THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE ONE-ACT PLAY

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C O N T E N T S

F O R E W O R D

In the writing of this thesis my attitude to the one-act play has undergone several changes. At the outset I had an uncritically high opinion of the short play, but I soon realised that memory had played me false. I had been remembering only the best short plays I had read, and had mercifully forgotten the large number of poor plays which had come my way. Re-reading these insignificant plays has not been an entertaining task, but I have been amply rewarded by finding many excellent short plays which I had not previously read.

There can be no doubt that the one-act play form has developed greatly in the twentieth century, but the conditions which have made this growth possible contain a threat to the continued existence of the form. This thesis sets out to assess what has been achieved by the one-act play and to consider what part itwill play in the theatre of the future, be it professional, amateur, radio or television.

The field is so vast that it has not been possible to cover everything in detail. There have been many important books to which I have not been able to obtain access. Drama has always fascinated me and I have been infectiously interested in the creation of the craftsman, the appreciation of the critic, the art of the actor and producer, and the enthusiasm of those playgoers who have recorded visits to the theatre where great art was born of the combined efforts of playwright, producer and actor.

In attempting to discover for myself just what the achievement of the one-act play has been and is likely to be, I have profited. If others find anything of worth in this approach to drama, the writing of this thesis will have been doubly rewarded.

PART ONE

DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER I

IN BRITAIN

The short play has been known to us since the earliest days of drama. It is to be found among the Greek and the Roman plays and in Western Europe during the Middle Ages it was a popular form. In ecclesiastical drama we find short plays dealing with the lives of saints and dramatisations of Biblical scenes. Many of the miracle and mystery plays were short. Among the cycles of plays which have survived from the heyday of the trade guilds we find many interludes, moralities and short farces.

When the theatres re-opened after the Puritan regime, the short play fell into disfavour until the nineteenth century, when theatre audiences were demanding full value for their money and an evening's entertainment would consist of a curtain-raiser, a full-length play and an afterpiece, all interlarded with musical items and recitations. There was an element of snobbishness in all this. Where drama in Elizabethan times had been a popular entertainment, during the eighteenth century it had changed to an entertainment which did not cater for the lower middle classes and the lower classes. This did not make for a financially successful theatre, and it was in an attempt to attract larger audiences that managers began to include the curtain-raiser and the afterpiece. These were usually short farces, sentimental pieces or plays of the grand

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guignol type. The result of this was that the élite would arrive late, so missing the curtain-raiser, and would leave early to avoid the crowds. The theatre became for them very much of a social occasion, and it was common for patrons of the upper classes to miss whole acts of the main play while they were visiting their friends in the boxes, often with the curtains drawn, or while they were promenading in the foyer or patronising the bars.

Hermon Ould[1] dismisses the curtain-raiser and the afterplay with:

> "These short plays were not taken very seriously and it was a rare event if an actor of recognised attainment took part in them ..... They provided opportunities for small-part actors to play modest leads and they enabled budding playwrights to try their prentice hands at something less ambitious than a full-length play.... Very few of these pre-1900 one-acters have survived to give us a taste of their quality, but, as their purpose was almost exclusively utilitarian, it may, perhaps, be safely assumed that they had little to do with art."

It does seem to be true that these plays were poor stuff, as it has been most difficult to find examples. Kozlenko[2] gives as a typical example a playlet named "A Pair of Lunatics" by George Alexander. A man and a girl who meet in a lunatic asylum each suppose the other to be insane. This leads to many farcical situations before the air is cleared and the pair fall in love with each other. It would seem that these plays were written to some sort of formula and that often the playwright would scorn to append his name. Many were of J.M. Morton's "Box and Cox" type, amounting to little more than the sort of comic dialogue popular in British music halls and in American vaudeville. Indeed, America provided so important a market for this type of play that in the earlier part of the nineteenth century there was no market in America for the indigenous short play.

The very terms 'curtain-raiser' and 'afterpiece' (are

1/ H. Ould:"The Art of the Play", p. 140.
2/ W. Kozlenko: "The One-Act Play Today", p. 55.

are terms of toleration and contempt, and most writers have not hesitated to heap opprobrium on this form of the one-act play. W. Macqueen Pope[1] has come to its defence:

"Often these plays were little gems. They deserved much better treatment than they got, but those who saw them delighted in them. They served a really useful purpose. They gave young dramatists a chance. Not that they were always the work of beginners. Practised hands like Keble Howard, Jerome K. Jerome, Anthony Hope and W.W. Jacobs, to say nothing of Seymour Hicks, Val Prensep, B.C. Stephenson, Frederick Fenn, F.D. Bone and many others did not disdain them. One does not include as curtain-raisers, the one-act plays of J.M. Barrie which were a thing apart and a feature of the show. Nor the one-act plays of W.S. Gilbert, which usually formed part of a triple bill, a thing never seen nowadays, so much has the theatre altered."

It is interesting to note that W.W. Jacobs' "Monkey's Paw", usually considered to be a perfect example of the grand guignol type of one-act play, was first presented on the stage as a curtain raiser, at the Haymarket Theatre in 1903. Several other W.W. Jacobs playlets which have survived, had the same humble origin. Other important curtain-raisers are Barrie's "Twelve Pound Look", G.B. Shaw's "How He Lied to Her Husband" and Pinero's "Playgoers". The curtain-raiser survived until 1914 and had a great influence on the modern one-act play, though many who are fond of this form of drama seem ashamed to admit this. The main function of the afterpiece seems to have been to put the audience in a pleasant frame of mind after seeing some harrowing tragedy.

The curtain-raiser is not dead. In a recent revival of Shaw's "Candida", a short play of Thornton Wilder's served as curtain-raiser; and the South African National Theatre's 1953 tour offered Tchekoff's "Anniversary" as curtain-raiser to Anouilh's "Antigone".

"Is there no play to ease the anguish of a torturing hour?" asked Theseus in "A Midsummer Night's Dream", and this question might well have been asked again when the commercial theatre forsook the one-act play. The answer was not long in coming. There were other spheres where (the

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1/Carriages at Eleven", p. 23.

G.J. Beukes[1] mentions the names of Gorki, Vishnevsky, Pogodin and Yaltev as modern exponents of the one-act play in Russia, but these names mean very little to us. Beukes tells us that the short play had no golden age in Russia and that generally the work of their writers, which is burdened with propaganda and lasts for only ten to fifteen minutes, is not to be compared with the English or American one-act play. Characterisation seems to be the main object of Russian dramatists, once they have acquitted themselves of their duty to disseminate propaganda, and this they do well, though very often at the expense of unity. Farce they understand, but humour is not found in their work. Their concept of tragedy is so far removed from ours as to make it difficult for us to meet on common ground. They search dark and desperate moods in their characters, investigate the dankest of the evil pits of human emotion, but their work is permeated with a static despair which is alien to our temperament and which we feel robs their work of development and unity.

Before I attempt to trace the growth of the short play in the hands of the amateurs, it is necessary that the one-act in what has been termed 'the other theatre' be examined. These theatres, though they often make some use of amateur talent, employ professional actors and are guided by producers whose main aim is not financial gain. They are often only kept going by subscription or by generous and frequent gifts of money by lovers of what is good in thetheatre. Permanency is not a characteristic and many close down after a few seasons. While these theatres have not given their entire attention to the short play, it is interesting to note that they have made a

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1/ "Die Moderne Eenbedryf", pp. 43-45.

success of a change from the usual programme, when they have put on multiple bills. There can be no doubt that the work done by these 'other theatres' is responsible for part of the miraculous growth of the amateur movement, especially in the field ofthe short play. Previously amateur work had been confined to the putting on of a play at some festive season in the home without any of the essential requirements other than, perhaps, some ill-fitting hired costumes and inadequate and amateurishly applied make-up. Enthusiasm would make up for any deficiencies in the producer and actors and the audience would consist of friends only. These groups of actors would choose either the most ridiculous farce or go to the opposite extreme and attempt one ofthe most difficult plays. The result could not really be called drama, but it was fun. Still, this was the sort of fun of which one could easily have a surfeit.

The 'other theatres' changed all this. There was an intimacy in their work and a close relationship between players and audience, which bridged the gap and made amateurs realise, that with some trouble and patience, they could, while not emulating the professionals, go far beyond their former fun and games and create real drama.

Credit for taking the lead in this field goes to the Abbey Theatre, Dublin. In 1892 W.B. Yeats and several other prominent Irish writers founded the National Literary Society, in which drama was to have a place. This developed into the Irish National Theatre Society, which was so constituted in 1903. The aims of this society were the development of a drama with strong national characteristics and 'to give truth and beauty its rightful place', to produce Celtic and Irish plays expressing 'the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland and surpassing political opinions."[1/] In 1904 Miss A.E. Horniman, (an

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1/ L. Hudson:"Twentieth Century Drama", p. 39.

an Englishwoman who sympathised with Yeats' high artistic ideals, offered to provide this society with a theatre, and in this way the Abbey Theatre was born. Yeats and Miss Horniman gathered about them some remarkable playwrights and players, with the result that not only was Ireland given a magnificent theatre where the best could be seen, but new plays were created which have constituted a most important contribution to English drama. It seems that we have always been indebted to the Irish for our leading dramatists, and here in the field of the short play we find names worthy of being mentioned along with those of Goldsmith, Sheridan and Shaw. There must be something in the Celtic blood which lends an extra dramatic sense. The dramatists associated with the Abbey Theatre created a new school of native comedy dealing with Irish folklore and Irish peasant life, but entirely divorced from the comic stage Irishman of the English music hall.

The Abbey Theatre became financially independent in 1910. Its international fame had begun in 1903 when two performances were given in London. This was soon followed by other English tours and then in 1911 came the first of the American tours which was to have far-reaching results which will be considered in the next chapter. The Abbey Theatre began by using amateur actors, and even to the present day continues to make some use of amateur talent.

Lady Gergory played an important part from the very beginning and contributed many charming light plays in one act, among which "The Rising of the Moon" is perhaps the best. In the earlier stages the new playwrights of the Abbey Theatre set out to write in English, using the Irish idiom of the peasants of the West, and did so with such success that we today still enjoy Yeats' "Pot o' Broth", his "Deirdre", J.M. Synge's "Riders to the Sea", "The Well

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of the Saints" and "In the Shadow of the Glen". "Pot o' Broth" remains as fresh and charming as it was half-a-century ago, and it is generally acknowledged that "Riders to the Sea" is a one-act tragedy without compare. The one-act form lends itself easily to farce, indeed, Hermon Ould says:[1]

> "The one-act form lends itself particularly well to the humorous subject. A joke, however good, is the better for not being long-drawn-out, and we have it on excellent authority that brevity is the soul of wit ... If comedy usually demands the shapeliness of the three-act structure for its happiest expression, many a farce which has been spread over an evening would have been better compressed into half an hour."

After a study of the one-act play, I am forced to agree that there are really very few one-act tragedies which do not sacrifice something essential in the attempt to encompass so much in so short a spaceof time. "Campbell of Kilmhor" by Ferguson, X = O" by Drinkwater, Cedric Mount's "Twentieth Century Lullaby" and "Riders to the Sea" are exceptions. With a sure dramatic instinct and a keen insight into the primary motive forces in human character, Synge takes us straight into black tragedy so that we are in the clutch of a chill hand, as he unfolds his story in which, to a simple woman off the west of Ireland, death comes to take toll of her sons who go to reap the harvest of the sea. "Riders to the Sea" remains one of the strongest arguments in favour of the one-act play.

Padraic Colum, though he devoted himself mainly to poetry, also played an important part in the early days of the Abbey Theatre. His best short play is "The Betrayal". Lord Dunsany owes much to the Abbey Theatre, and many of his one-act plays reveal the Celtic influence in the way in which fantasy leads us into a world the like of which does not exist on earth., but which grips us and makes us forget everything other than what is happening on the stage. "A Night at an Inn" takes us into a strange world where recognisable but ill-assorted types try to cope with a situation which is beyond them. "Golden Doom" and "Flight

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1/ op cit. p. 152.

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of the Queen" are examples of another type where we are transported to a world which exists only in fantasy. In "Golden Doom" the life of the beehive becomes the scene of all the emotions and motivating forces which push us humans along so many difficult paths. Dunsany makes us feel that the drones have hearts and feel fear and pain and loss just as we do, and we feel too, that the queen and the workers have their counterparts among humans. This is not only tragedy, not only fantasy: it is allegory as well. Beneath all the charm and whimsy lies a message as forceful as that of the more direct writers of plays bearing a political burden. Odets' "Waiting for Lefty" may be more rousing, more exciting, but the quiet comparison in "Golden Doom" must ever carry greater conviction for those who are not entirely slaves to their emotions.

While the Abbey Theatre continues to present the picture of Irish life in all its phases, including many plays written in Irish, in 1928 there arose the Dublin Gate Theatre iniated by Hilton Edwards and Micheál MacLiammiór, which set out to present the best in drama, whether it originated in Ireland or not. Their productions ranged from plays by Aeschylus to the most modern. Among the significant one-act plays which they presented are some by Tchekoff, Strindberg, O'Neill, Carl Capek and Elmer Rice. Their work was of a high standard and won acclaim during several tours to England, Egypt and the Balkans. Their presentation of programmes of one-acts did much to encourage amateurs and playwrights and also showed amateurs what could be done with vision, inspiration and very little outlay of money. This is what MacLiammiór has to say of these programmes: 1/

" ... a new sort of variety at Christmas inspired (partly

1/ M. MacLiammiór: "All for Hecuba", p. 121.

partly by the Chauve-Souris and partly by our own dreams for the sort of stage that would give you a bewildering procession - tiny plays that could find no place in a conventional full evening's entertainment, things by people like Douglas Hyde or mediaeval Chinese poets or sixteenth century Irish ballad-makers, or new young writers so amusing and so obscure that they made you feel as old as Trelawnay of the Wells. All these things were strung together in our Christmas Pie in a non-stop manner, with one interval only as in a music hall programme, and in later years we elaborated the method considerably.

The idea of seeing Strindberg, and Noel Coward, and Yeats, and Elmer Rice, and Gertrude Stein, and Edgar Allen Poe in one night, as well as a ballet, a potted pantomime, and an indefinite number of folk songs and mimes amused us, and was so successful that we have repeated the experiment for many years, bringing the results of our explorations to the Gaeity Theatre in 1942 - eleven years after our first experiment in the field."

When, in 1904, J.E. Vedrenne and H. Granville-Barker took over the Court Theatre they initiated a repertory movement and produced a remarkable series of new plays and revivals which did much to instil new life into the theatre and which gave the impetus to other Little Theatre movements in various parts of the country. These Little Theatres have done much to influence the development of modern drama both in England and America. Among the plays produced were many significant short plays which would not otherwise have been put on the boards in England.

"In 1907 Miss Horniman, tired of political demonstrations at the Abbey Theatre returned to England and began her own repertory in Manchester at the Gaeity." 1/ This was an example which was followed in many centres, of which the Liverpool Playhouse and the Birmingham Reps are the most important. The Liverpool Playhouse is of interest because it is the oldest existing Repertory Theatre in England, being the third to be opened. Though it is dependent almost entirely on box-office receipts, it is the only one which has made a policy of regularly putting on programmes of one-act plays. It has been through hard times, but shows a small profit today. The Birmingham Repertory Theatre was founded as an entirely amateur organisation with the aim of serving art rather than any

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1/L. Hudson: op. cit. p. 45.

commercial purpose, and has done so with great success. "..... in that spirit some five hundred plays have been presented. Few have been without artistic merit; many have proved notable additions to English drama."[1/]

The London Gate Theatre, with Peter Godfrey as owner producer, opened in 1925 and made a policy of including worth-while one-act plays. The first season saw the production of twenty-three plays, of which seven were short plays. In 1926 five one-act plays were produced among which was Elmer Rice's significant "Adding Machine". This policy of putting on striking one-act plays was continued until 1934 when Peter Godfrey gave up "The Gate" and went to America, where he became a successful radio playwright and film producer.

J.B. Fagan opened the Oxford Playhouse in 1923 in a converted big-game museum and for two seasons produced good plays and found some excellent new actors. Among the important one-act plays which he chose to present were G.B. Shaw's "Dark Lady of the Sonnets" and Galsworthy's "The First and the Last".

Terence Gray's Cambridge Festival Theatre, which was opened in 1926 and which lasted until 1933, was especially significant for such novelties as having a stage on several levels and no proscenium; he also put on programmes of outstanding short plays. In 1928, for instance, O'Neill's "Dreamy Kid" and "Emperor Jones" were presented along with Greverley's "Last Hour" as a single evening's entertainment.

The curtain-raiser was the beginning of the modern one-act play, but once the commercial theatre had deserted this form of drama, it was the Little Theatres and the Repertory Theatres which provided the only professional or semi-professional encouragement. Unless there is a demand for any particular type of drama, playwrights will not produce that type, and thus a great debt is owed to those (theatres

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1/ P. Hartnoll:"Oxford Companion to the Theatre", P.81.

theatres which did not put profits first, but set out to present plays which could be considered to be among the best that were to be offered. This not only encouraged the writing of short plays, but provided an inspiration for amateurs. Though influence of the sort exerted by these "other" theatres is too intangible to permit of any measurement or anything like reasonably accurate assessment, it seems reasonable to believe that the freshness and enthusiasm displayed could not but have far-reaching effects. This is much more readily seen in America, where the lines of development were not as diversified as in Britain. The development of the short play across the Atlantic is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

IN AMERICA

Before 1870 hardly any one-act plays of merit were to be found in America, and such as there were had been imported from England for variety shows or vaudeville, as the Americans prefer to call it. The position was even worse than in England, as these cast-off curtain-raisers were obtained so cheaply by the promoters of vaudeville that there was no encouragement for any American writer.

When Dean Howells began offering such one-act plays as "Mouse-Trap" and "Five O'clock Tea", mainly for publication in periodicals, it was thought that a period of renaissance had begun. Here were plays which were truly American in spirit, that were more than the thoughtless entertainment provided by vaudeville. The playlets of the English writer, John Maddison Morton (1811-1891), farces taken mainly from the French, of which the most popular was "Lend Me Five Shillings", were the sort of thing which was then popular in America. Dean Howell's short plays were not only produced in America, but several appeared as curtain-raisers on the London stage. "The Garroters" and "The Mouse-Trap" particularly, were acclaimed by critics, including Shaw, as a change from the typical curtain-raiser with its sentimentalism and melodrama.

This was the birth of the American one-act play, but the infant did not prosper because of lack of nurture. There is little progress to record until the visit of the Abbey Theatre Players in 1911. There were societies of amateurs, but they did not concern themselves with the one-act play. Nothing but the best was good enough for them and they produced Shakespeare and Goldsmith and Sheridan.

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In 1910 the Drama League of America was founded. This was an offshoot of an affiliation of women's clubs and prepared the way for the Abbey Players. The Irish players during their tour presented one-act plays by Synge, Yeats and Lady Gregory. By this time there were many chapters of the Drama League throughout the United States, and many of those who saw the Abbey Players were fired with a desire to write and produce one-act plays which would do for America what the Abbey Theatre had done for Ireland. Glen Hughes[1/] writes that "the history of the one-act play in the United States is, in effect, a history of the decline of the professional theatre and the rise of the amateur", and goes on to say that "In the United States the one-act has never been taken seriously by the professional theatre."[1/] This may help to explain how the one-act came to spread through the United States like wild-fire. By 1911 the Wisconsin Players were in existence, and by 1912 the Boston Toy Theatre, the Chicago Lillte Theatre and the 47 Workshop Theatre of Harvard University were all busily encouraging the writing of short plays and arranging for their production. Before long there were literally hundreds of Little Theatres, and universities, colleges and schools, along with many other organisations, included the one-act play in their sphere of activities.

By 1911 "The Drama" , a quarterly periodical, was being published by the Drama League of America. By 1919 it was popular enough to justify monthly publication. Many one-act plays appeared in its pages, including a number of important translations.

The Wisconsin Players were most successful in encouraging the writing of short plays which they would then

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1/ Glen Hughes writing in W. Kozlenko's symposium "The One-Act Play Today", p. 197.

produce. It is important to note that these associations were more than just societies of amateurs who were interested in being provided with plays which they could act. These people had embraced the cause of drama so whole-heartedly that they set out to learn something of the dramatist's craft, they sought knowledge of scenic design, make-up, props, sound-effects and the art of the actor. Eventually the more important one-act plays written at the instigation of the Wisconsin Players were published as "Wisconsin Plays" in two volumes. These volumes contain some plays which have become accepted as leading examples of their type. Glen Hughes considers that "The Neighbors" by Zona Gale is the best in this collection, though this play I have not been able to procure.

When the Chicago Little Theatre, directed by Maurice Brown, an Englishman with experience of English Little Theatres, presented its premiere, Alice Brown's "Joint Owners in Spain" was chosen. This play is one of great merit. It is probably the first one-act play with an all-women cast and this could not have been otherwise for the scene is an old women's home.

Professor G.P. Baker's 47 Workshop Theatre was, as the name would indicate, really a play laboratory. His students studied every aspect of the theatre, and then the results of their studies and their creative art would be brought together in productions executed by enthusiastic and well-trained amateurs. Professor Baker had his 47 Workshop Theatre at Harvard from 1912 to 1925, when he transferred to Yale, where he carried on with the same work until 1933, the year of his retirement. At Yale he had at his disposal an exceptionally well-equipped experimental theatre. Among playwrights who attended his drama courses and were later successful playwrights were Eugene O'Neill, Sydney Howard and George Abbott. The best results of his work are to be seen in the collections of plays

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published in four volumes under the title "Plays of the 47 Workshop". These four volumes were published in 1918, 1920, 1922 and 1925. respectively. There are also two volumes of plays "The Harvard Dramatic Club", published in 1918 and 1919, which are collections of the best work of his students.

The 47 Workshop deserted the short play for the longer form, and in so doing set the pattern in the American scene. Groups interested in drama set out to write and act short plays, but all too soon they forsake this form for the longer play. Many of the playwrights have written excellent one-act plays, and yet, even though there is an insatiable demand for the short play, they desert this form for the three-act play. This does not always happen. Percival Wilde has written hundreds of one-act plays for amateur groups in the United States and remains as popular as ever. In Britain there are a number of playwrights who write several short plays a year which are eagerly sought after by societies for production at Drama Festivals.

Rachel Field was one of Professor Baker's protégés who wrote a large number of first-rate short plays. "Three Pills in a Bottle" is one of her best.

The 47 Workshop Theatre gave the lead to many colleges and universities, and it is largely due to Professor Baker's pioneering work that drama courses figure so prominently in the curricula of American universities today.

The Washington Square Players set out in 1914 to perform distinguished American and European one-act plays which had been neglected by the commercial theatre. They too, exerted a great influence on those interested in drama, but they seemed to follow the general American

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trend; and when, in 1919, the Theatre Guild grew out of the Washington Players, the one-act play was neglected entirely for many years. Nevertheless, the high standard which was set and the policy of presenting what was new and unusual was largely responsible for American interest in experiment.

In 1915 the Provincetown Players were inaugurated with the ideal of presenting American plays, especially short plays, plays emphasising originality and experimental plays. Regular performances were given until 1929. It was here that Eugene O'Neill carried out some of that experimental work in the short form, which was to have so profound an influence on play-writing technique. The most notable O'Neill plays to be produced by the Provincetown Players were "Bound East for Cardiff, "'Ile", "Before Breakfast", "The Long Voyage Home", "In the Zone", "Where the Cross is Made" and "The Moon of the Caribbees". Other important one-act plays which were written for production by the Provincetown Players were Floyd Dell's "Sweet and Twenty" and "King Arthur's Socks", Edna St Vincent Millay's "Aria de Capo" and "Two Slatterns and a King", Alfred Kreymborg's "Lima Beans" and "Manikin and Minikin", Susan Glaspell's "Trifles" and, in collaboration with G.C. Cook, "Tickless Time" and "Suppressed Desires".

The growth of the one-act play in America has been phenomenal. Statistics can be misleading, but the figures are impressive. Hughes[1] writes:

> When Margaret Mayorga edited in 1937 a revised edition of her anthology "Representative One-Act Plays by American Authors" and included Percival Wilde's play "Pawns", the author wrote as follows: 'It may interest you to know that your 1919 anthology was the first volume of the kind in which I was included. Your new one will be the fiftieth.' Wilde's work would not have been in an earlier anthology because Miss Mayorga's 1919 collection was the first in the field."

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1/op. cit. p. 210

By 1939 there were over a hundred-and-two anthologies of short plays as distinct from volumes of plays by one author. Over 200 one-act plays are published annually in the United States and, though the standard is not always high and there is a certain lack of originality found in many, among them are a number which are significant. Most of these one-act plays are written by amateurs.

Lynton Hudson[1] says that in 1925 over 2,000 Little Theatres were amalgamated into the Drama League in America. These created such a demand for plays that it was found necessary for organisations to offer substantial prizes in order to obtain the plays they required. Miss Mayorga[2] states that in 1940 the Ballet Guild, New York, the Dock Street Theatre, Charleston, the University of Chicago, the Leland Stanford University and the Religious Drama Council of the Federation of Churches were all offering important prizes for winning entries in their annual competitions for one-act plays.

Interest in one-act plays has spread all over the United States, and much of the work done in the colleges and universities is of high standard. As an example of this I may instance Joesphina Niggli's Mexican Folk Comedy "Sunday Costs Five Pesos". This play was written while Miss Niggli was taking a play-writing course at the University of North Carolina. Though it is light and at first impact may seem to be so slight as to be insignificant, it remains in the memoryas a charming picture long after many other one-act plays have been forgotten. It successfully creates the atmosphere of a drowsy Mexican village on a Sunday, where, it seems, it is a convention that a fine of five pesos is imposed on Sundays for any unbecoming behaviour on the part of the young girls. The impetuosity

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1/ "The Twentieth Century Drama", p. 48.
2/ "The Best One-Act Plays of 1940, p. 7. (ed. M. Mayorga)

of these young girls, and the way in which these adolescent sisters bicker, is so natural that we realise that young people are the same the world over, even though they may grow up in a very different setting. Miss Niggli has since written many charming one-act plays, and though some of these are rather puzzling to one who is not acquainted with the Mexican villages in which they are set, they possess a certain inconsequential charm and seem to be popular with certain American audiences. Miss Niggli is representative of many who have been initiated into the dramatist's art through the agency of drama courses or Little Theatres.

A disturbing sign in the American scene is that so many of the Little Theatres and Drama Faculties at the universities and colleges seem to desert the one-act play for longer plays, often to the detriment of the work they are doing. This is also true to some extent of the playwrights. Many seem to be content to learn their craft through the medium of the one-act play and then desert it for the longer play. In spite of this there can be no doubt that the American contribution to the development of the one-act play has been a most important one; indeed G.J. Beukes[1/] states that the high standard of the one-act play in the United States has not been equalled in any other country. In a later chapter I hope to subject some of the more significant one-act plays to a closer examination as I feel that what has been accomplished is so important, and so diverse in character, that it is not to be evaluated in one facile sentence.

If a summing up is at all possible, it is perhaps best done in the words of P.H. Boynton:[2/]

The fact that showgoers are in an immense majority

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1/ op. cit. p. 41.
2/ P.H. Boynton: "More Contemporary Americans", p. 97.

over playgoers reveals nothing new and nothing unique about the American public. The commercial theatre does not so much pander to the base as cater to the unintelligent. The greatest money-makers of the year will almost invariably include one mercilessly explicit morality play. The prosperity of the commercial theatre simply emphasises one broad and safe conclusion: that in the amusement world the purveyor who consults the public demand will drop toward the level of the bromidic, the stupid and the obvious. But the rise in importance of the art theatre points an equally safe conclusion: that the public will on the whole accept better art than it will demand. The prevalence of the community ventures, the increasing resort to the drama and the theatre by schools and colleges, the quickened market for printed plays, are all building up a substantial body of playgoers, who, as time goes on, will increase the support of good plays well acted. Although the showgoers will always vastly predominate in the theatrical world, they are not irrevocably committed to the trivial or the dirty or the goody-goody banal. They are always open to the risk of blundering on to good plays and liking them; they are always open to the possibility of being recruited as at least associate members of the independent order of playgoers. Without them the best of drama would have little cance of stage survival. The American stage, good as well as bad, has more to look for in the support of the showgoer than in the patronage of an eclectic few. It needs and it profits from both. The situation is not one to inspire any patriotic outburst of complacency or gloom. It is one to watch with intensest interest, and it is stimulative of hopes as well as fears."

What Boynton foresaw has come to pass in great measure. The Little Theatres stressed the participation aspect of the amateur movement, giving prominence to the opportunities for self-expression. This was caused in the first place by the need for better theatres. To find the money for these theatres, these dramatic groups arranged to have greater seating accommodation and set out to attract audiences other than the friends of those who were participating in the production of the plays. While this was happening, the commercial theatre outside New York fell into a sorry decline mainly because it could not compete against the rising popularity of the cinema. Larger audiences began to attend the productions of the Little Theatres because these were the only theatres outside New York which they could attend. Though these larger audiences approved of the principle of productions by amateurs, they demanded a high standard of acting, better

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scenery and costumes and the best in lighting effects. So it happened that many groups appointed professional directors and often employed a core of professional actors. The term 'Little Theatre' gave way to the more popular 'Civic Theatre' and 'Community Theatre'. With this concept of civic consciousness came the concept of an obligation to the American nation in respect of drama. These theatres then became grouped into one association for the purposes of organisation and with the idea of feeding the great New York theatres. This came to be known as the Tributary Theatre. It was founded in 1925 and lasted until 1940. The name 'Tributary' was still unsatisfactory to these group theatres as it implied an inferior position just as the word 'little' had done. The attitude of mind has been explained by Edith J.R. Isaacs 1/ in this way:

"The center of America's professional theater life will probably always be New York. The center, yes, but not the source. The Tributaries must feed the main stream; the states must feed New York. As long as New York feeds the states the American theater will remain only a backwash for the waters that run by the market place. 'And don't think for a moment that it is Maine, Wyoming, and Wisconsin that suffer most from this. The theater in New York is the greatest sufferer."

The university theatres have been moving along a line parallel with that of the community theatres, and it has become increasingly clear that they have many common interests. In 1934 many of the university and community theatres banded themselves together under the name of the National Theatre Conference, and since then so many groups have become affiliated that this new concept, that they do not constitute tributaries to the mainstream but are the mainstream itself, has come to be generally accepted.

While the amateur movement in America has gone from strength to strength, it has to some extent done so

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1/ "Theatre Arts Monthly", Sept., 1928, Vol. XII, No. 9, p. 620. quoted in "The Oxford Companion to the Theatre", ed. P. Hartnoll. p. 562.

by forsaking the short play for the longer play.

PART TWO

CONSOLIDATION

CHAPTER III

DRAMA FESTIVALS

Amateur participation in plays goes back to the very beginnings of English drama. The mystery plays were written by amateurs for amateurs to produce, while the court masques of the eighteenth century lay in the province of the amateurs too. In the nineteenth century home amateur theatricals were popular and about the same time many amateur dramatic societies were formed.

The Old Stagers date back to 1842 and are still in existence, giving regular performances. In 1846 the Manchester Atheneum Dramatic Society was founded. It was inaugurated as a play-reading society, but in 1854 presented its first stage production. Since then this society has produced plays regularly every year, in recent years including three or four short plays every season. The Cambridge Amateur Dramatic Club was founded in 1855 as also was the Oxford University Dramatic Society.

The rapid growth of the number of amateur dramatic societies in the twentieth century may be attributed in part to the influence of the Abbey Theatre and in part to the 'other theatres' in England. It is not easy to trace the development of these societies, as they present themselves in bewildering variety and many lived for a few years only. There are many organisations which are

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interested in drama only as a sideline. Church groups, women's organisations, factory clubs, schools and the like may display only sporadic interest in producing plays. On the other hand, if there is some enthusiast at hand, drama will live and be an important adjunct to the group's activities. These organisations together with youth centres, welfare clubs and various other community groups, are the ones which have taken the one-act play to their hearts and which enter in such large numbers for the drama competitions which are the essence of play festivals.

Belonging to the above groups are the large numbers of village groups which fall under the Village Drama Society. This society grew out of the work done by the Kelly Players, inspired by Miss Kelly, which came into existence in a modest way during the First World War. These players were asked for assistance by amateur dramatic societies in many quarters, and in 1919 a small committee was formed and the Village Dramatic Society was born. At first it limited itself to giving advice on what plays to choose, where costumes might be obtained and the like. This service was so much sought after that by 1931 the society had been in communication with ten thousand villages. In this year the Village Drama Society became incorporated with the British Drama League.[1/]

Before considering the growth of the British Drama League, it would be well to record the doings of those amateur societies which , while they do not ignore the one-act play, spend most of their time on longer plays. These are, for instance, the larger dramatic societies which are to be found in the more important towns and cities. These societies usually repeat West End successes and do so with a great deal of ability; their work is of

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1/ This information is culled from Nora Ratcliff's "Rude Mechanicals", p. 17.

a high standard. Some of these set out to present plays of cultural and real dramatic value.

Then there are the Little Theatres which have played so important a part in keeping alive interest in good plays and experimentation, both of which were ignored to a large extent by the commercial theatre. The Little Theatres were founded either by amateurs or by producers who would not depart from their ideals and principles in allowing their work to be modified by the dictates of theatre-owners. They have presented plays which had been ignored by the London theatres, have made use of amateur talent along with professional, and some possess training schools in which a young actor will learn his craft while he is permitted to take increasingly important parts. This is in some ways a return to the Elizabethan method of training actors, and is, in my view, an improvement on the method whereby an aspirant actor will learn his theory at a drama school, without any more practical experience than can be given artificially on a drama school stage.

Among these Little Theatres may be mentioned the Maddermarket of Norwich, which, since 1910, has put on several programmes of one-act plays including some of the most modern. The Bradford Civic Playhouse, founded as a result of the success of the Leeds Civic Theatre, is interesting as it uses a core of professional actors but draws the remainder of its cast from suitable material in the many amateur societies which abound in Bradford and neighbouring towns. There are many others, each making its contribution, either in choosing plays which would otherwise not have been presented on a stage, or experimenting with scenic effects, stage techniques, or encouraging writers of experimental plays.

There are new groups arising all the time; and a new association of groups which may yet be of great interest

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is the Left Book Club Theatre Guild which has constituent members from trade unions and the like, and which is interested not primarily in the creation of art, but in the dissemination of a creed.

In 1919 Geoffrey Whitworth founded the British Drama League. This league has exerted a great, a bewildering and, one may say, an almost frightening influence on amateur dramatic societies and on the character of the one-act play. To understand just how great is the influence which it wields, it is necessary to attempt to trace its rapid growth and to obtain some picture of the complexity of the organisation. The Drama League provides its members with a library service, making available books on drama which are not readily obtainable. It also provides an information service which solves for societies all their problems as to suitable plays and which tells them where to obtain costumes and make-up, how to achieve the best sound-effects, how to set about achieving various effects with scenery and lighting, and all the hundred-and one matters which crop up in the course of producing a play. It publishes a magazine "Drama" and provides courses, some lasting for weeks, some held during a week-end only, at which leading actors and producers bring to amateurs the best information available. The most valuable feature of these courses is the practical training which those attending receive.

The most important work of the Drama League is the organising of an annual Theatre Festival [1]. John Bourne estimates the number of amateur dramatic societies at between twenty and thirty thousand, while "The Oxford Companion to the Theatre" gives the figure at over thirty thousand. Over five thousand of these groups are affiliated to the British Drama League [2]. This league held its

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1/ John Bourne writing in W. Kozlenko's "The One-Act Play Today", p. 221.

2/ J.W. Marriott: "Best One-Act Plays of 1950-51"-Foreword.

first drama festival in 1926, when seven societies took part. By 1936 the number of entries had increased to 747. This necessitated a complex organisation on a regional basis. The competition is run on the knock-out system, the plays of an area being adjudicated and only the best being allowed to enter for the second round. The plays which reach the finals are presented in a London theatre for adjudication.

When we add to this complex organisation the 150 branches of the Village Dramatic Society which has become part of the British Drama League, but which has not lost its identity, some idea is gained of the magnitude and influence of this movement.

These are not the only play festivals held in Britain. Hundreds of dramatic societies are affiliated to the National Federation of Women's Institutes, to the National Adult School Union, the Y.M.C.A., the Catholic Play Society, the Independent Labour Party and many others.

The Scottish Community Drama Association is Scotland's counterpart of the British Drama League, and most Scottish amateur dramatic societies belong to this association. A result of this is that all the member societies enter for the competitions and so devote all their time to one-act plays. J.W. Marriott writes:

> "After his tour through Scotland during the summer, Mr Joe Corrie came to the conclusion that 75% of the dramatic groups undertake the work for the sheer pleasure of doing it .... There are more than 1,000 societies in Scotland alone. 'There is scarcely a church without its drama group', says Mr Corrie, 'and tennis clubs, community service clubs, even ex-servicemen's clubs, have added drama to their activities.'" 1/

Other organisations which concern themselves with amateur work, though not exclusively with the one-act play, are the National Operatic and Dramatic Association, Ltd., the County Drama Committees, the Townswomen's Guild and,

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1/ J.W. Marriott: "The Best One-Act Plays of 1937", p. 5.

under the 1944 Education Act, Local Authorities. These Local Authorities are empowered to provide theatres, club rooms, rehearsal rooms, training classes and other facilities.

Wales has so far not been mentioned. Marriott has this to say of Wales:

"What is happening in Scotland has its parallel in England and (rather surprisingly) in Wales. Versions in Scottish dialect and in Welsh of modern English classics are in frequent use and serve to establish standards. For centuries drama has been under an unofficial interdict in the Principality, but today there are amateur groups ever where." 1/

In "The Theatre"he writes:

"Wales, for example, has for generations been opposed to the stage and all its associations, but during the past few years the keen interest of Wales in drama has surprised everybody. The Welsh temperament is instinctively dramatic, and the newly discovered enthusiasm for plays is sweeping everything before it. For the first time in history we are having a Welsh drama, and the movement may go far to redeem the hostility and neglect of the past." 2/

The drama festivals are a great force for good or evil, and it is not quite clear which it is to be. Some writers hold the view that festivals have been the making of the one-act play. They point out that commercialism does not enter into the picture. They point out that an almost insatiable demand has been created for one-act plays. "Unless there is a demand for a particular dramatic form," they say in effect, "you cannot expect that form to continue to exist."

"Thirty thousand amateur play-producing groups have an important effect on the economics of playwrights, publishers, theatrical costumiers, wig-makers and the like, besides contributing no small part of the revenue of the public halls and institutes which they use for their productions. The importance of the amateur stage can be appreciated, particularly when it is realised that the activities of the local dramatic society provide the only 'live' theatre for many sizeable towns." 3/

"In 1937 three hundred new plays were printed, most of them in separate acting editions. In addition

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1/ ibid. p. 6.
2/ J.W. Marriott: "The Theatre", p. 153.
3/ P. Hartnoll (ed.): Oxford Companion to the Theatre", P. 22.

there is still a steady demand for collections of one-act plays, a demand which publishers hasten to satisfy. There are about one thousand entries in a national festival and a further thousand entries in local festivals." 1/

Those who believe that the festivals have been for the good of the one-act play refer us to Joe Corrie who graduated from a coal miner into a first-rate writer of short plays, and all because of his association with the amateur theatre. They refer us to Sidney Box, one of the most prolific and most popular od English playwrights. As a medical man, his choice of the one-act was purely one of personal inclination, but he has made a great success of this form which suits his method and his aim. He is an efficient craftsman and has written a wide variety of short plays among which are some examples of successful experimentation.

In "Self-made Man", in five scenes and within the compass of thirty-five minutes, he tells us the life-story of a financier: how he leaves selling newspapers to become clerk to a leading stockbroker; how he engineers the latter's downfall by manipulating the market; how he himself is ruined, goes mad and is cured in an asylum. In the last scene we see him selling newspapers once more. When he rushes across the street to greet one of his former financier friends, "there is a screech of brakes". In this play Scene I is played before the curtain with a spot, excellent use is made of blackouts, the pace is good and the neat composition of five flexible scenes is most satisfying. Splendid use is made of an audible stock exchange recorder (in place of a ticker) to record the rise and fall of the fortunes of the financier and his clerk, where success for the one spells ruin for the other.

Sidney Box's "Waiter" is an unusually good example of simultaneous presentation of normal dialogue and thought

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1/ J. Bourne: op.cit. p 221

dialogue. This play is also interesting because of the large number of characters in the cast - unusual in a short play. His "Tree" is a highly interesting experiment in symbolism. His style seems to be particularly suited to the one-act play.

Many other names could be mentioned to show that the demand created by the drama festivals led to the writing of short plays of great value. There sems to be a type of dramatic situation which can find perfect expression only in the short play. Protraction would destroy such perfection. F. Sladen-Smith's delightful little satires are gems in miniature. To have lengthened these plays would have been to destroy the lightness and point. A playlet like "Love in the Ape-house" or "Mrs Noah Gives the Sign" would stand to lose everything by added length. C.L. Evans' "Antic Disposition" in which a modern Hamlet passes through all the suffering caused by irresolution, is clever and significant because of the sure touch with which the parallel is suggested, but it could not have been a success if protracted. Paul Green's "Hymn to the Rising Sun", because of the strong emotions aroused, the 'Father Juniper' plays of Laurence Housman, W.W. Jacobs' "Monkey's Paw", A.A. Milne's fairy story plays with their allegorical point, the stark "Till the Day I Die" of Clifford Odets, H.F. Rubinstein's tragically powerful "Deacon and the Jewess" and the deeply moving "Twentieth Century Lullaby" of Cedric Mount are all examples of plays which have found their happiest expression in one act. As Hermon Ould says, brevity is the soul of wit, and there are many delightfully clever little comedies which would have been of far less worth if the neatness of the situation had not been exploited or if there had been an attempt to repeat a similar type of situation. For some of the comedies protraction would

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have resulted in something like Ben Travers' Aldwych comedies, but this would not have been the same thing. There are countless examples of one-act plays which could not have been as well set forth in any other medium; which are complete and perfect only within their necessarily restricted limits. This will become clearer when I deal with some of these plays in detail in a later chapter.

There are writers who believe that the present strength of the drama festivals is valuable because the short play has an important duty to fulfil in the future. They believe that religious and educational institutions, radio, television and the cinema will yet come to realise that the one-act form is that which will best suit their purpose; and that once this is fully realised, not only will there be a rich treasure-house of plays on which to draw, but the results of experiment and improved techniques will be of great value.

Because the one-act play is free of the shackles of commercialism, it is free to experiment. Furthermore, while an audience might be impatient of an experiment which is not successful if it is the subject of a whole evening's entertainment, it would quite likely condone an interesting failure for a matter of thirty-five minutes, especially if other fare were provided to make up a full programme.

This may seem to be painting a glowing picture, but there is a darker side. Some writers consider the one-act form to be a sort of chrysalis stage, from which the playwright must emerge as a fully-grown writer of long plays. This seems to be borne out to some extent by what has been happening in America. There many dramatists have commenced their careers by writing one-act plays, but once they have mastered the dramatic art they desert the short play for the long. As I have said earlier,

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many of the American dramatic societies, too, set out to produce one-act plays but, as soon as they feel that they have gained sufficient proficiency to cope with a long play, they aim at giddier heights. This is true of Britain as well. Many of the larger amateur dramatic societies scorn the short play and devote all their time to the three-act play.

With isolated exceptions, the commercial theatres continue to ignore the existence of the one-act play and many critics believe that this is not obtuseness on their part, but just and right. Norman Marshall says "The one-act bill is not a particularly satisfying entertainment, rather like a dinner consisting of Hors-d'ouvres, soup, sweet and a savoury." 1/ He goes on to say:

> In the 'twenties I used to spend a good deal of time each winter acting as one of the adjudicators in the British Drama League Festival of Community Drama. Sometimes I toured for weeks on end adjudicating preliminary rounds, watching performances night after night all over the country in small towns and villages .... In those days I really did believe that 'the future of the drama is in the hands of the amateur'". 2/

He believed that the development of the amateur movement was bound to have an invigorating effect on the professional theatre because it could provide an audience of enthusiastic playgoers with a working knowledge of acting and production. He believed that the amateurs would prove an intelligent audience, intolerant of slipshod acting, production and scenery, an audience able to perceive the finer points of a good performance, quick to recognise and applaud new talent, able to differentiate between a good performance in a difficult part and a mediocre performance in a foolproof one and not too easily dazzled by stars irrespective of the merits of the performance.

"It was only gradually," says Marshall, "that I (began

1/ N. Marshall:"The Other Theatre", p. 23.
2/ ibid. p. 85.

began to realise how seldom is the amateur interested in the theatre as a whole." 1/

"Their cause", admits John Bourne, who used to edit 'The Amateur Stage', "is not truly that of the theatre, but the spontaneous and unconsidered desire to don the motley and have fun and games in doing so. They are too busy to support the commercial theatre, the repertory movement or the National Theatre project. They do not study deeply or read widely .... When the light evenings come, they throw off the motley and turn to tennis with that same spontaneity that prevents their ever reaching Wimbledon." 2/

Amateur actors seldom go to the theatre and are often most complacent, believing that they can without too much effort be quite as accomplished as the professional because they bring to the theatre a freshness, an enthusiasm and a knowledge of everyday life which they feel the professional must lack. Marshall says that the fact that there are over 30,000 amateur dramatic companies in Britain is not a sign of strength but of weakness. He suggests that in many of the provincial towns where there are more than fifty societies it would be to their advantage to co-operate, and that they should then be able to put on about half-a-dozen first-class shows each season.

There are groups which are doing really artistic work and carrying out worthwhile experiment, but they are in the minority. Too many are content to put on machine-made one-act plays. It is not always easy to decide just which is the cause and which the effect; this is evident when we come to consider whether the playwrights are to blame for the type of one-act play which is written, or whether the dramatic societies and the drama festivals are the culprits. We may say that the playwright has a duty to write plays which represent the best of which he is capable; that "there are innumerable one-acters with no greater claim to artistic consideration than the majority of short stories contributed to popular magazines." 3/

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1/ ibid. p. 85.
2/ Quoted by N. Marshall, op. cit., p. 85.
3/ H. Ould: op. cit., p. 141.

We may go further and blame the playwrights for publishing one-act plays so trashy that only the insatiable demand of the dramatic societies makes it possible for them to see print.

The one-act play is the favourite of the young playwright and often has all the hallmarks of immaturity: clumsy construction, insignificance, an undue exuberance or blatant didacticism. Hermon Ould says "Venturesomeness in technique has not been particularly characteristic of the writers of one-acters. The range of expression open to them, from strident comedy to wildest farce, from rigid realism to unbridled fantasy, tragedy, satire, history, religion, mysticism, Grand Guignol thrills, Cranford charm - has been so great that the need to expand the medium, has, perhaps, not made itself felt."[1] G.J. Beukes[2] states just the opposite. Characteristics of the one-act play are, he says, experimentation and the absence of everything that is hidebound.

We must admit that more than half the short plays offered are trashy, but if we remember the tremendous output of short plays this still leaves a large number which are of value. Yet it is not enough to lay the blame at the door of the playwrights. They do not purposely write plays which are not acceptable, and if they are to write one-act plays at all it is not unreasonable of them to write the sort of plays which will appeal to those who are interested in short plays. With thousands of amateur societies clamouring for plays suitable for production in competitions, it is not surprising that the playwright keeps a weather eye open to the demand. If we find that he is writing plays with all-women casts, this is merely because he realises that there are many women's institutes demanding such plays. If we find casts with only one or two men, we know that this is in recognition of the fact (of

1/ ibid. p. 156.
2/ G.J. Beukes: "Die Moderne Eenbedryf", p.45.

of the fact that all too often there are many more women members in a dramatic society than there are men. In some one-act plays, this principle is stretched so far that, when the inclusion of a male character is unavoidable, he may speak from off the stage. "Red William's Wooing" by K.C. Greene is an example of this type. King William is directly addressed by the abbess, but is not seen, and Prince Henry's message is but reported.

It is obvious that the drama festivals could not be run without rules, and it is just as obvious that these rules must exert a strong influence on dramatists who hope to have their plays accepted as entries in the various competitions. Quite apart from royalties, matters have come to such a pass that the writer of a prize-winning play, or even of a play that was runner-up in a national contest, or a play that won one of the regional contests, is assured of a steady source of income from that play and any further plays he may write, because there could be no better advertisement for a play, and nothing succeeds like success. Societies losing to others are quite likely to decide that it was neither the acting nor the production which lost them the award, but the choice of play. For them, this is easily set right: the following year they will seek one of the fortunate author's plays. His work will also be sought by compilers of anthologies.

The time limit set by the drama festivals may be necessary for purposes of competition, especially when there are entries in large numbers, but to impose rigid time limits cannot be to the advantage of a dramatic form. In the festivals of the British Drama League, the time laid down is twenty to forty minutes, neither more nor less. It is true that many first-rate plays are written within these limits, but some of the more striking one-act plays of the twentieth century are those which have

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ignored these restrictions as to time. Clifford Odets' "Waiting for Lefty" would play for rather more than an hour. Jean Anouilh's "Antigone" is in one act but lasts for almost two hours. The Americans do not seem to be ridden to the same extent by this craze for competition, and there is much greater flexibility in the length of their one-act plays. They have some remarkably good little plays which are all over in a matter of ten to fifteen minutes. I may instance Kreymborg's "Manikin and Minikin". Examples from other countries are Noel Coward's "Sorry You've Been Troubled" and August Strindberg's "The Stronger".

Most of the competitions include a rule that any play offered should contain more than two characters. While we can understand that this will prevent a society, weak in good actors, from choosing a play which will give scope to two stars, and will improve the chances of a society which has chosen a play with a cast large enough to permit of most of the members sharing in the fun and excitement of the competition, there lies real danger in this rule. It does unfairly influence the playwright, and yet it should not do so because these are considerations quite extraneous to the natural laws of drama, which should be the only ones to be taken into consideration. If we permit a committee, whose aims are not altogether in the interests of the play itself, to take such vital decisions, then the one-act play will be entirely at their mercy. It is not inconceivable that by means of a bit of lobbying, a rule can be changed in such a way that a host of acceptable plays will overnight find themselves outlawed. "Sorry You've Been Troubled" and "The Stronger" are duologues in which the second character has practically nothing to say. Because of the small cast and the time factor these distinctive playlets cannot be considered for festival work. Leonard White's

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"Lady Jemima's Weekly Thought" is a somewhat longer duologue which would also be unacceptable. Yet it is a captivating light comedy.

There is the even greater danger that plays which would have been perfect in the form of a duologue will be endowed with extra characters, so as to be acceptable to festival adjudicators, but to the detriment of the play itself. A good example of this is "The Pearl" by Mary Mitchell, a South African playwright. This play, which reached the finals in Bloemfontein in the F.A.T.S.S.A. 1953 National Play Festival, convincingly recreates a love-scene between the Mad Prince of Bavaria and the Empress of Austria. It is a valuable study in insanity but is spoiled by the fact that the Prince goes outside, drowns himself in the lake, is discovered and news of all this is brought on to the stage in a matter of two or three minutes after his leaving the stage. The play has a cast of four, of which two are menservants. In the first place these servants serve no dramatic purpose and the play would have been improved had the last episode been omitted and the dialogue partly re-written so as to leave the inevitability of the Prince's suicide quite clear to the audience. The play would have gained in power and there would have been none of that feeling of puzzlement as to just what purpose is served by the menservants being on the stageat all. Incidentally, in the opening scene these menservants appear and carry out their tasks without speaking. While it may be thought that they are building up atmosphere, creating a sense of the nobility of the leading characters so that the final tragedy may be all the greater, there would seem to be no real need for all this as the Prince and the Empress are excellently portrayed and their tragic liaison proceeds

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on its course, not assisted in any way by the servants.

Many festivals award extra marks for the choice of plays which have casts of more than five characters, and this too, can have an adverse effect on the form of the art. A play should contain a certain number of characters because they all have a purpose to serve. I do not believe that a dramatist can set out to write a one-act play without being conditioned before he sets pen to paper, if he knows that a cast of a certain number will be more important than the dramatic value of anything he writes.

Under the conditions which govern play festivals it is essential that as many plays as possible be adjudicated in a short space of time. For this reason, and with the aim of making the conditions fair for those societies with unlimited facilities and to which expense is not important, as well as the societies which struggle to make ends meet, most festival committees lay down that all teams play in a curtain fit-up and that scenery and properties be so simple as to permit of the stage being set in a matter of ten minutes. It is not difficult to envisage the effect of this on the playwright. He will soon realise that a simple play with five or six characters, preferably all women, with a simple setting, by choice a room, kitchen or bar, will be the play which sells. He will eschew any change of scene. He may be interested in experimenting with lighting effects, but will realise that only the simplest effects will be acceptable. He will realise that blackouts which can be of great importance in giving flexibility to the short play, will make too great demands on amateurs acting in a strange hall because split-second timing is all-important. Outdoor scenes will be avoided and anything demanding other than readily accessible stage properties will put his play out of the

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While the marking system varies, it is usually something like this: 1/

Acting	45
Production	30
Stage presentation	10
Dramatic merit of play	10
Enterprise	5
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With only five per cent of the marks available awarded for enterprise, it is not likely that the amateur groups are likely to go out of their way to overcome the obstacles which an enterprising play may present. When the dramatic merit of a play is assessed at a maximum of ten per cent of the marks available, dramatic merit is not likely to weigh very heavily with any selection committee, unless that play is at the same time simple and straightforward.

When one wonders how many of the insignificant one-act plays ever came to be written and published, one has only to consider the demands of the play festivals, and it will be seen that, looked at from this point of view, they are perfect little plays. The parts are well within the compass of amateurs, there are no difficult problems for the producer, scene-designer or technician to solve, and in any event, the hands of the adjudicator are tied because he has to award marks according to a scheme heavily loaded in favour of acting and production.

John Bourne writes:

"Small wonder, too, thatthe professional theatre .... has yet to be persuaded to take the one-act play seriously. What have the amateurs to show them that they have not already got? The blunt answer is: Little or nothing." 2/

This may not be the whole truth, but we can understand his mood. We are also able to sympathise with him, even though we may not altogether agree with him, when he writes:

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1/ J. Bourne, in "The One-Act Play Today", ed. W. Kozlenko, p./
2/ibid. p. 236. (p.235

"A vigorous one-act drama should have come first and a festival movement developed out of it because amateurs everywhere were already producing one-act plays." 1/ There can be no doubt however, that the festivals have created a demand for a certain type of play to be written within well-defined limits, and that most of these limits are not essentially of dramatic importance.

While not all playwrights who write short plays are dependent upon the festivals, these competitions have exerted an undue influence on the form and character of the short play, and this influence has, in the main, been deleterious.

In spite of all this, many outstanding plays which are suitable for festivals have been written and there are a number of British playwrights who are writing short plays without concerning themselves with the special requirements of the festivals. F. Sladen-Smith, is in control of his own theatre group, the Unknown Theatre, Manchester, and goes his own way; and a fascinating way it often is. There is satire and wit in his work, an unmistakable style, and an audacity which impishly leads his characters into improbably fantastic but delightful situations. Sladen-Smith fortunately has a considerable influence on younger writers.

Though amateurs consider Harold Brighouse to be difficult to produce, he continues to use good dialogue and is a master in the art of hinting at the emotional currents stirred in each of his characters. He uses the short play as a vehicle for the discussion of modern problems. He writes as he did before the success of the festivals created so great a demand for one-act plays.

Cedric Mount's "Twentieth Century Lullaby" which I (shall

1/ ibid., p.232.

shall consider in a later section, is a good example of a play by an English dramatist which ignores the dictates of the festival committees. Here we have rapidly changing scenes, a symbolism and a technique which is reminiscent of cinema fade-outs and "dissolves". There is also the ignoring of characters present on the stage when they are not taking an active part. Noel Coward's one-act plays with their brilliant dialogue and stage-business are different from anything else and owe little to anyone but Coward himself.

J.W. Marriott [1] says:

"The best one-act play of 1948-9 was undoubtedly "The Browning Version" by Terence Rattigan. It had the distinction - rare for a one-act play - of being performed with great success in a West End theatre. But it was twice the length of the usual 'one-acter', and this would rule it out for production by amateaurs in the festival competitions and tournaments."

Here we have a good example of how play festivals encourage amateur dramatic societies to ignore a play merely because it does not conveniently fit into a competition programme. "The Browning Version", along with "Harlequinade", was presented under the title of "Playbill", and was not only highly acceptable to West End audiences, but "The Browning Version" has been one of the outstanding film successes of the last few years and has contributed to the prestige of the British film industry.

It is obvious that the compilers of anthologies of one-act plays are not happy about the situation. When, in 1924, J.W. Marriott published the first of the series "One-Act Plays of Today", he admitted that it was as an experiment. The series was so successful that his tone grew more confident year by year, and it was only in the foreword to the sixth series that he expresses his first doubts. He complains of the low standard of the plays which seek to satisfy the demand for all-women casts, and

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1/ "Best One-Act Plays of 1948-49", p.5.

finds it necessary to name a few which justifiably and without sacrifice have no men in the cast.

The very titles to the collections of one-act plays tell their own story. Marriott finds it necessary to name his collection for a year 'the best', implying that many are not worthy of a place in a collection. And even then, in this collection of 'the best', many seem to me to be without any real significance. 'Contemporary' is found to be necessary to justify a collection, 'new','modern' and 'petticoat plays' are used to sell an anthology. One of the favourite descriptions of collections of short plays is 'prize-winning'. The greatest depth of degradation is reached when the compiler makes his stand on the appeal of 'non-royalty'.

By 1942, even though more plays were being written than ever before, and even though the amateur movement was benefitting by the financial assistance which the British Government was giving in recognition of the value of amateur theatricals, Marriott found it necessary to abandon his annual collection and publish his volume to cover 1942 and 1943; this in spite of the fact that he had managed to publish an annual volume throughout the most critical years of World War II. He has had to continue with this policy of one volume to cover the output of two years. In 1950 he was writing:

> "The dearth of good comedies from contemporary authors has been commented upon many times recently. When one remembers that comedy has been the tradition of British Drama through the centuries, this dearth may seem surprising. Playwrights and players alike appear to prefer tragedy or tense melodrama. Mr John Bourne, who adjudicates at hundreds of amateur competitions and reads one-act plays by the gross, assures the writer that comedies are at a discount today. Grim, sordid and even sadistic plays are being written and acted everywhere," 1/

That was his mood in 1950. In 1952, in his

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1/ "The Best One-Act Plays of 1948-49", p.5.

"Best One-Act Plays of 1950-51", the latest of the series I have been able to consult, he writes:

"Unfortunately one cannot speak with so much enthusiasm (he has been recording the growth of the various drama leagues) about the quality of the work accomplished during the last two years ..... This decline may be only temporary, for there appears to be a regular rhythm in literary production, periods of creative genius alternating with periods of criticism. We appear to be passing through a critical but fallow period."

Of the plays published by Marriott in 1952, only T.B. Morris's "Tail of Fire", a charming comedy of mediaeval England containing a few really entertaining village characters and possessed of a well-knit plot, seemed to me to be first-rate.

This is the dark side of the picture, but there is more to be said before the picture is complete. Though there is a tendency to supply what will most easily gain marks in the competitions, there is still a large number of plays which seem to have made a real contribution to the store of outstandingly good one-act plays. The output has been so tremendous that, even if we find it necessary to discard ninety per cent of the plays written in this century, we are still left with a greater number of worthwhile plays than the era of the curtain-raiser could offer. And the one-act play does not need to rest on the laurels of Yeats, Synge, O'Neill, Lady Gregory and Strindberg, because it has since produced work of even greater importance. Quite apart from anything else, there has been a change in the method of approach to the short play which has made it a powerful, flexible and most significant medium. It has been shown that a short play can have many scenes quite successfully.

Some of the more interesting experimental plays, which I shall discuss in detail in a later chapter, have done more for drama in the last twenty years or so than any three-act play has done. There are many books on

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how to write one-act plays but, so fast has technique improved, most of these are now completely antiquated. There is still a place for the conventional type of one-act play, but many of the old rules have had to be revised, some cancelled; and out of all this has come the realisation that the one-act play has a far greater range and power than was previously thought possible. Dramatists have shown more daring in attempting vaster canvases, and have often done so with great success. It was customary to say that the one-act play could capture one dramatic moment only; that it could adequately treat of some compact situation which was neatly parcelled up in a play of a duration of half-an-hour or so. Now we find a play in one act which tells of the dramatic loss of faith in a large number of characters, and yet each character is real to us; other plays deal with the frustration of the times, the whole life of a man or complex economic and social problems: all these are now found to be within the scope of the one-act play.

> "Instead of being, as it often was, leisurely and slow, the one-act play suddenly became swift and agile, flexible and responsive. Instead, too, of concentrating, as heretofore, on one or two crucial episodes, the larger breadth of form and elasticity of technique enabled the dramatist to show more than before (without destroying the inherent form of the one-act play) and introduce, if need be, related problems of plot and character, all of which tended to bring to the content of the short play a ne kind of theatrical excitement." 1/

This chapter would not be complete without some reference to the part the short form of drama has played in South Africa. The position in South Africa is especially interesting in that three distinct influences are discernible. It seems that there has been amateur theatre since the earliest days of the white settlement, and amateur groups, at first sporadic, have at last grown in importance until the British pattern has been followed. In 1938 the various amateur dramatic societies felt the

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1/ W. Kozlenko: "The One-Act Play Today", p.6.

need for closer co-operation, and the Federation of Amateur Theatrical Societies of Southern Africa was born. F.A.T.S.S.A. has developed along lines similar to those of the British Drama League. One improvement I have noticed is the abolition of the system of choosing a winning play in the finals. Instead, the adjudicators limit themselves to thorough and constructive criticism. Though there are still restrictive rules, some of the worst features of competition have been eliminated.

I have already mentioned the tendency for amateur groups in America to forsake the one-act play for the longer form, a tendency which is not altogether absent among the stronger groups in Britain. This is to be seen in South Africa too. Some of the stronger societies scorn the short play or consider it to be a mere paving of the way to the production of longer plays.

In these respects South Africa may be considered to have been influenced by Britain and America, but the South African dramatic scene is unique in several ways. In this sparsely populated country where an English and an Afrikaans drama have grown up side by side, a path has been blazoned which has not been trod elsewhere in the world. We may attempt comparisons with other bilingual countries, but the conditioning factors are still not the same. It is not my intention to trace the origin and birth of the Afrikaans language, to follow the Afrikaner in his struggle towards a drama, to tell of the spate of touring companies which brought drama in Afrikaans to the platteland, or of the flood of plays, good, bad and indifferent, which pour from the pens of Afrikaans dramatists. G.J. Beukes, in "Die Moderne Eenbedryf", has covered the Afrikaans one-act play with thoroughness and understanding; and other aspects of Afrikaans drama are dealt with by

(F.C.L. Bosman

F.C.L. Bosman in his "Drama en Toneel in Suid-Afrika (1652-1855), F.E.J. Malherbe in his "Aspekte van Afrikaanse Literatuur", and C.M. van den Heever in his "Die Stryd om Ewewig". Lydia Lindeque, wife of Uys Krige, has written a charming account of her life as a member of various travelling companies presenting Afrikaans plays in the rural districts. In "Op Met Die Skerm" she tells of the hardships and uncertainties of the life, of her quaint and eccentric fellows. Yet the English and Afrikaans dramatic societies have grown up side by side and have been of unusual importance because, apart from occasional tours by overseas companies, South Africa has been dependent on amateurs for all the live theatre it was to enjoy. At one time there were signs of theatrical companies gaining a firm foothold in Southern Africa, but the advent of the films changed all that.

After the First British Occupation of the Cape in 1795 we begin to hear of amateur performances by the officers of the garrison.[1/] The "African Theatre" was built in 1799 and performances were presented there until 1839, when the building was turned into a church. In 1801 a bill of four items was presented, and the programme makes interesting reading:-

1. The Little Hunchback or a Frolick in Bagdad.
2 The Magic Zone. (Interlude)
3. The Devil to Pay or The Wives Metamorphosed.
4. The Cunning Wife or The Lover in a Sack - a Pantomime Ballet.

In 1855 Sefton Parry, a professional, put on two one-act plays by Dion Boucicault, "Used Up" and "Family Jars". This venture was such a success that he had a wooden theatre erected in two weeks, big enough to seat 518 and presented a triple bill of one-act plays: "A Kiss in the Dark",

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1/ For much of the information on early drama in South Africa I am indebted to Olga Racster's "Curtain Up", pp. 2 - 45.

"A Thumping Legacy" and "Why Don't She Marry?"

In 1858 In 1858 the Cape Town Dramatic Club produced "Love and Duty" with "Poor Pillycoddy" as afterpiece. In 1860 "A Hopeless Passion" was presented in Cape Town al and was followed by John Oxenford's 'popular farce', "£5 Reward", as an afterpiece. Later in 1860 "A Sea ofIce" was followed by the short play "A Thousand Million Wanted."

1911 seems to be a milestone in the dramatic history of South Africa. "Japie's Courtship" was presented along with a cinema show, and so is likely to be the first one-act play written in English by a South African. "God's Servant," by Theo H. Holzberg, was published in 1913. In 1916 Olga Racster in collaboration with Jessica Grove published the one-act play "From German West".

Cecil Lewis published a booklet of three one-act plays in 1924, entitled "South African History Plays (from original sources)". The plays were "Willem Adriaan van der Stel and the Burghers", "Lady Anne Barnard and her Friends", and "Sir Harry Smith and his Juana". This seems to be the complete list of early plays by South African playwrights. Later plays come after the growth of the amateur dramatic societies to the point where affiliation was felt to be necessary, and as they may be considered to be modern in every sense, I shall consider them along with significant Modern one-act plays from Britain and America.

The youthfulness of South Africa is indicated by the fact that the first Little Theatre in South Africa was founded in Cape Town only in 1931. Professor W.H. Bell, of the College of Music of the University of Cape Town, founded this Little Theatre in an old laboratory and this was the germ from which sprang the many societies which exist all over Southern Africa today. One of the aims of F.A.T.S.S.A. when it was founded in 1938 was to

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promote competitions, and in 1948 P.P. Breytenbach could write that over a hundred societies were affiliated to the association and that no fewer than eighty-one plays had been presented at the 1947 festival. The Federation has grown until it has become necessary to run the competition on a regional basis before sending the finalists to the National Play Festival. In the 1953 finals held in Bloemfontein, five one-act plays were presented in English and three in Afrikaans. The English plays were T.B. Morris's "Tail of Fire", "Mr Sleeman is Coming" by Hjalmar Bergman, "The Brothers" by Nora Ratcliff, "The Sentence" by Florence Howell and "The Pearl" by Mary Mitchell, a South African dramatist. With the exception of "The Sentence", and allowing for one or two weak points in Mary Mitchell's play, these short plays were all good theatre. Of the three Afrikaans plays to reach the finals two were translations from Tchekoff and the third a translation of Ronald Haddington's "Stranger".

The growth of interest in South Africa in 'live theatre', which was brought about almost entirely by amateurs and the touring companies in which Marda Vanne and Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies played such an important part, led inevitably to the foundation of the National Theatre organization. Since its inception in 1948 it has brought to South Africa opportunities of seeing many first-class plays. Though it has yet to present a programme of short plays, its 1953 tour presented Anouilh's "Antigone", which is virtually a long one-act play, along with a surprising interpretation of Tchekoff's "Anniversary". Just why one of Tchekoff's most insignificant short plays should have been chosen is mystifying. This play is so thin that it was pathetic to see the actors attempting

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to make something of it by treating it as crazy burlesque and by introducing the most far-fetched business. Perhaps this was an attempt to re-create the weakest of the curtain-raisers. But for Antigone we are grateful, and the National Theatre did a great service for theatre-lovers in South Africa in presenting the robustious "Volpone".

The National Theatre has brought to us many delightful plays, but its greatest service will in all probability yet prove to be its policy of providing a secure and reasonably paid career for South Africans who wish to make acting their career. The names of Marda Vanne, Gwen-Ffrangcon-Davies, Leontine Sagan, Frank Wise, Leon Fagan and André Huguenet are evidence that South Africa can produce acting talent which ranks alongside the world's best. These actors and producers have had to make their way in a country which offered no assistance to the aspirant actor. The National Theatre may yet prove to be a training ground which will give us a group of actors who will win world-wide fame.

CHAPTER IV

CHARACTERISTICS

OF THE ONE-ACT PLAY

It has been said that the division of a play into acts is completely arbitrary, and that to consider a play from the point of view of acts is completely misleading; what is important is the time which it takes to act a play. There are plays which are published either as three-act plays or as five-act plays without its seeming to make any difference. Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer" was originally written as a five-act play but today's acting editions usually present it in three acts, without cutting and without loss. It is true that some one-act plays are so short as to be little more than sketches, and that some of the longer one-act plays which last for well over an hour, are more substantial than many a three-act play. Yet each genre has general characteristics which are not found in the others. The five-act play is a really important contribution to drama, provided the matter justifies the inclusion of five acts. In Shakespeare's tragedies five acts were not too many to ensure adequate treatment of the theme, but often the comedies lost dramatic unity when sub-plots were dragged in to make weight. Jonson's "Volpone" was vastly improved in the German version presented by the National Theatre, in which the sub-plot introducing the English characters is omitted. The five-act play is today out of fashion because the maximum duration of an evening's theatrical entertainment is usually considered to be two-and-a-half hours,

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and we spend so much time changing scenery that we are not able to achieve the pace of the Elizabethan five-act play.

The four-act play is seldom found. It possesses no inherent advantages over the three-act play, but is somewhat more solid. It seems to me to be lacking in balance and proportion. Barrie's "Admirable Crichton" is in four acts, but could just as well have been written in three. The two-act play was common in Elizabethan times, especially for comedies, and is still written. Plays of widely divergent types are found written in two-acts. Daviot's tragic "Richard of Bordeaux" and Rattigan's hilarious "French Without Tears" may serve as examples.

The three-act play is the most popular today as it is convenient both for actors and audience. Hermon Ould says:

> There is perhaps a certain geometrical balance about the three-act form which gives it an initial advantage over more complicated media. It is, as it were, a triptych with a central act of great weight and significance, balanced on the one hand by a first act of exposition and awakening interest, and on the other by a third act devoted to the resolving of complexes, the unravelling of tangled skeins, the tying of loose ends. 1/

The popularity of the one-act play has been fully discussed with regard to the appeal which it exerts on amateurs, but the question remains as to what popularity it deserves in its own right. I think the point made by Hermon Ould 2/ that the one-act play is often the best form for a humorous subject is important, but this does not define the limits within which first-rate one-act plays may be written. It would seem that adjudicating hundreds of one-act plays at the festivals has caused the iron to enter the soul of Hermon Ould when it comes to consideration of the one-act play:

"The one-act play has been described as the Cinderella of the theatre ... If it had any justification in

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1/ H. Ould: op. cit., p. 60.
2/ ibid. p. 152.

the past, it has even more in the present, for the fairy tale has run its course, and Cinderella, the one-act play, is now received in the highest places, and the Prince Charming of the modern theatre, Mr Noel Coaward, has himself espoused her. It must be admitted, however, that Mr Coward is almost alone in England in believing in the commercial value of his bride." 1/

The short play may be considered to be the dramatic counterpart of the short story. There is hardly any limit to the kind of experience which can find adequate expression through the medium of the one-act play, and there are many themes which find their happiest expression in a short form. Though it may cover much of the same ground, and though it may share characteristics with the longer play, the short play has an identity of its own, and is certainly not a longer play cut down. There are moments in life when events crowd themselves so artistically into the space of forty-five minutes that one-act plays depicting these events are without doubt complete within their restricted limits. Clifford Bax's unusual play, "The Cloak", written in verse, most appositely, and in which the characters are an angel, an unknown spirit, and one newly dead, is a good example of a successful play, dealing with a difficult theme, which could have been dealt with only in the one-act form. Atmosphere is rapidly built up to an extent which could not have been possible for more than one act; a more leisurely approach would have resulted in a play with an entirely different impact.

The modern short play bears so little resemblance to its forbears, the curtain-raiser and the afterplay, that I feel it is necessary to record the respects in which structural techniques have advanced and then indicate the wide range of forms which are now found.

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1/H. Ould: op. cit., p. 140.

ANTIQUATED RESTRICTIONS.

Even before the play festivals began to exert an influence on the characteristics of the one-act play, there had grown up a traditional attitude to this type of play which tended to make it stereotyped. There are many little books which set out to instruct the would-be dramatist as to how to write short plays. Most of what these writers have to say is valueless as the growth and development of the one-act play has been so great that these instructions no longer apply. 'It can give only one crisis in the life of a group', 'beware the danger of dilution', 'the crisis has to be started early', 'you must aim at giving a picture of a slice of life only', 'unity of place is most important in the one-act play', 'if you make the tempo too fast you will have difficulty in avoiding an anti-climax', 'avoid stock characters', 'the soliloquy is not condoned', 'the aside is a convention no longer accepted': these instructions are worthless. "Back to Adam" is described by Harold Brighouse as 'a glimpse of three periods'. In this one-act play there can be no question of one crisis only and the play is written in three scenes representing the periods 1826, 1886 and 19-?. This play reminds me of Arnold Bennett's "Milestones" and seems to me to accomplish quite as much as Bennett did in three acts. In the first scene we are shown a son's revolt against his conservative father and his making a success of railroads despite the misgivings of the father. The second scene shows us how, after two generations, the daring of the son in Scene I has resulted in a conservative attitude in his grandson. The grandson is the father who storms at his son for wanting to venture into the cycle manufacturing trade. In Scene III, the crisis is repeated; but with this difference: the son revolts against the father who is a successful manufacturer of

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aeroplanes and adopts a back-to-nature policy. The play ends with the son and his fiancee playing tennis in the nude (reported).

'Beware of the danger of dilution' we are warned, but some of the most significant plays are those which ignore this rule. In "Waiter!", Sydney Box has perfectly successfully introduced a waiter, a manager, porter, commissionaire, Messrs A, D, E, G, J, L, P and Q, Mesdames B, F, K, and M and the Misses C, H and O. Though the focus is on the waiter who has murdered his wife and contemplates flight, Box gives a lively picture of the inanities of the people in an hotel lounge.

Plays like Thornton Wilder's "Long Christmas Dinner", give the lie to the dictum that a short play can give a picture of a slice of life only. The rule of unity of place has been successfully ignored in the one-act play. There are numerous examples of really good plays with scenes set in various places.

We also find short plays successfully presenting more than one scene on the stage at the same time. Mary Pakington's play "Experiment" has as its theme telepathy. The stage had a Christmas tree in the centre which separates the two sets, one the tent of two men caught in an Arctic blizzard and the other a room in a London flat. The fiancees are celebrating Christmas in traditional fashion. Corinne, the actress, is not truly in love with Jim. If he succeeds in his expedition, she will bask in the sunlight of his glory, but if he fails she still has her career. It is Lydia, who loves Jim, who feels the danger of the men, and who calls out "Don't let go! Hold on, Jim." In the tent, the blizzard has dropped but Jim has lost hope. He has taken with him at great sacrifice, all of Corinne's letters. He has had plenty of

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time to read and re-read them and has realised her insincerity. Because the letters are now worthless to him, they become priceless - as fuel. They can provide enough heat to melt the oil in the stove which will, in turn, provide enough heat to keep them alive until they are rescued. It is at this point that Lydia's message comes through to him, He holds on. A moment later a sea-plane is heard approaching.

Rapid tempo is the essence of many of the episodic plays. In Odets' "Waiting for Lefty", the play soon gains momentum and the tempo in increased to the point where it becomes almost impossible for the audience, if it is the right audience, to remain passive. This is a deliberate technique favoured by the writers of socialist propaganda plays.

The propaganda play stands to lose by careful characterisation. Stock characters are its stock-in-trade. Such plays require characters who are readily recognised as types and who will call forth spontaneous sympathy or hate as required. The propaganda play does not set out to serve any artistic purpose, but sets out to persuade its audience to certain beilefs, and often immediate action, at any cost.

EXPOSITION, ACTION AND PLOT.

There are many techniques which remain valid. Some of these the one-act play shares with other forms. In the opening scene the exposition must be set about immediately in the interests of unity of action. This is important in any play, but most important in the short play. "A sound exposition is less an art of answering questions, than one of making audiences ask questions , those questions one wishes to answer."[1/] The time is past when the dramatist could solve his difficulties by opening with servants (chatting

1/ H. Ould: op. cit. p. 140.

chatting and explaining the whole position. Though the exposition in a one-act play is difficult there are more subtle ways of conveying important information.

Sometimes in a short play, when the action is so important that it must rise early in the play, we find that exposition and action take place simultaneously. Eugene O'Neill uses the technique of choosing an unusually interesting character who gives the exposition in the first person. It remains important that the exposition be dealt with as rapidly and as economically as possible. In Sutro's "A Marriage has been Arranged" a great amount of information is given in the first few lines:-

Scene: The conservatory of no. 300 Grosvenor Square.
Hour: Close on midnight. A ball is in progress and dreamy waltz music is heard in the distance. LADY ALINE DE VAUX enters, leaning on the arm of MR HARRISON CROCKSTED.

CROCKSTEAD(looking around): Ah - this is the place - Very quiet, retired, romantic, et cetera. Music in the distance - all very appropriate and sentimental. (He motions her to sit in chair R. of table L.C. She moves to settee R. and sits at L. end). You seem perfectly calm, Lady Aline?

ALINE (sitting): Anterooms are not unusual appendages to a ballroom, Mr Crockstead; nor is this anteroom unlike other anterooms.

CROCKSTEAD: I wonder why women are always so evasive?

ALINE: With your permission we will not discuss the sex. You and I are too old to be cynical, and too young to be appreciative. And besides, it is a rule of mine, whenever I sit out a dance, that my partner shall avoid the subjects of women - and war.

CROCKSTEAD: You limit the area of conversation - But then, in this particular instance, I take it, we have not come here to talk? (Moving R. at back of settee and sits beside her.)

ALINE (coldly): I beg your pardon!

CROCKSTEAD (sitting beside her) Lady Aline, they are dancing a cotillion in there, so we have half-an-hour before us. We shall not be disturbed, for the Duchess, your aunt, has considerately stationed her aged companion in the corridor with instructions to ward off any intruders.

This is as neat an exposition as you can hope to

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find and after all the information which these few lines supply there is nothing to prevent the playwright's proceeding with the action, which he does. In "Riders to the Sea", J.M. Synge establishes contact with the audience at once and action is introduced almost immediately. The more quickly the dramatist is able to complete the exposition, along with the depiction of character, the sooner he will be able to set about the development of the plot. In the one-act play every word is important and along with the exposition the dramatist often presents characterisation and the beginnings of the action.

Plays of situation may have their appeal, but plays with good characterisation are the most vital. To reveal something of the past is not enough. It is when questions as to the future are aroused in the minds of the audience that the plot has begun to 'thicken'. "The Monkey's Paw", by W.W. Jacobs, is an example where action, though important, does not take place until most of the leading characters have been established in their identities and the exposition completed, before the advent of the sergeant who is to bring about such a change in the lives of this family. When the audience is interested in the characters, understands the situation and begins to wonder what the future relationship of the characters is to be: then drama has come to life.

It is true of any play that what does not help must hinder, but this is the more true of the one-act play because of the compression which is necessary. There must be no loose threads and the principle of unity of action must be respected, even though we must remember that there can be dramatic action in inaction. A silence, a pause, a hesitation, can speak louder than the most violent action.

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The play unfolds, but the plot shows the relationship between characters. Interest is usually aroused because of the conflict between characters, but there is not necessarily such a conflict. It is possible to have dialogue so pointed that it is dramatically interesting without conflict between characters. Sometimes the conflict will be between the theme as unfolded in the play and the preconceived beliefs of the audience; sometimes conflict will arise because some group or type of persons is being lampooned. Some of the satires of F. Sladen-Smith may be considered to fall into this category. In "Skyscraper" he takes his characters to the top of a tall building. Part of the parapet is the front of the stage and the actors look out over the audience while they are ostensibly admiring the view of the city below them. By means of a shrewd use of dialogue we are introduced to the characters, and interesting people they are: we seem to have met some of them before. But Sladen-Smith is having a joke at the expense of his audience. They are quite unsuspecting when:

ALAN: Oh, Lord yes. Always. (Going to the side.) Look, there's the gasworks. (They run to different sides and look over.)

CHRIS: And there's the sewage farm at Holsover. Doesn't it look pretty?

Any conflict here will lie in the audience itself.

THEME AND SIMPLICITY OF STRUCTURE.

The themes which are suitable to the long play are equally suitable to the short play. Indeed there is no section of life with dramatic possibilities from which the short play is excluded. According to Henry Phillips,[1] there are only thirty possible themes in human life, and all the dramatist can hope to do is dress one of these in a new garb. He analyses the possible themes as follows:-

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1/ Quoted by G.J. Beukes, op. cit., p.57.

(i) The heart of man - his relationship with women:
(a) Women (b) Romance (c) Divorce (d) Reunion

(ii) Ambition - man's relationship to society:
(a) Ambition (b) Success (c) Failure (d) Politics
(e) Patriotism (f) War (g) Passiveness

(iii) Body - man's relationship to the devil:
(a) Money - the root of all evil (b) Sickness
(c) Confusion (d) Misdeeds (e) Death (f) After death

(iv) The soul: Man's relationship to God:
(a) Religion (b) Behaviour

(v) Intellect: Man's interpretation of the unknown:
(a) Spiritualism (b) Superstition (c) Suggestion
(d) Charalatanism

After this there does not seem to be much to be said about theme, but it is obvious that nothing mentioned in Phillips' list is outside the scope of the short play.

It was once thought that simplicity was an essential requirement of the one-act play; but this has been proved to be unnecessary. When only simplicity is the aim, one-act plays are written which are justifiably labelled insignificant. Unity there must be, but there is an artistically satisfying unity in variety. Once the audience has been captured by the dramatic quality of the situation, the introduction of new factors increases the interest and makes it more difficult for the spectator to guess at a solution. Suspense is a valuable dramatic ingredient and is achieved by the interweaving of new threads, the use of dramatic irony, innuendo or an unexpected turn in evens which will surprise and puzzle the audience. The application of this principle is as valid for the short play as any other. Many one-act plays depend entirely on the surprise ending for their charm. Percival Wilde's plays are of this sort for the most part; indeed in some of his plays he invites criticism , for he witholds information for the sake of his surprise ending, to the point where he may be accused of not dealing fairly with his audience; his play has become nothing more than a trick.

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THE MULTI-SCENE ONE-ACT PLAY.

Where previously it was contended that a short play should be in one scene only, and where drama festivals have encouraged this type of play, it may be interesting to examine some successful one-act plays in which there are many scenes and in some of which other interesting experiments are carried out at the same time. Clifford Bax's Bax's "The Rose and the Cross" is written in five parts. The tale is a slight one of two daughters who leave their father, whose search for knowledge has brought them only poverty, while the third daughter remains with her father until his death when she takes the veil. The method of presentation makes it rich in dramatic excitement and brings out the diversity of character of the daughters in a most satisfying manner. There are in the cast two narrators, the old scholar, and the three daughters, Giselda, Pia and Francesca, three envoys and also dancers. The time is the early fifteenth century and the scene shifts from Rovenna to Venice and then to Rome. The two Tellers of the Story are placed at either end of the stage, and when the curtain is drawn, the old scholar is discovered seated in a curtained alcove translating from a big book. Francesca writes to his dictation and then the narrators resume the tale, the actors at first miming. This play represents daring experiment for 1918.

Bax's delightful play "Aucassin and Nicolette" has lost none of its charm though it was written about the same time, and the treatment is so different from that of the traditional play that it is as modern as tomorrow. A troubadour is employed to tell this mediaeval romance and the scenery consists of a backdrop

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representing a variegated tapestry, before the various portions of which the actors play their parts choosing sections in keeping with the fifteen different scenes which comprise this short play. We are transported to the walls of a castle, to open fields or to hosts of charging Saracens, all in the twinkling of an eye. Clever use of lights gives dawn, full daylight and a moonlit scene. Some scenes are played before the curtains. The dramatization of this story, in this rich variety of setting, all played in a matter of forty minutes, must provide a dramatic experience far superior to anything offered by most of the light three-act plays I have seen. The flexibility of the scene makes possible a pace which is most suitable to the tale of a troubadour.

M. Jagendorf's "Buffalmacco's Jest" is another short play which is interesting because of a freshness of approach. The scene of this comedy, in which there is enough horseplay to remind us of some of the Elizabethan comedies, is Florence, circa 1280. There is a multi-coloured back-drop before which are arranged three screens of two panels each. On the right is depicted the house of the mosaic artist, Tafi; the centre panels represent the entrance to a church; and on the left there is another house. This arrangement gives to the play a flexibility and the possibility of variety of pace which is fully exploited. Buffalmacco, leader of Tafi's apprentices, decides that Tafi is to be persuaded that he is at death's door. The physician, Simon da Villa, will then be persuaded to cure the miserly artist for a lavish fee which will be spent on a feast. In addition, it is a condition that Tafi's daughter be allowed to marry Taddeo, whose suit has been refused because of his being a poor appren-

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tice. The play proceeds from this point with a light-heartedness and gaeity which gathers momentum until the pace and atmosphere make us forget the slightness of the theme.

The unexpected is just what we have learnt to expect from Sydney Box. In "Self-Made Man" there are five scenes, though there is only one set. Scenes I and V are played before the curtains and excellent use is made of black-outs. I have already mentioned his use of a stock-exchange recorder with excellent dramatic effect and there is poignant drama in the newsboy repeatedly calling the headlines announcing a Wall Street crash. The important part which sound plays in this drama should make it eminently suitable for adaptation for broadcasting.

In Scene I Napoleon Toplady, a newspaper seller in New York, tells a colleague that he will yet occupy a suite of rooms at the top of the City Hall buildings across the street. His companion replies that the only way Toplady will ever get into the building is by way of the basement where the mortuary is situated. In Scene II we find Toplady as clerk to Cromer, a successful financier. Toplady ruins Cromer, by making use of his knowledge of affairs in the office and rigging the market. Cromer becomes his clerk. Scene III shows us Toplady proceeding with a financial merger against his clerk's advice; Toplady is ruined. Scene IV shows us Toplady in a mental asylum. Toplady is seen interviewing the President of the United States, the Ambassador for France and an important Russian official. His treatment of these dignitaries is patronising and the scene is rather puzzling until a warder explains to a newly-appointed official that this fantastic game is a part of the therapeutic treatment which Toplady is receiving. The treatment has been so

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successful that Toplady's release is imminent. Scene V takes us back to the street-scene. The circle is complete and Toplady is a newspaper-seller once more, though visibly older. He brags to his companion that he will rise to great heights and will enter the City Hall again. At this moment he espies one who had been his friend when he was a successful financier and rushes across the street to greet him. The play ends with a screech of brakes.

This play is dramatically satisfying because of its neat construction and flexibility. There is good drama in the touch that he does end up in the mortuary; that this is not explicitly told is all to the good. Though character is not stressed, it is sufficiently well-drawn to satisfy. Even the characters of the office girls are well contrasted, and the scene in the lunatic asylum is brought back to earth before it becomes too farcical. Even in this is the added satisfaction of the audience's realising that it has been hoodwinked by a device which can be condoned only if it is incidental to the purpose of the play.

This play successfully gives us much more than 'a slice of life' and in doing so it refutes many a dictum regarding the one-act play previously held valid.

CRISIS AND RESOLUTION

One of the inherent characteristics of the short play, brought about by its very shortness, is that once the play has developed to a crisis, followed shortly by the climax, there is little time for a denouement. The conclusion in which the loose threads are tied must be accomplished in a very few lines. It may be thought that herein lies the superiority of the three-act play, but this is not necessarily so. There is a satisfying balance in the longer play in which the third act slows down

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the tempo and the dramatist has leisure in which to set about the resolution of all he has stirred up, but the short form can accomplish what the longer play cannot do nearly as well. Though the climax must of necessity come near the end of the play, it is not essential that there be a sort of trick or surprise ending. Many writers of short plays seem to think that this is unavoidable, and there is something to be said for a sudden turn of events because this essentially dramatic device will certainly capture the interest of the audience; but there is the danger of losing the sympathy of the audience, so necessary a part of good theatre, if there is any hint of subterfuge. In any event, a trick ending is not necessary and many of the best one-act plays are the ones which leave much to the imagination. This not only effects an economy in time but is good craftmanship, as a stirred imagination will conjure up a picture and reslove a situation much more satisfactorily than can ever be done on the stage. One of the best examples of this appeal to the imagination at the conclusion of a play is W.W. Jacobs' classic grand guignol, "The Monkey's Paw". Mrs White has just wished her son alive again after he has lain in the cemetery for ten days. After some building up of atmosphere there is a knocking at the door which mounts in volume and intensity. While the mother is fumbling with the chains and bolts at the door, the father finds the charmed monkey's paw and, as Mrs White opens the door to welcome her son, he wishes the third and last wish:

MR WHITE: (he has raised himself to his knees; he holds the paw high) I wish him dead. (The knocking stops abruptly.) I wish him dead and at peace!

MRS WHITE: (flinging the door open simultaneously) Herb....

(A flood of moonlight. Emptiness. The old man sways in prayer on his knees. The old woman lies half swooning, wailing against the doorpost.)

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The play ends here, but this is not the end for the audience. This is the happiest way in which a playwright can move an audience. The spectator must cogitate on this and complete the resolution for himself.

THE USE OF PROLOGUE AND EPILOGUE

The use of a prologue or an epilogue is a favourite device of many writers of short plays and is justified because it can lend depth to the treatment of the theme in an economical way. The deeper meaning of R.E. Davies' "Sunset in September" would have been lost without the prologue. A prologue may serve to replace the exposition or it may provide the audience with information which will make the ensuing scenes rich in dramatic irony. It may be used to indicate to the audience what the dramatist sees beneath the surface of the ensuing dialogue or it may remind us of an interesting parallel.

Percival Wilde, the popular American writer of short plays makes excellent use of the prologue to enrich his plays: dramatic irony is his favourite device. He often uses the epilogue to explain a play which he has written in a particularly puzzling way.

Unfortunately the prologue is often dragged into the short play when it has no right there. Mary Pakington's "Experiment" possesses both a prologue and an epilogue and this is unfortunate as it destroys any claim this play might have had to serious consideration as an investigation into telepathy: it smacked of the conjurer doing the hat trick. "Symphony in Illusion", by James Wallace Bell, is an impressionistic play treating of the theme that war is the result of the wickedness in the heart of man. The play is an interesting one, but the use of prologue and

epilogue seems to be without point, unless Bell hoped thereby to build up atmosphere. If so, he has failed, and "it is one of the fundamental laws of drama that anything that does not help ... hinders."[1/]

SOLILOQUY AND ASIDE

While G.J. Beukes[2/] refers to O'Neill's "Emperor Jones" as an example of a short play in which the soliloquy is used with excellent dramatic effect, he states that it is an outworn convention which is not normally condoned. He considers that telephonic conversations and shouting through windows are acceptable forms of soliloquy, but objects to O'Neill's method in "Strange Interlude", where the characters not only speak to each other but also speak out quite clearly what their private thoughts are. He admits that he cannot understand this, offering as a possible explanation the fact that he has never seen the play acted. This is no new convention, nor is it a mere casting aside of the fiat against the use of the soliloquy: it is more. The cult of realism and naturalism which dominated the theatre during the 'twenties was found to lead nowhere, and the use of the soliloquy, aside and the re-adoption of the convention of assuming that characters not in the centre of the stage are unaware of what is going on, is a deliberate protest against naturalism and realism which did not see that there are hundreds of conventions used on the stage to which we are so accustomed that we do not object to them: they are necessary to the form of the art.

Not only have we resumed the use of the soliloquy, but this convention has been enriched by the adoption of a new form in which there is no pretence about moving away so that other characters will not be aware of what is being said. Dialogue and thought are uttered openly and this is (dramatically

1/H.Ould: op. cit. p.51.
2/ op. cit. pp. 106-108.

dramatically most satisfying. An interesting example of this use of soliloquy is found in "Prelude and Fugue". Clifford Bax wrote this short play in 1923, anticipating O'Neill's method in "Strange Interlude" by several years. This play shows us two women speaking to each other, but interlarded in this dialogue, they continue to speak out aloud their own private thoughts and suspicions. This play is especially interesting because of the inclusion of a large number of experimental techniques, and must be considered more fully together with other experimental plays in Chapter V.

Eugene O'Neill's "Strange Interlude", a play in nine acts, is almost twice the length of an average three-act play. It was written in 1928 and uses Bax's method of the aside delivered as a soliloquy to reveal the workings of the unconscious mind, along with dialogue which gives conscious expression.

DIALOGUE IN THE SHORT PLAY

The one-act play has been important in its contribution to the technique of dialogue. The more leisurely tempo of the three-act play makes it possible for the playwright to deal with more or less one thing at a time. He can paint in a few strokes of character before he proceeds with exposition or development. This is not possible for the writer of short plays. In the interests of economy, each word must be considered to make sure that it is doing the maximum of work. This has been an excellent discipline and the skill in dialogue developed by many writers of short plays has been invaluable to writers of radio plays where everything depends on the ear. The training which writers of short plays have had in introducing references

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to locale and character in opening dialogue usually devoted to the exposition have made the short radio play possible. The short play has put an end to the realistic cult of the 'twenties. The accurately recorded speech of people in real life speaking to each other is loose, meandering, disjointed, inconsequent and unco-ordinated; it is quite without dramatic significance, without art. Selection is the essence of drama, and the one-act play has taught us the necessity of excluding everything which does not contribute directly to characterization, exposition, development or denouement. The one-act play provides numerous examples of dialogue which is selective and yet reads naturally, which imparts a great deal of information without revealing the method by which this is achieved.

Perhaps the greatest service which the short play has rendered is its killing of that distressing technique in dialogue favoured by writers of second-rate three-act plays: say what you intend saying, then say it and wind up by saying that you have said it.

CHARACTERISATION

Because of the shortness of the one-act play we might be tempted to think that really good characterisation is not possible and development of character is not to be dreamed of. There are many short plays which can serve as examples to disprove this. The writer of one-act plays will have to use every possible technique to make his characters intimately known to us in a short space of time. He will use costume, appearance, idiosyncrasies of speech and action, and nuances of tone; dialogue, silent reactions and deeds must all contribute to filling in the picture of his character. At the same time other characters, through what they say of a character, how they say it,

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and how they react to what he says, will help to complete the picture. All this is to be presented to the audience with that art which conceals the still greater art of seemingly effortless presentation. Character is to be built up speedily and so the strokes of the brush have to be sure.

"Queens of France", by Thornton Wilder, has its setting in New Orleans in 1869. M. Cahusac, an attorney posing as a member of the Historic Society, persuades one woman after another that each is heir to the throne of France. Here we have an interesting study of character: the reactions of these women, after each has been convinced of her royal estate, are different in each case. This is almost a clinical experiment in character study where the stimuli are controlled and identical, providing an opportinityof studying variation in response. The character of M. Cahusac is built up with a definition which makes it difficult for us to forget this suave, persuasive, ostensibly humble attorney who, not from avarice, but because he is sure that he is justified in thus obtaining money, mulcts his victims. To him the end justifies all: he will be able to carry on his investigations in that all-absorbing subject, the monarchy.

Though not drawn indetail, the characters in Joe Corrie's "Hewers of Coal" are well differentiated and seem to me to be real people. I shall deal with this play in detail in a later chapter.

Characterisation is a strong point in R.E. Davies' "Sunset in September". Peter Morrison, the young business man, may be something of a stock character, but he rings true. He is the prototype of many a young man to be found in the South African scene today: the extrovert materialist, lacking in those finer sensibilities which make so many

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people a complete enigma to him. He does not understand his wife, Olwen; he is impatient of anything that does not fit into a pigeon-hole in his simple scheme of things; there are many things which are not dreamed of in his philosophy. He provides an excellent foil to Olwen, and it is remarkable how, in the compass of a one-act play, we learn to understand something of those strange, dark, half-felt urges and semi-knowledge which motivates the Celt and which are a closed door to so many. In Olwen we have a character we can understand: her fears, though irrational by everyday standards , are presented so convincingly that we are transported to a strange world where supra-sensory forces are at large and of more potent cogency than anything in our humdrum lives. To have known Olwen is to have been privileged to share in the understanding of a sensitive soul.

Christopher Fry's "Boy With A Cart" is more than a religious play: it is a revelation of a character imbued with a sincerely religious power, who grows upon impact with hard experience. Character is especially well drawn in "The Man in the Street", by John Thorburn, a religious play in which a large number of characters are drawn, each in a few masterly strokes, with such verisimilitude that we feel we know them all. The Young Man is depicted with a sincerity and depth of feeling which makes this a deeply significant treatment of a difficult theme.

William Saroyan's "The Man with the Heart in the Highlands" is another one-act play which has little story to tell, in which there is little plot, but which is dramatically successful because of the characterisation of that queer person MacGregor, of the unpractical and destitute poet, and his son, who possesses all the faith

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of the young idol-worshipper, who will do anything for his father, believe anything he wants him to believe, even though he breaks his heart in the doing of it.

Pearl, the prostitute in Philip Johnson's "Derelict", is a fine study in tragic character. Laurence Housman's Father Juniper series and the St Francis series both provide examples of how character can be treated with complete fulness in a short play. "Brother Wolf" is in my opinion the best of the St Francis series, and "Makers of Miracle" of the Father Juniper series.

Housman's "Judge Lynch" tells of the torn and tragic Judge who has had to sentence his own son to death and who, after all who serve the Judge and love him have refused to carry out the death sentence, finally takes the life of his son and, on returning, locks himself in his room. We know that he has been through all the torments of hell.

That length is not all-important for the depiction of character is well shown in "Antic Disposition" by Cicely L. Evans. In this study in aberrational charcater, the dramatist cleverly and most successfully draws a parallel with Hamlet and so with great economy and mastery of suggestion stirs our imaginations and brings forth from dim memory all our understanding of Hamlet, to serve once more to make us understand this new Hamlet.

Rupert's mother had committed suicide because of justifiable jealousy of Rupert's present step-mother. The father, a bacteriologist, has decided to undertake a government commission to carry out experiments to ascertain the best methods of transporting and using bacteria in warfare. Rupert is also a bacteriologist and objects to this on ethical and professional grounds. He has never forgiven his father and step-mother for their responsibility for his mother's death, and they plot to

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get him out of the house by marrying him off to his fianceé. There is in this play a moving parallel, delicately suggested, between Rupert and Elizabeth, on the one hand, and Hamlet and Ophelia, on the other. When the play ends with Ruperts quoting,

> "How strange or odd so'er I bear myself,
> As I perchance hereafter shall think meet,
> To put an antic disposition on ...",

his actions beyond the limits of the play are quite clear to us.

Rupert is in character throughout. He is irresolute, moody, distrait is a way which gives credence to his subsequent actions. When he is unstrung he quotes Hamlet again:-

> "What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba
> That he should weep for her?"

Characterisation gives life to drama and should not be subjugated to other interests, because the result is not art. Pace and burden are so important to the writer of propaganda plays that he will often sacrifice the depiction and development of character in the interests of 'putting his message across'. He will then use stock charcaters and this seems to me to be the fundamental weakness of this type of play. These characters may serve as a means to an end but they are not dramatic art. Man and his behaviour in human situations is basically the appeal which drama holds for us. It is only when there is identification with the characters, when they become people and not puppets, that drama lives and we are caught in a web where the illusion of the theatre is complete.

When the characters' behaviour is incomprehensible, there can be no response. I find that some of the American one-act plays are meaningless to me because they have casts of characters representing types which are completely beyond my ken. Weldon Stone's "The Devil Take

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a Whittler" and "Cloud Over Breakshin" are of this type. E.P. Conkle's "Hawk A-flying" is intelligible in part only.

ATMOSPHERE

Atmosphere is as important in a short play as in any other, and there are numberless one-act plays in which the building up of atmosphere is done as successfully as in any long play. Is there any play with a more tragic atmosphere than Synge's "Riders to the Sea"? What horror can compare with that of "The Monkey's Paw"? Atmosphere is the essence of "The Emperor Jones". The capriciousness of F. Sladen-Smith's "Love in the Ape-House" creates a brittle and callous atmosphere which is an excellent vehicle for his satire. Florrie and Herbert, her fiancé, who hopes to inherit a confectioner's shop, during a visit to the Zoo come to rest in the ape-house:-

HERBERT (with explanatory condescension): That's an ape. Supposed to be like us, an ape is.

FLORRIE (surveying the ape): Well, it has a look of Uncle Joshua, I will say that. It's just the way he used to eat at chapel teas. (Becoming more attracted.) But, you know, it's a bit better-looking than uncle. I shouldn't be surprised if some people should think that ape handsome.

HERBERT: Go on! You're getting depraved tastes, you are. I shan't have nothing to do with you if you get struck on an ape.

FLORRIE: You great silly! What's it matter when it's all caged up? But if one of them creatures escaped on a dark night I bet you many a poor girl wouldn't hardly know the difference.

HERBERT: I shan't take you to a zoo again. It makes you peculiar.

FLORRIE: You mean it makes you jealous!

HERBERT: Well, what if it does? Wouldn't any man be jealous if his fancy suddenly admired an ape?

FLORRIE: You needn't worry. It's not a bit like you.

HERBERT (sulkily): I should just think it isn't. Nice thing if you had to choose between an ape and me.

FLORRIE: Most girls have to.

HERBERT: Whatever do you mean?

FLORRIE (evasively): Oh, I don't know. (Turning to him) Anyway, I can't even admire a poor animal in a cage but you get all upset. You were perfectly ridiculous over them leopards.

HERBERT: And so were you! The next minute you'd have told me you wished I had spots.

FLORRIE: I needn't to wish that. You've got them already.

HERBERT: That's right! Make a day of it!

FLORRIE: Only because you're so aggravating. You're a proper Mohammedan over women. You'd like to put veils under our noses and shut us up and pay unicorns to look after us, you would .....

Percival Wilde's "Comrades in Arms" recaptures for us the fantastic atmosphere of Talaveria, an imaginary country on the coasts of the Black Sea. Everything that happens is as inconsequential as the events in any Ruritanian play. Odets' "Till the Day I Die" is pregnant with fear and hatred, there is a highly emotional atmosphere in his "Waiting for Lefty", while, in contrast, I might mention Thorburn's "Man in the Street" as an example of a play with an atmosphere of simplicity and faith.

DRAMATIC IRONY

Dramatic Irony, especially in comedy, is as useful a technique to the modern playwright as it was to Shakespeare, and is most effective in the short comedy. The whole point of Graham Sutton's North Comedy, "T' Pup", depends on dramatic irony. Briggs, a mole-catcher, while poaching, sees a stranger stuff a diamond stolen from the Manor into a dummy sausage. A dog makes away with the sausage and, in passing Briggs who is in hiding, drops the diamond into his lap. The next day Briggs buys the pup from a friend for a nominal sum and sells it to the stranger for twenty guineas. In addition he claims the twenty-five pounds reward offered for the return of the diamond. This slight material would be devoid of dramatic interest but for the introduction of dramatic irony. "There's good stuff in that pup" says Briggs while fleecing

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the stranger.

STYLES

Because of the wide range of choice of subject open to the writer of short plays, we find a wide divergency of style, but there is one quality of style which every writer of the short play must possess and that is selectivity. By means of selection he gives a vignette of life, more original, more compact, more logical and more interesting than real life ever is, and yet satisfying because it remains true to life, because the trivial, the incidental and the contradictory have been omitted. O'Neill has been called a realist, but there is selection in his work and any looseness is only apparent. In fantasy and in poetic plays, there need not even be a pretence at realism. Harold Hobson writes, 1/ "One of the few points on which current dramatic criticism is agreed is that the methods of realism are now worn out .... Certainly the most vigorous new dramatic movements express themselves in verse with richness of metaphor and imagery." The naturalism of the 'twenties seems to have left us with nothing of value, unless we accept Sean O'Casey's "Juno and the Paycock", which, once again, is not as lacking in selectivity as would appear on a cursory examination. Though O'Casey lets his light fall on the fair and the foul of the Dublin slums in a seemingly realistic manner the result is dramatic reality because there has been selection.

Barry's sentimental style is well known to us, the charm of Cranford is brought to us by Harold Brighouse in "Followers" and Philip Johnson has given the quiet charm of the Lushe community in "The Spinsters of Lushe", "April Shower" and "In Waltz Time". Violence of emotional (agitation

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1/ "The Theatre Now", p. 166.

agitation seems to be the forte of the propaganda play and expressionism, with its insistence on the importance of the unconscious is well exemplified in Elmer Rice's "Adding Machine", an in some of the work of O'Neill and Clifford Bax.

Sublimity of style is found in H.F. Rubinstein's tragic "Deacon and the Jewess", There are many factors in this excellent play which contribute to the successful working up to the sublime. In the prologue, Henry de Bracton, a thirteenth century lawyer, dictates to his scribe that part of a treatise which ends with the relation of how a deacon "was committed to flames by a lay hand". The curtain rises to show a room of a Jewish family of money-lenders in Oxford, A.D. 1221. They are preparing to protect themselves against another attack by students when Robert, a deacon, comes to impose a new restriction on them. He is irresistibly attracted by Joia, a young Jewess, and remains to defend the family against the students. For this he is disgraced and burnt at the stake. Each of the large number of characters is unusually well drawn, and the dialogue is in elevated prose. In the treatment Rubinstein exercises great restraint and gives an accurate historical and living picture unspoiled by partisanship. And then comes the sublimely beautiful conclusion:

> "A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee."

There is polish in Noel Coward's one-act plays as there is in his longer dramas, and everything goes with a smoothness which effectively disguises the ineffectiveness of it all. It may be very funny to tell of "the man who does things to a duck and makes it sing 'Land of Hope and Glory'" in "Hands Across the Sea", it may be amusing to meet Noel Coward's characters, but these plays seem to be written to a recipe and do not amount to much without

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Coward's personal charm. He takes a large number of diverse characters, lampoons the types, adds a little dramatic irony, a modicum of suggestive dialogue, terrific pace and a little music, mixes well and serves hot: but the dish soon becomes stale.

Paul Green uses a natural and yet musical speech, George Bernard Shaw's style in his short plays is similar to that in his long plays and suffers because of this. It is not always to the point, as references are dragged in which are the reverse of helpful to the play. His speeches are far too long for use in a short play and his characters all use the same language - Shaw's. Clifford Odets deliberately chooses a harsh and grating style, vigorous and non-musical, with the purpose of exacerbating the feelings of his audience so that he can then sway them to his purpose.

O'Neill uses several styles in experiment. He makes use of repetition, choral speech and the chant to create drama. On one hand we may find a classic chorus using a beautiful stylised speech and then in "The Hairy Ape" we hear the spine-chilling 'chorus of hard barking laughter".

The most successful examples of stylised speech are those of Synge, Yeats and Lady Gregory in their early Irish plays. The richness and freshness of the idiom translated into sympathetic English makes for a superb vehicle, be it for tragedy or farce.

Unfortunately the same cannot be said for attempts at something similar in South Africa. Afrikaans can be beautiful, but it is not always so. It seems vain to hope to take characters of the 'Oom Kaspaas' type and derive from them a language to compare with the imaginative, capricious, fresh and emotionally rich language of the Irish peasant. Most of these attempts have failed utterly, unless they have been successful in achieving the farcical. All too

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often, in this attempt to capture South African atmosphere, the result is merely flatness.

Joyce Miller, in "Cradle in the Dust", avoids this; but, it seems to me, achieves something which smacks of Afrikaans but is certainly not English. At times her dialogue is beautiful and sympathetically portrays the tragedy of a people who have been lords of lands, who have lived like barons with power in their hands and respect shown to them, but who now live in dirt and drudgery or idle hopelessness. There is real tragedy in the way in which inexorable circumstance drags many of these to a new life in the cities: a life of menial labour all too often, a life bereft of all they have learnt to love; bewildering in its rush and false values. Their children will never understand their love of quiet, their feeling for the veld; and they will never understand these children of theirs who know nothing of these things, who show no respect for their parents, who are always rushing off to the cinema or the bar, who do not know of church. Joyce Miller's play merely implies much of this and her dialogue fails to achieve an authentic style:

"OUMA: You skelm! Since when are you anxious to feed the fowls? You will stay here with your little sister, I don't like it. But I must go. I can see about the oven at the same time. That is something. (She looks sadly at the stove) Ah ... if only there had been good rains .... But to talk so is foolishness"

This is not English nor is it drama: it is an unselective translation of uninspired Afrikaans.

What the Irish writers did successfully for Ireland, J.A. Ferguson and others have done for Scotland. In a form of heightened prose they bring out the beauty of the twist of idiom. Compare the speech of Mary Stewart in "Campbell of Kilmhor" with that quoted above:

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"Is it you think I have the gift, girl, that you ask me that? All I know is that it is five days since he was here for meat and drink for himself and for the others - five days and five nights, mind you; and little enough he took away; and those in hiding no' used to sore lying I'll be thinking. He must try to get through tonight. But that quietness, with no one to be seen from daylight to dark, I do not like it, Morag. They must know something; they must be watching."

REGIONAL PLAYS AND THE USE OF DIALECT

There are many plays of little significance which seek to appeal to a limited audience by using a dialect familiar to that audience. These plays justly do not travel far afield. But there are as many plays in dialect which are good plays and in which the use of dialect is more than justified because of its value in characterisation and in setting the scene. "Campbell of Kilmhor" is universal tragedy and appeals to people of all climes. It has been successfully translated into Welsh and some English dialects.

Harold Chapin's "It's the Poor that 'Elps the Poor" gains by being in the Cockney dialect. Though it is a comedy, the dialect serves as vehicle for bitter ironical social comment, and at the end of the play we suspect that we were wrong in laughing at these queer Londoners with their knack of giving a strangely humorous twist to their words.

A large number of one-act plays has been written in the North Country dialects. Herbert Ingham's "Our Lad" makes use of the Lancashire dialect to present a moving study of two old folk who keep from each other what each knows: that their son who has gone to America to make a fortune, has been killed while robbing a bank in Chicago. "The Great Dark", by Dan Totheroh, is a fine study in character. The self-control of the women waiting at the pithead to learn the fate of the men trapped in the mine is dramatic to the point where the audience feels that the

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strain is unbearable. The drama of the scene where the men are brought to the surface and Mrs Yates realises that Tom is dead, is enriched by the use of simple, effective dialect. Joe Corrie's "Hewers of Coal" shows us the miners trapped underground. His restrained use of dialect helps to bring out the difference in the characters of the men who face death without hope of rescue.

It is a pity that there are so few Welsh plays, for most of those I have read are charming comedies filled with an unpredictable sense of fun and enriched by a sensitiveness and a touch of lilting dialect. There is a disregard for the canons of everyday life which fills these little plays with dramatic interest. Ronald Elwy Mitchell's "A Husband for Breakfast", with a happy turn of dialect, tell of Isaiah Jones who is unable to stand a round of drinks when it comes to his turn. When no one will lend him any money, he tries to sell his possessions. It turns out that anything of value in the home belongs to his wife. He then offers to sell Aholibah, his wife, and the miserly Moses Roberts concludes the bargain by giving Isaiah half-a-crown. The next morning the party turns up at Jones' house to see the fun.. Moses has thought the matter over and has come to reclaim his half-crown, but Aholibah pretends that she is really his wife and scolds him and forces him to do numerous chores. After paying six bushels of wheat, a dozen hens, a litter of pigs and his fine brown cow, Moses is released from his bargain.

"Birds of a Feather" by J.O. Francis is a Welsh comedy with much more subtlety and depth. Twm Tinker, the poacher, is drawn with sympathy and mastery, while in Dicky Bach Dwl, daft little Dicky, we have a strangely moving character, lovable for his trust in Twm, his fey intimacy with nature, his knowledge of the watching eyes

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in the dark, his fear of the workhouse and his excited response to the thrill of catching the fish:

"Ha, ha, ha! Spear and torch once again - aay, this is the time when I'm happy. Happy? Darro, Twm, - I can't tell you. It's - it's - oh, it's like as if there's a lot of little birds all singing inside me. (Dancing a few steps). I can't keep still - no, not I. (Suddenly downcast) But, Twm - that talk o' me being put in the workhouse - it comes over me something dreadful on times. If I was in the workhouse, Twm, and somebody was to come to me on a night like this and whisper the word 'salmons' - only just whisper it - O mawredd, Twm, I think I'd lie down and die broken-hearted."

Josephina Niggli's "The Bull Ate Nutmeg" and "Sunday Costs Five Pesos" not only capture the atmosphere of a Mexican village, but her dialogue presents with freshness and adroitness the idiom and strange channels of thought of these people so alien to us. The hill-billies of America with their strange dialectical variations find expression in E.P. Conkle's "Hawk A-Flying" and "Gold is Where You Don't Find It", as well as in Weldon Stone's "Rainbows in Heaven", the farcical Iowan play in which the parson "rastles with the Devil to win a 'whittler'".

THE POETIC SHORT PLAY

When John Drinkwater first wrote his one-act play "X = O", in 1917, he proved that the one-act play in verse could be an important work of art. Since then many short plays have been written in verse, many very poor in quality. Some have hardly risen to the heights of doggerel.

The choice of verse in a one-act play immediately does away with restrictions which might otherwise hamper free expression. When Pronax cries out in anguish, in "X = O", on learning of the death of his friend, we do not think this melodramatic because the use of verse has lifted the play out of the orbit where everyday rules might apply.

I have already discussed the good use to which Clifford Bax has put verse in "Prelude and Fugue". The Use of verse in his "Cloak" gives elevation to his treat-

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ment of a difficult theme which might otherwise have led to anti-climax. Gordon Bottomley's "Culbin Sands" is a drama in verse which presents interesting aspects. The play is based on the story of the Culbin estate which was engulfed by sand-dunes during a furious storm in 1694. The use of verse lends beauty to the play and heightens the tragic effect. The fullest use is made of word-music, and in the poetry of the choruses, the nine winds and the nine trees, there is rhythm, alliteration and assonance, all blending in an appeal to the ear and rich in dramatic reward. The changing tempo follows the rush and scurry of the winds as they recite:

"It has no body; it is born
As the Will chooses, and dies
As the Will changes; its horn
Is sounded by no lips,
It is a spirit's sound,
At once the horn and the player,
The pain and the heart that cries
Out against the pain."

The lines are lengthened when the witches speak, and, though there may be some obscure reason for the change in the quality of the poetry, it seems to me that Bottomley is less fortunate with this type of verse and has written what Hermon Ould calls "that chancy hybrid, prose poetry" 1/ :-

"Slander your own mother if you will:
Let mine alone, she was a decent woman
And did not guess that I should listen to you
And let you teach me of your dirty ways."

Significant one-act plays written in verse are W.B. Yeats' "Deirdre", Oscar Wilde's "Florentine Tragedy", Geoffrey Whitworth's "Father Noah" and Clifford Bax's delightful "Poetasters of Ispahan".

COMEDY AND FARCE

I have attempted thus far to consider the characteristics of the one-act play with reference to the more important constituents of drama. It now remains to consider (the

1/ H. Ould: op. cit. p. 146

the scope of the one-act play as regards genre. I have already indicated that the one-act play is especially suited to comedy. While there are many successful three-act comedies, there are all too many which are patchy, plays in which an atmosphere of lightheartedness which has been built up successfully cannot be maintained. The are many short plays which are such gems of fun that they lack no word and could not be altered in any way without marring their perfect, dramatically satisfying balance. There is many a farce in one act which is a delight, a kicking over of the traces of the rational, but which could not possibly be prolonged.

"Refund" by Fritz Karinthy will serve as an example of this type. We cannot take this play seriously for one moment, but we are willing to follow the vagaries of fancy of the playwright for half-an-hour; and a crazy course we tread. Wasserkopf decides that he has not received value for money as far as his education is concerned. He demands from the principal a refund of all the school fees which his parents have paid on his behalf. This amounts to a considerable sum as he had spent more years at school than most. When he will brook no refusal, the principal calls in the aid of the staff. In a spirit of stagy collusion, they decide that he is to be given an oral examination. It is put to him that if he passes he has no claim on them.

The masters have no doubts in their minds that, as they are the examiners, he must pass. Wasserkopf thinks otherwise and a farcical scene follows in which he is asked the simplest questions, but is not to be caught out and gives the wrong answer to each. At last the only subject left is mathematics; the master pretends that he will set no test and proceeds to reckon the amount to be refunded. Wasserkopf objects, his objection is sustained, and he is

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informed that he has passed in mathematics and that under the circumstances no refund is possible.

"Cupid Rampant" is a farce by Percy Corry which takes as its butt the way in which Socialism will dash in where angels fear to tread. The play is set in 1970 and Corry envisages a state of affairs where love, matrimony and the propagation of the species are arranged on the lines of eugenics and forms in sextuplicate. There is unusually good characterisation, especially of the complaisant orderly and the Controller of the Crèche. A real sense of fun and good pace save the play from being too unrealistic or too didactic in its criticism of a political system.

"Story Conference", by N. Holland, is a good farce set in Hollywood. A young man employed by a film company, tired of having nothing to do, demands of the secretary that he be permitted to see the director. An important conference is about to commence. They have a great film, but the ending has to be changed with a view to the box office receipts. Various solutions, solutions possible only in Hollywood, are offered, but there is no agreement. All this while the young man has been waiting patiently to see the director. He is now called in to arbitrate. He rejects both suggestions and makes a third which is immediately acclaimed. "Hire him!" says the director, but it turns out that he has already been hired, as he is the author of the book in question.

There are comedies in one act which are classics. We all know A.A. Milne's "The Boy Comes Home", Galsworthy's "Little Man" (almost too true and sad to be a comedy), the poignant "It's the Poor That 'Elps the Poor" and Coward's plays with their inimitable smoothness and pace. Coward's "Fumed Oak" has the added characterisitic of a callous brutality. W.B. Yeats' "Pot o' Broth", Tchekoff's "Pro-

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posal" and "Bear", and Sean O'Casey's "Pound on Demand" have been considered good comedy since the early days of the century. Plays I have already mentioned in other contexts, but which should not be neglected when considering comedies, are Saroyan's "The Man with the Heart in the Highlands", J.O. Francis' "Birds of a Feather", W.W. Jacobs' comedies, especially "The Boatswain's Mate" and "The Ghost of Jerry Bundler" and many of the plays of Percival Wilde.

Among the outstandingly good comedies we may include those by Allan Monkhouse ("The Grand Cham's Diamond"), T.B. Morris ("The Tail of Fire"), Stanley Houghton ("The Dear Departed") and H.C.G. Stevens ("Hamlet in Modern Rush").

A comedy which cannot be passed over hurriedly is "Lucrezia Borgia's Little Party" by A.J. Talbot. This short play in a familiar historical setting and with all the trappings of the dignity of archaic language, tells of the amazing results which follow when wine containing a love-potion instead of the usual poison is distributed among the guests.

Percival Wilde excels in complexity of comic plot; his plays proceed rapidly with many unexpected turns, and usually wind up with a surprise ending which make them miniature masterpieces. In "Comrades in Arms" we are introduced to the temperamental Elena, widow of a colonel in the cavalry who is reported to have fallen off his horse in a drunken state while on his way to battle, this being the cause of his death. She is wooed by Sergei, a major who is never at a loss for words and who concocts a brave tale of how the colonel died while saving his, the major's, life. Sergei is carried away by the magnificence of his own tale, which contains a thousand improbabilities, the light and shade of which are seen in Elena's face. After many complications, Elena finds rest in Sergei's arms, is

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had considered applying for the position, nothing would persuade him to work there. Scobie gives a masterly analysis of the faults which he has found. Coles is at first annoyed at this unauthorised scrummaging in his office but, when he realises with what acumen Scobie has analysed the whole business, he sets about persuading him to accept the position of chief clerk. After some bargaining from which Scobie emerges triumphant, Scobie agrees. Then Cole discovers that Scobie is the nephew of the former chief clerk whom he had refused to interview. He also discovers that Scobie is from his friend's office and that the advice to employ no Scotsmen was not altogether disinterested.

TRAGEDY

There are many tragedies but few are outstandingly good. Though this is true of both the long and the short play, the paucity of really good tragedies in the short form suggests that to write one-act tragedies must be one of the most difficult dramatic tasks. The complete success of "X = O", "Riders to the Sea" and "Campbell of Kilmhor" is sufficient proof that it is possible to capture in the one-act form the depth and sincerity necessary for successful tragedy. But if we add H.F. Rubinstein's "The Deacon and the Jewess" and Joe Corrie's "The Hoose on the Hill", which bears so strong a resemblance to "Campbell of Kilmhor", there seem to be no others which deserve to be classified as first-rate tragedies. There are many which deal with tragic themes, but there is not in them that universality of sympathy or that identification so necessary in the audience to make the plays worthy of the designation tragedy. Odets' "Till the Day I Die" could have been treated as a tragedy but the burden of propaganda has prevented this. "Judge Lynch", by Laurence Housman, is tragic enough but is not great tragedy.

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delightfully avenged on her rival, and the seemingly inextricably complicated difficulty with the photographer is neatly resolved.

Percival Wilde's "Over the Teacups" is rather different from his other comedies, though he still uses the technique of witholding information in the interests of dramatic suspense. This play is written with a restraint and understanding which lend depth and delicacy to the tale of two gentlewomen who, having lost their fortunes, meet in the office of an employment agency where they have unsuccessfully been seeking positions as companions. They decide to live together. "While there's nothing - nothing - a lady can't do for somebody else, there are so many things a lady cannot possibly do for herself ...." So they arrive at an arrangement. Their combined resources will permit of the renting of a place with a good address, but at a safe disstance from their friends. They live in reasonable comfort and when one is entertaining a friend, the other plays the part of the model servant, the maid who is such a treasure that she is the envy of all the friends.

One of the best one-act comedies I have read seems to be little known. Cormac Simpson's "Scobie Betters Himself" is pre-eminent in the field of light comedy. The plot is well-knit, the play has good pace, dialogue flows easily and lightness of touch is maintained throughout with unerring skill. The theme is slight and does not by any means reflect the enjoyment which this comedy can offer. Mr Coles, a London business man, is without his Scottish chief clerk, who has left to better his position. While he is enjoying relief from the tyranny of the over-efficient Scot, his friend, also a business man, persuades him to employ no more Scotsmen. At this juncture he discovers a certain Scobie prying about the office. Scobie tells him that the office is so appallingly run that, though he

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Joe Corrie's "Children of Darkness", which has as its theme the hopelessness that is in the hearts of men in a coal mining town when there is general unemployment, gives an authentic picture of the suffering of simple folk, but it is not great tragedy. There is a tragic and poignant note in Paul Green's "Southern Cross", in which he portrays the failure of some Southerners to keep pace with the times, living in the past, living on mortgages, conducting themselves according to a moribund code, thus divorcing themselves from the real but changing life around them. Though his atmosphere and characters are exceptionally good, there is a decadent air about it all which does not make us feel that there has been great loss and waste.

I am still not sure whether Saroyan's "The Man with the Heart in the Highlands" should not be classified as tragedy. Though some of the six flexible scenes have comedy in them, tears are never far away, and not only is the poet's inability to come to terms with life tragic, but there is tragedy too in MacGregor, who makes men weep when he plays his trumpet and leaves to return to the lunatic asylum because he has been promised the leading part in "King Lear". There is a fine dignity in the relationship between the poet and MacGregor which makes this enigmatic play more akin to tragedy than comedy.

HISTORICAL PLAYS

The one-act form seems to lend itself particularly well to little historical portraits which bring some section of the past into such clear focus as to give it a life and meaning which it would otherwise not possess for us. I have already written of Rubinstein's "The Deacon and the Jewess". His "All Things Are Possible" takes us to that period of history on which so dim a light falls that we

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know little of it: the days of the early Christian Fathers. Set in A.D. 68, this play gives a moving and convincing picture of the precarious existence and the trials of faith which were the lot of the Christians of the period. The story is simple: Flavia is a Christian. Her husband, Julian, intends to give away the secret chapter to Caesar for a reward. Then he sees the courage and faith of the group in face of danger, and in the tragedy of the knowledge that he has betrayed them just when they were rejoicing, believing that he had been converted, he finds that he cannot proceed with his plan. While he is trying to undo the evil he has wrought, the news of Nero's flight comes to them. Though the story may be simple, Rubinstein fills it with dramatic suspense, and human interest arises out of masterly characterisation and dialogue. His historical touches and use of language are sure, making this play a valuable contribution to the list of one-act plays which are of significance.

Rather different in approach is Donald Carswell's "Count Albany", a callously unflattering play, showing us Bonnie Prince Charlie at the least charming stage of his life. The study of character is good, as are the dialogue, atmosphere, pace, dramatic quality and attention to historical detail.

"One Hour Alone", by Norman Holland, might have been a dramatisation of a page from Lytton Strachey's "Queen Victoria", so closely does it follow his method of telling how Victoria, on receiving the information that she was really and truly queen" said, "Then, dear Mamma, I hope that you will grant me the first request I make to you as Queen. Let me be by myself for an hour." 1/ After her hour alone, her first, she sets about gaining a conquest over her mother's tyranny and sets about having the Lady (Flora

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1/ Lytton Strachey: "Queen Victoria", p. 43. (Chatto & Windus, London, 1948.)

Flora Hastings, her mother's favourite, and Sir John Conroy, her mother's lover, hounded from the palace.

South Africa has yet to show us a tragedy in one act, but her playwrights seem to take easily to the writing of historical plays. Naturally, the plays entered for the van Riebeek Tercentenary Festival Drama Competition were for the most part historical plays. Four were recommended for publication. "The Cottage", by Dennis Granger, shows us two South Africans participating in the Spanish Civil War. The play is uneven in quality, but Granger's "The Lady Anne Gets Her Bath" is a charming play in which Granger develops a fantasy around Lady Anne's Bath at Kirstenbosch. The characterisation is good, the dialogue is neat and well-motivated and dramatic interest is maintained to the end at a quiet level. This picture of life at the Cape in 1798 is accurate.

Percy Baneshik's "Garden at the Threshold" is spoilt by the unnatural introduction of a didactic and prophetic note in the sea captain's belief (in 1652) in a great future for South Africa with the Dutch and the English living side by side in harmony. It is also marred in the ending, when van Riebeek's daughter declares her love for the English sea captain who has just died. The dramatic situation did not call for this; nor was there sufficient preparation. The character of Roger Black, the sea captain stricken with scurvy, is well drawn, and the historical detail is authentic, though it is not neatly woven into the dialogue.

May Thomas' "Border Folk" is a one-act play dealing with the native raids on the frontier farms in the Eastern Province in 1834. There is plenty of action but it is not a good play. In "Laying Down the Foundations" she chooses, with more success, that difficult period just after the Huguenots had arrived at the Cape. She tells the

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story of the difficulties experienced by the French and the Dutch in getting used to each other's ways. Her entrances and exits are not as neatly contrived as might be and her characterisation is crude. Her Simon van der Stel is most unconvincing.

There are several short plays which treat of a period in history in romantic style. One of the best of these is Harold Brighouse's "Romany Road". The atmosphere is reminiscent of the pages of a Jeffery Farnol romance. The time of the play is circa 1700 and Lord Ranacre, a bankrupt London fop, is so desperate that he becomes betrothed to the countrified Jessamine, daughter of Sir Rufus, without having seen her. He comes to the county estate to make Jessamine's acquaintance and is horrified at the crudity of country ways. After many misunderstandings and much entanglement of plot, all ends happily.

SATIRE IN THE SHORT PLAY

Satire often finds happy expression in a short play. I have already dealt with F. Sladen-Smith's "Love in the Ape-House" and "Skyscraper", and have mentioned "Mrs Noah gives the Sign". Not only is the construction and development of this last play sound, but Sladen-Smith keeps his audience guessing to the very end when he solves everything with a typically capricious twist. Mrs Noah is a silly woman who is feeding the animals in the Ark. The animals know that Noah is waiting for a sign from God as to what their fate shall be and, in the stress of waiting to know whether they are to live or not, and in discussing whether there is any step they can take in the matter, they reveal distinctly human characteristics which are satirised without mercy. When Mrs Noah learns that the animals have decided to revolt she rushes to Noah to tell

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him that he should do away with all the animals immediately. Noah takes this as the sign from the Lord: all his life he has done just the opposite of what she has advised.

In "the Man Who Wouldn't Go to Heaven" Sladen-Smith is less whimsical and capricious than in his other satires. The play remains fantastic, but the subject is treated with a reserve which demands serious consideration of the underlying theme. The theme, that it is foolish of us to have preconceived notions as to what an afterlife is to be like when we have nothing to go on and can think only in terms of what we know and understand of life, is certainly not slight, and Sladen-Smith's treatment, though daring and humorous, is, surprisingly enough, not iconoclastic.

In most of his work there is a 'take-it-or-leave-it' attitude, but in this play there is nothing of that trait so often found in Sladen-Smith which seems to make him deliberately include dialogue which will penetrate the complacency of the audience and discomfort them; nor is there any hint of saltiness in this play. Thariel, the angel, is portrayed most sympathetically, and there is tolerance in his treatment of Nightingale, the roué. The Rev. John McNulty, the Free Church minister, is ever so pleased when he thinks that he has landed in Hell because it proves that he has been right in all his preaching and Harriet Strenham, the doggy woman, and Alton, the atheist, who places his trust in nothing, are all well portrayed. His treatment of the two young people, the nun, Eliza Muggins and the half-wit, Timothy Toto Newbiggin, is warmly sympathetic.

To make this a completely satisfying play, Sladen-Smith endows it with natural dialogue, sufficient dramatic suspense, and scenes which are sound drama. For instance Timothy Toto plays snap with himself and periodically calls out "Snap!" while the dialogue continues over his

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head, and there is the scene where Alton condescends to play snap with Timothy. While he is becoming increasingly absorbed in the game, to the point where he cries out with pleasure when he realises that he has won, the angels silently gather round to watch. A beautiful touch is the subtle way in which the half-wit as he unknowingly crosses the threshold to Heaven, grows in stature and his speech takes on a new dignity.

Another satire in one act which has merit is "After the Tempest" by Geoffrey Trease. This play seems to owe something to Barrie's "Admirable Crichton" and something to A.G. MacDonell's satirical novel "How Like an Angel". A group of people belonging to the English nobility, shipwrecked on an isolated island, long for rescue with a nostalgic yearning for the way of life which they once enjoyed. Prudence, who was one year old when they were cast up on the island, likes the simple, unfettered life she leads and cannot understand the attractions of life in England which the others attempt to explain to her. After they have been on the island for twenty years, an aeroplane lands and a schoolgirl alights, giving them a picture of the New World, the socialist world state. All, except Prudence, are horrified and choose to remain on the island. Prudence, with all the eagerness of youth, leaves in the aeroplane, eager to serve the New World.

This is first-rate farce in which present customs, especially of the privileged class and old-school-tie sort, are held up to ridicule, and a horrible picture is painted of a New World which has turned Eton into a co-educational school. Though farcical in treatment, the satire is penetrating enough to make this a play containing much food for thought.

DIVERSE FORMS

Writers of one-act plays seem to have a special liking for plays which throw further light on some aspect of a Shakespearean play or which delve deeper into the lives of characters created in some litetary work of art. Of the best of these are Olive Conway's "Becky Sharp" and Harold Brighouse's "Followers: A Cranford Sketch". H.F. Rubinstein in "Prelude to a Tragedy" brings to life the doings at Elsinore while Hamlet's father is asleep in the garden. James Bridie's "Pardoner's Tale" re-tells Chaucer's tale in a Scottish setting and modified to fit the early eighteenth century, while "Newgate's the Fashion", by Helen Foy, gives a vivid picture of Jack Sheppard after the death sentence has been pronounced. W.S. Gilbert's "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern" takes us back to "Hamlet".

Literary figures have not been neglected. "The Clown of Stratford", by Sir John Squire, presents a picture of Bacon writing, in secret, a number of pot-boilers under the nom-de-plume 'Shakespeare'. In "Poet's Corner", Mary Pakington tells of Keats' first meeting with Fanny Brawne, and "The Night of 'Mr H'", by Harold Brighouse, cleverly recreates Charles Lambs' style of conversation while entertaining in his rooms after a night at the theatre.

The range of types of plays written in one act is almost limitless. There are thrillers which are good entertainment, such as Housman's "A Good Shot", well-knit and well-sustained; Michael Rayne's "Men are Missing", in which the characters are particularly well drawn. The reactions of the characters when the dramatic situation has undergone a volte face are interestingly portrayed. Harold Simpson's "In Port" is another interesting example of this type of play. There are a host of plays treating of the supernatural. Most of these are poor stuff, but

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"And Now - The Journey", by Conrad C. Carter, deserves serious consideration; and "The Second Visit", by John Bourne, is an eerie but convincing study in the supernatural. R.E. Davies' "Sunset in September" takes us into that half-world which intuition and a knowledge deeper than our normal senses can reveal to us, making the stepping over into a world without limitation as to space and time, a simple rational act.

Lord Dunsany is without peer in fantasy as "Flight of the Queen" and "Golden Doom" testify. Neil Grant writes an interesting fantasy, "The Last War", in which the characters are animals, the Last Soldier, and an Angel. With his senseless warfare, man has wiped out all but one of his race and the animals scorn his foolishness. Only Dog misses him.

A.A. Milne's "Ugly Duckling" has all the charm of his longer comedies, but the one-act form is especially suitable to this allegorical fairy tale. Though the play is compact, it is not simple in construction and contains many unexpected twists, a good plot and is exceptionally well knit. The scene where the king trains the maid, Dulcibella, to receive the Prince while she is masquerading as the Princess, is remarkably funny.

Clifford Bax's "Tale of the Wandering Scholar" is founded upon an old French story. This play is written in rhymed quatrains and the simple story, the romantic approach, the rollicking lyric and the horseplay give it the atmosphere of a mediaeval romance. The story is simple as befits a romance: The wife, after being married a year, sends her farmer husband to town and encourages the advances of a renegade priest. A wandering scholar appears, but they drive him off. The farmer returns before he is expected, bringing the scholar with him. The priest and the feast

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which he was about to enjoy are hidden. The scholar tells a tale which, by means of most amusing innuendo, reveals to the farmer the true state of affairs; the priest is belaboured and turned out and the farmer and the scholar sit down to the repast while the wife is forced to wait upon them as a penance.

The short play has been put to many interesting and unusual uses. Stuart Walker's "Portmanteau Plays" which includes the beautiful "Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil", are written so simply that the scenery and props required can be packed up in small compass and readily transported.

Marguerite Merington has written a series of plays taking famous paintings as her inspiration; there are one-act pantomimes, puppet plays, plays for children and plays for women only. There are so many poor plays with all-women casts that I feel justified in mentioning a few which may be considered first-rate and in which men characters are reasonably excluded. These are "Joint Owners in Spain", by Alice Brown, "The Great Dark" by Dan Totheroh, "Unnatural Scene" by Kathleen Davey, "Smoke-Screens" by Harold Brighouse and Edward Percy's "Women at War".

Perhaps the most amazing use to which the one-act play has been put is to be found in a series of plays written by Stanley Young, in which characters already familiar to the audience through the medium of the comic strip in American newspapers have their exits and their entrances.

There are religious plays, episodic plays, propaganda and didactic plays which I have kept over for consideration in the next chapter as it seems to me that in these types is to be found the greatest experimentation and advance.

There is much that has necessarily been omitted in this attempt at a survey of the characteristics of the modern one-act play, and I can only hope that I

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have managed to depict to some extent how the one-act play has grown in importance, and how, in spite of a spate of worthless plays, the yield has not been negligible. Quite apart from advanced experiment, the modern one-act play bears little resemblance to the silly short farces of the nineteenth century.

PART THREE

THE FUTURE

CHAPTER V

THE ONE-ACT PLAY AS A FIELD FOR EXPERIMENT

Tradition and convention have been the subject of many a heated argument through the years. In the field of art, we see that development and growth are the outcome of the casting aside of convention. It is ironic that those who realise the worth of this new growth and development try to make out of it a new convention which will shackle the art. Genius leads and knows no laws, but those who follow make for themselves laws out of what genius has successfully accomplished. Convention and definition can serve a purpose. The experience of the past shows some things that cannot be done with success and it shows some that can. But the danger is that we are liable to think that convention and definition show us all that is possible.

The one-act play has suffered at the hands of those who would have defined its characteristics. This is demonstrated by a large number of highly successful one-act plays written in the twentieth century which have refused to accept the limitations usually laid down to circumscribe the short play. There are also many one-act plays which, though they may not in themselves be considered as complete successes, are successful in that they have proved that

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the one-act play can accomplish that which was previously thought impossible.

Opinions as to the value of what has been accomplished by writers of short plays differ greatly. Hermon Ould[1] says "Venturesomeness in technique has not been particularly characteristic of the writers of one-acters", while Kozlenko[2] writes, "Moreover, experimentation in the drama has been effected recently, not in the three-act play, which has long been used as a field for experiment, but in the short drama, especially the social drama". As these critics cannot both be right, it remains to record the outstanding achievements in the field of the short play, and then compare these with the outstandingly good plays which have come to us in the last half-century. The good long plays have received full encouragement, for they have been espoused by the commercial theatre and the rewards for a successful playwright have been great. This is not so with the short play. Too many good plays are presented to a limited audience and never seem to be heard of again, except when collected in an anthology.

COMMERCIALISM AND CONSERVATISM

The success of the three-act play seems to have been a disadvantage in some respects. Because this is the type of play which the commercial theatre favours, and because a failure can be such a costly business, caution and conservatism have become the watch-words. This is not so with the one-act play. While we must not forget the danger inherent in festival rules, which are too strict in their limitation, and the tendency for writers and amateur groups to forsake the short play for bigger game, it does seem that the writing of short plays in the dramatic schools of the American universities and the willingness of amateur groups to tackle short plays containing bold experiment creates

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1/ "The Art of the Play", p. 156.
2/ "The One-Act Play Today", p. 3.

conditions more favourable to venturesomeness than we find in the commercial theatre. Eugene O'Neill, by the time he was thirty years of age, had written for the Provincetown Players a series of short plays in which he explored many new forms of play construction. He experimented with new uses for lights, revived the soliloquy and the aside, employed a form of classical chorus, used stylised speech, choral speech, repetition and chanting to gain the effects he required.

In "Strange Interlude" he makes interesting use of asides in stylised speech to indicate the thoughts of the characters as opposed to their conversation with other characters. He makes use of masks to indicate the various personalities which went into the making of a complete character. He introduced abnormal, hysterical and insane characters to illustrate his themes based on psycho-analysis. His plays are not always easy to understand and some of his experiments seem to be very far-fetched, but it is likely that in time his work will be appreciated even more than it is today because of his daring in breaking away from many outworn conventions.

James Bridie wrote many of his one-act plays for the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, which made possible experimentation with social themes such as "The Amazed Evangelist". He uses the technique of allowing his main character to explain himself between scenes directly to the audience. He makes use of the soliloquy, and sometimes he introduces an inebriated character who will reveal his true self only when intoxicated.

The independence of the amateur theatre of the profit motive is clearly seen in the many daring experiments with scenery, flash-backs, fadeouts, black-outs, lighting - especially spots - and sound-effects. Though use of these

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devices will not make a play, imaginative manipulation of all the aids at hand, usually not lavish or intricate, has resulted in changing the nature of the one-act play altogether. It has acquired a new stature and a new appeal, a new importance and a greater significance; the curtain-raiser has been left very far behind.

NOEL COWARD AND NATURALISM

Naturalism and Realism (a stricter form of the same cult) did not seem to lead anywhere in particular. Nor did the dialogue of the realistic plays seem to lead anywhere. The plays set out to give a picture of life as it really was, beginning anywhere, ending anywhere and leading nowhere. They might have been accurate pictures of life, but they were not drama. Some of Noel Coward's plays seem to suffer from this defect. His characters are interesting, his dialogue is masterly; but there is often a purposelessness and a lack of selection which is detrimental to his work. "Fumed Oak" will serve as an example. The play is in two scenes with the same setting, and shows us Henry Gow, tired of his nagging wife, the complaints of his mother-in-law and the disrespectful and self-centred behaviour of his daughter. He revolts and leaves home for good. There is really nothing more to it than that, as far as the story is concerned. The characters are real people and the dialogue is natural and flowing - strangely brutal in this play - but there is a lack of the dramatic touch which would grip an audience and a lack of selection which would turn a play like this into great art. Time has not improved his plays and there is a staleness about the short plays which imparts to them the insipidity of flat soda-water. The unnatural introduction of songs does not help to raise these plays above the level of music hall sketches.

There is a neatness of construction, a rhythmical

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development , a seriousness of approach added to good characterisation and a worth-while theme, which make "Still Life" his best short play. In it we find nothing of the brittle, casual, 'slick' attitude so often characteristic of him. The story is of a couple, both married to other partners, who truly love each other, yet the ties of family, duty and decency mean that their love can never be other than a hole-and-corner affair and they refuse to accept it on these terms. There is an element of noble tragedy in this play. The scene is the refreshment room of a railway station, and the play has five flexible scenes. Humanity and contrast are provided by the depiction of two other love affairs, each of an entirely different sort. Of the eleven characters, six are well-drawn, living people; not an easy accomplishment in a short play. The very significance of this play is a condemnation of his others.

An interesting, though slight, contribution of Coward's is his revue sketch "Sorry You've Been Troubled", which is virtually a monologue. Coward cleverly brings out the character, not only of Poppy Baker, but of all the friends whom she telephones to let them know that her husband has jumped over Waterloo Bridge.

SEX THEMES

The one-act form seems to have been singularly free of plays displaying a morbid or exhibitionist interest in sex, yet there are many plays dealing with the relationship between men and their wives or lovers. Philip Johnson's "Derelict" and R.E. Mitchell's "Royal Inn" are plays which give sympathetic and serious treatment to main characters who are prostitutes; but, with the exception of a few of Coward's short plays and revue sketches, sex does not seem to have been introduced for the purpose of titillation or to bolster up work otherwise of little value.

MULTI-SCENE AND SOLILOQUY-CUM-ASIDE

Clifford Bax's "Prelude and Fugue" is a good starting point because it is so rich in experimentation. The play is in verse, which not only gives it elevation, but also allows of a variation of intensity to indicate the casualness of the early conversation and the mounting dramatic intensity of the private thoughts which find ultimate utterance in words. It shows in a subtle manner the various possible ways of developing an identical initial situation. It is a multi-scene play with no curtain between scenes. In some cases a black-out of a few seconds economically indicates the termination of the scene, and in others an interesting use of the symbolism of picking up a little Roman lamp is sufficient to indicate that an episode has run its full cycle. Added to this theme of the various paths which are open to us in a given set of circumstances, we have the creation of depth by the use of a new kind of soliloquy-cum-aside in which the presence of another character is ignored and the actor's thoughts are spoken quite openly. We are thus privileged to know the character's thoughts before they are rationalised or covered up by artifice. This lends a new and exciting richness to the interplay of the dialogue, a richness for which it is difficult to find a name. It is akin to dramatic irony in that the audience shares what is hidden from another character; but the interest depends not on the situation, but on depth of understanding of the situation.

Rosemary, who is sitting for a portrait by Joan, learns that Joan is fond of Philip, whom Rosemary knows to be an untrustworthy drunkard in spite of his great charm of manner. The picture is done, and Rosemary prepares to leave without having tea, after Joan has explained that she will not be able to attend Rosemary's wedding because of her impending trip to Spain. So far all has been on

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the surface, but Rosemary, before departing, picks up the little Roman lamp, which Bax endows with an implicit symbolic significance.

The realtionship between these women is now no longer entirely on the surface; something has stirred them, but not yet deeply. Rosemary tells Joan of Philip's real character, but Joan refuses to believe a word of it. They take leave of each other; this time, however, Joan accepts the invitation to the wedding, giving up her trip to Spain where she was to meet Philip.

Scene II, which follows immediately after a short black-out, opens as does Scene I. Because of the changed relationship between them, the conversation soon takes a new course. The women now speak their thoughts while the normal dialogue is carried on, and this subtly alters the relationship between them still more. It seems that the very admission of their unconscious thoughts to the conscious mind, makes them more responsive to each other, though there is not yet complete understanding. We now learn that Rosemary has suffered at Philip's hands and knows just what misery lies before Joan if she goes on her trip to Spain. Yet Rosemary feels that nothing she can say can help Joan; Joan by this time suspects that Rosemary has had an affair with Philip and determines to tax him with it so that she can watch him "tangle himself in lies". Rosemary refuses tea and once again the little Roman lamp is picked up. Its great age seems to lift a veil and brings to Rosemary some understanding of the wisdom of the countless minds which the world has seen, and she decides to reveal to Joan how she was treated by Philip. At first Joan pretends not to credit the tale, but she knows it is the truth and in her stirs a sort of wonder at the "queer deep kind of love" which has made Rosemary speak. Joan asks if she may

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attend Rosemary's wedding, and we know that a deep understanding has grown between these two women.

EXPERIMENT WITH SCENERY

Experiment with scenery came as early as the days of the Abbey Theatre. Hermon Ould[1/] refers to Yeats' "Four Plays for Dancers, plays I have not been able to procure, and tells how Yeats tried to popularise the one-act play by dispensing with the trappings of the ordinary theatre. The plays are intended to be performed eithout scenery in a room or any small space. No scenery is to be used, but the actors wear masks or paint their faces to resemble masks. In place of a curtain, a cloth is folded or unfolded, indicating the commencement or close of a play. This is the convention of the Japanese Nō plays. The use of verse in these short plays would justify the use of such symbolism.

I have already referred to the simple yet effective setting of J.W. Bell's "Symphony in Illusion". The impressionism of having the play performed before the doorway of a ruined church cannot but enrich this play with its strong attack against the wickedness in the heart of man which makes war possible. Mary Pakington's "Experiment", with its theme of telepathy, gains much by playing two scenes simultaneously on different halves of the stage. "Buffalmacco's Jest", with its use of a multi-coloured backdrop, before which are three screens, each with two panels representing different scenes, I have already dealt with. Other plays already mentioned which are interesting because of the original use made of lighting and scenery are; "Self-Made Man" by Sydney Box, Clifford Bax's "Aucassin and Nicolette", "The Rose and the Cross" and "Silly Willy", in which the first scenes are played before a drop-curtain representing the facade of a Georgian house. When this

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1/"The art of the Play", p. 157.

curtain is raised a drawing-room is displayed.

"Over the Top" by E. and D.E. Hickey is a poor play with clumsy dialogue, but it is interesting as an example of early experimental short play. The scene is the interior of a huge tank and the play attempts to catch the atmosphere of the first attack in which tanks were used in World War I.

Joe Corrie makes good use of scenery in the second scene of "Hewers of Coal". He has a sloped platform with a sloped frontpiece painted to resemble a coalface. A black curtain is lowered from the top at a corresponding angle and, with the assistance of a good back-drop and well thought out lighting, we have an excellent setting for the rising tension in miners trapped in a stope. The exposition in this play is thorough; there is clever use of stones and dust to simulate a fall of rock; dramatic interest mounts in several waves; characters are carefully drawn and there is good development of character while the miners are passing through a time of stress. The whole makes a play of great significance and dramatic power. It is more than a tragic tale of a mine accident; it is a story of men who are sobered by the death of one of their number and whose characters are developed when they are brought face to face with death. Without the sobering touch of the death of Joe, this play might have been a little too melodramatic.

"We Got Rhythm", by Nora Ratcliff, is an interesting experimental play. Repetition in the dialogueis used, to the point of irritation, to bring out the effect of the monotonous rhythm of factory machinery and routine tasks, turning the brains of men into rhythmical but senseless machines. Interesting use is made of masks. When the girls doff their dirty masks and don silly, simpering ones, and the men remove their black masks and put on clean ones, we know that work is over and that they are stepping out.

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This reinforces their inane dialogue. The cessation of their actions, miming their tasks, changes in the background music all make it possible for the scene to change without any break in the action, effecting a great economy in time. There is a simple curtain fit-up in black, with a bank of four cinema seats in the centre close to the footlights and four upturned tubs. Music suggests the atmosphere while the two miners and their girls are at the cinema, and we are allowed to share their thoughts. The low whistle of a hooter, a change in the music and they are all back at work again, thinking the same repetitive thoughts. When work is over they are addressed by characters reminiscent of the Moralities. Patriotism and Idealist exhort these workers, presenting their creeds in the over-simplified manner popular with present-day propagandists. There is no peace for these simple folk, for they are addressed in a bewildering spate of words by the political figures who now mount the tubs: Cassock, Striped-shirt, Mili-clubman and Red-shirt. Fortunately for them, the words have no visible effect and they return to their monotonous rounds. The play is given depth in the last scene when we realise that this is a rehearsal. The author discusses the play with the actors, and they reveal that they understand as little of what is going on as did the characters whose parts they are taking.

The setting of Harry Penson's "Unknown Dimensions" is simple: a park bench, a signpost on which the legend is indecipherable. This simplicity and lack of definition is most suitable for a play with a theme which is becoming so popular in this century: fear. Two young lovers lose their way because of fear of poverty, but find it again when their love for each other proves to be stronger than fear. This play has charm and atmosphere, but is spoilt by a too obvious didacticism.

(H.F. Rubinstein's

H.F. Rubinstein's "Johnson was no Gentleman" gains tremendously because of the setting. The stage is divided into two, showing an anteroom and Lord Chesterfield's library. The dramatic interest is built up neatly as the characters pass between the two rooms, and we are privileged to know more of what is going on than the characters do; a new treatment of dramatic irony. Rubinstein deftly captures Dr Samuel Johnson's conversational style and combines with this the characteristic style of Chesterfield as we know it in his "Letters to his Son". We discover Johnson unsuccessfully and impatiently waiting to ask Lord Chesterfield for his patronage for the Dictionary. In the library, Chesterfield's illegitimate son is informing his father of his love of a woman who is not of noble birth. Chesterfield promises to arrange a liaison with the woman and a later marriage with someone who is worthy. In the meantime the young woman and her mother arrive in the anteroom, and Johnson becomes interested enough in their affairs to persuade Chesterfield's son to marry the young woman in secret. Johnson is advised that Chesterfield will not be able to see him after all, and when the son offers financial assistance he replies: "Thank you, sir, but your father has already given me all that I shall ever require from a patron."

PHILIP: What is that, Mr Johnson?

JOHNSON: A definition, sir.

Enrichment of characterisation and economy are gained by choosing characters and situation which are already familiar to the audience. The introduction of complication to the situation assisted by good dialogue results in a most satisfying historical one-act play.

The use of a ruined cottage, wind and rain, moonlight occasionally breaking through a cloud, a fire which sporadically blazes up, and a tramp who snores throughout

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the play without ever waking, cannot make drama; but when these effects are added to deft touches of characterisation, clever exposition, development to a great climax, immediately followed by a denouement, which turns out most unexpectedly in the last few lines, we have in "The Man Born to be Hanged", by Richard Hughes, a play of great dramatic power. After the curtain has fallen and risen and fallen again, the full meaning of what has transpired hits the audience with the most forceful impact of which drama is possible. There are not many Welsh writers of one-act plays, but in this play Hughes shows what the Welsh temperament combined with a masterly technique can do in the way of drama. This play tells us more in thirty minutes than is told by half-a-dozen long plays. The horror of it all is still mounting long after the curtain has finally fallen.

When Bill, the showman, enters the cottage with Davey, a youth of twenty, seeking shelter, he recognises the tramp who is lying asleep and who does not wake throughout the play. Bill is telling Davey a rather sordid tale of how he deserted his wife, Nell, when two others come in to seek shelter from the weather. Spencer is an ineffectual little man with thin limbs and a twitching moustache. The woman has thrown her skirt over her head for protection from the weather. Bill carries on with his tale but when the woman reveals her face, he recognises his wife. From the folds of her skirt she fires a shot and Bill falls to the ground. Spencer flees into the night. Davey does not waste any time in making approaches to her and tries to comfort her by telling her that the blame will fall on the tramp, who is still sleeping, as he was born to be hanged anyway because his eyebrows meet. Her wild talk is incomprehensible to him and his ardour is cooled by her strange manner. When she falls down in a dark corner of

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the cottage, Bill, thinking she has left, rises and says that Nell's shot had missed him completely. After taxing Davey with his behaviour, he continues telling of his wonderful escapades. The moon comes out from behind a cloud and Nell is discovered lying huddled in a corner. When Bill carries her to the firelight, it dawns on them that Nell had aimed the shot at herself. For once Bill loses his self-assurance and there is a slow curtain closing over the scene of Bill and Davey looking at the body of Nell, while the tramp snores on peacefully. In a moment the curtain rises again. Nell lies there, Bill and Davey have gone, and in the background, the man born to be hanged is still sleeping.

THE EPISODIC PLAY

Cedric Mount makes an interesting use of spotlights in "Twentieth Century Lullaby". The device is all the more effective because of its simplicity, and lends a flexibility to this short play which makes it compare in importance with any long social or religious play of this centiry. A light picks out Mary in the centre of the stage. She is in the nursery and there is a cradle before the fire. The rest of the stage is in gloom but, as each character has to play his part, a spotlight picks him out. Mary is singing a lullaby to her baby. There are wonderful dreams in her heart for this child of hers, but we are shown how the baby's schoolmaster is to imbue him with cynicism, how his employer will teach him dishonesty and how his wife will let him down. The unemployment grinds into his spirit and finally war swallows him in its maw. When Mary cries out in protest that she will not rear a child to such a fate, the Madonna is seen in a soft light. She approaches Mary, soothes her and whispers to her the secter of motherhood.

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This play is an effective answer to critics who hold that the episodic play is confusing or that it causes the interest of the audience to become diffused. Though this play really tells the story of the whole life of a man in the space of forty minutes, it possesses a unity of its own. Realism and fantasy are successfully mixed and the use of an announcer fulfilling the function of the Greek chorus, preserves the sequence and gives depth of meaning to the episodes.

The episodic play constitutes one of the greatest advances in technique in the development of the one-act play.

Norman Holland's "Happiness my Goal", a 'biography in one act', in treatment and theme bears a strong resemblance to "Twentieth Century Lullaby". The main character is in the centre of the stage. A spotlight picks out "The Male Voice ofthe World" and "The Female Voice of the World" as they speak, acting as mouth pieces for various stock characters who are to influence the main character on his journey through life. The father, the musician, the father-in-law, the drill sergeant, the mayor, the employer, the mother, the wife and the mother-in-law all help to make or mar him. While this is a significant play, it is not of the same quality as "Twentieth Century Lullaby".

"Subway Circus", by William Saroyan, is an episodic play of great interest. It had not yet been produced when it was published in an anthology in 1940, and it seems doubtful whether it could ever be successfully produced. It has its faults and yet it is certainly adventurous experimentation. To the accompaniment of the sounds of a train racing over the tracks, the curtain rises to show a railway carriage. The front of this divides into halves which roll back to the wings at the opening of the scenes, each of which represents the dream of a traveller. This is a long one-act play in ten scenes. Use is made of

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a spotlight to pick out the dreamer whose dream is to be unfolded. This play shows us the dreams of the small boy, the acrobat, the lovers, the Hero, and the Jew in the World, and then Saroyan includes dreams of characters who do not represent people but abstractions. The introduction of the dreams of The Social Revolution, the Africa-Harlem Express, the Multi-millionaire (a young man earning fifteen dollars a week), the Immortals, and for good measure, The Morning Song, seems to rob the play of unity. A serious criticism is that there is no clear thread running through the play

Thornton Wilder is one of the leading experimenters with the one-act play. His "Pullman Car Hiawatha" is interesting on its own merits, but also because Wilder accomplishes something similar to what Saroyan attempted. His discarding of any attempts at realism as regards scenery is a distinct advance on "Subway Circus". The stage directions read:

> "At the back of the stage is a balcony or bridge or runway leading out of sight in both directions. Two flights of stairs descend from it to the stage. There is no further scenery."

The stage manager acts as commentator. The scene is a Pullman car, and chairs are used to represent berths. As the passengers settle for the night we learn something of them from the dialogue. As they settle down to sleep, they begin to speak their thoughts and we realise that the real people are very different indeed from those we met in their conscious moments.

Next we are introduced to the passengers in the compartments. One woman lies there dying, and her husband sleeps on peacefully, insensible to what is happening to her. In another compartment an insane woman is seen: she is on her way under escort to an asylum.

Thus far Wilder has tried to capture the soul of the train by giving us an insight into the complexity of the lives which go to the making of a train as it rushes

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through the night. Still Wilder is not satisfied that the full meaning of thentrain has been brought out and we are introduced to characters representing the towns past which the train races. They tell us of the part which the train plays in their lives. The tramp, stealing a ride under the carriage, is part of the picture too. The train could have had no existence without the preliminary work done by the workmen killed while making the bridge over which the train passes, so they speak. The man in the signal box is also part of the train and tells of his work. Wilder has not yet completed his attempt at disentangling the intricate web which hides the mystery of life. He delves beneath the surface of things with a technique similar to that which he employs in his novel "The Bridge of San Luis Rey". As the weather is part of the life of the train in its fullest sense, a weather report is included. Various Hours come with their philosophy, as do the planets which look down on this train rushing over the earth. Death comes to take the dying woman, and the mad woman wishes to accompany her, but she is informed that she must wait.

By the time the train has reached Chicago the audience has realised, with strange feelings stirring within them, something of the cosmic and complicated forces at work in everyday situation. This is a play of great dramatic power and considerable importance.

Wilder's "Long Christmas Dinner" is another happy result of the casting aside of many conventions restricting the one-act play. The directions will explain much:

> "The dining-room of the Bayard home. Close to the footlights a long dining-table is handsomely spread for Christmas dinner .... At the extreme left, by the proscenium pillar, is a strange portal trimmed with garlands of fruit and flowers. Directly opposite is another edged and hung with black velvet. The portals denote birth and death. Ninety years are to be traversed in this play.... The actors are dressed in inconspicuous clothes and must indicate their gradual increase in years through their acting. Most of them carry wigs of white hair which they adjust upon their heads at the indicated moment, simply

and without comment. The ladies may have shawls concealed beneath the tablethat they gradually draw up about their shoulders as they grow older. Throughout the play the characters continue eating imaginary food with imaginary knives and forks. There is no curtain. The audience arriving at the theatre sees the stage set and the table laid, though still in partial darkness."

This is the history of three generations of the Bayard family. The play may be compared in some ways with Armold Bennett's "Milestones" or with Harold Brighouse's "Back to Adam", but as it is not broken up into acts or scenes, there is a continuity which suggests the continuity of life. As the life of a character draws to a close, that character quietly draws nearer to the dark portal and passes through it. A birth is indicated by the entrance of a nurse wheeling a perambulator. She comes on through the portal trimmed with fruit and flowers and the baby is welcomed by the women. Characters leaving the stage, to come on again, do so by means of a door to the hall.

So the picture of life, which changes its manners and ways and outlook with the passing of the years, unfolds itself smoothly before our eyes and we feel we know intimately all these people who have gone to build up a family, who have gone through many vicissitudes of fortune "without fear and without reproach". The play closes with the re-assurance that, though that house mat not see the Bayards for much longer, their life and all that the word Bayard stands for, will be carried on elsewhere.

POETRY IN THE SHORT PLAY

Before I consider more serious short plays in verse from the point of view of experimentation, I feel that A.P. Herbert's delightful "Two Gentlemen of Soho" should be mentioned. Shakespeare has been the inspiration of many writers of short plays; some have allowed their fancy to re-create modern situations in which there is a parallel to situations in Shakespeare's plays; some have written

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plays developing some side issue which Shakespeare has by-passed; H.C.G. Stevens in "'Hamlet' in Modern - Rush" has given us a farce in which the story of Hamlet is told in modern slang: but "Two Gentlemen of Soho" is the only play I know of in which a trite modern theme and stock modern characters are graced with all the dignity and beauty of Shakespeare's style. The combining of noble language with farcical situations results in a superbly funny play.

The scene is a night club. The Duchess of Canterbury has distressed the Duke because she spends so much time haunting the night clubs with her professional dancing partner. He has hired Sneak, a private detective, to report on her doings. Plum, a 'public detective', ill-disquised, has been trying to espy any contravention of the regulations, without success. In his boredom he invites the Duchess to dance and Sneak makes a note of this. Lord Withers enters with the Duchess's daughter and browbeats the waiter into producing a bottle of port. Plum arrests them all, but Sneak accuses Plum of carrying on with the Duchess and says that he is to be cited as co-respondent by the Duke. They fight and Sneak dies. Topsy, a professional dancer, announces that Sneak is her father, and she dies of grief, falling over her father's body. Hubert, a male professional dancer, declares his hitherto secret love for Topsy and kills himself, adding his body to the heap. This arouses the comment in Withers:

> "Yet I have heard some countryman remark,
> Clapping the swallows from a field of corn,
> 'It is not seldom in the course of nature,
> After a droughtnot in light showers only
> Falls and descends the gentle rain of heaven.
> But in a spate and tempest.'"

The Duchess, after a moving speech, dies of shame. This causes Laetitia, her daughter, to die of grief. This is more than Lord Withers can bear, and he adds his corpse to the growing heap. The waiter announces:

> "Sir, from my birth I was a nervous child,
> This way and that swung weakly by suggestion
> And could not see my fellow creatures weep
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But I must echo them with noisy tears.
Speak of an earthquake, and I fly the house;
Hang o'er the bulwarks, I am sick myself,
And now, i' the presence of these diminished figures,
By their own act, I take it, brought to nought,
I feel the prickings of mortality."

He dies. The meaninglessness of life becomes apparent to Plum, the remaining character, and he dies, much after the fashion of Bottom in the part of Pyramus.

Reference to this play would be incomplete without giving Withers' ordering of a cocktail:

"Pluck me ten berries from the juniper
And in a beaker of strong barley spirit
The kindly juices of the fruit compress,
This is our Alpha. Next clap on your wings,
Fly southnfor Italy, nor come you back
Till in the cup you have made prisoner
Two little thimblefuls of that sweet syrup
The Romans call Martini. Pause o'er Paris
And fill two eggshells with the French vermouth.
Then home incontinent, and in one vessel
Cage your three captives, but in nice proportions,
So that no one is master, and the whole
Sweeter than France, but not so sweet as Italy...."

One of the greatest achievements of the one-act play has been the part it has played in bringing poetry back to the stage. In the nineteenth century there had been unsuccessful plays in verse and successful revivals of verse plays, but the ready acceptance of poetry in drama is something of this century, and there can be little doubt that the short play has led the way. Previously poetic plays had been written for esoteric groups of highbrows, by specialists for specialists. The attitude to the poetic play was defensive. The strongest case that could be made out for it was one of uplift. Comparisons were made with former ages and some attempts were made at poetic drama, but they lacked vitality and were not essentially dramatic. G.J. Beukes[1] says that poetry is less used than formerly and gives as the reason that the earlier apron stage required the elevation of poetry because of the otherwise too intimate contact between actor and audience. He quotes Drinkwater's "X = O" as an exception. What he says about the [illegible] (intimacy [illegible] times

1/ "Die Moderne Eenbedryf", p.98.

intimacy of the apron stage is true, but he is behind the times when he says that poetry is less used than formerly. The opposite is true.

I have mentioned a number of the plays of Clifford Bax which were written in verse. There is a host of authors who successfully use poetry in the one-act play. Some of the more important names are : Gordon Bottomley, Geoffrey Whitworth, Oscar Wilde, W.B. Yeats, J. Darmady, A.J. Talbot, M. Connelly, John Thorburn and A MacLeish.

There is a special advantage gained by the writer of short plays who uses poetry. In the first place he discrads all the restrictions and limitations of realism, which lends economy, and in the second place, poetry gives dignity and grace to a theme, which is all the more necessary when it is to be dealt with in small compass. These plays written in poetry are eagerly accepted by a public tired of the impoverishments of realism.

T.S. Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral" being in two parts, is not a one-act play, but it is a short play and it has the direct attack of a one-act play. W.H. Auden's "Dance of Death" is a savage attack on the supposed decadence of the British Empire. It was banned by the British Censor, but was produced in the "Poetic Theatre" in America. Much of its power results from the use of verse. I have mentioned the name of Archibald MacLeish. His radio play "The Fall of the City", is an important contribution in poetry which I shall deal with in the section on radio plays in the next chapter. No better proof of the ready acceptance of the poetic play can be given than reference to Guy Butler's "The Dam" and T.S. Eliot's "Cocktail Party". The paucity of earlier long plays in poetry is sufficient evidence that in this respect at least, the example of the one-act play has been most noteworthy. Poetry is of special dramatic importance in radio plays where the appeal is to the ear alone.

EXPRESSIONISM

The one-act play form can claim one of the best plays in the field of expressionism. Elmer Rice's "Adding Machine" combines skilful use of the expressionistic method with clever and vivid dialogue, characters of flesh and blood, and biting satire. His play is written in seven scenes and, as it runs for an hour and three-quarters, it is not a one-act play in the generally accepted sense. Yet it is no long play.

On the anniversary of his twenty-fifth year of service, the Boss calls in Mr Zero. Zero is hoping for a rise in salary and position, and can hardly believe his ears when he is told that the firm is acquiring an adding machine to be operated by a girl and that Zero will have to leave. At this point there is soft music which changes to the blaring music of a mechanical organ. That part of the floor on which the desk and stool are standing begins to revolve, at first slowly, butfaster as the music becomes louder. This is symbolic of the chaos in Zero's mind. The Boss continues speaking even after his voice is drowned by the music.

> "The music swells and swells. To it is added every off-stage effect of the theatre: the wind, the waves, the galloping horses, the locomotive whistle, the sleigh-bells, the automobile siren, the glass crash, New Year's Eve, Election night, Armistice Day and the Mardi Gras. The noise is deafening, maddening, unendurable. Suddenly it culminates in a deafening peal of thunder. For an instant there is a flash of red, and then everything is plunged into blackness."

We may reasonably assume that this is not without its effect on the audience. Zero's murder of the Boss is not shown, yet murder has been committed.

That is only the prologue. The play is about to commence. Scene I is a monologue in which Mrs Zero nags her husband endlessly. He does not speak throughout the scene. Indeed, only his sallow face and partially bald head can be seen.

(SceneII

Scene II is an interesting flash-back. Zero and Daisy, his assistant, are talking to each other, but their private thoughts are uttered without interruption of the dialogue, as the other character responds only to that part which applies. Daisy reflects on what life could have been like had Zero ever been attracted to her and admits to herself that she would have accepted his attentions. His thoughts are milling around his intended interview with the Boss. Scene III shows us a party at Zero's home. The names of the guests, Mr and Mrs One, Two, Three and Four, suggest that they possess as much individuality as does Zero, and this is borne out by the dialogue.

Scene IV consists of a monologue delivered by Zero in court after he has been arrested for the murder of his boss. Scene V is a fantastic graveyard scene and is followed by Scene VI, set in the Elysian Fields.

In Scene VII Zero is seen working assiduously at an adding machine. He is informed that he has to return to the world to re-live his life as a slave. At first he is unwilling, but then he sees a bewitching red-head insinuating her way back to earth and he hurries after her. The ending is sudden and coarsely brutal, with the two guards talking:

JOE (shaking with laughter): Did you get that? He thinks he saw somebody and he's following her. (He rocks with laughter.)

CHARLES (punching him on the jaw): Shut your face! Hell, I'll tell the world this is a lousy job. (He takes a flask from his pocket and drains it.)

The use of sound in this play reminds me of Eugene O'Neill's "Emperor Jones", in which the beating of drums commences when the negro, Jones, takes flight and continues with growing intensity and speed until the peak of the mad tattoo is reached as Jones is crawling into the very jaws of the corcodile. When he fires a silver bullet, the beating changes to a "sombre pulsation, a baffled but revengeful power." "The Emperor Jones", though on the long side, is in seven scenes and is more akin to the one-act form than the

(long

long play. It is practically a monologue as, for the most part, it is concerned with the flight of Jones by himself - and he does not flee in silent fear.

SOCIAL AND PROBLEM PLAYS

The one-act play has become an important means of airing views on social and other problems and has furthermore, been adopted for purposes of spreading propaganda. It is not easy to decide just when the boundary between a play with a social theme and a propaganda play has been crossed, and yet there are the two distinct types. All plays must in some measure reflect the times in which they are written and there must be some motivation to all plays. All social plays must deal with social values as well as events and situations. What Hermon Ould writes on this aspect of drama is very much to the point: 1/

"John Galsworthy, Brieux, Ibsen, Strindberg, Eugene O'Neill, Ernst Toller, Elmer Rice and numerous other well-known dramatists have written successfully plays that were inspired by a burning desire to reform the world, to express an unconventional point of view, or to call attention to an evil towards which the world seemed to be apathetic ..... the very roots of the theatre are embedded in the passion to instruct....but the propagandist must be the servant of the dramatist and not the master."

I have already mentioned in other contexts a number of plays which have social problems as their themes and have still to consider a few which are too important to be ignored. Then I shall proceed to consider a few plays which are completely propagandist: the work of playwrights who have rejected the creation of art as their first aim and been satisfied to use the form to sway the minds of men at any cost.

(Noel

1/ op. cit. pp. 54-56

Noel Houston's "According to Law" is, in my opinion, one of the most important short American plays dealing with a social problem. There are other important American plays, but they are socialist rather than social in their appreach. The theme of "According to Law" is this: Provision is made in the Bill of Rights that the state must provide for the briefing of a lawyer for an accused who is penniless. Houston sets out to show that this provision is worthless if the law is observed to the letter but not in spirit. This play is an honest attempt to bring about an improvement in court procedure. It creates a convincing picture of what happens in some courts and bitterly satirises such a state of affairs. The play is dramatic in the fullest sense, and there is no sacrifice of character nor any weakness due to didacticism. It is not a clumsy vehicle for a social message: what Houston wants us to know arises naturally out of the play.

Charlie Teague, a Negro, is accused of rape. In view of an impending election, the Judge, though not convinced of Teague's guilt, feels he cannot go against the jury who have been swayed by the prosecution. The woman concerned is known to be of loose charcater; her husband has since left her; the identification of Teague has been irregular and unsatisfactory. Teague's story is simple and acceptable, and in addition, he has been brutally handled by the possé that arrested him. Staggs, the defending lawyer, is thwarted at every turn, and Teague has been browbeaten to the point where he pleads guilty, but adds that he did not commit the deed of which he is accused. There is very little hope for Teague, as the company employing the woman's husband follows the policy of looking after the welfare of their employees. The glib company lawyer assists in the prosecution, which would otherwise have been a casual affair and, interested only in what he thinks is

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the husband's welfare, persuades the jury to bring in a verdict of 'Guilty'. The judge passes sentence.

St John Ervine's "Progress" is a bitter indictment of the folly of war. The play gains power from the stromg contrast between the elation of the professor, who has just invented a bomb of unbelievably great lethal power, and the sadness in the heart of his sister who has bought flowers to put on the cenotaph because it is just three years since her son died on the battlefield. Ervine's technique is good and the play develops well, though some of the speeches are on the long side. The play ends strongly. When the professor refuses to give up his project of sowing death, his sister, a mild woman mourning the loss of her son, stabs him to death. The resolution is left entirely to the audience.

Satire is the weapon used by Sidney Box in his anti-war play "Bring me my Bow". The wife of the Minister of War comes to her old school and with great unction and plausibility encourages the girls to write a prize essay on "A Britain Armed Means a World at Peace". Mary Blake, the leading pupil whose father was killed in the war and whose mother works as a laundress, refuses to write the essay. The Headmistress is not one to brook any nonsense of this sort. Fancy a girl having ideas of her own! Mary is forced to sit at her desk. She cries herself to sleep and dreams that a prize is to be awarded for the best nursery rhyme on war. Her dream is enacted and the schoolgirls come forward with their efforts, e.g.

> Little Miss Nan
> Has lost her man
> And doesn't know where to find him.
> He says with a moan,
> That he'll soon come home,
> Leaving his legs behind him,

or

> Mary, Mary, quite contrary
> What does your garden grow?
> I've crops of guns and bullets in tons
> And crosses of wood in a row.

(The

The nightmarish quality of the dream fits in well with the nightmare of war and this light treatment of a serious subject is most effective.

Though John Thorburn's "Man in the Street" is a deeply significant religious play in the broader sense, I am including it in this chapter because of several interesting characteristics. It possesses a simple convincing atmosphere of patient sincerity. It is a moving protest against cant, doctrinism, materialism and selfish hedonism. It hits out against the peddling of religion without the realisation of the deep significance of Scriptural truths. Though the cast is large for a short play (eighteen), the characterisation is good. None are stock characters, none are drawn in broad lines, and the Young Man receives the fullest and most sympathetic treatment. Though at time the stage is crowded, there is no babel or diffusion. The second phase of the play which moves on a note of tragedy, is written in moving blank verse. The play opens on a variegated street scene and we see the selfish and materialistic behaviour of many characters. The Tramp Woman is caught stealing chocolate from the kiosk and the characters of those present are portrayed in their reactions to this incident. Then the Bride, stepping back to photograph a gigantic crucifix, is run over by a car driven by the Society Woman. Her back is broken and she is pronounced dead by the Policewoman. The Bridegroom is desolate.

YOUNG MAN: It is all right, Mother. I know what I have to do. (To the bridegroom.) Be content ..... Sister, the time was not well chosen for you to go ..... Awake from your sleep and return to your lover."

The miracle happens. Then comes a moving study of the change in the behaviour of the Flowerwoman, the Customer, the Kiosk Girl, the Bishop, the Slum [illegible]rson, the Harlot, the Policewoman, the two typistes, the Tramp Woman, the Poet, the Society Woman and the Reporter. Most are

(deeply

deeply stirred, but there are those among them who are too hardened to be moved, even by a miracle.

No resumé can hope to do justice to this great and beautiful play.

THE PROPAGANDA PLAY

Trade unions and revolutionary groups seem to have favoured the one-act play as a means of propaganda. Their concern has not been with art except in so far as it could serve their ends. There have been many of these "agit-prop" plays, which have sought to use the emotional and persuasive force of drama as a vehicle for 'the message' and to stir up the audience to persuade them to action which they would not otherwise have adopted. Most of these agit-prop plays are not really drama at all, as they employ easily-recognised stock characters and are without any subtlety. Two, however, are so important that they cannot be ignored. Both are by Clifford Odets.

"Till the Day I Die" is in seven scenes and tells of the cruelty of the Nazis and the suffering endured by the German Communists in their fight against 'fascism'. Ernst loves Tilly. He is caught by the Nazis. A crudely brutal scene shows him being tortured. Then he is forced to stand outside the court so that arrested Reds will see him and believe that he is identifying Communists for the Nazis. He is also forced to accompany the Gestapo when they raid Communist cells. The Nazis cannot find enough evidence to hold him, but when he is released, the Communists blacklist him. Even his brother denounces him. In Scene VII, Ernst comes to his brother and Tilly and explains to them that he is at the end of his tether. He has suffered so much at the hand of friend and foe that his reason is going. He fears that he may divulge something to the Nazis and begs his brother and Tilly to kill him before he can do so.

(Because

Because they are now certain that he has been faithful to the cause, they are not able to shoot him. He goes out and kills himself.

This play is filled with a fervour for the Communist cause acceptable only to a convert. The brutal torture is unnecessarily stressed. Nothing is left to the imagination. The objectivity so necessary to good drama is absent in this play and nature is twisted to serve the ends of propaganda.

On the credit side there is the simple and moving relationship between Ernst and Tilly: this is most sympathetic and convincing. Scene IV is the best in the play. The German Nazi Major During, formerly a Social Democrat, explains to Ernst what lies ahead of him if he does not do what the Nazis want. He explains further that he himself is forced to remain where he is because of his family and his wife's connections, and confides in Ernst that he has destroyed many incriminating files. This scene works up to a climax where During feels he cannot carry on. He kills his assistant, dismisses Ernst and then commits suicide.

"Waiting for Lefty" was written in 1935 in three days, during a strike of taxi drivers in New York. This play by Clifford Odets has received much more praise than I think it deserves. It is interesting as an example of what can be done in the one-act play in the way of appealing to mass emotion. It is certainly forceful and stirring, but it is crude and lacking in charm or polish. A new feature is the use of actors in the audience who act as 'starters' to encourage the audience to shout out their own exhortations to strike. The strike committee is arranged in a semi-circle on the stage and one after another comes forward after the style of a minstrel show, addressing the audience as if it were the body of a meeting. The spot picks out the one who is explaining why he believes they should strike. Suspense and exacerbation of emotion is the essence of the

(play.

play. The meeting can get nowhere because all are waiting for Lefty. Fatt is the prototype of the capitalist employer. He smokes a cigar to show opulence, and his whole manner shows that he is completely untouched by the stories of hardship which are being unfolded. When he puffs out a cloud of smoke to show his unconcern, a spotlight picks it up. Then scenes are enacted to show what has made a striker of Lefty. These are not at all subtle, but they are effective with the right audience. For example, Episode II takes us to Lefty's home. Edna is thinking of leaving Joe and the children to become the mistress of a former lover, not because she has fallen out of love with Lefty, but because the grinding poverty is making her desperate. Joe is distracted with jealousy and worry because he knows he cannot earn enough as a taxi-driver to keep the family in decency. Fatt sneers at this pitiful picture and seeks solace in his cigar.

Odets gives great flexibility to this play by using black-outs, flash-backs and fade-ins. The play possesses unity of purpose: every device is employed to excite the audience into demanding that the committee votes for an immediate strike. I understand that when this play was first presented in New York to gain support for the strike of taxi-drivers which was then on, the audience who were all worker's union people, became frenzied with excitement and at the end of the final scene rose to their feet, yelling frantically, "Strike! Strike! Strike!"

EXPERIMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Objectivity is a primary requirement in the dramatist, and this may explain to some extent the paucity of good plays in South Africa. Youth and objectivity do not usually go together. Drama depends more than any other art on an audience, and South Africa is at a disadvantage in this respect too. Experiment presupposes a rich store of plays in which a certain standard of attainment has been consol-

idated, and upon which advancement is aimed. We do not expect much in the way of experiment with the one-act play in South Africa, and this is just what we find. Such plays as there are, are for the most part conservative in technique and construction. I have already considered Joyce Miller's rather unhappy experiment with an English written in a spurious Afrikaans idiom. In Grace Sherwin's "The Light is Against Us" there is an interesting use of lighting, but nothing really worthy of the name of experiment. B. Northling Swemmer has published "Pentagon", a booklet of five one-act plays. He calls these plays 'outspoken', and on the title-page informs us that they are 'for adults and adult audiences only'. In fact they are childish, and none deserves serious consideration.

"Sunset in September", by R.E. Davies, makes an interseting use of a prologue which effectively lends atmosphere to the play, but its claim to be considered as experimental lies in the theme. When J.B. Priestley was inspired by J.W. Dunne's "An Experiment with Time" to write his 'time' plays, He attempted something extremely difficult of successful accomplishment. This was certainly breaking new ground. It was not a return to a former age when superstition was rife, but a serious contribution to the study of supra-sensory forces of which we know so little, but which is the subject of serious research today. "Sunset in September" ranks with Priestley's 'time' plays in that it is a study of the power of evil to find a home in the heart of one who has given himself over to this intangible power.

This is the crop which the one-act play has yielded in the twentieth century in the way of experiment. It seems to me that, in spite of the fettering influence of the festivals and the desertion of the form by

(dramatists

dramatists after they have carried out successful experiments, the one-act play can claim to have done more for drama than the long play. There can be no doubt at all that the one-act form today has become mature and is a much more flexible and powerful vehicle for drama than was the short play fifty years ago.

CHAPTER VI

THE ONE-ACT PLAY OF TOMORROW

The one-act play has grown tremendously in importance and achievement in the first half of this century. It has played an important part in the dramatic activities of schools, universities, religious bodies, amateur groups and socialist groups. What future is there for the short play in these directions? What future is there for the short play in cinema, radio, television and the commercial theatre? Prophecy is a risky business and so I shall content myself with indicating a few of the possibilities.

Because drama so accurately reflects the interests and ways of life of human beings, it is difficult to foresee, in a rapidly changing world, what strange channels of human development will be reflected in the short play of tomorrow. Recently we have seen a surprising re-birth of interest in puppets and there has been a spate of little plays for puppet theatres. A characteristic of many short plays written since World War II has been a spirit of unrest, uncertainty and fear.

A disturbing sign is the openly unethical approach found in a number of writers. I have found this to be especially true of radio plays. "Mr Pratt's Waterloo", by Val Gielgud and Philip Wade, is a most interesting comedy thriller, but in essence it tells of how Mr Pratt successfully embezzles thirty pounds from the firm in which he holds a position of trust and how good fortune puts the

(blame

blame on a greater rascal than he is. "The Tunnel", by Mabel Constanduros and Howard Agg, is an excellent radio play which tells us how a woman causes the death of her employer and marries the widower. When he discovers that she was responsible for his wife's death he kills her and successfully passes it off as an accident. Lucille Fletcher's "Hitch Hiker" finds nothing unusual in the character who deliberately and repeatedly tries to run over a hitch hiker to discover whether he is real or a product of overwrought nerves.

Drama is playing an ever more important rôle in the schools. Hermon Ould writes:[1/]

> The current practice which looks to education to draw out the latent qualities of the child could have no more devoted handmaiden than the drama, and it is therefore not surprising that the more enlightened schools treat the study and acting of plays as a part of their usual curriculum."

The main criticism against drama in schools is that success goes to the heads of young actors, but this is easily prevented if the danger be recognised. On the credit side we have motivation in language study, team-work, the kathartic effect of playing the parts of widely diverse characters, the consequent acquisition of an objective attitude towards others, speech training and an ever-widening knowledge of peoples, times and cultures. Plays of modern times, unless they are farcical, are perhaps best avoided, and tragedy is not usually attempted with success. Farces, historical and other costume plays and fantasy seem to be most suitable for children. Plays in dialect are usually suitable only for young people who are members of special speech training classes.

The short play is the indicated play for children. A child has a natural sense of drama and steps easily over into a world of make-believe. For this reason it is not (necessarily

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1/ op. cit. p. 160.

necessarily only a simple part which is suitable for a child, yet a child has neither the physical stamina nor the nervous reserves of an adult and may easily become overwrought. A long pantomime, or any long play with so many in the cast that no single one has too much to do is quite suitable for children, but this usually means that each part is insignificant. In a short play a child can play an important part without strain.

In many ways the future of the one-act play may be considered to lie in the hands of the universities. From the universities we expect daring crossing of the frontiers of experimentation from a select and highly intelligent group of young people under the guidance of leaders in thought and creative art who can protect them from the dangers of sensationalism, journalese and commercial radio programmes. The one-act play is pre-eminently suitable for young talent because the writing of a short drama, though it is a difficult form, is not as formidable a task as writing a long play, and because more students can take an active part as actors, stage directors or even noises off. During a student's course at a university a greater diversity of plays could be studied if the one-act play were chosen. Experimentation can be encouraged as, when a programme is presented, the success of the evening does not depend on the success of one play.

Not only does most of what I said about the benefit of active interest in drama to children hold good for students, but this interest can serve as an integrating factor which will assist the student to apply to life what he has been learning from his professors and lecturers.

The value of the one-act play in the university has been recognised in America, and "in colleges and universities alone there are probably 35,000 to 40,000 students regularly enrolled in dramatic departments."[1/] For those

(students

1/B.H. Clark, quoted in Kozlenko's "One-Act play Today, p140.

students who do not wish to spend their time on a drama course, membership of a dramatic society as an extra-mural activity is of great value.

Drama has played an important part in religion for thousands of years and the place of the short play in mediaeval Europe is well known. When amateurs became interested in the short play in this century, many groups associated with churches formed dramatic societies; and while a few were satisfied with secular drama, others were more interested in plays with religious themes. Many short religious plays have been written and published in this century, but it must be admitted that most of the playwrights were more well-meaning than accomplished. The policy of the Religious Drama Council of England has been to raise the technical and artistic standard of religious plays.

Laurence Housman took the lead in the 'twenties with "Little Plays of St Francis", a collection of plays illustrating the life and works of the saint. His "Comments of Juniper" is a set of six short plays dramatising the legends surrounding St Francis. They are plays with a serious purpose, but lightness of treatment is gained by having Brother Juniper, a laughable yet lovable fool, as the central character.

Among the more significant one-act plays with a religious purpose, by British authors, are John Thorburn's "Man in the Street", Christopher Fry's playlet of St Cuthman, "The Boy with the Cart", and "The Cloak" by Clifford Bax.

Church bodies in America became interested in drama during the twentieth century; but until 1925 the bulk of the output of religious plays was trash, coming mainly from publishing companies producing religious literature and so eager to profit by this new church interest that they gave little thought to the quality of what they were

(publishing.

publishing. Most of these plays were rejected by church bodies, and in 1924 the American Federal Council of Churches appointed a committee to survey the available religious plays and select a few which could be recommended. Ten were selected from many hundreds and published in a single volume.[1/] In 1938 Fred Eastman felt he could still recommend four of these: "Dust of the Road" by Kenneth Sawyer, "The Pilgrim and the Book" by Peter McKaye, "A Sinner Beloved" by Phillips E. Osgood and "The Rock" by Mary P. Hamlin.

Courses in drama have been introduced into summer schools, and theological seminaries have established chairs in Religious Literature and Drama. Fred Eastman writes:[2/]

> Today, most religious dramas are presented on Sunday evenings, sometimes in the main auditorium of the church, moreoften in the parish hall. They are set in a service of worship with a prelude of,organ music, hymns and prayers and responses calculated to lift the minds of the audience, unite them and prepare them for a serious contemplation of a great theme. The drama takes the place of the sermon as the climax of a religious service. If well done, it is more effective than the usual sermon."

Eastman reveals that a survey of 451 churches showed that 91% were using one-act plays and that most were producing about four plays a year. Almost one half of the plays were presented at the Christmas season and one third at Easter.

There is one important question as regards religious drama which the future must settle. It is this: Which plays are to be considered suitable for presentation as part of a service? It is not enough to have a religious subject. Marc Connelly's "Little David" may have a Biblical subject, but the approach is a-religious. This play is treated like a negro spiritual, but is without the sincerity of the spiritual. When David faces Goliath the Lord speaks:

> "Yere comes ol' Goliath. He's de biggest man dey got. I speck he heard yo' defy. Give it to him David. An' give it to him good."

A religious subject and a reverent treatment are not enough. If the play is not a good one, not much (good

1/ F.Eastman in Kozlenko's "One-Act Play Today", p.163.
2/ ibid, p. 167.

good will result. Yet if drama in the church is to mean good plays limited to themes drawn from the Bible and the lives of the saints, it will be limiting itself to the past. A church which does not speak for the present must die. Laurence Housman puts the problem in this way: 1/

"If you are to have live drama, it must touch modern problems and conditions. If the churches are alive they must show fight .... The real problem you are up against is a moral, a spiritual problem. Is Christ still the Great Adventure or is he only a reminiscence? .... You are willing to have in your churches a mystery play or something similar from past ages, but are you equally willing to have a modern play, not merely a goody-goody play of pious, blameless character, but a play of social conflict like "Strife" or a play exposing legal cruelty, like "Justice", by Galsworthy? I do not mean necessarily these plays in particular, but plays generally as socially alive to our own times ..... If you have the dramatic gift and your solution is a Christian solution, you have religious drama. You ask for subjects? War, capital punishment, the soul-destroying system of our prisons, sweated labour, prostitution, the hardness of heart of the self-righteous, the colour problem - out of all these you can get a religious drama."

Housman makes out a good case, but to write plays on such subjects and yet keep out of the hurly-burly of politics, to steer clear of propaganda on the one hand and yet not turn the play into a sermon on the other, is not easy. There are many playwrights who are attempting honest solutions to problems which Housman mentions, though few are working under the wing of the church. Is the church to keep to its mystery plays, or is it to ignore the question of theme and consider the effect on the audience as the deciding factor, when assessing the suitability of a play for inclusion as part of a religious service? There is no easy solution.

Is there any place in the cinema for the one-act play? We have seen how successfully "The Browning Version" has been presented as a film. Noel Coward's "Still Life" fas been filmed under the title "Brief Encounter". But I know of no others. It seems that producers of films confuse brevity with inferiority. Yet Kozlenko 2/ believes (that

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1/ Quoted by F. Eastman in Kozlenko's "One-Act Play Today", (p.164.
2/ "The One-Act Play Today", p.7.

that "all films , curiously enough, are one-act plays". The average film does not run for more than ninety minutes and is certainly not broken into any divisions.

In recent years we have seen successful film productions of short stories. Somerset Maugham's "Trio" and "Quartet" were film versions of several short stories presented in one programme. The film "Full House" was made up of five of O. Henry's short stories. The film industry may yet turn to the one-act play as well as the short story as sources for story material.

If the question were asked 'When is a play not a play?' the answer might well be, 'When it is a radio play'. Quite apart from differences inherent in a form which appeals to the ear alone and which is independent of scenery, lighting and the like, the range of the radio play seems to include much which, though dramatic enough does not seem to deserve the name of a 'play'. "Music at Dusk", by Val Gielgud, seems to be a flimsy tale of the supernatural which acts as a vehicle for some beautiful piano music. "Music for Miss Rogers", by Margaret Gore-Brown, was written as a vehicle for Mr Carol Gibbons' piano-playing. "The Airborne" by Marc Blitzstein, is a play in verse extolling the part played by the Allied air forces during World War II, but it is not a play in the generally accepted sense of the term. "The Empty Noose", by Arnold Perl, seeks to justify the hangings at Nuremburg and its appeal to stock post-war emotions is shockingly crude. It is highly dramatic, but it is not a play. Millard Lampell's "October Morning" tells of the feelings of a returned soldier as he explains to his son why he went to war, knowing well that the danger is not over. The treatment is dramatic, giving scenes from the Spanish Civil War, the Second Front and Occupied France; but,

(once

once again, though the length is that of a cne-act play, it is a play in the radio sense only.

"Many a Wathcful Night" by J.M. Brown and H.M. Teichmann, gives a dramatic picture of the landing on the Normandy beaches; and "The Big Road", by N. Rosten, is a dramatisation of the building of a military road from Aåaska to the Unites States. These subjects are tcpical in treatment, and the appeal of some is evanescent, yet it is difficult to know where to draw a distinction.

"The Face", by A. Laurents, was written with the purpose of helping civilians to understand the problems of returned soldiers who were undergoing or had undergone plastic surgery to their faces, yet the characters live, the situations ring true, there is restraint and there is dramatic suspense which equals anything the theatre can offer. On the face of it, this play should be classed with those radio dramas which are quite divorced from what we usually understand to be drama, but the treatment is so sympathetic, and dramatic principles have been so faithfully and successfully adhered to that the result is a play, admittedly a new sort of play which must appeal to the ear only, but which is still akin to the theatre.

There are, of course, radio plays which, in choice of subject and in treatment, are true plays. It has been necessary to adapt the dialogue to make up for the absence of scenery, but in many ways this has been a good discipline. "Smash and Grab", by Norman Edwards, is an example of excellent adaptation of dialogue to intrcduce a number of scenes. The play opens with the sounds which go with a smash and grab raid: shattering glass, shouts, two revolver shots, a police whistle, a motor-car racing off and a woman screaming. There is a short period of silence and then we hear a staccato knocking on a dcor. When the door is opened, the dialogue opens too, the first four lines being devoted to the building up of a tense atmos-

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This play makes excellent use of the reports of a police patrol over the wireless to create dramatic tension. Without leaving the room, the robbers and their accomplices are aware of the net closing in round them. It is a good example of a successful radio play of the thriller type.

Radio plays seem to be at a disadvantage when subtle characterisation is required, but atmosphere is the forté of the radio: sounds can be reproduced with a subtlety which is not possible on the stage, and the range of possible sounds is much wider. Yet there is the danger that this can be overdone. The value of sound effects decreases in proportion to the amount of their use, and too many radio plays are cluttered with distracting sounds.

There are several other disabilities from which the radio play suffers. It seldom happens that a play is broadcast more than once, and for this reason the rewards are small. The dramatist cannot count on his audience to infect each other. His audience is composed of individual units who lack homogeneity. He cannot aim his play at a group, and must avoid anything which is not likely to have a wide appeal. As the radio play appeals to the ear only, more concentration is demanded of the listener, he becomes more easily fatigued, and soon loses interest if the play is at all obscure. Usually characters have to be severely limited in number, and it is necessary to include names in the dialogue every now and then throughout the play. It is not easy to do this in a natural manner.

Because of the strain on the listener, a long play is not really suitable for broadcasting. In England the average length of a radio play has in the past been well over an hour, but Val Gielgud[1/] says that it is now realised that this is too long. He believes that forty to

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1/ Val Gielgud: "Radio Theatre", p xi.

fifty minutes is the best running time for a play. In America most radio plays run for about half an hour, but there the factor of buying time on the air seems to be the operative one.

I have ignored the commercial radio programmes. In America, it would seem that the best plays were produced during war-time when facilities were made available for writers who were not interested in writing 'soap-operas', and by independent organisations such as the Columbia Workshop and the Theater Guild of the Air. Only the future can tell us what crop we shall reap from the trashy plays which are the present stock in trade of commercial radio.

It seems to me that the potentialities of radio plays have not yet been fully realised. Music is always at hand and too much use is made of this: radio seems to be afraid of the power of a moment's silence. The use of a narrator is so convenient that there seems to have been too little experiment with more subtle forms of linking the scenes. As the radio play depends entirely on auditory appeal, it seems a pity that there have not been more experiments with radio plays in poetry: sound is the essence of the appeal of poetry. And lastly, though the radio play is presented in a new medium and should hence ignore many of the conventions acceptable in a theatre, it should not allow itself to become bastardised. It should be a play in every sense. Dramatic presentations of topics of passing interest are suitable for broadcasting, but there is still a place for the play as dramatic entertainment pure and simple.

No reference to radio plays would be complete without reference to Archibald MacLeish's "Fall of the City". This is a play which has used to full advantage all that the radio can offer. It is written in poetry, and words

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and sounds are all that MacLeish finds necessary for his effects. The theme of the play is the state of mind of a nation which welcomes a dictator , at any time or in any place. We are told that the announcer, who is reporting what is happening, is looking down on a square where the multitude is waiting for the conqueror. His voice is matter-of-fact at the commencement, but as the mob becomes more excited at the approach of the dictator, he cannot but become more excited himself. He describes how the soldiers throw away their arms, how political, army and church leaders fail them in their hour of need, and how the citizens cry out:

"Masterless men
Must take a master! ...

Freedom's for fools:
Force is the certainty!

Freedom has eaten our strength and corrupted our
(virtues,
Men must be ruled."

There is a mammoth cast and MacLeish makes full use of the blending of voices.

The conqueror arrives:

"They cover their faces with fingers. They cower
(before him.

They fall: They sprawl on the stone. He's alone
(where he's walking.
He marches with the rattle of metal. He tramples
(his shadow.
He mounts by the pyramid - stamps on the stairway -
turns -
His arm rises - his visor is opening .....

(There is an instant's breathless silence: then the voice of the Announcer low - almost a whisper.)

.....
There's no one! ....
There's no one at all! ....
No one! ...
The helmet is hollow!
.....
They don't see! They lie on the paving. They lie in the Burnt spears: the ashes of arrows. They lie there ....

The theme is epic, the treatment is objective and the language noble. This play was written for the radio

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and could not possibly be produced on a stage without great changes; but that is not all: Macleish has properly used the very nature of radio to serve his ends.

The radio play must be a short play, and it is possible that the one-act play in the theatre will yet benefit from the new techniques which the radio play must evolve if it is to develop at all. Similarly, it is not unlikely that radio plays will find that the modern one-act play, in its economy and flexibility, can supply techniques and material which will be most valuable.

Television is in its infancy and producers are feeling their way in an uncharted sea; but the one-act play is likely to be most suitable for television because of economy, simplicity of scene and the use of a small cast in most short plays. Technical advances may widen the scope of television, but these factors will remain important. It is possible that in television may be found the stimulus which will liberate the one-act play from the worst features of drama festivals.

With regard to festivals, it would seem that though the one-act play owes much to these competitions, the dramatic form will suffer unless there is some relaxation of the rules and playwrights are encouraged to forsake the one-room interior, the small cast and the trite themes easily interpreted by the amateur. It seems to me that a little revision of the system of allocation of marks will effect far-reaching changes.

As far as the commercial theatre is concerned, there are not really any signs that the one-act play will ever be acceptable. We have the exceptions of Coward's "To-night at 8.30" and Rattigan's "Playbill", but these programmes were produced, not because of their merits, but because the playwrights had names already famous enough to attract playgoers.

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The future will show us what will be made of the propaganda play. What little I have been able to find out about the Russian propaganda play seems to suggest that it may be ignored as a form of art. F. Spenser Chapman[1/] writing of his life in a Chinese Communist geurilla camp in the Malayan jungle during World War II gives an interesting description of the type of propaganda play, Russian inspired, which was part of the regular evening programme of the geurillas:

"Now there would be a short play in three acts. These were almost always variations of the same theme, and I soon got to know them by heart. In the first act a Chinese family discussed the war; the son of the house asked his father for permission to join the geurillas, but this was refused. In the next scene, the Japs - hideous and ridiculous little men with small black moustaches and huge spectacles - entered the house led by an informer. They ravished the daughter, tied up or killed the parents and, finding a bottle od samsu, became incapably drunk. In the final scene, the son of the house, who had run for aid into the jungle, reappeared with a band of geurillas who overpowered the Japs and rescued any compatriots who were still alive."

In England, the Left Book Club Theatre Guild has grown out of the Unity Theatre (a worker's theatre), and by 1938 three hundred groups were affiliated to the Guild. These groups are not tied to any festival rules and are interested in drama with a 'message'. It will be interesting to see what mark they leave on the future. So far they still seem to be enthusing over "Waiting for Lefty".

The part which South Africa has played with regard to the one-act play is all too easily neglected. The charge is often laid at our door that the poverty of South African literature in English is a sign of our not yet having become a nation. The truth is that because of the flood of books from Britain, we are apt to overlook the work of South African authors. A perusal of E.R. Seary's "Biographical and Bibliographical Record of South African Literature in English"[2/] will soon convince the reader that (the

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1/"The Jungle is Neutral", p. 165. (Chatto & Windus, London, (1952)
2/ Grahamstown, 1938.

the work of South African writers of English compares favourably with the output of Afrikaans writers. Much of the work of our writers is published overseas and is accepted on its own merits. All too often it is only by accident that we learn that a writer is a South African, because the African scene is not the only source of inspiration tapped by our writers. A case in point is Horace Flather's one-act play, "Jonathan's Day"[1/]. This play won the first prize in the British Drama League Festival Competition in 1934. Horace Flather, after many years as journalist on the staff of the Cape Argus, has since 1936 been editor of the Natal Advertiser.

The South African scene changes so rapidly that few would venture to predict the path to be followed by the one-act play in the future, and if any dared do so, this land of surprises would be almost certain to prove them wrong. If, however, we circumvent the worst features of the drama festivals and protect ourselves against undesirable features in radio drama, especially commercial programmes, we can look forward to good work from playwrights, producers and actors.

1/ Published by the Year Book Press, London, 1935.

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ADKINS E.	A Ghost in the City (5) A Little Bit of Fame and Glory. (2) Arabian Ring (2) Bloaters (1) Crowning Glory (4) Days of Romance (1) Diamond Syndicate (4) Do It Now (4) End of the Story (1) Entire Change of Programme (4) Find Beverley Brown (1) Footsteps in the Blackout (5) Grandmother's Gold (5) In These Hard Times (3) Lost - One Lunatic (4) Mechanical Man (2) No Fear (2) Romance Comes to Cooper Street (3) Seeing the World (2) The Case of the Crowing Cockerels (3) The Justice of Ching San Chu (3) The Paragon (1) The Portrait (5) The Thompsons in Utopia (5) The Threat (4) The Unexpected (1) Thought Machine (2) What Happened to Henry (3)
AKLOM M.	Apprehensions (50) Flash-back (56) Of Social Significance (55) The Girl in the Tub (54) The Murder Scream (48)
AMES G.	The Green Veil Passes (56)
ANDERSON M.	Feast of Ortolans (70)
ANDREWS I.	Goldfish (57)
ANDREYEV L.	The Dear Departing (14)
ARKELL R.	Colombine (34)
ARLETTE V.I.	Nocturne (51) The Tree (57)
ARMSTRONG A.	In the Dentist's Chair (66)
ARMSTRONG M.S.	Drought (38)

ASKE L.	Non Nobis (56)
ATKINSON A.	They Cannot be Forgotten (6)
AUDEN W.H.	The Dance of Death (see plays published singly)
AYLEN E.	The Holy Crown (50)
BAKER V.H.	Spanish Diggin's (41)
XBaneshik P.	Garden at the Threshold (see plays published singly)
BANNISTER W.	No Tears for Henry (26)
BARING M.	Rehearsal (32) Catherine Parr (33)
BARR H.D.	Diana the Hunted (17)
Barr R. & Ransom S.	Conspiracy (43)
BARRIE J.M.	A Well-remembered Voice (7) Barbara's Wedding (7) Half an Hour (7) Old Friends (7) Pantaloon (7) Rosalind (7) Seven Women (7) The New Word (7) The Old Lady Shows Her Medals (7) The Twelve Pound Look (7) The Will (7) Shall we Join the Ladies? (7)
BAX C.	Aucassin and Nicolette (8) Poetasters of Ispahan (8) Prelude and Fugue (8) Silly Willy (8) Square Pegs (8) The Cloak (8) The Rose and the Cross (8) The Summit (8) The Tale of the Wandering Scholar (8) Tragic Nesta (66)
BAYLISS A.E.M.	A Cure for Colds (11) All Hands to the Pump (11) Forget-me-nots (11) Great-Aunt Jemima (11) One Good Turn (11) Puss in Boots (11) The Missing Skull (11) The Rowland Ruby (11)
BAYLISS A.E.M. & J.C.	All in a Maze (13) Startling Revelations (13) The Golden Mean (13) The Haven (13) Toothache (13) When I was a Girl (13)
BAYLY J.W.	Never no Third Degree (70) The Maker of Laws (69)

BEACH L.	The Clod (20)
BELL J.J.	Thread o' Scarlet (68) Courtin' Christina (25) Wee MacGregor's Party (9)
BELL J.W.	Symphony in Illusion (45)
BELLA M.	Dark Walkers (40)
BENAVENTE J.	No Smoking (68)
BENÉT W.R.	Day's End (71)
BENNETT A.	The Stepmother (59)
BERKELEY R.	Queen of Morturea (68)
BOLTON M.G.	Her Affairs in Order (26)
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BORETZ A.	Camp Ghost (40)
BOTTOMLEY G.	Culbin Sands (33) Ealasaid (67) The Falconer's Daughter (66)
BOURNE J.	Black Night (20) Thy Name is Woman (15) The Second Visit (45)
BOX M.	In a Glass Darkly (17)
BOX M & S	A Marriage Has Been Disarranged (19) Amazons on Broadway (18) Anti-clockwise (19) Be Sure Your Sex Will Find You Out (18) Danse Macabre (18) March Wedding (18) Martha and Mary (19) Number Ten (18) Peace in our Time (18)
BOX S.	Bring me my Bow (50) Fantastic Flight (20) Self-made Man (47) Solomon's Folly (15) The Government Regrets (16) The Tree (6) Waiter! (48)
BRANDANE J.	Rory Aforesaid (61)
BRANDANE J. & YUILL A.W.	Glenforsa (67)
BRICEWHITE G.	Black Uniform (87)
BRIDIE J.	Mrs Waterbury's Millenium (20) Paradise Enow (66) The Amazed Evangelist (68) The Pardoner's Tale (67)

BRIGHOUSE H.
Albert Gates (50)
Back to Adam (48)
Exhibit C (46)
Followers (59)
Hallowed Ground(54)
How the Weather Is Made (61)
Let's Live In England (56)
London Front (53)
Lonesome Like (60)
New Leisure (49)
Passport to Romance (66)
Romany Road (45)
Smoke Screens (44)
The Boy: What will he Become? (47)
The Dye-Hard (64)
The Funkhole (51)
The Inner Man (55)
The Man who Ignored the War (53)
The Night of "Mr H."
The Oak Settle (9)
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The Prince who was a Piper (62)
The Stoker (63)

BROKENSHIRE J.
The Gaolbird (17)

BROOME DM.
The Moon (45)

BROWN A.
Joint Owners in Spain (67)

BROWN I.
I Made You Possible (83)
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BUCKLEY S.
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BUERMANN H.
Debt Takes a Holiday (69)

CANNAN G.
Mary's Wedding (68)

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Ace, King, Queen (25)
City Frolic (87)
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CARRIÉRE A.
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CARTAR C.
And Now - The Journey (48)
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CARY F.
Husbands Supplied (76)

CHAPIN H.
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I's the Poor That 'Elps the Poor (60)
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CHOWN P.
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CLEMENS J.L.
Boy of Bisley (39)

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Gold is Where You Don't Find It (71)
Hawk A-Flying (41)

CONNELLY M.
Little David (50)

CONRAD C.C.	And Now - The Journey (55)
CONWAY O.	Becky Sharp (59) Dux (49) Mimi (61) One of Those letters (51) The Bureaucrats (47) The Desperationist (46) The King's Waistcoat (60) When the Bells Rang (48) Wireless Can't Lie (45) Women Do Things Like That (44)
CORRIE J.	After All Those Years (17) Children of Darkness (49) Hewers of Coal (6) Home Aint So Sweet (54) Litchen Fair (55) Nicodemus (51) Tell it not in Gath (57) The Bridge (53) The Failure (56) The Hoose O' The Hill (44) The Maid of Domrèmy (48) There is no Glory (50)
CORRY P.	Cupid Rampant (76)
CORSWELL D.	Count Albany (35)
COURTNEY P.	Uncle Petey (40)
COWARD N.	Family Album (21) Fumed Oak (21) Hands Across the Sea (21) Red Reppers (21) Shadow Play (21) Still Life (21) The Astonished Heart (21) Ways and Means (21) We Were Dancing (21)
CRON J.	King's Son, Churl's son (46)
DAGGETT J.L.	Goodnight Please -- (69)
DANE C.	Shivering Shocks (10)
DARMADY J.	The Annual Jumble Sale (45) The Mousetrap (63)
DAVENPORT E.A. & STUART D.M.	An Interlude in Porcelain (48) The Map (47)
DAVEY K.	Unnatural Scene (35)
XDAVIES R.E.	Sunset in September (78)
DAVIS C.A.C.	A-sitting On a Gate (23) Burbage Comes to Dine (23) Little Annie (23) Many Years Ago (23) The Battle of the Pump (23) The Faggot (23)
DAWSON N.	"------ Can Die But Once" (56)
DE FRANGUEN L.	The Whip Hand (87)

DE ZGLINITZKI H.	Cannibal (17)
DINNER W.	Mr Fothergill Joins the Angels (55)
DIX B.M.	Allison's Lad (32) Captain of the Gate (9)
DONAHUE P.M.	The Bear's Nest (50)
DOWN O.	The Maker of Dreams (59)
DOYLE A.C.	Waterloo (60)
DRINKWATER J.	Robin Hood and the Pedlar (24) X = O, A Night of the Trojan War (59)
DRURY W.P. & PRICE R.	A Privy Council (67)
DRURY W.P.	A King's Hard Bargain (61)
DUFFY B.	The Coiner (85)
DUGON L.W.	Hospital Scene (71)
DUHIG J.V.	The Ruling Passion (48)
DUKES A.	The Dumb Wife of Cheapside (64) The Player's Dressing Room (66)
DUNSANY, LORD	A Night at an Inn (59) Flight of the Queen (62) Golden Doom (61) Tents of the Arabs (24)
DUSTMAN W.	Indignant Ghost (40)
ELDER E.	Official Announcement (48)
ERVINE ST J.	She was no Lady (25) Progress (35)
ETHERIDGE K.	Underground (87) The Folly of Seithenyn (56)
EVANS C.L.	Antic Disposition (15)
EVREINOV N.N.	Corridors of the Soul (85)
FARJEON H.	Friends (61)
FENN F. & PRYCE R.	'Op-o'-me-Thumb (60)
FERGUSON J.A.	Campbell of Kilmhor (59) The Scarecrow (63)
FERRIS F.	Object All Sublime (17)
FIELD R.L.	Cinderella Married (27) Colombine in Business (27) The Londonderry Air (64) Theories and Thumbs (27) The Patchwork Quilt (27) Three Pills in a Bottle (27) Wisdom Teeth (27)
FOY H.	Corfe Gate (55) Newgate's the Fashion (51) Poor Caro! (53) What is his Lyflode (54)

FRANCIS J.O.	Birds of a Feather (63) The Poacher (62)
GALSWORTHY J.	Defeat (28) Hallmarked (28) Punch and Go (28) The First and the Last (28) The Little Dream (28) The Little Man (28) The Sun (28)
GILBERT B.	Eldorado (33) The Hordle Poacher (9)
GILBERT C.	The Stocking (45)
GILBERT W.S.	Comedy and Tragedy (43) Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (14)
GLASPELL S.	Trifles (67)
GLASPEEL S. & COOK G.C.	Tickless Time (34)
GODEFROY V.	Blessed above Women (50) Intermezzo (54) Widow of Ephesus (39)
XGORDIMER N.	The First Circle (78)
GOW R.	Under the Skull and Bones (100)
XGranger D.R.	The Cottage (see plays published singly) Lady Anne Gets her Bath. " " "
GRANT N.	On Dartmoor (45) The Hat Trick (20) The Last War (46)
GRANTHAM N.	The Sixth Hour (66)
GREEN P.	The No Count Boy (68) Alma Mater (70) Hymn to the Rising Sun (85) Southern Cross (51)
GREENBAUM A.	Bread of Affliction (50)
GREENE C.C.	Your Rooms Are Ready Now (40)
GREENE K.C.	Bohemian Life (30) Please to Remember (30) Red William's Wooing (30) The Baby in the Bulrushes (30) The First Prince of Wales (30) The Princess on the Road (9)
GREGORY, LADY	The Rising of the Moon (60) The Travelling Man (24) The Workhouse Ward (64)
GREGSON J.R.	Mate in Two (66)
GROSS H.	The Next War (85)
GUITRY S.	Table Set for Two (66)
GUNN N.M.	Back Home (44)

HAMILTON C.	The Child in Flanders (60)
HAMPDEN J.	Hynd Horn (31) Over the Garden Wall (31) St George and the Turkish Knight (31)
HANKIN ST J.	The Constant Lover (62) The New Wing at Elsinore (34) The Relapse of Lady Teazle (25)
HARN T.	The Three Wayfarers (43)
HARMER N.	Ghosts on Strike (40)
HARRIS W.E.	Twenty-five Cents (69)
HARWOOD H.M. & JESSE F.T.	The Mask (67)
HAWKINS J. & LEE P.D.	Command Performance (17)
HAY I.	The Crimson Cocoanut (10)
HAYES J.	The Silver Key (57)
HENSON B.	Plans for the Coronation (51)
HERBERT A.P.	Two Gentlemen of Soho (80)
HICKEY D.E.	Over the Top (47)
HICKEY D.E. & PRYS-JONES A.G.	The Clock Strikes Ten (48)
HINES L.J.	Dènouement (17) It's Hard to Grow Old (87)
HINES L.J. & KING F.	Fire Below (16) Vindication (2)
HODSON J.L.	Before Trafalgar (66)
HOLLAND N.	Fond Farewell (36) Happiness my Goal (36) Liberation (36) One Hour Alone (36) On the Frontier (58) Smokescreen (36) Story Conference (36) Tea with a Legend (57) The Defeated (36) The High-backed Chair (36) The Leopard's Spots (36) They all come Back (36)
HOLME C.	The Home of Vision (25)
HOPKINS A.	Moonshine (34)
HOSKING N.N.	Good Ghosts (40)
HOUGHTON S.	The Dear Departed (60) The Master of the House (61)
HOUSMAN L.	A Good Shot (49) Brother Ass (37) Brother Sun (35) Brother Wolf (77)

HOUSMAN L.	Elegy of a Country Churchyard (25) Judge Lynch (15) Makers of Miracle (37) Possession (84) The Last Comment (37) The Mess of Pottage (37) The Order of Release (37) The Peacemakers (37) The V illage Conjurer (65) Under Fire (43)
HOUSTON N.	According to Law (72)
HOWARD F.M.	Money Makes a Difference (10)
HOWELL F.	Jane Wogan (38) The Sentence (87)
HUGHES B.	If the Shoe Pinches (69)
HUGHES L.	Soul Gone Home (41)
HUGHES R.	Man Born to be Hanged (84)
HUNTERTON M.	Headless Horseman (40)
INGHAM H.	Our Lad (76)
JACOBS W.W.	Admiral Peters (9) A Distant Relative (10) The Boatswain's Mate (14) The Ghost of Jerry Bundler)77) The Monkey's Paw (60)
JAGENDORF M.	Buffalmacco's Jest (47)
JENNINGS G.	Between the Soup and the Savoury (61) Five Birds in a Cage (62) The Bride (44)
JENNINGS G. & BOLTON E.	Elegant Edward (9)
JOHN E.	Prelude to Massacre (50)
JOHNSON P.	Dark Brown (56) Derelict (16) Hullabaloo (54) In Waltz Time (53) It's Autumn Now (66) Legend (77) Orange Blossom (55) The Lovely Miracle (63) The Tinsel Duchess (57) Uncle Midnight (58)
KALLAS A.	Bath-Sheba of Saarema (20)
KARINTHY F.	Refund (49)
KAYE-SMITH S. & HAMPDEN J.	Mrs Adis (34)
KELLY M.	The Spell(35)
KIRKPATRICK J.	Of Time and the Blizzard (71) Sleeping Dogs (72)

KOZLENKO W. — The Devil is a Good Man (71)
This Earth is Ours (66)
Trumpets of Wrath (41)

KREYMBORG A. — HAUNTEDWATER (71)

LAWRENCE C.E. — The Reckoning (43)

LEE C. — Mr Sampson (64)

LEHMANN G%. — The Ghost of Laughing Dan. (40)

LEIGHTON G.R. — The Lion's Whelp (10)

LERNET-HOLENIA A. — Saul (85)

LEVEN N. — Odds All Even (17)

LEVINGER E.E. — Tenth Man (47)

LOGAN E. — The Recoil (16)

MACNAMARA M. — Elizabeth Refuses (34)
The Tall, Tall Castle (31)

MAETERLINCK M. — Interior (68)

MALLESON M. — Michael (33)
Paddly Pools (62)

MAPES V. — The Foundling (69)

MARK F. — Tarakin (45)

MATHESON M.F. — Phantom Ship (26)

MAULE W. ST J. — Ladies in Waiting (48)

MAYOR B. — Thirty Minutes in a Street (34)

McCracken E. — Behind the Lace Curtains (66)
The Willing Spirit (76)

McKennel N. — The Bishop's Candlesticks (61)

McLellan R. — The Changeling (68)

MERINGTON M. — A Gainsborough Lady (73)
Artist-Mother-Child (73)
Her Mother's Face (73)
Millet Group (73)
Queen and Emperor (73)
The Lost Silky (73)

MICHAEL H. — Peace Without Honour (46)

MILLER H. — High Tea (57)

XMILLER J. — Cradle in the Dust (78)

MILNE A.A. — Portrait of a Gentleman in Slippers (43)
The Boy Comes Home (69)
The Man in the Bowler Hat (62)
The Princess and the Woodcutter (33)
The Ugly Duckling (53)

MILNE E. — Displaced Persons (58)

MITCHELL R.E.	Husband for Breakfast (49) Resurrection Ezra (70) Royal Inn (39)
MOISEIWITCH M.	The Magic Suit (66)
MONKHOUSE A.	Night Watches (60) The Grand Cham's Diamond (59) The King of Barvender (63)
MORAVSKY M.	The Vacant Room (40)
MORRIS T.B.	Apple Pie Order (26) Cats in Egypt (52) Check to the Queen (26) Dark Betrothal (31) Everybody Comes to Mabel (50) Gild The Mask Again (68) Mirror to Elizabeth (66) Ophelia (57) Progress to Fotheringay (54) Renaissance Night (53) Tail of Fire (58) Tudor Thorns (55)
MOUNT C.	Twentieth Century Lullaby (76) Dirge Without Dole (66)
MULDROW E.	Dust (70)
MUNRO H.H. ("SAKI")	Death Trap (68)
NICHOLSON H.	Shelter for the Night (6)
NIGGLI J.	Soldadera (69) Sunday Costs Five Pesos (51) The Bull Ate Nutmeg (41) The Red Velvet Coat (68) This is Villa (70)
NORRIS L.	Fair Rosamond (17) My Lady's Arms (16)
NOYES A.	Robin Hood (33)
NUSBAUM N.R.	Parting at Imsdorf (72)
O'CASEY S.	A Pound on Demand (43) The End of the Beginning (14)
ODETS C.	Till the Day I Die (74) Waiting for Lefty (74)
O'NEILL E.	All God's Chillun Got Wings (75) Before Breakfast (75) Bound East for Cardiff (75) Emperor Jones (75) In the Zone(75)
OSBOURNE L. & STRONG A.	Little Father of the Wilderness (67)
OULD H.	Discovery (33) Pathfinder (63) Tangled Skeins (66)

PAKINGTON M.	Black Horseman (10) Experiment (45) House With the Twisty Windows (77) Nil Medium (49) Poet's Corner (44)
PARISH J.	St Michael Comes to Shepherd's Bush (53)
PEACH L. DU G.	Shells (66) Scenario (31) The Cohort Marches (6)
PEMBERTON M.	The Queen Waits (53)
PENSON HARRY	Here Comes the King (16) Unknown Division (75)
PENSON HENRY	Love and Cousin Albert (87)
PERCY E.	Red Wax (53) The Language of Love (47) Women at War (64)
PHILLPOTTS E.	Carrier Pigeon (43) The Market Money (68)
PIETERSON F.	Security (47)
PINERO A.	Playgoers (67)
PLOWMAN M.	Get Out of Your Cage (38)
POLLOCK C.	The Captains and the Kings (71)
POPPLEWELL O.	The Pacifist (20)
PURCELL H.V.	Mr Hackett's Alibi (66) Mr Hackett's Prize (17)
QUANT V.H.	Brown Paper Parcel (17)
RANDALL W.M.	Tobacco Alley (69)
RATCLIFF N.	Daughters of Invention (26) We Got Rhythm (35)
RAYNE M.	Folly of Faith (16) Men are Missing (76)
READY S.	Mr Jones Dines Out (87)
REGNIS L.	Arising Out of the Minutes (16)
REID-JAMIESON M.	Eleven A.M. (47)
RELONDE M.	The Happy Ending of a Gruesome Ghost(40)
RIDER F.	Two Ghosts are Better than One (40)
RIGGS L.	A World Elsewhere (71)
ROBERTS C.	Tails Up (16) The Flaw (76) Exit (44)
ROBINSON L.	Church Street (84)
ROBERTSON W.G.	The Slippers of Cinderella (33)

RUBINSTEIN H.F.	Afterglow (6) All Things Are Possible (50) Johnson was no Gentleman (66) Okad's Woman (54) Old Boyhood (63) Prelude to a Tragedy (50) The Deacon and the Jewess (48) The First Corinthians (51) They Went Forth (67)
RUSSELL E.	The Quick and the Dead (46)
RUSSELL E. & CHOWN H.	Two Women (50)
RYERSON F. & CLEMENTS C.	Farewell to Love (70) That's Hollywood (71)
SANGSTER A.	The Moat (6)
SAROYAN W.	Subway Circus (72) Man with the Heart in the Highlands (41) The Hungerers (71)
SAUNDERS L.	The Knave of Hearts (9)
SCHOCHEN S.	One-Car Wedding (71)
SCHOFIELD S.	The Chartist (49)
"SEAMARK"	The 'Ole in the Road(9)
SEILER C.	Goodnight Caroline (70)
SHAIRP M.	The Phoby (77)
SHEA P.	A Lady in a Cage (58)
SHEPHERD M.	Ali the Cobbler (45)
XSHERWIN G.	The Light is Against Us (78)
SIMON I.	Ghost a la Mode (40)
SIMPSON C.	Scobie Betters Himself (46)
SIMPSON H.	In Port (16)
SLADEN-SMITH F.	Happy Death, Ltd. (20) Harlequin Bridge (55) Mrs Noah Gives the Sign (43) Polonaise (54) Sky Scraper (15) St Simeon Stylites (62) The Invisible Duke (63) The Man Who Wouldn't Go to Heaven (61) The Poison Party (64) The Saints' Comedy (67) The Waters of Lethe (58) Love in the Ape-House (46)
SMITH B. & WEBB C.	Manana Bandits (70)
SMITH B & FINCH R.	Summer Comes to the Diamond O (72)
SMITH E.	Dotheboy's Hall (31) Death of Balder (31) The Swineherd (31)

SMITH N.K.	They Refuse to be Resurrected (45)
SQUIRE J.	The Clown of Stratford (14)
STAFFORD K.	I Was a Stranger (58)
STEVENS H.B.	Lincoln Reckons Up (47)
STEVENS H.C.G.	"Hamlet" in Modern - Rush (43)
STEVENSON P.	Transit (41)
STOLER S.A.	Ghost by Request (40)
STONE W.	Cloud Over Breakshin (70) Devil Take a Whittler (69) Rainbows in Heaven (73)
STRINDBERG A.	Miss Julia (79) The Link (79) The Stronger (79)
STUCKES W.	Shanghai (44)
SUTRO A.	A Marriage Has Been Arranged (60)
SUTTON G.	T' Pup (46)
XSWEMMER B.N.	Breaking Point (81) Doctor's Wife (81) Live and Let Live (81) Private Ward (81) Sauce for the Gander (81)
SYLVAINE V.	Everything's Just the Same (66) The Road of Poplars (67)
SYNGE J.M.	Riders to the Sea (60)
TAGORE R.	Chitra (68)
TALBOT A.J.	Incorrigible (77) Lucrezia Borgia's Little Party (46) Set Fair (15) Tarnish (50) The Centurion's Billet at Swacking Burphen (64)
TAYLEUR W. St J.	Reunion (57)
TAYLOR M.A.	The Dilly Dehaunting Agency (40)
TCHEKOFF A.	A Tragedian in Spite of Himself (82) On the High Road (82) The Anniversary (82) The Bear (82) The Proposal (82) The Wedding (82)
TERRY J.E.H.	Master Wayfarer (61)
XTHOMAS M.	Border Folk (78) Laying the Foundations (see plays published singly)
THORBURN J.	The Man in the Street (53) The Woman (54)
THORNDIKE R. & ARKELL R.	The Tragedy of Mr Punch. (43)

THURSTON E.T. — Snobs (10)

TIMMORY G. — To Kill a Man (85)

TOLLER E. — The Scorned Lover's Revenge (15)

TOMHOLT S. — Anoli: The Blind (49)

TORAHIKO E. — Raizan (47)

TOTHEROH D. — The Great Dark (46)
The Stolen Prince (31)

TREASE G. — After the Tempest (51)

TURNER T. — The Crystal (16)

TURNES M. — My Hornbook and My Top. (58)

USTINUV P. — Beyond (55)

VALLANCE R. — Fairy Blessing (31)
Pandora's Box (35)

VERY A. — Highland Lad (40)

von ORBOCK A. — With Discretion (85)

WALKER R.S. — The Great Globe Itself (64)

WALKER S. — Nevertheless (83)
Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil (83)
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The Trumpet (83)

WALLACE E. — Forest of Happy Dreams (43)

WATSON T.M. — When Peacocks Sing (87)

WEFER M. — Three Squeals for Freedom (40)

WELFF E. — The Ghost of Caesar's Hair (40)

WEST N.K. — Madam Döde (40)

WHITE L. — Lady Jemima's Weekly Thought (49)

WHITWORTH G. — Father Noah (77)

WILDE O. — A Florentine Tragedy (67)

WILDE P. — A House of Cards (65)
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Catesby (65)
Comrades in Arms (48)
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Finger of God (65)
In the Net (65)
Kings in Nomania (65)
Lady of Dreams (65)
Mr F. (54)
Over the Teacups (41)
Pawns (65)
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The Sequel (65)
The Talisman (65)
The Traitor (65)
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WILDER T.N.	Love and How to Cure It (86) Pullman Car Hiawatha (86) Queens of France (86) Such Things Only Happen in Books (86) The Happy Journey to Trenton-and Campden- The Long Christmas Dinner (86) (86)
WILLIAMS H.	Au Petit Trianon(77)
WILLIAMS T.	Moony's Kids Don't Cry (70)
WILLIAMSON H.R.	Conversation with a Ghost (58) The Cardinal's Learning (57) Various Heavens (83)
X WILSON A.J.A.	The White Train (78)
WINTER K.	Air Raid (6)
WOTHERSPOON R. & JACKSON L.N.	All in the Day's Work (87)
YEATS W.B.	Cathleen ne Houlihan (54) Deirdre (67) Pot o' Broth (61)
YOUNG S.	Farmer Brown's Pig (72)

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BENÉT S.P.	Western Star (42)
BLITZSTEIN M.	The Airborne (42)
BROWN J.M. & TEICHMANN M.	Many a Watchful Night (42)
BONETT E.	One Fine Day (29)
CONSTANDUROS M. & AGG H.	The Tunnel (29)
CORWIN N.	Daybreak (42)
COX W.E.	Return of Michael Conly (40)
COUPER L. & OTHERS	The Last Speech (42)
DECKELMAN E.	Helen Keller (42)
EDWARDS N.	Smash and Grab (29)
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GORE-BROWN M.	Music for Miss Rogers (29)
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MACLEISH A.	Air Raid (71) The Fall of the City (42)
MARKLE F.	Sometime Every Summertime (42)
MILLER A.	Story of Gus (42)
MORGAN A.	The Little One (42)
PERL A.	The Empty Noose (42)
ROSTEN N.	The Big Road (42)
WISHENGRAD M.	The Last Inca (42)
WOLFE T. & LOMAX E.	Farewell to Altamount (42)