

White, N.J. (1999). In the absence of memory?: Jewish fate and dramatic representation; production and critical reception of Holocaust drama on the London stage 1945-1989.

(Unpublished Doctoral thesis, City University London)



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***IN THE ABSENCE OF MEMORY?***

**Jewish fate and dramatic representation:  
the production and critical reception of Holocaust drama  
on the London stage 1945-1989**

**Nicholas John White**

***Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy***

***City University London  
The Department of Arts Policy and Management  
August 1998***

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**IN**

**ORIGINAL**

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the following individuals and institutions for their generous response to my enquiries and for their assistance in locating sources:

### **Israel**

Nava Carmel, The Israel Goor Theatre Archives and Museum, Jerusalem; Dr Ben-Ami Feingold, School of Education, Tel-Aviv University; Habima National Theatre, Tel-Aviv; The Hebrew University, Jerusalem; The Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, Ramat Gan; Shimon Lev-Ari, The Israeli Documentation Center for the Performing Arts, Tel-Aviv University; Corina Shoef, Tel-Aviv University; Dov Ben Yacob, 'Genazim' Theatre Archive, Tel-Aviv.

### **The Netherlands**

Anne Frank Stichting, Amsterdam.

### **Poland**

The British Council, Warsaw; Centrum Informacji, Spotkan, Dialogu, Wychowania I Modlitwy W. Oswiecimiu; Dr Tomasz Kubikowski, Dialog, Warsaw; State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Oswiecim; Dr Andrzej Zurowski, Kontakt, Gdansk.

### **Switzerland**

Bibliothek der Universität, Basel; Hirter Millar, Zentralbibliothek Zürich; Schweizerische Theatersammlung, Bern; Stadtarchiv, Zürich.

### **United Kingdom**

Dr Glenda Abramson, St. Cross College, The University of Oxford; Brighton Library; Britain-Israel Public Affairs Centre, London; British Film Institute, London; The British Library, The Manuscripts Collection, London; Cambridge University Press; Ms. Anna Charin, *The Jewish Chronicle*, London; David Clough, London; Liz Comstock-Smith, London; Vicky Edwards, Chichester Festival Theatre; Dr John Elsom; Mr Keith Feldman, *The Jewish Chronicle*, London; Sue Godsell, The City University Library (Periodicals) London; Goethe Institut, London; Natalie Haupt; David Higham Associates Ltd., London; Deborah Holden, Library Theatre, Manchester; Roger Howells, The Shakespeare Centre, Stratford upon Avon; Institute of Contemporary History and Weiner Library Ltd., London; Institute of Germanic Studies, University of London; Institute of Jewish Studies, University College, London; Lois Keidan, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; Nicolas Kent, Tricycle Theatre, London; Judith Knight Ltd., London; Jon Mendelsohn, The Holocaust Educational Trust,

London; Movietone News, London; Nancy Mules, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry; Nottinghamshire County Library, Nottingham; Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, The University of Oxford; Pascal Theatre Company, London; Marian Pringle, Royal Shakespeare Company Archives, The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, The Shakespeare Centre Stratford-upon-Avon; Gabriele Reinsch, Goethe Institut Library, Manchester; School of East European and Slavonic Studies Library, University of London; Claude Schumacher, Dept. of Theatre, University of Glasgow; Dr Peter Singer, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; Robin Smith, National Library of Scotland (Manuscripts Division) Edinburgh; Roger Smither, The Imperial War Museum, London; John Strickland, Citizens Theatre, Glasgow; Mercedes Sullivan, Paines Plough, London; The Theatre Museum, Covent Garden, London; *Time Out*, London; Michael Walsh, The Library Heythrop College, London; Peter Williams, The City University Library (Inter-library loans) London; The World Zionist Organisation, London.

### **United States**

Prof Kenneth Bernard, Dept. of English, Long Island University; Bill Carver Writers' and Artists' Agency, New York; Leah K. Friedman, New York; Prof Alvin Goldfarb, The Theatre Dept. Illinois State University, Normal, Bloomington; Hartford Library Connecticut; Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin; Prof Ron Jenkins, Emerson College, Boston; Christine Karatnytsky, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center Plaza, New York; Long Wharf Theater, New Haven Connecticut; William Morris Agency, New York; Flora Roberts Inc., New York; San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum; Prof Robert Skloot, The Dept. of Theater and Drama University of Wisconsin - Madison; Prof Michael Taub, Judaic Studies Dept. State University of New York at Binghamton; Prof George Wellwarth, Theater Dept. State University of New York at Binghamton; Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; Ken Werther, Mark Taper Forum Center Theater Group, Los Angeles; Writers Guild of America (East), New York; Yale School of Drama, Yale University, New Haven Connecticut.



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## **Abstract**

Plays representing some aspect of the Holocaust produced in both the commercial and subsidised sectors of the London theatre throughout the Cold War period variously but consistently sought to evade, diminish or inappropriately qualify the cardinal fact that, in the formulation which was the Nazi's own, 'the Final Solution' was that 'of the *Jewish* question in Europe'. Such dramatic distortions hinder perceptions of the identity and fate of the chief victims of the Holocaust.

Playwrights', directors', managements', and to a marginally lesser degree, critics' failure to question or challenge these tendencies results not so much in the explicitly stated exoneration of those responsible for the Nazi genocide as the erasure or attenuation of both German guilt and Jewish suffering through dramatic speculation upon the universal human propensity to evil. In consequence the suggestion is made of Jewish agency in, and culpability for, their own fate during the Holocaust. At their most extreme these dramatic tendencies resort to the recurrent themes of anti-Semitic discourse.

The ubiquitous dramatic strategies and tropes employed in the productions discussed, rather than succeed in their attempt to find and represent meaning in the respective episodes and events of the Nazi genocide dramatised, frequently re-present this elimination through the evasion, attenuation or erasure, of Jewish fate. The productions register the failure of dramatic art to find equitable metaphor and adequate representational means to provoke reflection of a kind which might transcend the meaningless facticity of mass murder and the impulse to annihilation, and are drawn into those same dynamics of annihilation, evidenced by the erasure of Jewish identity and fate. This phenomenon remains largely, but not entirely, unremarked in the immediate critical response of the British press, but almost wholly neglected in later commentary due to an 'absence of memory': the lack of a specifically British critical discourse on dramatic representation and the Holocaust.

## Abbreviations

The following *italicised* abbreviations followed by a page reference appear in the text when direct quotation is made from the chosen published text of the play under consideration. The abbreviations are given in alphabetical order rather than by order of appearance in the text.

*CHPAH.*      *George Steiner's Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.*  
Christopher Hampton

*G.*            *Good. A Tragedy.* C. P. Taylor

*Gh.*           *Ghetto.* Joshua Sobol

*IAV.*          *Incident at Vichy.* Arthur Miller

*Inv.*          *The Investigation.* Peter Weiss

*L.*            *Laughter!* Peter Barnes

*MITGB.*      *The Man in the Glass Booth.* Robert Shaw

*PDAF.*        *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank.*  
Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett.

*Pdn.*          *Perdition.* Jim Allen

*R.*            *The Representative.* Rolf Hochhuth

Full details of the published texts may be found in the references of the appropriate chapter and, along with variant versions of some of the texts, in the Drama section of the bibliography.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Britain and the Holocaust

In his informal survey of the condition of Anglo-Jewry, *The Club. The Jews of Modern Britain*, first published in 1989, Stephen Brook enquiring about British attitudes towards the Holocaust solicited the views of several Jewish commentators, amongst them George Steiner, who remarked:

In Britain the Shoah has no reality, not even to the Jews... Out of all the countries in the world with a sizeable Jewish population, Britain alone, out of the whole diaspora of remembrance, is oblivious of the Shoah... The Jewish establishment will never remonstrate, it will never rock the boat. Did it speak up in the 1940s when unspeakable things were being done to those who had survived the Holocaust? No. Consequently we live in an oasis of unreality. Yet it is a miracle that the Jews of Britain were spared the horrors of Europe. Only twenty miles of salt sea separated them from extinction. (1)

Steiner's final comments are no mere rhetoric. The Wannsee Conference of 20 January 1942, where the implementation of the 'Final Solution to the Jewish question' in Europe was decided, estimated Britain's Jewish population at 330,000. (2) While Steiner acknowledges that the minimal engagement with the consequences and issues provoked by the Holocaust is due in some measure to the complacency of officialdom within organised Judaism, the writer and critic Frederic Raphael deftly identifies the attitude he considers to be characteristic of the breadth of British society: 'the British won. They don't regard the Holocaust as their problem.' (3)

When prominent figures in British academic and cultural life express such views the effect is in part consternation. Are the British oblivious to the Shoah, and if so, why? Is there something to be gained from British interest and involvement in the profound problems provoked by the Holocaust? Tony Kushner has made perhaps the most recent sustained investigation of British responses to the Holocaust, including official government policy toward the Jews of Europe throughout the 1930s, the war, and post-war periods (including the failure of the limited opposition to that policy during 1943), to the 'revelations' of Nazi atrocities in 1945, and the lack, until recent years, of a climate in which serious and sustained consideration of the Holocaust could take place in mainstream British educational and cultural life. (4) In a 1991 article entitled 'The Impact of the Holocaust on British Society and Culture', Kushner concludes:

There is a remarkable lack of literature on the impact of this enormous event on the British state, culture and society as a whole. There is a curious silence from groups ranging from historians to contemporary commentators in this country to what many see as the most significant episode of the twentieth century. (5)

The evidence Kushner has himself marshalled relates to such diverse areas as the British response to immigrant Holocaust survivors, the public commemoration of anniversaries associated with the Holocaust, the historiography of the Holocaust in British academic history, Holocaust education at university level, War Crimes trials, and, more recently, the initiative to establish a permanent exhibition on the theme of the Holocaust at the Imperial War Museum. (6)

Kushner considers that the Holocaust has become 'a subject of major interest' only in the 1990s because three factors which combined so powerfully in 1945 to ensure that 'the history of the Holocaust would remain marginalised and generally neglected', have only recently been challenged. Kushner identifies these three factors as: the preservation of an untainted memory of Allied victory - essentially Frederic Raphael's point - which any attempt to acknowledge the enormity of the Holocaust would destroy; 'the universalist liberal framework' which had been 'resistant to the particularity presented by the Holocaust'; and 'the domination of Englishness and Christianity' which necessarily implied Jewish marginality. (7)

However, this thesis seeks to address an area of cultural life Kushner neglects to mention, namely, London theatre, and to determine in what ways dramatic representations of Jewish fate during the Holocaust and the critical reception given to such productions, confirms, or otherwise, Steiner's and Kushner's views about the place of the Holocaust in British cultural life.

## **1.2 Holocaust drama and the British theatre**

In his book, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, Kushner maintains that 'the worlds of literature, art, music and film-making at a popular and high cultural level in British society rarely addressed the issue of the Holocaust' in the post-war period until the 1990s. (8) While it is a fair assessment of the situation across a broad range of artistic expression, Kushner's statement is of interest because he specifically fails to mention the theatre. This may reflect the 'invisibility' of theatre in British cultural life beyond the latest West End 'triumph', the implication being that theatre does not merit mention either as 'popular' art or high culture, or possibly that he is aware that his statement is less accurate (but then only marginally) for the theatre. While not wishing to argue that British playwrights and theatres have made special efforts to concern themselves with the Holocaust, the problems of representation, and the staging of plays

about the Holocaust (placed as they are by virtue of Britain's role in the Second World War and its policies towards the Jews in relation to the Holocaust), the London theatre has consistently staged plays which have achieved critical notice in the US and Europe, as well as staging plays by British playwrights which have sought to address the Holocaust. No claim is being made which would suggest the London theatre has given noticeably more attention to productions than a given London publisher may have given to novels, or a gallery to plastic arts which concern the Holocaust. But this thesis, at the very least, aims to register that the London theatre has regularly staged dramas concerned with the Holocaust and, as such, due consideration of these productions should form part of any general survey of the place of the Holocaust in post-war British culture which Kushner's account in *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination* fails to do. (9)

It is principally the public, communal nature of theatrical art, and, accompanying the post-war media boom, the increasingly sizeable journalistic commentary upon theatre productions, which render these productions of Holocaust drama a significant factor in any judicious assessment of the place afforded to the discussion of the Holocaust in post-war British culture. It is hard to account for Kushner's neglect of such a public expression of concern for the issues provoked by the Holocaust. Theatre may well have appealed to a broader constituency than some of the institutions Kushner does discuss. This thesis seeks to give the theatre, and specifically the productions chosen, an appropriate significance within the British cultural scene.

As far as the present author has been able to ascertain only one English language book exclusively focused upon drama of the Holocaust has been published to date, *The Darkness We Carry* by Robert Skloot, which appeared in 1988. (10) This sole critical work had been preceded by an anthology of plays, entitled *Theatre of the Holocaust*, also edited and introduced by Robert Skloot, and published in 1981. (11)

There is a noticeable similarity between the earlier generic and thematic treatments of Holocaust literature and Robert Skloot's *The Darkness We Carry*. This is not due solely to their common subject and the critical issues shared by artistic representation of many kinds, but by virtue of Skloot's approach to the plays. While Skloot acknowledges that 'One of the objectives of this book of essays is to stimulate producers and directors... to consider staging dramas of the Holocaust' (12) - his practical and ethical concerns as a *theatre director* as well as a scholar are to the fore - it is his thematic approach to the difficulties inherent in the dramatic representation of Holocaust experience which allows him the 'coherence and flexibility' for his acknowledged 'ethical-theatrical bias'. (13) This places him firmly amongst the earlier discussants of a literature of the Holocaust in offering a critical examination of the existential phenomenology of Holocaust experience as constructed or bodied forth in

the wide spectrum of plays and productions from Britain, France, Germany, Israel and the United States.

Skloot devotes a chapter to each of a number of related themes. First, he discusses the dramatic representation of the nature of choice and the prospect of survival in the midst of Nazi sadism and atrocity and how these dilemmas are variously resolved dramatically. Skloot's assessment of the plays is quietly upbeat. He maintains that the best plays succeed in preserving a sense that potential choices remain, however circumscribed, and that the negotiation of these choices is what preserves a glimmer of hope for human dignity. Writing to counter a strong literary tendency to speak of the *inevitability* of Jewish suffering and fate, Skloot's views are decidedly more optimistic than Lawrence Langer's characterisation of the encircling Nazi universe as one of 'choiceless choice' in his book, *Versions of Survival*, (14) even though Langer himself rejects any notion of inevitability particularly when reinforced by attempts at theological justification.

Second, Skloot considers the propriety of tragedy as a meaningful generic description of drama of the Holocaust when conventionally such a genre has been predicated upon values and assumptions obliterated by Nazi racial ideology and buttressed by a spurious legality that to be a Jew was not to be human. Consistent with the position he had taken in his discussion of choice, Skloot is affirmative in his conclusions about the place of tragic understanding:

According to traditional tragedy, the individuals who do challenge the forces of catastrophic fate *are* unique, like us and different from us at the same time... We do not seem wholly able to dispense with the hopeful and heroic aspects of tragedy... neither can most artists *totally* sacrifice their intuitive, natural, use of some life-affirming action, even in the presence of concentration camps. (15)

The question remains whether the playwright's incapacity to '*totally*' abandon 'life-affirming action' corresponds to the experience of those caught up in the Holocaust and whether the inability reflects their limitations rather than the reality of Nazi cynicism.

Third, Skloot detects three comic stances in the plays he considers, remarking that 'comedy in Holocaust drama is often intrusive and reflexive, calling attention to itself by admitting the futility of its own function', while other writers by considering Holocaust survivors' attempts to divert attention away from 'the terminal pressure of history' ask audiences to 'attend to the experience of those who lived through the terror'. Skloot acknowledges however that such plays 'are emptied of their comic emotion of joy... and despite deliverance, a mournful quality often remains.' Comedy also manifests itself 'as a fully expressed antithesis to the seriousness of the Holocaust.

Here, playwrights advance a comic vision in spite of the tragedy, defying its purity and dominance... These plays turn comedy against itself, often in the style of parody... Their objective is to shock audiences from complacency and sombre respectfulness.' (16) Dramatists are struggling, Skloot concludes, with a *tragicomic* vision of life and while no such easy recourse to generic labelling resolves the issues, in the context of a discussion of drama representing aspects of the Holocaust it at least emphasises once again the closeness of the 'essential natures' of tragedy and comedy. (17)

Fourth, Skloot maintains that dramatic strategies 'insulate our reality not only from "inhuman circumstances" but from clear delegation of moral responsibility'. Amongst these dramatic strategies he includes the tendency to dramatise the Holocaust through the 'personification of historical good and evil' where 'paired characters whose identities are interchangeable' are used by the dramatist to challenge or critique conventional assumptions and interpretations which the dramatist believes to be ossified, thus masking some deeper insight that has been lost and which the role reversal brings sharply into focus. These characters often have 'a stage reality that calls attention to itself as a conscious invention of the playwright, and where the audience is asked to accept certain "unbelievable" premises for the action of the play'. (18) This frequently leads to a proliferation of elements in the production which reinforce the aesthetic of theatre conscious of itself as theatre with its consequent effects upon audience perception and their relationship to that which is represented.

Lastly, in a final chapter Skloot examines six German language plays from the 1950s to the 1980s in which he finds evidence of 'the increasing abstraction of images of Jews that contributes to a troubling, if not dire, sense about the future'. (19)

As Skloot acknowledges, a chief purpose of his book is to give a strong indication of the minimal criteria by which serious attempts to dramatise an aspect of Holocaust experience can be discerned from those which are not, precisely because the latter *violate* these criteria. The violations include: patent indifference to the memory and suffering of millions; a less than rigorous approach to the complexity of the historical record; and the subordination of the cardinal fact of the Holocaust, 'Germans (and others) killed millions of Jews (and others) and not the other way round'. (20) While such negligence may enable the playwright to make a speculative argument about more abstract issues, such as the universal human propensity to evil, or to privilege a personal political interpretation or even to explore an unrelated issue, the central character and objective of the Holocaust, the extermination of Europe's Jews, is masked or diminished.

While not entirely ignoring the public, the political and cultural dimensions of performance, Skloot's approach leans toward the more formally aesthetic, to questions of genre and form, and the efficacy with which these convey the thoughts and ideas the



playwright was intent on dramatising. In this thesis I have attempted to engage with those same issues specifically in relation to the representation of Jewish fate, while simultaneously interpreting the playwrights' dramatic forms and strategies in the broader but minimal context of a critical discussion of the theatres' contemporary situation. The plays discussed here were frequently produced for reasons not solely accounted for in terms of the urgency of their theme, and the ethical or aesthetic importance granted the plays by the producing companies.

A factor which affirms the basic thrust of Steiner's and Kushner's argument is the paucity of critical work in Britain which seeks to discuss and evaluate specifically British responses to representations of the Holocaust on page and stage, in cinemas, concert halls and galleries, as opposed to commentary on their reception by other European countries (notably Germany) and the United States. This thesis will also seek to demonstrate that beyond the first night press notices, dramatic representations of the Holocaust have been neglected in academic theatre criticism.

The prevalence and pre-eminence of US critical commentary amongst English language publications is hardly surprising. With the chief exception of Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi's *By Words Alone. The Holocaust in Literature* (1980) (21), scholars based in the US were amongst the first to define a literature of atrocity (22) and specifically of the Holocaust, developing generic and thematic approaches to literary texts which were concerned with Holocaust experience. Chief amongst these critical endeavours are Lawrence Langer's *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (1975) Alvin Rosenfeld's *A Double Dying. Reflections on Holocaust Literature* (1980), Langer's *Versions of Survival* (1982) and James E. Young's *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust. Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (1988). (23) These books have become the standard introductory texts to literary works concerned with the Holocaust and the critical issues raised. Amongst these are: the problematic place of rationality both in the implementation of the Nazi genocide and the literary attempt to provide a coherent and veracious account of its human dimensions even as these defy the very process of their delineation in artistic expression; the collapse of rational discourse and aesthetic representation predicated as they are on traditions in European civilisation which assume precisely that which has been lost: the existence of a coherent relationship between language and reality; the relationships between history, writing and memory, and aesthetic criteria and form in relation to all these; the representability of trauma and atrocity and the attendant risks of the aestheticisation and trivialisation of atrocity and suffering; the propriety of poetic and narrative representation versus silence and ritual remembrance in face of the problematic comprehensibility of the Holocaust, its ineffability and the dangers inherent in the tendency toward mystification.

The earlier generic surveys of Holocaust literature merely touched upon dramatic texts and almost exclusively concerned themselves with the popularisation of the Holocaust through the dramatisation of *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* and the German documentary movement exemplified by Rolf Hochhuth's *The Representative* and Peter Weiss's *The Investigation*, 'the rhetoric of fact', as Young calls it. (24) The issues raised briefly in these earlier works are discussed with broader reference in chapters devoted to each of these plays.

In my attempt to outline a public perception of Jewish fate during the Holocaust as mediated through the production, critical reception, and scholarly discussion of Holocaust drama on the London stage, many of the themes identified in the generic treatments of Holocaust literature and those issues raised by Skoot are central to the discussion of the particular productions which provide the focus of this thesis.

### **1.3 Holocaust drama on the London stage 1945-1989**

I examine a number of renowned productions, and in one instance the withdrawal of a production, of dramas of the Holocaust which were staged in London throughout the Cold War period between 1955 and 1989, embracing a number of theatre institutions operating in the capital and which are representative of London theatre: the two national subsidised companies, the Royal Shakespeare Company (in two of its London bases, the Aldwych Theatre and The Warehouse in Covent Garden) and the Royal National Theatre, as it came to be named in 1988; the leading company for new writing based at its renowned theatre in Sloane Square, the English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre; two West End commercial theatre managements, H. M. Tennent Ltd, and Glasshouse Productions; and finally Bernard Miles's Mermaid Theatre.

With each production I have aimed: first, to provide a minimal context for the production in the company's or management's artistic policy and economic condition in so far as these could be discerned from published sources, and particularly where these considerations have a direct bearing upon the desired economic success of the production. In each case an ethos exists which respective artistic directorships are frequently reluctant to define precisely, though most acknowledge its existence. It is this ephemeral sense, along with much else in the theatre, of offering a particular kind of theatrical experience, that I have aimed to evoke briefly in each case. Each company may have viewed its policy as simply providing good theatre but what constitutes good theatre for each, differs markedly.

Second, to provide a narrative summary of a published text of the play, a narrative context against which my discussion of the press night performance criticism and subsequent scholarly discussion of dramatic texts and performances could be set, the

object being to provide textual evidence and interpretation in support of my central thesis and specifically focusing upon the dramatic texts' representation of Jewish fate.

Patrice Pavis has commented that 'the reading of the text as carried out by an ordinary reader... calls for a concretization/representation which is a kind of imaginary *pre-mise en scène*'. (25) Committed to paper, this 'imaginary staging' becomes for the writer a pre- or post- text to the performance text, and as such shares in the impermanence and instability of meaning of the text itself. Nevertheless Pavis acknowledges that there is 'an undeniable relationship of the fictional universe structured by the text and the fictional universe produced by the stage', (26) and Issacharof considers the performance to a greater or lesser degree always to be inscribed in the dramatic text. (27) Likewise the narrative summary of each play presented here claims a substantive relationship both to the published dramatic text and the largely unrecoverable performance text of the premières which were the subjects of the press night critical notices.

Third, to discuss the critical notices of the chief national daily and Sunday newspapers, political weeklies and the specialist theatre press, and to assess the critical reception of these dramas, noting particularly the response to the representation of Jewish experience and fate in each of these plays. Conclusions drawn about the critical response to the plays may thus fairly be described as those found in the mainstream of the British national press.

For semioticians it is equally necessary to stress the instability of the performance text as it is that of the written dramatic text. For example, Erika Fishcher - Lichte comments: 'as an aesthetic text the performance allows for different possibilities of constituting meaning, we cannot assume the existence of one single "correct" interpretation... the process of constituting the overall meaning of the performance can always be started up anew... is always itself merely temporary'. (28) This process comes to an end in Fischer-Lichte's view with the conclusion of the last performance after which the meaning of the performance 'can only be revised on the basis of memory and not by comparison with the text'. (29)

While acknowledging the force of this insight - the potential of the dramatic text to assist in the recovery of meanings taken by the members of a specific audience from a specific performance text on a given occasion is severely circumscribed - the effect of such a conclusion is to suggest that nothing can be known of a specific performance text from the written dramatic text when the latter has formed a substantive element of that performance text. In their anxiety to deny the primacy of the text lest they betray a residue of metaphysical assumptions, semioticians are reluctant to elucidate the grounds for a coherence of meaning across the dramatic and performance texts, and those meanings received by critics and audiences which would allow for difference in

interpretation while preserving valid minimal criteria for claims of participation in the 'same' event and the possibility of shared meanings. If interpretations were as discrete as some semioticians appear to suggest, an audience could not know whether the play they had attended bore any relation to the play they intended to see, or to the meanings they derived.

Fischer-Lichte is undoubtedly correct to point out that, 'during the performance the receiver can neither dart back and forth, nor immerse himself in some particular detail, nor acquire additional material on the context of the performance... For he cannot interrupt the course of the performance with a view to obtaining a better understanding of the latter'. Nevertheless, she concedes that 'opportunities must exist for the spectator to accord these signs and sign combinations an ad hoc meaning' (30) - a process made possible by shared presuppositions both within theatrical conventions and codes and within the wider cultural context.

With the exception of the professional semiotician intent on making a semiotic analysis of a performance he attends, the critical reviewer is the only individual whose ad hoc construction of meaning of a given performance is made publicly available simultaneously with the run of the play. As such the critics' notices become a significant source of public critical memory of the performance text, both 'public' and 'critical' in ways that are less true for other possible sources which avail insight into the performance text, such as director's or technicians prompt books, which, as texts, are treated by semioticians with an austerity equal to the dramatic text in the potential they hold for uncovering meanings of the performance text.

In approaching the irretrievable performance text of the press night performance the critical memory of the theatre critics as concretised in the texts of their reviews, is the chief source used in this thesis to gain some understanding of the interpretations made of the dramas' performance texts. While acknowledging that differences of interpretation of the performance text arise due to the 'ambiguous and polysemous semiotizations' on stage, (31) discussion of critical memory (differences of interpretation in evidence in the critical notices and scholarly discussion) is based upon the assumption that such memory stands in a coherent relationship to both the written dramatic, and the performance texts. They share sufficient common ground to make discussion of the critical notices meaningful in relation to the dramatic text and the ultimately irretrievable performance text of each première.

W. B. Worthen's comments in the introduction to his *Modern Drama and the Rhetoric of Theatre* are apposite in this regard:

The promise of theater semiotics has foundered on the fact that the theatre's meanings arise in a congeries of signifying formalities that is too multiplex, indeterminate and unsystematic in its 'lexicon', 'grammar', and 'syntax' to be

readily reduced to the model provided by verbal language. Yet theatre semiotics alerts us to an important truth about meaning in the theater: meaning arises not through a given production's direct reference to an external world, but through the production's assertion of a set of available signifiers from the field of stylistic possibilities.

The meaning of a given ensemble of practices and effects is discerned not by reference to the world it represents, but by its differences from ensembles, other rhetorical modes. (32)

Worthen's remarks are suggestive of a fruitful approach to the dramas considered here. He is emphasizing that it is the audience which 'defines and legitimates a certain range of interpretative behaviour and experience' in relation to drama in production, and it is this that Worthen takes to be 'the rhetoric of theater'.(33) Expressing these dynamics slightly differently, he adds: 'The rhetoric of theatre... frames a relationship between the drama, stage production, and audience interpretation, and it is within that relationship that our experience as an audience takes place.' (34) In short meaning is produced by what the audience makes of the interpretative potential offered and denied to it by the drama in performance. The most formal, prolific public record of this interpretative endeavour is that created by the theatre critics' notices.

Fourth and finally, to offer a critical assessment of some of the post-production scholarly research and interpretation in which the analysis of the dramatic texts is extended beyond that which is possible in the necessarily summary, immediate press night critical response to the performance, and, in some instances, to engage with the scholarly debate or with ensuing public controversy over the representation of Jewish fate and experience.

In so far as it is valid to speak of a British public consciousness of the Holocaust mediated through theatre performance, criticism, and the publication of dramatic texts, such awareness has not been informed solely through plays authored by British writers. Plays considered in this thesis, from Germany, Israel, the United Kingdom and the United States, were chosen not solely as representative productions of the policy priorities of different sectors of the London theatre in different eras, but in relation to the place the productions enjoy in the mythology of British theatrical history, gained in part through one or a combination of the following factors: popular and/or critical acclaim; the international renown of the playwright, director, designer or actors (and sometimes all of these), the controversial nature of the claims being made, an ensuing public controversy, and in one instance the complete withdrawal of the production on the day before its première.

#### **1.4 Describing the indescribable, avoiding the unavoidable: dramatic evasion and Jewish fate**

In his introduction to the anthology of Holocaust plays, *The Theatre of the Holocaust*, Skloot ventured the opinion that serious playwrights who are drawn to the events of the Holocaust are

motivated by five objectives, often simultaneously pursued: 1) to pay homage to the victims, if not as individuals then as a group; 2) to educate audiences to the facts of history; 3) to produce an emotional response to those facts; 4) to raise certain moral questions for audiences to discuss and reflect upon; and 5) to draw a lesson from the events re-created. (35)

Principally Skloot is describing the motivations he discerns in the authors of the plays he selected for his anthology, none of which are discussed in this thesis. (36) The objectives are of interest in so far as they may be claimed to be an adequate description of the objectives of the authors whose plays were produced on the London stage and discussed here. As will become clear, Skloot's analysis betrays rather a naïve conception of the normative when reflecting upon the variety of objectives entertained by playwrights who address the events of the Holocaust. The conscious and unconscious motivations of the playwrights considered here are a good deal more complex than Skloot's description allows, a complexity he implicitly acknowledges later. Indeed, he engages with the central difficulty when, in the introduction to *The Darkness We Carry*, he refers to this above quoted passage from his introduction to the anthology and remarks:

Achieving these... objectives depends on the capacity for symbolising, on finding the appropriate metaphor to carry the performance to a satisfactory conclusion. The aesthetic issues here concern the dramatist's vision of the Holocaust survivor as representative of humanity, and the means by which this connection is achieved on stage. (37)

With apparent approval Skloot continues by quoting Ellen Schiff: 'In an impressive number of contemporary situations the experience of the Jew is viewed as a comprehensive experience and the figure of the Jew comes to stand as a metaphor for modern mankind.' (38)

Furthermore in the introduction to *The Theatre of the Holocaust* Skloot relates his summary of the dramatists' common objectives not solely to the search for an appropriate metaphor but to the dramatists' belief in the uniqueness of the Holocaust:

What makes their work different from attempts to deal with other tragic themes, war for example, is their conviction that the Holocaust was a unique historical (and theological, political and social ) event, an event unlike anything else in the long and often tragic story of Western civilisation.(39)

In his gracious and perceptive book, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, James E. Young addresses the nature of the relationship between metaphor and the uniqueness of the Holocaust. Noting first, by way of example, the dissenting voice of one of America's leading Jewish novelists, Cynthia Ozick: 'Jews are not metaphors - not for poets, not for novelists not for theologians, not for murderers, and never for anti-Semites', (40) like Skloot and Schiff, Young also registers the opposing view to that expressed by Ozick, protesting:

But in fact, Jews are metaphors... Can any of us know ourselves as part of a people or the world around us, without grasping both in tropes of our heritage and civilisation? We may not like the ways that Jews have been figured traditionally, or the ways Jews are now used to figure other peoples. But in fact Jewish memory and tradition depend explicitly on the capacity of figurative language to remember the past. (41)

Young continues with a reminder that the problem with figurative language in relation to the Holocaust became apparent first to the victims themselves, who, in their attempt to convey something of the events with which they had been confronted, were continually frustrated by the inadequacy of language which rather than vividly express the entirely unprecedented elements of their experience, tended to direct attention to the already familiar. Figurative language became suspect because of its apparent failure to convey the barest of facts about the Holocaust, to *displace* rather than place events, and because of its *incapacity* to clarify meaning. In relation to the later usage of metaphor Young notes Alvin Rosenfeld's reservation that an implied intention is often discernible in the use of figurative language, the motivation for metaphorical comparison being, 'not so much... an urge to get *at* the first [experience] but to get *rid* of it'. [my italics] (42)

This was precisely the difficulty with which Richard Dimbleby was confronted late in the afternoon on 15 April 1945, as the first British War correspondent to witness the suffering caused by Nazi genocidal policy at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. (43) Hours after leaving the camp Dimbleby began to record his despatch, breaking down five times as he attempted to describe in simple and direct language some of the scenes he had witnessed. When the recording reached London, the BBC refused to broadcast it until the substantive details had been verified by independent reports. Indeed, some individuals listening to the recording feared Dimbleby had lost his sanity. 'In anguish

and outrage, Dimbleby telephoned Broadcasting House and told the News Room that if it were not transmitted at once, he would never make another broadcast in his life.' (44) After considerable delay, severely edited forms of Dimbleby's report were broadcast, first on 19 April as an item on the programme *War Report*, which had, since D Day (6 June 1944) followed the nine o'clock evening news on the Home Service, and later as a part of the Home Services programme *The World Goes By*. The first public broadcast by the BBC of one of their correspondents, Richard Dimbleby, on Bergen-Belsen concentration camp began like this:

I wish with all my heart, that everyone fighting in this war, and above all those whose duty it is to direct the war from Britain and America could have come, with me, through the barbed wire fence that leads to the inner compound of the camp. Beyond the barrier was a whirling cloud of dust, the dust of thousands of slowly moving people, laden in itself with the deadly typhus germ. And with the dust was a smell, sickly and thick, the smell of death and decay, of corruption and filth. I passed through the barrier and found myself in the world of a nightmare.

The living lay with their heads against the corpses and around them moved the awful ghostly procession of emaciated aimless people with nothing to do and no hope of life, unable to move out of your way, unable to look at the terrible sights around them, it was as though they were waiting their turn. This is what the Germans did, let there be no mistake about it, did deliberately and slowly to doctors, authors, lawyers, musicians, to professional people to every kind whom they had turned into animals behind the wire of their cage. There was no privacy nor did men or women ask it any longer. Women stood and squatted stark naked in the dust trying to wash themselves and to catch the lice on their bodies. Babies have been born here. Tiny wizened things that could not live. A mother, driven mad screamed at a British sentry to give her milk for her child and thrust the tiny mite into his arms and ran off crying terribly. He opened the bundle and found the baby had been dead for days.

This day at Belsen was the most horrible of my life. I saw it all. The furnace where thousands of people had been burned alive only stunned before they were packed three at a time into the flames; the pit fifteen feet deep and as big as a tennis court piled to the top at one end with naked bodies; the dark huts in which the dead and the dying are lying together so that you must step over them and avoid the sticks of arms that are thrust imploringly towards you.(45)

Dimbleby's experience of Bergen-Belsen and the making of his subsequent news reports raise questions about British attitudes. How could it be that the dominant emotions are those of utter astonishment and surprise, of complete unpreparedness for the discoveries made behind the wire fences and barrack walls? He was certainly not alone amongst British army and news personnel in this reaction.(46) At no point in the broadcasts is there a specific reference to the identity - other than by broad categories of occupation - of the suffering inmates. What was the reason for this? Did Dimbleby



assume that this British audience would know quite well who the camp inmates were, making explicit identification unnecessary? Or was it simply that in these first moments of utter desolation he saw an undifferentiated mass of human suffering - suffering of such ghastly and depraved inventiveness, that questions of national, cultural and especially racial identity were of little importance compared to the appearance of the indiscriminate inhumanity inflicted, and the indiscriminate humanitarianism called for? Or was it guilty conscience? For the majority of Bergen-Belsen's inmates were Jews. (47)

Dimbleby's broadcast also raises the issue of the adequacy of language in face of such events. James E. Young argues that metaphors 'are our only access to the facts which cannot exist apart from the figures delivering them to us' and the attempt to exclude metaphoric usage would be to place the Holocaust 'outside of language and meaning altogether, thereby mystifying the Holocaust and accomplishing after the fact precisely what the Nazis had hoped to accomplish through their own - often metaphorical - mystification of events'. (48) Young concedes, however, that the 'Nazi literalisation of metaphor during the Holocaust' and the consequent death of language, to which commentators such as George Steiner and Alvin Rosenfeld (49) draw attention, 'may have destroyed the possibility of innocent figuration'. (50) This, Young concludes, necessarily implies that 'the rhetorical phrase after the Holocaust is no longer innocent but is now condemned to carry the ominous threat of its literalisation'. (51)

On a more mordant note - if such were possible - Young also acknowledges that it was as a result of the cynical recognition by the Nazis of the Jewish propensity to interpret present experience through historical analogy and the interpretative categories of biblical and rabbinical literary traditions that they were 'able to screen from view *the differences* of the present persecution [the Holocaust] until it was too late'. (52)

Nevertheless, Young is continually thrown back to the ineluctable metaphoric nature of language and the capacities of writing to 'mend perceived breaking points in history', creating unities and continuities, causes and effects'. For in his view: 'As long as we name events of this period, remember them, or figure them in any form, we also know them - however poorly, inappropriately or dangerously.' (53) The inability to represent 'the tremendum, the caesura, the traumatic breach we infer in the events of the Holocaust' may not be due so much to 'a breach in knowledge, or in history, or in the continuum' which the Holocaust is frequently claimed to be, 'so much as it is a traumatic breach in our uncritical belief in the kinds of knowledge we have of it.' (54)

This thesis seeks to address, in Young's words, 'the uncritical belief in the kinds of knowledge' which it is assumed we might acquire of the Holocaust through the 'poor, inappropriate and dangerous' theatre productions planned for and presented on the

London stage. Specifically this thesis argues that through a variety of motivations and means, authorial and directorial, through critical ignorance, neglect and an anodyne liberal tolerance, the particularity of Jewish experience during the Holocaust is frequently erased or significantly attenuated in the theatre productions, and to only slightly lesser degree, in the theatre criticism considered here. Rather than encourage an informed understanding of the Holocaust and a compassionate engagement with wider human concerns these productions mar and inhibit a potentially clearer understanding of the historical particularities of Jewish fate, substituting a spurious universalism or stereotypical portraiture and, in the absence of memory, neglect the necessary emphasis on the recognition that humanity consists of particular others.

## 2 GOODRICH AND HACKETT'S *THE PLAY OF THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK*

### 2.1 The dramatisation of *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*

Anne Frank became a widely recognised symbol of the Holocaust in Britain in the last years of the 1950s when the published version of Anne's diary, *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, gained in popularity through the fresh impetus provided by the general release of George Stevens's feature film, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, in 1959, after which the *Diary* became a publishing phenomenon. Stevens's film was based closely on the earlier stage version, *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank*. Both play and film scripts were by the Hollywood screen writers, Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett. But the success of the US production of the play (and subsequently the film) was also tied closely to a minor American novelist, Meyer Levin, who, in his review of the first US edition of *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* for the prestigious *New York Times Book Review* in June 1952, was almost single-handedly responsible for making Anne Frank known throughout the US. (1)

Levin's determination to be the reviewer of the *Diary* had not been entirely without self-interest. From the first, he had been the most persuasive advocate of the *Diary*'s publication and he also considered himself as the 'natural' candidate to undertake its dramatisation once its appeal had been proven through the publishing *coup* Levin was convinced he and Doubleday were about to witness. In this last respect, Levin was not mistaken.

Without keeping Doubleday wholly informed of his intentions, and through some adroit correspondence with Otto Frank with whom Levin had a well established relationship as a result of his efforts to find a publisher for the *Diary*, Levin secured limited legal right to make the first dramatic adaptation of the text published by Doubleday.

Levin succeeded in this endeavour in a situation of increasing legal complexity and an atmosphere of growing mistrust, specifically between Levin and Frank, Doubleday and their respective legal representatives. But when the New York producer Kermit Bloomgarden received Levin's script for consideration his verdict was unequivocal: he thought Levin's adaptation heavy-handed and unnecessarily didactic in tone.

A new legal arrangement allowed for a period of revision after which, if Levin's script was again deemed not to be up-to-standard, his legal right to be the first stage adaptor of the *Diary* would lapse. It was during this period that Levin came to believe in the existence of a conspiracy against him, orchestrated by the assimilated Jewish literary establishment, which, in his view, had taken exception to the emphasis he had

placed on Anne's Jewish identity in his script. When his revised script was also rejected the legal agreement he came to believe he had been coerced into signing, deprived him of his most cherished desire: to adapt Anne's diary for the stage.

In his stead, Lillian Hellman, a chief conspirator in Levin's view, recommended to Bloomgarden the Hollywood screen writers Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett. After initial reservations, Otto Frank approved their involvement and encouraged them to ensure that their adaptation would 'propagate Anne's ideas and ideals... to show to mankind where to discrimination, hatred and persecution are leading'. (2)

Goodrich and Hackett did not find adapting the *Diary* to be as straightforward as they had anticipated, and experienced difficulty in resisting over-dependence on the *Diary* entries, specifically Anne's quip that she was 'on vacation in a very peculiar boarding house'. (3) While one example of the psychological strategies the Franks' plight demanded, such fantasy could hardly be sustained by Anne, and could only misleadingly serve as the controlling theme of the entire dramatic action of Goodrich and Hackett's adaptation

Early drafts were greeted with a great deal of criticism from all quarters. Otto Frank, Bloomgarden and Hellman all felt that by focusing almost exclusively on a single aspect of her character, Anne's precocious quick-wittedness, Goodrich and Hackett overlooked the other occupants of the annexe (the hidden living quarters on the top floors of Otto Frank's business premises at 263 Prinsengracht in Amsterdam which the Franks shared with the Van Pels family and Fritz Pfeffer), and the threat of discovery which all of them lived with each day.

Although Hellman continued to provide advice about how to create event and pace in their dramatic narrative, Garson Kanin, appointed as the production's director in October 1954, was chiefly responsible for encouraging Goodrich and Hackett to take the themes of anti-Semitism and the Nazi genocide and universalise them to include the oppression of any minority. (4) Goodrich and Hackett's *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank* finally opened on Broadway at the Cort Theatre on 5 October 1955.

In contrast to the US where the initial print run of *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* had sold out during the afternoon of the first day of its release, 16 June 1952, the British edition, as indicated earlier, had a less than auspicious start in the British book market, sales only beginning to pick up by the mid 1950s. (5) In 1956 Hugh 'Binkie' Beaumont, the power behind H. M. Tennent Ltd in London's West End, was quite aware *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank* was winning multiple awards on Broadway, acclaim which to Beaumont suggested star making potential and good box-office receipts.

Where awareness of Anne Frank increased in Britain, she was unavoidably associated with the one other touchstone of Holocaust consciousness in the British popular imagination, the liberation of Bergen-Belsen. In a recent article on the memory of Anne Frank Tony Kushner has written:

Britain, of all the major countries involved in the Second World War was most at ease with its memory of the conflict. The myth of 'Britain alone' was firmly established, and with ultimate victory, the military and civilian losses and suffering it had incurred were not in vain. In short there was no suppressed memory to confront, no need for a symbol that both represented the horrors of war and provided a redemptive ending. The British liberation of Belsen provided the proper finishing point: the forces of good triumphed over the monsters that had created a 'living hell'. Britain did not require the specific recognition of victims such as Anne Frank.(6)

How then did a dramatic adaptation of *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* find its way onto the London stage in 1956, and more importantly how was the Anne of the stage adaptation understood?

## 2.2 Hugh 'Binkie' Beaumont, West End theatre and the staging of *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank*

'It may sound cynical but the war has been the making of me. Can't complain about a thing. Look at me and look at the Firm. And to think I owe it all to Hitler', (7) reflected the impresario Hugh Beaumont to the British playwright Terrence Rattigan in 1945. Surveying the previous six years Beaumont felt he had every right to feel pleased: he had produced fifty-nine plays in the West End in that period, and of those, just seven had failed. Many had had runs of over a year's duration and some had enjoyed record-breaking success with over a thousand performances each.

Beaumont was the managing director of one of the two entertainment conglomerates which dominated London and regional theatre from the early 1940s. The name of his parent company, the one which appeared on formal invitations and on theatre programmes as the presenting management, was H. M. Tennent Ltd. Beaumont had become managing director following the sudden death on 10 June 1941 of Harry (H. M.) Tennent after whom the company had been named as one of its two founding members, the other being 'Binkie' Beaumont himself.

By the mid 1940s most of the larger and many of the smaller theatre buildings in London's West End were either owned or run by H. M. Tennent Ltd or by the cartel of companies referred to as 'the Group' - the other major conglomerate - whose chief executives were Prince Littler and Stewart Cruikshank, who also sat on the Tennent

board of directors, thus concentrating the capacity for production in the British theatre system within the hands of a very limited number of individuals:

During the heyday [Beaumont] had first call on a number of the best West End theatres - Drury Lane, His Majesty's, Haymarket, Apollo, Lyric, Queens and Globe, all those were Tennent strongholds. One play followed another without a break and it would be a very rare occurrence if another management could get in ... How did he do this? Theatre owners liked high quality productions which made money and 'Binkie' always delivered the goods... it was the closest London had experienced to a monopoly before or since. (8)

Apart from his flare for recognising a particular kind of theatrical fare, a fierce loyalty amongst those to whom he offered employment in the profession, and his impeccable business connections, Beaumont's seemingly unassailable financial position also relied upon a novel interpretation of the Entertainments Tax regulations in the Finance Act of 1916, whereby he was able to claim tax exemption from a large proportion of his box-office revenue. (9)

While Beaumont could boast of his good fortune during the war years to Rattigan, inevitably the war had had a deleterious effect upon the cross-fertilisation of Broadway and Shaftsbury Avenue. Of the sixty plays Beaumont presented during those years just five were transfers from Broadway, four of which reflected upon the sombre experience of war: Robert Audrey's anti-war play *Thunder Rock* (New York, 1939; London, 1940); Sam Behrman's *No Time for Comedy* (New York, 1939; London, 1940); Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes* (New York, 1939; London, 1942) and *Watch on the Rhine* (New York, 1941; London, 1942), the latter playing for 673 performances; and Robert Sherwood's *There Shall Be No Night* (New York, 1940; London, 1943).

Once the war was over Beaumont was eager to re-establish contact with Broadway. In 1945 he had produced Thornton Wilder's *Skin of our Teeth*, which, graced with the presence of Vivian Leigh, had crowds flocking to the play in London and later the provinces. When Beaumont visited New York in 1946 he immediately made arrangements for a London production of Wilder's *Our Town*. This proved to be a complete misjudgement, the production closing after just thirty-one performances. The reverse was true of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *Oklahoma!* Produced at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane in 1947 there were scenes of hysteria on the opening night, 30 April, with the audience applauding the cast for over forty minutes at the final curtain. The production ran for a total of 1,543 performances.

In 1948 the options on Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* became available and Beaumont made a successful bid for the London production rights. After long and complex negotiations the play was finally premièred on 12 October 1949 as

a Tennent Productions Ltd presentation. Beaumont considered this a prudent move because Williams's plays were not widely known, and despite Vivian Leigh taking the lead role of Blanche du Bois and Olivier directing, Beaumont thought the production might benefit from the kind of financial buoyancy that could only be obtained from sizeable tax exemptions.

Beaumont's caution proved to be an error of judgement on both counts, critical and administrative. By the week of the opening over 10,000 applications for first night tickets had been received for a theatre which held only 1,200. Generally the critics expressed cautious welcome, but a number of the tabloids and quality Sunday newspapers condemned it as obscene. Beaumont also heard that several West End managers, among them Emile Littler, Tom Arnold, Jack Hylton and Lee Ephraim had formed a committee whose declared aims were to oppose the apparently unassailable position enjoyed by Tennent Productions Ltd in the West End:

The committee were complaining bitterly that because 'Binkie' had accumulated such a large capital reserve by manipulating the tax laws, and other devious methods he could now outbid all other managers in securing the London rights of important and successful American plays. At that very moment, they pointed out with disapproval, he had no less than seven Broadway successes running in London: *Streetcar*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Summer and Smoke*, *The Heiress*, *Deep are the Roots*, *Dark of the Moon* and *The Glass Menagerie*. He had completely cornered the market and although they welcomed fair competition they considered his tax exemption gave him an unfair advantage. (10)

Beaumont may well have had good reason to be satisfied with the productions he had managed to attract into the Tennent fold but not everyone shared his opinion of the state of West End theatre. Writing in the *New Statesman and Nation* in December 1949 T. C. Worsley observed: 'The post-war theatre inevitably looks a little old-fashioned; it is still addressing itself to the left-overs of the old audiences, perhaps trying to reassemble them; and being naturally conservative, it relies on the conventions that succeeded in the immediate past.' (11) In 1952 *The Unholy Trade*, Richard Findlater's critical examination of the state of the theatre in London in the first half of the twentieth century was published, and in which he observed: 'West End rents, unchecked by the government, have soared since 1939, and a powerful combine, linking production and distribution has entrenched itself without intervention from the state', adding yet another voice to the slowly rising tide of criticism. (12)

Eighteen months later, on 10 March 1954, Woodrow Wyatt introduced a bill into the House of Commons the substance of which was a proposal for the stricter regulation of non-profit distributing theatrical companies and the abolition of the

provisions whereby such companies could legitimately claim exemption from tax. The bill was given a second reading, and received wide publicity in the press. But through lack of evidence of any illegality, particularly in the business affairs of Tennent Productions Ltd, and the general view in the House of Commons that a near monopoly should not be considered in any way reprehensible when it consistently produced work of exceptionally high standard, little support could be found for the bill, and it failed.

The author and critic John Elsom observes:

Beaumont's status and aesthetic standards were thus endorsed by Parliament. But what kind of theatre did he offer? From where did these standards derive? Tennent may have been his mentor in the ways of London, but Beaumont's spiritual guide was surely Sir George Alexander, the actor-manager who ran the St James's Theatre from 1890 until 1917.

Alexander and Beaumont certainly ran their theatres to appeal to the middle classes. Battling against the raffish reputation of Victorian show business, Alexander transformed the St. James's Theatre into a model of stylish respectability... Beaumont behaved similarly hushing up scandals, maintaining propriety, savouring the moments when he could welcome a member of the Royal Family to the Haymarket. Sir Anthony Eden was a personal friend. (13)

John Osborne expressed the same views but rather more unkindly, describing the Beaumont style of drama as, 'unreal chintzy plays, gorgeous decor and a glamorous selection of theatrical lords and ladies glittering over all', (14) which Osborne attributed to the homosexual orientation and sensibilities of Beaumont.

Kenneth Tynan's renowned, damning overview of the West End theatre scene also appeared in 1954:

The bare fact is that, apart from revivals and imports, there is nothing in the London theatre that one dares discuss with an intelligent man for more than five minutes.

If you seek a tombstone, look about you; survey the peculiar nullity of our drama's prevalent genre, the Loamshire play. Its setting is a country house in what used to be called Loamshire but is now, as a heroic tribute to realism, sometimes called Berkshire... The inhabitants belong to a social class derived partly from romantic novels and partly from the playwright's vision of the leisured life he will lead after the play is a success... And so grim is the continuity of these things that the foregoing paragraph might have been written at any time during the last thirty years.

Perhaps Loamshire's greatest triumph is the crippling of creative talent in English directors and designers. After all, how many ways are there of directing a tea-party?

The theatre must widen its scope, broaden its horizon... I counsel aggression because as a critic, I had rather be a war correspondent than a necrologist. (15)



These sentiments were repeated but from a slightly different perspective in *Everybody's* a year later:

As the London theatre lurches into the summer of 1955, let us look a few facts in the face...There are exactly as many American plays as English running at present in London...There are eighteen straight plays in the London theatre, with a tally of: British, eight; American, eight; French, two... In musicals or revue, we total eight, homegrown. The American tally is five: but these five are *The King and I*, *Wonderful Town*, *Kismet*, *The Jazz Train*, and *Can-Can*. Is anyone arguing if I call this our darkest hour?

The American invasion, once only a bridgehead, is becoming an occupation. And what makes this galling is that the American plays are no masterpieces. (16)

None of the five musicals, it has to be said, were H. M. Tennent Ltd productions, but of the eight American straight plays three were productions of H. M. Tennent Ltd - *Bell, Book and Candle* by John van Druten (Phoenix, 5 October 1954); *The Bad Seed* by Maxwell Anderson (Aldwych, 14 April 1955); *My Three Angels* by Sam and Bella Spewack (Apollo, 12 May 1955); one was a Tennent Productions play, *The Matchmaker* by Thornton Wilder (Haymarket, 4 November 1954). Although this situation in neither degree nor kind matched that of 1949 when the independent West End theatre managers began to be vocal about H. M. Tennent Ltd's near monopoly it is further evidence of the early hegemony of American culture in the early years of the Cold War.

Undeterred by the defeat of March 1954 Woodrow Wyatt had continued to campaign and to publicise the potential for injustice inherent in the provisions of the Finance Laws of 1916 and 1934 and, in his view, their improper application by theatrical managements. Ultimately it was not a socialist government helping to build the new Jerusalem, but the Conservative Government of Harold Macmillan which, identifying the Entertainments Tax as the source of the controversy over alleged injustices, abolished it in March 1957. 'With Tennent Productions Ltd no longer needed it was quietly dissolved. Now all the rival managers enjoyed financial equality of opportunity. Overnight, with a single stroke of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Peter Thorneycroft's pen 'Binkie' lost his advantage.' (17) But not before he had secured the option on the London production of *The Play of The Diary of Anne Frank* from Kermit Bloomgarden. The American invasion was not over.

Goodrich and Hackett's adaptation arrived in the West End in a period of crisis both in the theatrical and political life of the country - a period which has, and continues to manufacture a mythology of its own. John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* had opened earlier in the year and was enjoying its first revival at the Lyric Hammersmith. Early in November Britain had attacked Egypt over the nationalisation

of the Suez Canal. Indicative of a change of national mood, both events may have served to 'date' Goodrich and Hackett's stage adaptation on the eve of its London opening, and the conflict in the Middle East, deter potential audiences.

*The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank* mirrored the international political scene: on the one hand the ubiquitous presence of American cultural/political power, and on the other, the disappearing world of Edwardian England represented politically by Anthony Eden, and in the West End by H. M. Tennent Productions and 'Binkie' Beaumont. In this sense while Tony Kushner is correct to assert: 'In Britain, the play lacked relevance... the play had little to say to most adults about either contemporary society or memory of the war', (18) in relation to the play's essential aesthetic and focus, the fact of its production was a reminder of the ubiquity US ideals, and of the role of the US in the new world order, specifically in the cultural sphere. The play was least a reminder of the harshness of war, and of the particularities of Jewish fate during the Holocaust, which is perhaps what Kushner intends to mean.

Nevertheless Kenneth Tynan echoed Kushner's general point some years later:

The West End Managements, particularly H M Tennent and their star actors - your Geilguds, Richardsons and so forth, had a common attitude towards the sort of plays they considered were good for prestige and for their acting style, and these plays obviously had to be slightly artificial.

Our new actors nowadays are not so interested in that sort of classic it seems... their bent isn't essentially nostalgic. (19)

Artificial nostalgia is not a bad summary of the aesthetic implicit in the dramatic adaptation of *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, nostalgia not for the War years and resistance to Nazi oppression but for the liberal belief in the basic goodness of human beings which Anne is made to assert stridently at the close of the play. This is particularly ironic in light of the director Frith Banbury's remark that he intended to 'emphasise the *universality* of the theme as he had learnt from experience... that any attempt to stress the Jewishness of a character always ends in *unreality*'. [my italics] (20) Banbury had, knowingly or not, followed Garson Kanin's directorial imperatives: not to draw particular attention to Anne's Jewish identity.

### 2.3 *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank*

The play opens with Otto Frank distraught with grief as he surveys the bare, vacant rooms in which he, his family, the Van Pels, and Fritz Pfeffer had hid. It is November 1945. 'I'm a bitter old man', (*PDAF*. p. 4) he says to Miep, his trusted office assistant who had been the families main contact with the outside world, and who has accompanied him into the concealed rooms. Otto is intent on leaving Amsterdam to

escape the memories, but as they speak, Miep draws his attention to some sheaves of papers left behind, and hands him Anne's diary. Mr Frank begins to read from it, and his voice is soon joined by Anne's. As Otto's voice fades, Anne's becomes the more prominent. Her reading voice becomes the chief dramatic device marking the transition from one scene to the next.

The play's first act is set in 1942. In the opening scene Goodrich and Hackett convey the salient features of the families' concealment, the various restrictions and routines which must be adopted and strictly adhered to in their bid for survival. They also establish the dynamics between the characters, primarily Anne's precocious attitude toward the other occupants of the annexe, and the tensions between Anne, her mother and Mrs Van Daan, (the name Anne gives to the Van Pels family in her diary).

Specific and partially representative key phrases or sentences are taken from the *Diary*, and become the dramatic means for establishing the tone of each act. The remark, which becomes the leitmotif of Act I, 'You know the way I'm going to think of it here? I'm going to think of it as a boarding house. A very peculiar summer boarding house', (*PDAF*. p. 18) is in the *Diary* (11 July 1942). But little effort is made to provide a dramatic gloss upon Anne's strategy for coping, or to demonstrate the unreality of the metaphor. Anne herself provides evidence challenging the metaphor merely by recording the monotony and debilitating effects of the routine which had to be followed by the occupants of the annexe.

Goodrich and Hackett represent Anne's knowledge of systematic searches, mass arrests and columns of Jews being forcibly marched through the streets (the diary entry for 19 November 1942) in dramatic terms through the arrival of Jan Dussel (the name Anne gives to Fritz Pfeffer in the *Diary*) who abruptly informs the occupants of the harsh realities existing outside. (*PDAF*. pp. 52-53) Potentially this is a dramatically satisfying solution because it hints at the sense of a false security having developed in the demeanour of the occupants of the annexe.

Nevertheless it leaves an inaccurate impression, namely that the situation in Amsterdam was not being followed closely by the families by any *other* means. Yet Anne records in her *Diary* that the occupants' chief source of information were those helping with their day-to-day survival, and that they avidly listened to the BBC and Dutch broadcasts to glean news of the progress of the war. To be sure, Dussel's arrival brings immediacy to the events which the occupants might have heard otherwise at greater remove, but once again the selectivity with which Goodrich and Hackett present *a* perspective, distorts both the perspective and the wider picture of their awareness of events.

Act I ends with the Hanukkah celebration. When Mrs Van Daan chides Jan Dussel with the question, 'What kind of Jew are you that you don't know Hanukkah?'

(*PDAF*. p. 69) the answer is an obvious one, 'A Jew that Hitler nevertheless wishes to kill', and it is interesting to speculate whether or not the ironies inherent within this question were completely lost on Goodrich and Hackett and/or the play's audiences. There appears to be little recognition of it in the dramatists' wish to present a fussy female character.

While the occasion is divested of its Jewish associations, it is invested with its Christian: St Nicholas' Day. This much may be historically faithful to the experience of assimilated Jews in Europe, but the moments of relief provided by the 'sacramental' offering and receiving of the word (Anne's poems) and her home-made gifts are curtailed by the sounds of an intruder in the offices below, introducing to the context of ritual observance the dramatic possibility of eventual betrayal. A Judas is present at the 'Last Supper'.

The first act ends as the occupants sing a sanitised and saccharine song of deliverance and future hope, the earnest of which, in the song's lyrics, is the unspecified 'many reasons for good cheer', (*PDAF*. p. 86) which at best refers to the fact of their narrow escape as the intruder has turned out not to be the SS or the Order police. To conclude the scene Goodrich and Hackett place a prayer in the mouth of Otto Frank: 'We thank Thee, Oh Lord our God, that in Thy infinite mercy Thou hast again seen fit to spare us'. (*PDAF*. p. 86) While such a prayer reflects common devotional practice, Goodrich and Hackett exploit ritual observance to prefigure and reinforce the sentiment contained in the final words of the play, spoken by Anne from beyond the grave.

The initial scene of Act II revolves around the possibility of betrayal by the intruder who, it is assumed, is the warehousemen of Otto Frank's company, the premises of which the annexe is above. The warehouseman has recently been asking after the welfare and therefore the whereabouts of Mr Frank, and in the same breath, for a wage increase of twenty guilders a week from Frank's business associates who continue to work at the offices.

The tension is released in scene 2 by the 'romantic interest' of the drama. Anne 'dates' Peter Van Daan and the flirtation is dealt with in much the same manner as sophomore camp romances were dealt with in countless US movies in the 1950s, coy *rapprochement* to an alien nation: cold war politics. Dramatic tension is next heightened by the discovery that Mr Van Daan is stealing food *before* the families meagre supplies have been apportioned, and in a dramatic juxtaposition which is designed both to demonstrate the pettiness of the squabbles over food, *and* provide the necessary dramatic contrast and prelude to the arrest of all those in hiding, the D-Day landings announcement on the BBC is heard, and becomes the focus of a heady scene of jubilation and relief.

Before the dénouement, however, Goodrich and Hackett provide the leitmotif of Act II which stands in direct contrast to that of Act I in that it encapsulates a considered attitude to the predicament of the occupants rather than a strategy for psychological survival:

Peter:... Look at us, hiding out for two years. Not able to move. Caught here like... Waiting for them to come and get us - and all for what?

Anne: We're not the only people that've had to suffer. There've always been People that've had to - sometimes one race - sometimes another - yet...

Peter: That doesn't make me feel any better.

Anne: I know it's terrible, trying to have any faith -When people are doing such horrible... (*She gently lifts his face*). But you know what I sometimes think? I think the world may be going through a phase, the way I was with mother. It'll pass, maybe not for hundreds of years, but some day. I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are really good at heart. (*PDAF*. p. 137)

The arrest itself is conveyed through sound effects, and as the occupants listen to the fall of heavy boots on the stairs and the crash of doors flung open, Otto Frank, from the threshold of the concealed entrance utters an expression, genuine in its provenance and entirely coherent with the optimistic tenor of the play but inconsistent with what is candidly reported in the *Diary*. He says: 'For the past two years we have lived in fear. Now we can live in hope.' (*PDAF*. p. 139)

The play concludes with a return of the dramatic action to November 1945, to Otto Frank (*his bitterness gone*), *PDAF*. p. 140) in the annexe with Miep. The reflections that the audience are left with reinforce both the boundless optimism of the play and the reluctance of the adaptors to allow their audience to engage and work with thoughts and feelings that might have been provoked by an adaptation less concerned with preserving a hopeful outlook than with the evidence in the *Diary* itself which offered perspectives other than this sole appeal to a certain bright future.

The audience is assured that Anne found both happiness and the ability to see beyond the systematic extermination of millions, to the basic goodness of the human heart. In the final scene Otto Frank, over a cup of coffee, says:

It seems strange to say this, that anyone could be happy in a concentration camp. But Anne was happy in the camp in Holland where they first took us. After two years of being shut up in those rooms, she could be out - out in the sunshine and the fresh air that she loved. (*PDAF*. p. 141)

In the penultimate line of the play the audience hears Anne's voice from beyond the grave at precisely the moment Mr Frank finds the appropriate entry in the *Diary*: 'In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart.' (*PDAF*. p. 142)

## 2.4 The critical reception of the London production

Beneath the headline, 'Pulitzer Prize Play for London', *The Times* reported that Goodrich and Hackett's dramatisation would be 'presented in the autumn by the Tennent organisation' and that Frith Banbury would direct. (21)

As with the Broadway production the part of Anne was not to be played by an established star. Some four hundred actresses were auditioned for the part which was eventually given to Perlita Neilson, a not entirely unknown twenty-three year old actress whom Banbury had seen in Chekhov's *The Seagull*. The British production opened at the Phoenix Theatre on Thursday 29 November 1956.

Goodrich and Hackett 'wanted a carbon copy of Garson Kanin's New York production. The set (by Boris Aronson) - the room behind the warehouse door in Amsterdam - was basically and necessarily the same.' Banbury was also 'made to acknowledge Kanin's original production... in the programme'. (22)

In this respect, and in relation to the response of the British critics it is worth noting briefly two broad, but distinct tendencies in the stance the critics on Broadway took toward Goodrich and Hackett's adaptation. The vast majority of reviews spoke of the US production in glowing and triumphant terms, while a handful were distinctly reserved, raising a number of issues concerned more with the integrity of the adaptation than the skills of those involved with the production.

Brooks Atkinson described the play as 'a lovely, tender drama' about 'the shining spirit of a young girl'. (23) Richard Watts was even more fulsome in his praise of the production's success in resisting sentimentality: 'Wisely shunning any trace of the atrocity or emotional excess, the playwrights have made the... story deeply moving in its unadorned veracity... There is the deepest of feeling in it, but it is more by understatement... and... *there isn't a Nazi in it.*' [my italics] (24)

While these reviews reflected the evident pleasure of the critics in an affecting portrayal of childlike innocence and aspiration, without a lapse into theatrical sentimentality, other reviews more clearly registered the need of the critics and the audience for an unharrowing night in the theatre, and the success of the play in providing just this. *Variety* commented:

Almost defying their subject, writers Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett have turned in a warm, human document that makes theatre at its most powerful best. Moreover, Garson Kanin has directed with such a thorough understanding the needs of both the stage and the audience that 'Diary' emerges not as a grim drama, but rather as the delightful chronicle of a young girl's passage from childhood to adolescence... Throughout the entire play it's impossible to forget that all this really happened, that Anne and her family did live, and that, with the exception of the father, they all died in concentration camps. This creates a deep

sense of sadness and yet also a feeling of exhilaration, for Anne must have been a wonderful youngster. (25)

Despite the candid acknowledgement of the Frank's fate, the play is viewed as a 'delightful chronicle' which becomes in William Hawkins's review 'a truly uplifting adventure out of as terrifyingly sordid a situation as it is possible to find in history... All the emphasis rests on the courage of the people, and above all on the blossoming of hope and faith in Anne herself' (26) - an effect which he attributed to the united efforts of the producer, playwrights, director and actors. *The New Yorker*, on the other hand, reminded its readers: 'In the end the Nazis are hammering at the door and it is clear that most of the inmates are doomed', adding with a measure of relief, 'but the greatest part of the evening is pitched in a much less sombre key.' (27)

The play was also a popular success. Lawrence Graver comments about the audiences:

Most theatregoers adored the Goodrich and Hackett *Diary* because they felt it transformed horror into something consolatory, inspirational and even purgatorial: the characters may have been doomed but the play was full of hope, energy, humor, lyricism, and 'ineradicable life'. People came out of the theater thinking not of all the eradicated lives and the monstrous implications of the German attempt at genocide, but rather of a smiling young girl who affirmed that 'in spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart'... a repeated utterance so mindfully placed [in the play at curtain fall] and so resonant that it soon became a tag line summing up the message of the *Diary* [itself] for countless people around the world. (28)

But not all US theatre critics saw the play quite like this. In the Jewish monthly *Commentary* Algene Ballif observed that:

The Broadway Anne Frank... turned out to be not much more than the Jewish Corliss Archer (the adolescent girl in *Kiss and Tell*)... another image of that fixed American idea of the adolescent.

Anne's keen and well-articulated insights always told us what it was in other people and herself that caused the friction between them. In her deepest self she never really accepts the explanation that it is 'just a stage' she is going through. And when in the last act, Anne is made to say, 'Daddy was right, it was just a phase I was going through'... the very pith and marrow of the diary had with this glib stroke... been swept away.

Anne Frank on Broadway cannot command our seriousness for all Anne's true seriousness - her honesty, intelligence, and inner strength - has been left out of the script.

If this were not damning enough, Ballif also pointed out:

Not one of the characters in *The Diary of Anne Frank* is brought to life - not even Anne's father, who is her chief source of wisdom, dignity, and strength in the book... All are primarily foils for the antics of Anne rather than the people she lived and shared and struggled with for two clandestine years. The wonderful patches of their conversation which she wrote down in her diary are never heard. The daily, active dedication to learning of the Frank family, the political discussions that Anne complained about, the wireless that was always tuned to the BBC... all these never find their way into the play. They would have been forgivable omissions if the spirit of Anne herself had survived them. That it did not can only turn us back to her real diary for the kind of memorial she requires. (29)

The Catholic periodical *The Commonweal* was rather more blunt:

The premise of art... is that life is something else altogether, and we cannot be so impertinent, surely, as to imagine that we are reproducing the *reality* of Anne Frank's suffering on the stage. What we could hope to do at most is to translate those recorded facts (which have their own unalterable truth and reality) into *another* kind of truth - dramatic, poetic. And this the Hacketts have not done.

Neither joy nor terror nor malice nor largeness of spirit are in these pages from Anne Frank's diary: only their stagey counterfeits; fragile shells of emotion arranged by the smooth expertise of Mr Garson Kanin's direction into a conventional pattern. (30)

Some months later Eric Bentley commented briefly on the production in *The New Republic*, specifically noting that,

contrary to most people's expectation, including mine, the *Diary* proves to be a touching, charming and not at all harrowing piece of theatre, though it ends weakly with Anne reflecting on the goodness of human nature - a principle which her story is so far from confirming. (31)

Goodrich and Hackett's adaptation played for over two years at the Cort Theatre for a total of 717 performances. The play received the Antoinette Perry 'Tony' Award, the New York Critics' Circle Award, and The Pulitzer Prize in the spring of 1956, honours which go some way toward explaining the play's attraction for 'Binkie' Beaumont and his eagerness to secure the London production rights.

Lawrence Graver points out that of the dozens of 'ecstatic reviews' which appeared in the autumn of 1955, the reviews from *Commentary*, *The Commonweal* and *The New Republic* represent a mere 'handful' of reviews which 'raised objections to the way Goodrich and Hackett had adapted the book for the stage'. (32) But the *issues* which the minority raise are of central importance in relation to the response of the British critics to the London production.



Did the play effectively succeed in 'translat[ing] those recorded facts... into another kind of truth' recognisably coherent with the rhythms, preoccupations, emphases and *elisions* found in the *Diary*, and by representing that which may be inferred from, but is not directly recorded in the *Diary*, better represent a reality on stage which may be described as a piece of dramatic art which is in a *fuller* sense the world of Anne's diary?

Critics and audiences appear to have attended the production with broadly similar expectations: they were 'in' for a grim and harrowing evening. The anticipated sense of confinement, the hiding place, the condensed nature of the entries in a diary, and the theatre space itself seem in some measure to have been experienced as persecutory, and resented by critics and audiences alike.

Many of the critics comment specifically on the tangible sense of relief experienced when the evening turned out not to be as grim as anticipated, and as a consequence wrote 'ecstatic reviews' which spoke of the production almost solely in terms of the production's 'triumph'. Indeed, Lawrence Graver points out: 'The words "glow" and "warm" appeared in five of the seven next day reviews, and every critic testified to seeing something magical, iridescent or mesmerising happening on stage at the Cort.' (33) The critics and audiences went into the theatre expecting to see 'inmates', to use *The New Yorker's* unconscious slip describing the occupants of the annexe, and came out of the theatre with an immense sense of relief that what they had actually witnessed was 'a girl who with her family and friends hid out in a garret in Amsterdam' in the words of *The New York Post*, a kind of extended middle-American family holiday in some wilderness den.

Although the description 'inmates' is inaccurate and misleading, the audience's anticipated emotional response of depression and foreboding to the subject of confinement and oppression - the persecution of the Jews by Nazi Germany - is the more *appropriate* response than the one which actually characterised both critical and popular response, and it is this *inappropriate* chorus of warmth and jubilation which leads to the suspicion that Goodrich and Hackett's dramatisation failed in important respects to represent the experience of persecution as it is mediated through the *Diary* itself.

This suspicion is confirmed by noting that there are in excess of twenty-five diary entries which make explicit reference to Jewish themes, and specifically contemporary Jewish experience under Nazi occupation, amongst them: the Nazi measures against Jews (20 June 1942); Anne observing mass arrests from a window in the annexe (19 November 1942); the conditions at Westerbork and speculation about conditions in the East, including a mention of the use of poison gas (9 October 1942); Church protests against persecution (27 February 1943); theological reflections on

Jewish history (16 February, 11 April 1944); a reference to the dire position of Hungarian Jewry (31 March 1944); and reflections upon the phenomenon of anti-Semitism and nationalism (22 May 1944). Given that such subjects are mentioned in the *Diary* of an adolescent girl it is a damning indictment that the adaptors were unable to engage with these subjects in a dramatically effective way.

The dramatisation failed to translate the *Diary* into a fuller and different kind of truth, if the reasonable expectation of the critics and audiences to find the subject depressing and horrifying were disappointed by the adapters' diversion from unpleasant reality.

The acclaim which greeted the production may have more to do with anxiety about being negatively critical of dramatic art which concerns the Holocaust lest the criticism be misconstrued as being aimed at those who were murdered by (or those who survived) the Nazis, and unconscious or conscious attempts at emotional reparation vicarious or otherwise, replacing depression and forlornness with the triumph of youth, of idealism, and of the human spirit. As several critics observed this involves defending against knowledge of the ultimate fate of the occupants including rather than excepting Anne's father.

But the sheer *magnitude* of the critical and popular response suggests that an unconscious attempt was being made to match the magnitude of the horror, and as such the great acclaim was intended to equal, in the phraseology of Meyer Levin's review of *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, 'the voice of six million vanished Jewish souls'. (34)

It has to be conceded that with one significant exception - Harold Hobson's review in *The Sunday Times* - the British reviews were generally congratulatory, though the tone, perhaps predictably so, is generally more restrained than that of the US notices. Besides this shared sense that the dramatisation had been both effective and affecting, there is little the British reviewers have in common with their US counterparts, apart from the general agreement that visually the stage design by Boris Aronson successfully conveyed the *claustrophobia* of the annexe and the sense that this clandestine refuge was situated in a *sweeping* metropolitan centre, the latter conveyed by the silhouettes of the city's roof tops.

The general difference between the British and US critics is the lack of apprehension at the potential for a harrowing evening at the theatre, and the consequent absence of the immense sigh of relief when the performance did not turn out to be as demanding as anticipated. The general impression conveyed by the British critics is that they are more conversant with the fate of the families and less reticent to identify the explicit reason for their predicament, namely that the families are Jews and in hiding as a result of Nazi persecution.

Many of the British critics mention that Anne died in Bergen-Belsen. For British critics, as for the *Diary's* reviewers, Bergen-Belsen had special significance and for the same reasons. The liberation of the camp by British forces, Richard Dimbleby's broadcast, and the subsequent British Army film footage shown in British Pathé and Movietone News Reels had fixed Bergen-Belsen as *the* representation of the Holocaust in the British public imagination. Anne could be placed by and with the images of the camp shortly after liberation.

It is these associations, and in some instances the reviews acknowledge the connection, which inform the tone of the articles and create the impression that the British critics approached the production with expectations that were more realistic. Tony Kushner is undoubtedly correct to point out that 'Britain, in reconstructing its own war memory, had a particular place for Belsen... It had become "our camp" and moreover that, 'the anglicising of its memory meant that it no longer "belonged" to the Jews'. (35) But it was precisely this process that enabled British audiences to place Anne in Belsen: an 'American' adolescent in a 'British' camp!

A final general consequence of the approach of the British critics is that the critical notices neither dwell particularly on the saccharine optimism of Anne's declaration of faith in the goodness of humanity with which the dramatisation ends, or heap unqualified praise on the production even in the instances where the critical response is generally positive. In light of these general remarks the notices can be examined in more detail.

The issue of history and representation is at the centre of Milton Shulman's review:

It takes an effort of memory to recall the horrors of Belsen and Buchenwald. Time has inured us to the statistics of mass-murder. THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK at the PHOENIX, reminds us that only yesterday civilisation was no match for barbarism. The gas chamber was as real as the dawn and for many, as inescapable. Anne Frank was a 13 year-old Jewish child fated to die by Nazi intolerance for the sole crime of having been born. (36)

Shulman says scarcely anything in his review about the production, and it is the raw fact of the historicity of the catastrophe which confronts the reader. The populations of nations, cities and towns, villages and neighbourhoods were systematically exterminated for a 'reason' beyond their choosing: they were of the Jewish race. He mentions Anne's boundless young optimism, 'in spite of everything I still believe people are really good at heart', with the necessary qualification 'she carried her faith with her to the gas chamber'. (37)

If Shulman succeeds in one respect, it is to make his reader aware of the larger context. The critic of *The Times* brings the issue of historicism into sharp focus by

reminding his readers of the literary provenance of the dramatisation, but drawing a conclusion which highlights the tension between history and representation:

It is a skilful dramatisation of an authentic diary kept by a young Jewish girl and found after she had met her death in Belsen. The actuality of the events that the diary records sets up an emotional response of its own and no doubt plays its part in the contrived stage atmosphere of jumpiness. But those who are to get the most out of the evening would do well to treat the whole thing as a well-invented story for the stage. (38)

*The Times* critic is dismissive of the production, 'after all only another picture of life in a tenement', condescending to his readership and to the audience, 'those who are able to get the most out of the evening would do well to...', and wishes to place an emotional and imagined distance between what is represented on stage and any historical reality, 'treat the whole thing as a well-invented story for the stage'. (39)

The invitation to pretence extended by the critic to potential audiences is sadistic, and the above short extracts are expressions of a profound contempt, both for the production and for the historical reality which the play is in some small degree attempting to represent. Such a critical response may be indicative of the deeply felt anxieties and prejudices which were also noted in relation to the US critical notices.

Another central issue present in the critical reviews is the relationship between writing and representation. J. C. Trewin confessed quite candidly that he had not read *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* before attending the stage adaptation, continuing,

but I did know of the fate of Anne and her family, and it was this that clenched the imagination so powerfully from the first. One realised that the long endurance in the 'Secret Annexe' would be for nothing... that presently only Anne's journal would remain to speak for the two hidden years.

Maybe it is possible, in cold blood to take the play to pieces, to shred the performances, to be cynical about this or that, to say a few words on technique... and to go on easily to the next task. But I cannot do this. I can say only that the night, coming as it did so soon after events in central Europe, moved me deeply. (40)

Trewin's review is representative of a view near to the opposite end of the critical spectrum to that expressed in *The Times*. He touches upon a recurrent issue in the philosophy of history, a writer's attempt to represent an historical event or period with verisimilitude when greater knowledge is available to him than it was to those whom he is writing about. Greater breadth of perspective can easily lead to the style of argument which implies that ignorance of various factors inevitably led to the actions and directions it is now known were those taken. Hindsight makes valid associations

and lends coherence to events which while unavailable to the victims at the time, did not substantially alter choices available to them. (41)

Trewin and many in the audience would have known that Anne died in Bergen-Belsen. The audience knew the knock on the door was 'inevitable'. He writes: 'I shall remember... the shattering blows of the Gestapo that at last break down the door in the *Prinsengracht*. It was a sound that, subconsciously, I had waited for all night. No one else is seen. There is just the noise below.' (42) It was 'inevitable' dramatically. It is the event's 'inevitability' that carries the frisson of horror.

His perspective is suggestive of the necessity and place of criticism. Any documentary source is finite and inherent within it are the demands of corroboration and qualification. Anne's *Diary* must be examined in similar terms to arrive at a balanced assessment of its value and the limitations of its perspective. A dramatic adaptation may be a catalyst in this process. But the critic needs to be alert to both possibilities, new perspectives *and* distortions. Trewin is neither sufficiently critical in his approach to the *Diary* as an historical document or to the dramatic adaptation, the aesthetic shaping and reformulation of the *Diary*.

Whereas the theatre critic of *The Times* appears to be unable to engage seriously with the production, he slips too easily into an uncritical and sentimental merging with the production, failing to preserve both an empathic engagement with, and critical reflection upon the material which characterise the pursuit of the shadow of objectivity.

Critical reflection upon the *Diary* would necessarily lead to the conclusion that not all Jews in hiding in Amsterdam perished, though some 75% of the total Jewish population of The Netherlands were murdered, effectively qualify the 'inevitability' of Anne's death, and preserve the potential that existed for alternative histories, while indicating the complex of factors upon which survival depended. In short, a more rigorous critical approach to the *Diary* may have modified Trewin's view of the play. In fact later in his review he concedes that once having read the *Diary* there were details he would have himself changed in the dramatic adaptation, though he maintains that 'what counts is that the book is with us in a stage version that has not been cheapened. For the imaginative and responsive, it is an evening of almost painfully mounting emotion.' (43)

Does the pleasure of the play derive from witnessing what is considered to be the inevitable, immutable conclusion? And is pleasure therefore being taken in the inexorable movement toward and unavoidable death of a young girl? Most critics preferred to register their pleasure or discuss the issue of pleasure in the production in the conventional language of genre - specifically that of tragedy, a further issue of central importance in relation to the dramatic representation of Jewish fate.

While Philip Hope-Wallace conceded that the dramatic adaptation of the *Diary* falls short of the formalities present in the tragedies of Racine, W. A. Darlington in like manner mentions that the 'quality of emotion' was quite 'different from that which I am accustomed to feel at... a Shakespeare tragedy'. (44) In this regard David Watt also writes:

It breaks the cardinal rule of tragedy for its heroes remain essentially unchanged, one does not feel that they are hammered and tempered by their ordeal, they are life-size people reacting as life-size people often do to appalling tensions - with fear and trembling a little heroism and a lot of irritation... When the dramatisers, Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, are at their most theatrical they are at their least convincing, in particular where a facile moral is drawn at the end. But they have mostly realised that horror can be built of very small particles - the unbearable claustrophobia, the hothouse emotional atmosphere, the endless bickering over absurd trifles, the moments of vacuum when a bell rings, the wild hopes and despairs. These do not make the rugged ups and downs of classical tragedy but a plateau of tension so high and breathless that the final drop from the precipice is a merciful release. (45)

While in his review, Kenneth Tynan asserts:

If the stage version stresses the trivia of domestic life it is because Anne dwelt on these things: What ennobles and magnifies them is the simple fact of persecution. We never see the persecutors, though at the end we hear them, a scream of brakes, a thud of boots and a knocking at the door more unnerving than Macbeth ever knew. (46)

Watt and Tynan amongst British critics come closest to allowing that Goodrich and Hackett had achieved something of that dramatically effective translation which a number of the play's most severe critics in the US felt had been entirely lacking. Through threats and intimidation the Franks have been forced into the predicament of seeking refuge from Nazi persecution in a concealed place of hiding, and have thus already entered the criminal system of Nazi design. Abject fear is the most effective of prison guards. The situation may only be described as tragic in the minimal sense that all tragedy involves the eventual conscious realisation of unwantedness (annihilation) and that it lies within the agency of the other to effect this destruction in a manner entirely coherent with the kind of unwanted being entertained.

As well as generic considerations there are also those of dramatic form. Contrary to the admonitions of *The Times* critic who encouraged his readers and the audience of the dramatisation to treat the play as merely 'a well invented story for the stage', Darlington asserted that the play's 'special impact' was due precisely to the fact that 'it is not a fiction', its effect being 'that of an account in a newspaper of a horribly

true event'. Goodrich and Hackett are described as more like 'editors than dramatists'.  
(47)

Tynan writing some days later also described the play as 'a superb piece of theatrical journalism' and continued by making a highly dubious distinction between dramatists and journalists:

The journalist differs from the creative writer in that he does not (indeed should not) possess the power of invention. He records and interprets events that are not of his making. This is exactly what Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, the adaptors, have done. All their characters spring directly from Anne Frank's diurnal reflections. (48)

Presumably having had opportunity to reflect upon Tynan's review and other reviews, Kingsley Martin synthesised a number of the above issues in a tendentious manner:

The tragedy was readymade in the minds of the audience before the curtain went up. Thus - or so it seems to me - to compare the play with journalism exactly misses the point; it would be dramatic reporting only if its drama lay in the Hitler terror; but it doesn't. The drama is within this particular group of people caught in a trap... Our sympathies were already fully engaged with the real Anne, who died in Belsen and of whose existence we know only because she kept a diary during the two years she spent in an Amsterdam garret hiding with her father and mother and sister in a party of eight Jews condemned to death, destined for the incinerator. They are caught in a trap from which the audience knows they will not escape. (49)

The motive for describing Goodrich and Hackett's dramatisation as 'dramatic journalism' was no doubt to indicate the historical veracity of their source, and the veracity of their interpretation and shaping of that source. Both literary endeavours are problematic in terms of the extent of the historical purview each possess, and in the kind of literary form each of them take: a private diary, and the public performance of a dramatised version of entries in a private diary.

The resort to a familiar and assumedly unproblematic literary category is indicative of the need to make Holocaust experience 'accessible' - and one way to do this is to choose literary genres or forms which carry the precedent or potential to familiarise experience beyond imagining. The recurrent problem for all Holocaust literature, drama included, is that the conventional categories of literary traditions and discourse, fail abysmally. The problem then becomes what literary and dramatic conventions, structures, forms, styles, and language are equal to all this 'ab-sense'. Is it possible to attempt to shape sense out of that which at one and the same time *defies reason*, and is also a massive and systematic programme of *rational calculation*: the annihilation of European Jewry. The documentary approach as a solution to these

problems will be considered in more depth in relation to other plays. As a 'short cut' to describing the form and justifying the approach of Goodrich and Hackett's adaptation the label 'dramatic journalism' poses more questions than it answers.

Finally, the issue of the uniqueness of the Holocaust and the particularity of Jewish fate are central factors in the critical discussion of these dramas but which more often than not are qualified, evaded or over-looked.

'The Final Solution to the Jewish Question' was the Nazi semantic expression given to the phenomenon of industrialised mass murder of one group of people, defined in laws promulgated by Nazi Germany in 1935 (the Nuremberg Laws), planned and implemented by Nazi Party institutions with the active collaboration of other agencies and institutions within Nazi control. In Zygmunt Bauman's much later formulation, it is unique 'against the quotidianity of modern society because it brings together some ordinary factors of modernity which are normally kept apart'. It is 'the combination of factors... not the factors' themselves which are unique. (50) In Bauman's view this unique combination of factors included: pseudo-scientific racial theory which seeks to identify a human group as other than human, and this theory's ideological appropriation by the State; the codification of murderous anti-Semitic views and sentiments in state laws giving such views the veneer of legality; the concentration of the means of coercion in a few ideologically motivated agencies; the establishment of a state bureaucracy willing to administer and when necessary enforce state laws and ideological commitment to the State, and the subsequent liberalisation of this authority which permitted the organisation of mass arrests, deportations and ultimately mass murder under cover of a national emergency, the state of war; and finally the 'meticulous functional division of labour' and 'the substitution of technical for moral responsibility'. (51)

British reviews demonstrated a misunderstanding of the unique nature of the Holocaust. The Franks had gone into hiding, according to Eric Keown, not because Margot, Anne's sister, had received the letter demanding that she register for deportation to the East, but had escaped there 'during the German pogrom' (52) in Amsterdam. This may be the lazy expression of an overworked journalist; equally it could be the persistent English ignorance of the systematic nature of what happened to the Jews in Europe – and here *Western* Europe is specifically in view – though this is hard to credit given the evidence which many English people had seen and accepted: the newsreels of Bergen-Belsen. It is precisely this which makes the Darlington's slip – Otto Frank 'the only member of the family to be liberated from *prison*' (53) – difficult to grasp.

The *New Statesman and Nation's* misunderstanding is still more basic: 'The drama is within this particular group of people caught in a trap, much the same human



problems would be created if it were an earthquake or an 'H' bomb that threatened the prisoners.' (54) Similarly, *The Manchester Guardian* quips: 'There is a sort of Robinson Crusoe interest in watching such shifts [in relationships] being worked out which we all enjoy.' (55)

In the first instance it is a natural disaster and an aggressive action by another human agency which threatens, and the threats are general by their very nature. In the second instance the echoes of the adolescent 'sleep over' party so prominent in the US reviews can be detected. The families live a 'sequestered existence' with plenty of 'simple domestic comedy and drama'. (56) It is *Swiss Family Robinson* in Amsterdam rather than the South Seas.

The impressions conveyed in these two short extracts are faithful to the dramatisation, and therefore responsibility must be laid squarely with the adaptors. Goodrich and Hackett consciously worked against making the adaptation too Jewish or too sombre and harrowing. The historicity of the unique aspects of the Holocaust have been written out of the adaptation and what remains is perceived by many critics to be little more than a 'balloon debate': strategies for survival in dire circumstances.

Alone amongst the English critics, Harold Hobson focused on both these points precisely, and in comparison with the other reviewers was remarkably, if hesitantly, negative about the production. Beneath the title 'Out of Step?' he wrote:

'The Diary of Anne Frank' calls for more imaginative treatment than Frith Banbury's production, based apparently on one in New York, gives it. Not that Mr Banbury's production is positively bad. On the contrary, one might go so far in praise as to recognise that it is sound, honest workaday stuff.

Critics of the 1930s would have considered it even better than this because it fulfils the criterion of William Archer about a good play on which they were accustomed to insist, namely, that a production should imitate exactly the audible and visible surfaces of life.

This it does perfectly. It convinces us that it was precisely thus that these families of Jews, hiding from the Nazis in a high building in Amsterdam during the war, quarrelled, that it was thus they hungered, that it was thus (a point on which the play is very firm) they went to the lavatory. But, until near the end, it does no more.

After all, there is nothing very novel in the sight of crowded families upon the stage. There is nothing very novel in such families quarrelling. We have had crowding and quarrelling of an intenser kind, to mention only one instance in 'Look Back in Anger'. What the text of [the dramatisation of] 'The Diary of Anne Frank' does not give us, partly perhaps from a laudable desire to avoid encouraging the spirit of hatred and revenge, *is the sense that this particular crowding was due to the menace of racial persecution. Mr Banbury in this vital particular had added nothing to the script...* The Franks, the Van Daans, and Mr Dussel, for any feeling one has of external peril, might have been piled on top of one another by a housing shortage. [my italics]

With the possible exception of Milton Shulman, Hobson is the sole British critic to draw his readers attention to the racial basis of the Franks' predicament, and even he fails to point out, unlike a number of the US critics, that the *Diary* itself furnishes sufficient evidence of Anne's knowledge of the plight and probable fate of Jews in Holland to provide the adaptors with material that might have been used to create a more cogent and engaging drama. After conceding that he had admired the skill with which Perlita Neilson had managed to transform herself into the character of a young girl half her real age, he confessed to finding the character of Anne 'far too tediously precocious' and also that he had sat through the production 'totally unmoved and uninterested'. (57)

Tynan, having attended the première productions in New York, Berlin and London, drew the unremarkable conclusion that London had successfully steered the middle course:

When I saw *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Phoenix) in New York I was queasily embarrassed... the slightly *voulu* pyrotechnics of Susan Strasberg... evoke[d] a world quite alien to the Amsterdam attic... a private and recent agony was too blatantly exploited.

Later I attended the play's opening in Berlin, where it had the cathartic effect of a masterpiece, leaving the audience dumbstruck and paralysed. Last week's London production found the middle course. Performed far less 'brilliantly' than in New York, before an audience lacking the peculiar qualifications of the Berliners, the play emerged unadorned as a superb piece of theatrical journalism,

and in a telling last line he remarks, 'Berlin was too close to the problem; New York was too remote. The half-way English, neither too involved nor too removed have come off best.' (58)

The 'balanced coverage' of theatrical journalism suited the English temperament better than the excesses of Broadway show-biz and Berlin's persistent inability to mourn: anodyne Anne in Amsterdam being sufficiently close to those events from which German audiences wished to distance themselves .

The *Jewish Chronicle* found the play 'a rare and moving experience' and reflecting the predominant sentiment of the New York critics also noted that the production was 'not nearly as harrowing as one might fear in advance'. (59) However, in a rare departure from the majority critical opinion it questions the adaptation on the grounds that Goodrich and Hackett failed to take a more objective and critical stance toward their source and allow themselves a greater degree of freedom to depart from Anne's sole perspective on events in the annexe. To be bound too rigidly to their source, rather than serve their intent to remain faithful to the *spirit* of the diary, had hindered this purpose:

This story of eight Jewish people cooped together in an attic hide-out in Amsterdam for two years is seen through the eyes of a child who, at the outset, was thirteen - and a child chronicles faithfully all the trivialities and all the comic situations, and sees the wider tragedies only in so far as they affect her own spiritual development. If the play has a fault it is in the fact of the adaptation being so faithful to the original that we see the others only through Anne's eyes. (60)

The review then takes rather melancholic refuge in uncritical regression, finding some solace in the adaptation's emphasis upon the lighter moments (scenes which despite the numerous revisions of the drafts had remained a dominant feature of the Goodrich and Hackett adaptation) and in the masochistic reflection: 'We can be grateful that the action... has its moments of laughter. The emotion is chiefly sapped by the foreknowledge of the fate which awaits the high hopes of this courageous group.' (61)

The audience's knowledge of the Franks' and Van Daans' imprisonment, deportation and murder corrupts the gratitude which the audience feels toward the adaptation for not focusing upon sorrow and pain, but upon the comic and joyful moments. Perhaps that is no bad thing. The alternative would have been to have left the theatre with the impression that being a Jew in hiding between 1942 and 1944 in Amsterdam was, as several reviews both in the US and Britain appear to imply, little more than being temporarily marooned on a desert island - just a great adventure.

The *Jewish Chronicle* review is unique in one respect. It is the only review which provides early evidence that the process of mythologising the figure of Anne Frank as the symbol of Jewish experience has already begun in British culture and, perhaps more noteworthy, that she is portrayed not in the role of the unfortunate and passive victim but of the Conquering Hero:

Thanks to her acute vision, her sense of fun, and her ability to convey her gratitude for the gift of life, she is, in accordance with her own arrogant hope, immortalised. She has become the Known Warrior of the Jewish people in Europe in the days of the Persecution; the symbol of all that is great in her race. (62)

Goodrich and Hackett's dramatic adaptation of the *Diary* played for 139 performances at the Phoenix Theatre, from the opening night on 29 November 1956 until 30 March 1957. The play was not a commercial failure, nor was it a popular success.

## 2.5 Anne Frank: identity and fate

While *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank* has provoked no substantial critical reflection in Britain either immediately following its run at the Phoenix Theatre, or

since – a significant absence in relation to the arguments being pursued here – (63) the figure of the dramatised Anne became an immediate focus of critical attention in the US and continues to be so.

Meyer Levin's review of the US edition of *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* is significant for the evidence it provides of the tension between Jewish particularism and the desire to universalise the themes of the Nazi genocide, (64) but amongst the wealth of criticism, the views of Arthur Miller and Bruno Bettelheim merit attention due to their prominence as commentators on the ills of modern Western society, and their early discussion of the tension between the universal and the particular in relation to the *Diary*'s dramatic adaptation.

In an address he delivered in the spring of 1958 shortly after the Broadway production of *The Play of The Diary of Anne Frank* had closed, Arthur Miller surveying the New York theatre scene lamented that the theatre seemed not to be able adequately to dramatise situations where the dynamic between the particular and the universal could produce effective theatre. Miller criticises Goodrich and Hackett's adaptation for failing to stress *Nazi* particularity. He comments:

There is something dramatically wrong, for instance, when an audience can see a play about the Nazi treatment of a group of Jews hiding in an attic, and come away feeling the kind of - I can only call it gratification - which the audiences felt after seeing *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Seeing this play, I was not only an audience or even a Jew, but a dramatist, and it puzzled me why it was all so basically reassuring to watch what must have been the most harrowing kind of suffering in real life.

What was necessary in this play to break the hold of reassurance upon the audience, and to make it match the truth of life, was that we should see the bestiality in our own hearts, so that we should know how we are brothers not only to these victims, but to the Nazis, so that the ultimate terror of our lives should be faced - namely our own sadism, our own ability to obey orders from above, our own fear of standing firm on humane principle against the obscene power of the mass organisation. (65)

As Miller indicates the play fails to represent the nature of the particular threat enshrined in Nazi ideology, but the reassurance felt by the audience would not be broken by recognising their own potential for being both oppressor as well as victim as Arthur Miller argues.

*Miller's position is in fact a more thoroughly universalist position than Goodrich and Hackett's.* The audience should *not* see themselves as Jews, but as Nazis; as *oppressors* rather than *victims*. In Miller's view the power of the play resides in the ability of the audience to *universalise* rather than *particularise* the events represented, and as such has profound implications for audience perceptions of Jewish fate, a

strategy, while challenged by later critics of the Goodrich and Hackett adaptation, was dramatised by Miller in *Incident at Vichy*.

Child psychologist and psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim had been an inmate in Dachau concentration camp and in Buchenwald in 1938-39. Although he is at pains to deny that his purpose is 'to criticise what the Franks' did', and rather, to examine critically 'the universal admiration of their way of coping, or rather of not coping' in line with his attempts to provide a general theory explaining the survival of the few, the net effect of his article, 'The Ignored Lesson of Anne Frank', is to treat the families as if they were laboratory specimens. Moreover, many of the recommendations he makes for active resistance (66) are predicated on the assumption of 'faith in human control over atrocity... the individual's ability or failure to exercise choice on behalf of his own survival'. (67)

Despite Bettelheim's intemperate attack on the 'passivity' of those in hiding his article does illuminate something of the dynamics of the euphoric popular and critical response to the play:

What is at issue is the universal and uncritical response to her diary and to the play and movie based on it, and what this reaction tells about our attempts to cope with the feelings her fate – used by us to serve as a symbol of a most human reaction to Nazi terror – arouses in us. I believe that the worldwide acclaim given her story cannot be explained unless we recognise in it our wish to forget the gas chambers, and our effort to do so by glorifying the ability to retreat into an extremely private, gentle, sensitive world, and there to cling as much as possible to what have been one's usual daily attitudes and activities, although surrounded by a maelstrom apt to engulf one at any moment. (68)

In his view the play and the later film were chiefly responsible for encouraging this admiration:

While play and movie are ostensibly about Nazi persecution and destruction, in actuality what we watch is the way that, despite this terror, lovable people manage to continue living their satisfying intimate lives with each other... Thus the play reassures us that despite the destructiveness of Nazi racism and tyranny in general, it is possible to disregard it in one's private life much of the time, even if one is Jewish. (69)

But he reserves his particular condemnation for the line, taken from Anne's diary, which is heard at the very end of the play as Otto Frank recounts how on his journey home to Amsterdam from his incarceration in Auschwitz he had heard of the murder of most of the other members of the annexe. Bettelheim comments:

At the conclusion we hear Anne's voice from the beyond, saying 'In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart'. This improbable sentiment is supposedly from a girl who had been starved to death, had watched her sister meet that same fate before she did, knew that her mother had been murdered, and had watched untold thousands of adults and children being killed.

Anne has the last word. This is simply contrary to fact, because it was she who got killed. Her seeming survival through her moving statement about the goodness of men releases us effectively of the need to cope with the problems Auschwitz presents... It explains why millions loved the play and movie, because while it confronts us with the fact that Auschwitz existed, it encourages us at the same time to ignore any of its implications. If all men are good at heart, there never really was an Auschwitz; nor is there any possibility that it may recur. (70)

In his view the play encourages the understandable resistance to reflecting upon the significance of industrialised mass extermination and opts for a palliative: the security of familiar domestic routine. For him the play faithfully represents the disastrous passivity and weddedness to habitual domestic routine which he finds so reprehensible. The families in hiding lacked both the moral courage and the emotional robustness to take the kind of decisions which would violate the spirit of conventional family bonds but which were necessary for survival in these extraordinary circumstances. The accusation of Jewish passivity in the face of Nazi oppression would gain notoriety some years later following the publication of Hannah Arendt's book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. (71)

Lawrence Langer is scathing about this line of argument:

This version of Jewish compliance, not invented by Bettelheim but eagerly espoused by him, heaps scorn on the passive victim and virtually ignores the murderer, who organises and executes the deed. It is a comfortable view because it confronts the reader only with rational cowardice, not an irrational racist hatred, and protects Bettelheim (and the reader) from having to face a vision of atrocity that eliminates familiar ideas of cause and effect from the ordeal of the Jews. (72)

Bettelheim wanted to shake audiences out of their admiration for the Franks' measured courage over a period of more than two years in hiding as a laudable strategy for survival by pointing out that rather than moral fortitude, the strategy was significant of a lack of a proper moral vision given the exigencies of the situation. In his view it was also redolent of emotional cowardice in that they succumbed to the need to remain together. Bettelheim also wanted to shake audiences out of their complacency by pointing out that the play rather conveniently eschewed any

engagement with the implications of the existence of an ideology which could result in Auschwitz.

In so far as his criticism indicates that the play in no way makes the particularity of the Nazi threat of extermination a tangible presence with which the audience must grapple, he stands against the universalising tendency of the *Diary*'s adaptors and other critics, including Arthur Miller. That Bettelheim did not apparently make the connection between that absence in the play with his own theorising about survival suggests, that he was blind to the fact that the chief criticism he levelled at the play might with equal force be applied to his own attempts to construct a general profile of the survivor: he suppressed the reality of Auschwitz and the choiceless choice of the concentrationary universe.

Furthermore, he implies that it is a foregone conclusion that Anne would have responded in a specific way to her experiences, and that he knows quite well the nature of this response. This suggests that he held a fixed view about both the impact of the camps and the subjective response of all inmates. The implied *inevitability* and *uniformity* of impact and the consequent loss of individuality is quite different from Langer's stress upon the collapse of conventional understanding of choice, causality and chronology. Bettelheim, rather than taking a sympathetic view of the unresolvable dilemmas faced by the Franks, was wrestling with his own survivor guilt and the need to find a rational explanation, a justification for his survival when so many others perished, which is the more easily found if most victims are viewed as offering no resistance and passively accepting their fate.

Lawrence Langer accuses the adaptors of the *Diary* of a lack of artistic integrity:

The authors of the dramatic version of Anne Frank's *Diary* lacked the artistic will - or courage - to leave their audiences overwhelmed by the feeling that Anne's bright spirit was extinguished, that Anne, together with millions of others, was killed simply because she was Jewish, and for no other reason. This theme lurks on the play's periphery, but never emerges into the foreground. (73)

This passage is suggestive of a different conception of Jewishness than that prevalent in the US in the late 1950s. Sander Gilman comments that Goodrich and Hackett's adaptation,

seemed to present antithetical readings of a text in the light of two models of the Jew present in Eisenhower's America. The first was of the Jew as child, as victim, like all other children, like all other victims. The only answer to this image was the liberal answer: humanity must eliminate all suffering, and such suffering, too, would vanish. How?... The audience is left with the vague feeling that something must be done, even if no program is presented. Levin's reading presents a program. It is through the strong identification of Jews as

political and religious Jews, defined in the light of the newly realised political ideal of Zionism that such horrors can be prevented from happening again. *The Diary* itself, or at least the fragments that have been published, presents a mix of both views. (74)

In this regard it is important to recall Levin's remythologising of the *Diary* in *The New York Times Book Review* article where he quite definitely interpreted the *Diary*'s relevance to contemporary America in terms of an appeal to a robust liberalism if not fully to Gilman's 'program... defined in the light of... Zionism'. Levin wrote:

Just as the Franks lived in momentary fear of the Gestapo's knock on their hidden door so every family today lives in fear of the knock of war. Anne's diary is a great affirmative answer to the life question of today for she shows how ordinary people within this ordeal consistently hold to the greater human values. (75)

The Goodrich and Hackett adaptation cannot in any meaningful sense be described either as Communist inspired or Marxist in theme or emphasis. There is no anti-fascist rhetoric, Marxist sentiment, or an identifiably Communist ideological thrust intended to suggest that the Franks' fate was due to their failure to adopt a left ideological position in their bid for survival. And there is nothing that might resemble an appeal for a new understanding of Jewish consciousness 'defined in the light of Zionism' as Gilman indicates existed in Levin's dramatic adaptation of the *Diary*, conclusions that Levin had drawn from his reflections on the Frank's predicament. Rather by the 1980s literary critics are unanimous in their identification of liberal ideology in the early Cold War period as the impetus behind the universalisation of the *Diary* in Goodrich and Hackett's dramatic adaptation. Judith Doneson comments that in the early 1950s:

'Americanisation' was a goal for minorities: equality and freedom as well as conformity and assimilation were ideas to be found on both the left and the right. The liberals, in calling for equality, sought 'sameness' for minority groups, whereas the anti-Communist conservatives' notion of freedom was to protect the 'American way', in this case, freedom from enemy influence.

And the Jews conformed to the principles of the day. They tried not to 'stand out'. In the arts, this expressed itself in what Henry Popkin called 'de-Semitization': out of misguided benevolence, 'Jewish characters, Jewish names, the word "Jews" itself are expunged... Those involved in the arts attempted to reflect the 'American' experience rather than a specifically Jewish one. Arthur Miller, for example, in his plays *All My Sons* (1947) and *Death of a Salesman* (1949), situates his characters in a vaguely Anglo Saxon Protestant environment - although, in fact, he involves them in familiar Jewish scenes in his treatment of business life and family.



Politically the Jews associated themselves with liberal, universalistic causes; many who were involved in the civil rights movement would never have dreamed of being involved with Jewish causes. (76)

The ideological emphases in the adaptation, rather than Communist or Zionist, are liberal in orientation. The complexities to which this led are most clearly exemplified in the scene that Meyer Levin and the Hacketts considered to be crucial each in their own adaptations, and which Levin cited as evidence of the Hacketts' plagiarism, namely the Hanukkah celebration, which, in both adaptations, is placed crucially at the climax of the first act.

Levin's objection consisted not merely of the complaint that they had plagiarised his dramatic structure, but that the celebration was more like Christmas. Sander Gilman observes that this is entirely consistent with the *Diary*. Anne herself records that Hanukkah and St Nicholas's Day fell almost together, but Gilman identifies the difficulty this created for the *Diary's* dramatic adaptors:

Anne Frank was typical of assimilated Jews, who adopted Christian religious observations without any religious overtones in lieu of a Jewish religious celebration... Being Jewish, at least in the world of the theater, is tied to the image of religion, if not to religion itself. The language that Anne Frank is made to speak is stage English... so there is no linguistic marker for her identity. (77)

In a rare concession to Jewish cultural identity Goodrich and Hackett include the celebration of Hanukkah as the final suspenseful scene of Act 1, but they insisted that the families could not possibly sing the traditional song in the original Hebrew explaining in a letter to Otto Frank that:

It would set the characters in the play apart from the people watching them... for the majority of the audience is not Jewish. And the thing we have striven for, toiled for, fought for throughout the whole play is to make the audience understand and identify themselves... to make them one with them. (78)

Otto Frank supported the Hacketts and Kanin in this decision replying: 'It was my point of view to try to bring Anne's message to as many people as possible even if there are some who think it is a sacrilege and does *not* bring the greatest part of the public to understand.' [my italics] (79)

What remains is historically and dramatically unsatisfactory: *neither* the unself-conscious childhood delight with gifts, the ritual significance lost or of secondary importance, the occasion undifferentiated between Christian and Jewish festivals, compared with the excitement of opening gifts, *nor* a dramatically effective exposition of the meaning and poignancy of Hanukkah in these circumstances for 'the

majority of the audience which is not Jewish'. The audience experiences neither Jewish particularity (as Levin claimed to desire it), nor the effective representation of a liberal assimilationist position close to the historical experience of the Frank family and consistent with Otto Frank's post-war wishes.

The dramatic justification for historical distortion in Goodrich and Hackett's view is the necessity of achieving audience identification with the families in hiding as this is deemed the sole means through which the audience will comprehend the Franks' position. With the essential features of context and identity - Nazi racial ideology and Jewish particularity - largely written out, the crucial elements that the audience need to grasp to make sense both of the adaptation in general and the poignancy of the Hanukkah scene in particular, are blurred or absent. The liberal tendency to erase cultural difference and the willingness of some Jews to acquiesce in the prevailing cultural climate in the US in the 1950s coalesce in the adaptation to provide an almost meaningless tableau of domestic routine in conditions of overcrowding, and the Hanukkah scene becomes a secularised 'Last Supper'.

Doneson, like Arthur Miller before her, comes close to affirming this position in her otherwise insightful work on the *Diary* when she writes: 'audience identification could come only from the realisation that they, like the Franks are part of the same humanity'. (80) On the contrary, audience understanding could come through being able to recognise genuine difference represented in the dramatic adaptation. Difference in this instance may not necessarily be assumed to warrant either mistreatment or equality on ideological grounds, but rather imply, (given the specific circumstances which in the adaptation the audience remains almost entirely ignorant of) the ethical demand for *historical veracity* as the means to elicit critical reflection, rather than merely seeking to discover one's own image in the other.

Finally it must be noted that Otto Frank's clear preference for the universalised representations of the play and the film were given formidable sanction in influential circles of the American establishment: by Eleanor Roosevelt. Frank wrote to Goodrich and Hackett:

When I talked to Mrs Roosevelt about the book, she urged me to give permission for play and film as only then we could reach the masses and influence them by the mission of the book which she saw in Anne's wish to work for mankind, to achieve something valuable still after her death, her horror against war and discrimination. (81)

But Sander Gilman's conclusions about *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank* are suitably blunt. Anne is not merely sanitised in life, the ebullient adolescent, but speaks of human goodness from *beyond* the mass grave at Bergen-Belsen: 'The drama...

provided the audience... throughout the Western world with a living victim. It provided the resurrection of one of the dead witnesses of the Holocaust, one who spoke and thus broke through the silence attributed to the victim. ` (82) As such `the illusion is that the Jewish dead of the Holocaust are made to speak. This is of course, merely an illusion. The dead remain mute; the living revivify them for their own ends.` (83)

### 3 THE RSC AND GERMAN DOCUMENTARY DRAMA: HOCHHUTH'S *THE REPRESENTATIVE* AND WEISS'S *THE INVESTIGATION*

#### 3.1 The Royal Shakespeare Company at the Aldwych

Peter Hall assumed the directorship of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in 1959 and immediately embarked upon a thorough programme of modernisation. The adoption of a Royal Charter, the renaming of the company as the Royal Shakespeare Company, and the change in name for the auditorium, to the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, was a declaration of intent: to rid the institution of the funereal Victorian associations its name provoked, and to place the theatre at the centre of England's most potent and pervasive national mythology, the monarchy.

Hall's programme was intended to include all aspects of the RSC's work. In 1960 he recruited a respected establishment figure, the director and ex-Cambridge don, John Barton, whose specialisms included Elizabethan drama and verse speaking. It was hoped his expertise would inform the company's dramatic practice as well as assert the RSC's credentials for a responsible and scholarly approach to textual complexities and theatrical interpretation.

Behind Hall's modernising initiatives lay a desire to encourage a new cultural investment in the Shakespearian heritage. The Shakespeare Memorial Theatre had been presenting a 'balanced' programme of five plays each year, and an annual festival in celebration of Shakespeare's birthday, an event which had been taking place in Stratford-upon-Avon since 1886. Hall did not intend to allow the RSC to be viewed, as had the Memorial Theatre, as a mausoleum for a defining English literary tradition, but rather intended that the new company should be seen to have contemporary concerns; in Alan Sinfield's phraseology, 'Shakespeare-plus-relevance'.(1)

The productions which came to be seen as typifying Hall's drive to present Shakespeare with scholarly integrity and contemporary purchase were his and Barton's *Troilus and Cressida* (1960), Peter Brook's *King Lear* (1962), John Barton's *The War of the Roses* (1963) and his own *Hamlet* (1965).

In 1962 Michel Saint-Denis was appointed general artistic adviser to the company, and both Peter Brook – the *enfant terrible* of the English avant-garde – and Clifford Williams were appointed directors, establishing another facet of Hall's modernising programme: associate directorships. In this way the company would benefit from a spectrum of directorial styles.

Hall also hoped that the introduction of a rigorous training for RSC actors, and flexible contracts of three years duration would provide the twin benefit of, on the one

hand, a degree of personal freedom which would allow actors to take work outside the company, and on the other hand, provide the conditions necessary to establish an acting company who could develop a style of ensemble playing along the lines of the Berliner Ensemble which had visited London in 1956. Hall also abandoned the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre's approach to the repertoire, a representative selection of tragedy, comedy and history plays, in favour of presenting a related group of plays.

The modernising programme was also expressed in the RSC's new commitment to a metropolitan base. Although the new company was comparatively wealthy at the turn of the decade with over £100,000 in its accounts, Hall was aware that to fulfil his long-term ambitions a substantial annual amount of government funding would be required. 'Hall reasoned that while Stratford had money in the bank, no government would give it subsidies. If this money could be spent on doing something really spectacular, which no government could avoid noticing, then there was a chance of large annual grants in the future.' (2) The extravagant gesture was the opening of the RSC's London base at the Aldwych Theatre on 15 December 1960.

The news of the RSC's intention to establish a London base had not been greeted with enthusiasm in all quarters, and securing a lease on the Aldwych proved to be less than straightforward. When 'Binkie' Beaumont had learnt of Hall's intentions he had resigned from the RSC's board of governors, the presence of the company in the West End creating a conflict of interest. But when Hall discovered that a great many theatres were suddenly unavailable for lease, he concluded that Beaumont had encouraged other West End theatre managers to obstruct the RSC's expansion.

The Aldwych was finally acquired through playing upon the rivalry between the managers who had conspired against Hall. The RSC applied for a lease from Prince Littler which was refused as Littler was, with Beaumont, a director of H. M. Tennent. The RSC next approached Littler's brother, Emile, and due to the rivalry which existed between the brothers, the RSC was able to secure a promise of the Cambridge Theatre. Making sure that this news filtered back to Prince Littler, the Aldwych immediately became available for lease! Littler struck a deal which, after covering the lion's share of the cost of much needed renovations to the theatre and settling on a low fixed rent for the first five years, gave him 25% of gross earnings. (3)

Littler's success in negotiating such a favourable return on his initial outlay, as well as raising questions about the RSC's financial acumen, gives a strong indication of just how big a threat to West End commercial managements the RSC's presence in London was felt to be. Through theatre ownership - in this case ownership of the Aldwych - Littler was able to soften the impact of the RSC's residence upon his own revenue through their payment of rent and the percentage of box-office takings he had negotiated.

As the RSC's metropolitan base, it was planned that the Aldwych would take transfers from Stratford, provide a platform for staging the work of Shakespeare's contemporaries, and make a stage available for the production of modern classics. In the event, throughout Hall's years as the director of the RSC, few Stratford productions transferred to the Aldwych. In consequence a large number of new plays had to be found to fill the repertoire which would also employ the members of the company who were at any given time based there. The first Aldwych seasons were 'dominated by large cast, middle brow plays such as *Ondine*, *Becket* and *Curtmantle* which were all well received', (4) precisely fulfilling the West End management's worst fears.

But these kind of productions were *not* what Hall had intended for the Aldwych, and in time he drew together the repertoire he had entertained from the first: a programme which stood some chance of ruffling feathers in the theatrical and political establishments, which were 'relevant' to contemporary society.

From 1962 he was able to stage productions which were much more in tune with his modernising programme and the not so recent developments in theatrical taste. These productions included Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* directed by William Gaskill, and the RSC's first Harold Pinter play, *The Collection*, both in 1962; Friedrich Durrenmatt's *The Physicists* directed by Peter Brook, and a stage adaptation of Rolf Hochhuth's *Der Stellvertreter (The Representative)* by Robert David MacDonald, the Scots translator of Hochhuth's play, directed by Clifford Williams, both produced in 1963.

*The Representative* was the first major play concerned with the Holocaust to be produced on the London stage by Britain's leading subsidised company. Sally Beauman comments on the 1963 season:

The company began to explore the work of German and Swiss dramatists whose concern with recent European history... chimed with the RSC's attempts to link Shakespeare's history plays to the post-war consciousness. It was as if, eighteen years after the war, the theatre could at last attempt to examine the significance of those events... Hall's generation was the first who seemed able to come to terms with it. (5)

While these plays continued to be a minority interest, the transfer of acclaimed Stratford productions, amongst them William Gaskill's *Cymbeline*, Clifford Williams's *Comedy of Errors* and Peter Brook's *King Lear* pretty much guaranteed large houses at the Aldwych. The fact that they were better liked than new English writers such as Harold Pinter and the European plays, was not necessarily welcomed by the commercial managements. In short, audiences now had a choice they could exercise.

Not all managements were as fortunate as Prince Littler in relation to the financial resources at their command, and the grievance nurtured against the RSC finally flared into public controversy in 1964 ostensibly triggered by a difference of 'artistic opinion', first over the involvement of the RSC with experimental theatre work based on Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*, and later over Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade*.

A series of club performances of experimental work (and therefore exempt from the scrutiny of the Lord Chamberlain's office) organised by Peter Brook and Charles Marowitz had taken place at the LAMDA Studio theatre in 1963-4 with actors from both the RSC and the English Stage Company, and which were, in part, intended to draw attention to the incongruities and absurdities of the Lord Chamberlain's powers through examples of censorship that both companies had suffered.

The LAMDA seasons included scenes from Jean Genet's *The Screens*; a courtship sequence from *Richard III*; a Charles Marowitz collage of *Hamlet*, and a short performance piece entitled *The Public Bath* during which Glenda Jackson undressed and bathed on stage while comments from *The Times* on the trial of Christine Keeler were read to the audience. The work also included the reading of a genuine letter from the Lord Chamberlain that detailed the necessary deletions to allow an RSC play to be staged, that is, the recital of the words he deemed to be obscene.

In the 1964 season at LAMDA an RSC governor, Maurice Colbourne, mistook this letter for an improvisation and was most offended by the expletives to be deleted. Though a governor, he was not a member of the executive council, and so he wrote, not to the chairman of the executive council, Fordham Flower, who was also an old friend, but to another council member - Emile Littler. The thrust of the letter was not merely that the work itself was a disgrace but that 'a company operating under Royal Charter had no right to be publicly rude about a member of the Queen's household, namely the Lord Chamberlain'. (6) Littler passed the letter to Fordham Flower.

The matter was raised at the executive council in July 1964 but Fordham loyal to his directors stalled for time and hoped Colbourne's complaint would fade with the passage of time. It was not to be. Colbourne and Littler were further incensed by the productions opening at the Aldwych, Rudkin's *Afore Night Come*, Roger Vitrac's *Victor*, and most particularly by Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade* directed by Peter Brook. (7)

Brook's involvement with the *Theatre of Cruelty* had led naturally to an interest in Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade*. Brook visited the Schiller Theatre in West Berlin in the Spring of 1964 to see *Marat/Sade* in rehearsal with the idea of his directing a London production at the Aldwych later in the year. (Weiss punctuated his attendance at rehearsals with visits to the Auschwitz Trial currently being conducted in Frankfurt-am-Main.) Weiss's dramaturgy involved a visceral brutality and sensuality, along with a combustible amalgam of theatrical forms and conventions of the kind Brook

had already been experimenting with at the LAMDA Studio theatre. The impact of *Marat/Sade* was such that it remains a defining moment for the subsequent course of English dramaturgical practice. Not so for Emile Littler.

In late August 1964, shortly after *Marat/Sade* had opened, Fordham Flower had reason to visit the US and while he was away Littler decided to air his grievances to the press, criticising Hall's play policy at the Aldwych:

'These plays are dirt plays', he said. 'They do not belong, or should not, to the Royal Shakespeare Company; they are entirely out of keeping with our public image, and with having the Queen as our patron'. Littler claimed that his reaction was prompted solely by righteous indignation at the subsidised peddling of 'filth' at the Aldwych; but it was perhaps also not unconnected with the fact that the West End commercial theatres (of whose Society of Managers he was President) were having one of their worst box-office seasons on record. (8)

*Camelot*, the commercial musical offering of 1964 had just opened to critical condemnation, and seventeen plays had already closed after just a few weeks' run. Littler could not but be aware that many West End managers blamed the string of closures not on the quality of plays they offered, but on the presence in London of two subsidised companies - the RSC and the National.

At the beginning of 1965 George Farmer, the chairman of the RSC's finance committee sought an urgent meeting with the Arts Council to discuss the gravity of the RSC's financial circumstances as it had become clear that their reserves would be exhausted by the autumn. No increase in subsidy could be foreseen for the coming year, and in Farmer's view the figure of £150,000 mentioned for 1965-1966 would still leave the RSC with a substantial deficit, the only solution to which 'would be "drastic curtailment of present policy" - by which he meant closing the Aldwych'. (9)

Both Fordham Flower and Peter Hall knew that following the controversies of the previous year, particularly over Peter Brook's *Theatre of Cruelty Season* and *Marat/Sade*, the new Chairman of the Arts Council Arnold Goodman had been privately approached by some RSC governors who expressed the view that the Aldwych should be closed because of the new policy. Hall suspected that these views were sympathetically received by Arnold Goodman. Sally Beaman points out: 'it was Goodman who, as chairman of the Arts Council questioned whether it was the duty of the State actually to subsidise those who were working to overthrow it... Its anti-Establishment tone and its deliberate attacks on the Lord Chamberlain... had not gone unremarked.' (10)

The RSC's next presentation of Peter Weiss's work took place in late 1965. On 19 October, as a conscious, if belated, expression of solidarity with left-wing protest in



West Germany against the overweening capitalist ethic of the 'new Germany', the RSC, chiefly under the guidance of Peter Brook, staged a late night public reading at the Aldwych of Peter Weiss's *The Investigation*. A courtroom documentary drama with its ostensible subject as the Holocaust, *The Investigation* was the first play of its kind to be seen in London.

The play's entire thrust is an attack on state complicity in rapacious market capitalism, and it elicited neither public protest from West End Theatre managements – the RSC's presentation posed little or no commercial threat – nor public reprimand from the Arts Council for its anti-establishment message. Expletives stirred stronger emotions than the charge that the extermination of Europe's Jews was an economic policy pursued by the Nazi state, and, however partial or misleading an explanation that might be in relation to the destruction of European Jewry, Weiss was claiming it as the guiding spirit of contemporary Western society.

While a contrast may exist between the chaotic violence accompanying the emergence of a secular state during revolution, the French Revolution being the referential context dramatised in *Marat/Sade* (a revolution which helped define the very notion of European humanism), and the state-sponsored industrialised extermination of millions (which both challenged and affirmed the origins and character of that humanism), Weiss's thematic concerns remain constant. These are the primacy of imagination over the possibility of historical knowledge; the primacy of contingent, material realities, the body, wealth, and violent power, over idealism; and an acceptance of the duplicitous nature of humanity over any easy distinction being drawn between good and evil.

### 3.2 German documentary theatre in the 1960s

The modernist roots of Documentary theatre, sometimes referred to as the 'theatre of fact' or subsumed within the genre of 'social drama', (11) lay in the representational theories of Eisenstein and Meyerhold, Brecht and Piscator. But influences may also be traced to late nineteenth-century naturalism, the theatrical innovation of realism, the historical drama of Schiller, and to the Station dramas of medieval Christian Europe.

In the early 1970s Jack Zipes commented:

Documentary plays are aesthetic experiments which analyse the character of ritual authoritarian language and its affects on the human mind. Though this one-dimensional language is most prevalent in Germany and is largely a result of Hitler's attempt to purify German, it has now spread to all countries in the East and West.

Today it is this ritual authoritarian language against which all writers react – some with hyperbole and bombast in order to break the bonds the language

imposes on them, others with subtlety and artifice in order to turn the language in against itself, thereby destroying its repressive nature. Documentary dramatists belong to the latter group. In essence, they are subversive. They choose to infiltrate into the establishment's inner sanctum for the purpose of mastering the techniques of the authoritarian language and overthrowing the establishment. (12)

Nearly twenty years later the British writer Derek Paget essentially concurred with these views: 'The attitudes expressed in these plays were profoundly critical, they can be seen as challenges to the very notion of political consensus at least as much as *Look back in Anger* can.' (13)

In so far as the plays were able to represent effectively the rhetoric of bureaucratic styles of argument and language, and to do so with devastating critical intent, they were threatening to any political attempt to construct the pretence of a consensus through the obfuscation of the formulaic and economic use of language. But given that the specific subjects of the examples of Documentary theatre which found their way onto the London stage in this period were marginal to the contemporary British political scene, Paget may be overstating the case in relation to Britain, though two documentary style plays did cause considerable disquiet to the Labour government: the RSC's *US* directed by Peter Brook and Rolf Hochhuth's *Soldiers*.

The German documentary plays which received London presentations in this period included *The Representative (Der Stellvertreter)* by Rolf Hochhuth, an RSC production at the Aldwych which opened on 25 September 1963; *The Investigation (Die Ermittlung)* by Peter Weiss which was given a staged reading by the RSC at the Aldwych on 19 October 1965; *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer (In der Sache J. Robert Oppenheimer)* by Heinart Kipphardt first at the Hampstead Theatre Club on 17 October 1966, subsequently transferring to the Fortune Theatre on 28 November 1966; *Soldiers: An Obituary for Geneva. A Tragedy (Soldaten: Nekrolog auf Genf. Tragodie)* also by Rolf Hochhuth which after abortive discussions about a production at the National Theatre in August 1966 was staged at the New Theatre on 12 December 1968, but only after the abolition of the Lord Chamberlain's powers of theatre censorship earlier in 1968. *US*, a collaborative theatrical enterprise directed by Peter Brook which opened at the Aldwych on 13 October 1966, was an attempt at documentary theatre of a kind which was heavily influenced by German documentary theatre practice, but a modification of it.

In Germany growing disenchantment with Konrad Adenauer's Christian Democrats (CDU) led in the early 1960s to the pervasive feeling that 'it was time for a change' in West German politics. The Social Democrats (SPD), far from being considered the radical alternative, were viewed by many as, at best, the lesser of two evils. The Marxist critique of West Germany's 'economic miracle' was held by a

substantial minority to be the only radical alternative on offer and, in the first years of the decade, began to receive broader consideration.

Apart from this significant shift in the national mood, two further contemporary factors appear to be pre-eminent in the explanation for the quite unexpected re-emergence of documentary theatre in Germany in the early 1960s. The first of these is a renewed engagement with the theatrical perspectives of Piscator and Brecht.

Between 1919 and 1933 German theatre had abandoned the characteristic emphases of Expressionism and came to be influenced by the theories of Bertolt Brecht and Erwin Piscator. Brecht developed his theories of epic theatre which encompassed *Zeitstücke*, historical plays and documentaries. Piscator developed the political epic, through staging classic historical dramas in accordance with his distinctive political outlook. With Hitler's seizure of power in 1933 both Brecht and Piscator were forced into exile, Brecht returning to East Berlin in 1949 and Piscator to West Germany in 1951. Jack Zipes makes the lineage between Brecht and the documentary theatre of the 1960s explicit:

Kipphardt who was *Chefdramaturg* of the Deutsches Theater in East Berlin while Brecht was still alive, shows a partiality for the *Verfremdungseffekt* through sharp variation of language and staging devices. Hochhuth resembles Brecht in his treatment of a theme in epic style and in his use of character types for pedagogical purposes. Weiss's choice of the oratorio form in *Die Ermittlung* and his emphasis on social and political obligation are related to Brecht's *Massnahme*. But what these dramatists have in common with Brecht is primarily a strong social conscience and the desire to effect change through drama. (14)

On returning to West Germany in 1951 Piscator worked freelance in a number of theatres until his appointment in 1962 as the Intendant of West Berlin's Freie Volksbühne where, amongst others, he directed the German premières of *Der Stellvertreter* (*The Representative*), 20 February 1963, *In der Sache J. Robert Oppenheimer* (*In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer*), 11 October 1964, and *Die Ermittlung* (*The Investigation*), 19 October 1965.

However, there appears to be a broad agreement that the *immediate* catalyst to the urgent reclamation of the truncated pre-war theatrical practice of Brecht and Piscator was the trial of Adolf Eichmann. Writing in early 1967 Zipes observed:

In Germany, the Eichmann Trial served as a reminder to a prosperous people that crimes had not died with their victims. The dispersal of facts uncovered by the Eichmann Trial and political pressure forced the German government, which had been rather lax up to that time, to pursue and bring to trial many Nazis who had already assumed respectable roles in the new German society. Thus, the

Eichmann Trial generated in Germany itself a series of trials and reports which centred upon the German past. (15)

The saturation coverage of the Eichmann Trial by West Germany's media, the bureaucratic administration and the development of the technical means to accomplish a plan of mass extermination, elicited in the minds of these relatively unknown playwrights, associations with an earlier generation's preoccupations: Brecht's and Picator's critique of capitalist driven modernity and the necessity of exploiting the technological innovations of this modernity to criticise the oppressive use to which the state itself put these innovations.

Documentary theatre is then predominantly incident or issue centred, 'characterised by a central or exclusive reliance on actual rather than imaginary event'. (16) The clear intention is the creation of the illusion of reportage, that is the pretence of the objective presentation of the details of a case. The practitioners of documentary theatre accepted that this itself *was* an illusion, as they did not believe objectivity to be an achievable rational position, and because they were quite candid about their own selective use of sources in support of the interpretation of events which they wished to convey to the audience.

Documentary theatre is readily identifiable as primarily a mode of representation which exploits the tools and techniques of the mass media to present the kind of arguments that the mass media were themselves resistant to, representative as they were perceived to be, of powerful vested interests maintaining the status quo. These techniques included the use of montage both to drive the narrative and to make the action appear natural; and to create startling contrasts to punctuate or break the narrative to provoke the audience to question. Montage could be used with film or projected photographic images, sound recordings and commentators, and to a lesser degree printed posters or banners which could either be found in or extrapolated from the historical record. The purpose was to enmesh the audience in the multiplicity of informational sources, to overwhelm them with evidence and to remind them of the vortex of modernity, the very forces of which were put to misleading use in the incident being documented. Short, succinct scenes produced the effect of a chronicle, the culmination of which is the verification of the case being presented. Again Zipes points out that 'the courtroom is often chosen as the setting so that the author can conduct his examination of facts in an appropriate environment'. (17)

The rhetoric of the court and the legal professions represented are exploited to subvert the authority they represent, that of the state. The partiality of legal discourse is made to serve the documentarists' perspective, rather than that of the state and in so doing the impression conveyed is that the establishment cannot withstand scrutiny by its own methods and practices.

The pedagogical and rhetorical intent of the theatrical enterprise is conveyed by the assumption inherent in the tone of the production; the spectators are to be enlightened about an issue that despite their beliefs to the contrary, they have hitherto remained shockingly ignorant of or ill-informed. The implicit message is that the audience should leave the auditorium determined to prevent the repetition of the kind of situation it has just witnessed. The veracity of the production is often reinforced by information contained in published texts which accompany the play, and background notes and bibliographies in the published texts of the production. These are intended to emphasise, as are other elements in the production, that the play is based upon extensive and painstaking historical research, and that the audience bears a moral responsibility to take action now this research has been made publicly available.

In a recent discussion of Documentary theatre James E. Young has described this form of theatre as employing 'a rhetoric of fact'. Young draws a distinction between:

Those writers of documentary literature whose texts are reflexively naturalised by a particular religious tradition or cultural continuum and those writers who quite consciously - even conscientiously - employ a documentary rhetoric of fact in order to naturalise, and thereby obscure, a particular subtext.

As bourgeois ideology works by naturalising its signs in order to appear free, universal and self generating, socialist realism and other forms of documentary literature mask and naturalise their own production.

By presenting itself as non-ideological, documentary literature enforces its facticity: that is, through its rhetoric of fact, the documentary mode works to obscure its ideological premises precisely in order to be ideological.

As a literary mode that would mask its seams of construction in order to become the basis for actions in the world, documentary literature seems to share both the process and ends of ideology - and thus might come to be regarded as a fundamentally ideological form of discourse. (18)

In arguably the most thorough treatment of the documentary mode by a British author, *True Stories? Documentary Drama on Radio, Screen and Stage* (1990), Derek Paget expresses the distinction identified by Young in a different manner. In his view there is a central dilemma in the position of documentary theatre practitioners because they 'participate in, are a symptom of, two distinct, but inter-linked structures of feeling: one is expressive of a faith in facts, grounded upon positivist scientific rationality; the other is expressive of a profound political scepticism which disputes the notion that 'facts = truth'. (19) Paget elaborates upon two distinctive traditions of understanding documentary which issue from these opposing views of epistemology:

The dominant tradition of documentary is the liberal/ conservative one which holds that facts and information are *in themselves* liberating, and that a responsible, democratic society will see to it that its citizens are sufficiently well

informed to make judicious moral and political decisions ... There is a tendency in this tradition to see facts and information as 'objective' entities, free from all 'bias' and equivalent to 'truth'.

The alternative tradition is a radical / revolutionary *reporting* one, which recognises that facts and information can never come value free... Whereas the 'record' of an event is presented as transparent (but is in fact mediated), the mediator in the 'report' is... also the message.

The first tradition is 'compensatory'; it constructs a citizen who must be compensated for his/her lack of knowledge... The second tradition assumes knowledge and allows the citizen access to the makers' own place in the mode of production... The information it contains is 'enabling' rather than compensatory. (20)

This is a rather tendentious account of opposing epistemological and pedagogical traditions which fails to resolve the fundamental dilemma that hangs upon each tradition's claim of exclusive access to final truths and the failure to recognise the threat of authoritarianism in such a claim. The first tradition, which Paget describes as the 'dominant', fails to encourage a genuine plurality of conviction due to the inherent belief in its own superiority often based upon birth (aristocracy) or accomplishment (meritocracy) and the consequent inability to trust any other perspective. The later tradition described in affirmative terms by Paget fails to recognise in its proclaimed tolerance of diversity and desire for wider participation the totalitarian push for unanimity of conscience, the distinction which Young was seeking to make. A. V. Subiotto makes precisely this point with regard to the chief practitioner of documentary theatre:

Piscator made no secret of his subordination of documentary material to his primarily political purpose: 'my intellectual sights are and will continue to be set on the social revolution'. Thus the creator of documentary theatre... produced a paradoxical off-spring: the inbuilt objectivity of document was clearly surrendered by Piscator to a slanted interpretation of the structure assembled on the stage; yet, as with all propaganda, the audience was expected to believe totally in the 'truth' of the material shown. (21)

The substance of Subiotto's argument is really not that documents themselves are objective, but that the selection of documents is not made upon the criteria of a broad representation of conflicting views, but amassed to represent just one chosen perspective: that of the dramatist.

In his lengthy defence of his documentary method in a postscript to *The Representative* entitled 'Historical Sidelights', Rolf Hochhuth invokes the authority of Schiller by reminding his readers of Schiller's dictum that the playwright 'can use no single element of reality as he finds it, that his work in all its aspects must be a work of the idea, if it is to possess reality as a whole'. (22)

In his invocation of Schiller and the categories of thought associated with German idealism, Hochhuth moves closer to making absolute claims for his own documentary method, a temptation to which Peter Weiss was also not immune. His 'Notes Towards a Definition of Documentary Theatre' (*Notizen zum dokumentarischen Theater*) are amongst the most programmatic of statements about the nature and purpose of documentary theatre which he delivered at a symposium entitled 'Brecht Dialogue' sponsored by the Berliner Ensemble in East Berlin in February 1968. (23)

The two traditions identified by Paget are not so very different. Both are based upon the assumptions that the masses are in need of enlightenment and that an obligation exists to engage with this assumed lack of understanding (on liberal or Marxist grounds). Both assume that the approach taken will be partisan, each presenting an interpretation based upon preferred assumptions, though the earlier tradition would assert that *noblesse oblige* implied the liberal consideration of other views. Both make claims for the universal validity of their own perspective. The earlier tradition holds a classical 'top-down' model (divine revelation, metaphysical ideals, papal infallibility, divine right, dynastic succession, heredity), the later tradition accepts a 'bottom-up' model, possibly along Marxist lines, (the will of the people, historical inevitability, immutable economic laws, and the circulation of social energy).

The essentially antagonistic rather than consensual nature of the relationship between these two traditions, each making an *exclusive* bid for power goes some way toward explaining the relatively negative reaction to documentary theatre in Britain in this period. With one exception, Rolf Hochhuth's *Soldiers: An Obituary for Geneva* (24) the subject of these plays were considered marginal to current British culture. *The Representative* concerns the Roman Catholic Church's, and in particular the Pope's, response to the Nazi extermination of the Jews of Europe; *The Investigation* is based upon the transcripts of trials of suspected war criminals by *German* courts, of which next to nothing had been heard in Britain, and which concerned atrocities at Auschwitz-Birkenau, a camp which continued to have little resonance in the British imagination.

While pointing out that *The Representative* is not strictly historical and cannot be properly described as 'Documentary theatre' 'since most of the characters... and all the dialogues are fictitious', R. C. Perry argues that 'the effectiveness of Hochhuth's accusation depends on his being able to demonstrate that the main actions and dialogues of the play... have [a] solid basis in history'. In this respect Perry concludes that Hochhuth 'to a large extent succeeds' because 'the facts and figures about the atrocities are all true, the "background" scenes are dramatic re-constructions of actual historical situations, and most of the main protagonists have a certain authenticity in

the sense that motives, arguments and opinions correspond to those of actual people or groups.' (25) In fact most of the main characters *are* modelled on historical figures, as Hochhuth's commentary in the published text of the play makes clear.

Perry is not alone in questioning whether *The Representative* is a genuine example of documentary theatre. Sidney Parham argues that it is easily recognisable as a play modelled upon classical tragedy by virtue of the arrangement of the scenes over the entire span of the play: Acts I, III and V have three scenes each; Acts II and IV each have only one. Moreover, the parallelism between the manoeuvrings of the Nazi officials and those in the Roman Catholic Church, strongly suggest that Hochhuth has based his play on the form of Schiller's historical plays:

Yet Schiller's historical dramas make no pretence to documentary accuracy. They are concerned with presenting ideal or moral truth, and in them one finds historical fact altered for dramatic effect. Schiller's use of juxtaposition and parallel scenes is primarily of comparing a man's private and public life and of presenting through this comparison insight into the nature of truth.

Hochhuth says that he is documenting public acts. His characters have no private lives; they exist only in relation to the public issue at hand. Instead of using Schiller's form to examine those personal moral conflicts from which Schiller believes tragedy arise, Hochhuth uses it to create a rather simple comparison, one which shows the similarity of the Nazi's actions with those of the Church. Not only is this a debased use of Schiller's form, but an unworkable one. Because Hochhuth tries to present all of his facts realistically and at great length, this comparison cannot be presented on the stage.

We have a play in which form does not follow function. (26)

The structuring of the play's scenes in each act and over the entire length of the play is not the only respect in which Hochhuth has sought to emulate Schiller, whose historical dramas follow other conventions of classical drama. Schiller's lines are iambic pentameters and the diction of each character has a poetic and literary quality. *The Representative* is written in free verse and has 'a basic iambic quality', most lines having 'either four or five stresses'. (27) Hochhuth found that choosing a verse form helped him condense the vast amount of material into a viable text for the stage, allowed him to avoid the pedestrian tone of much of the scholarly and official documentation, and also to imbue the events he was dramatising with a sense of immediacy. Hochhuth himself has commented:

Free verse carries its speaker along much more readily than prose, especially when it concerns a subject which is so closely involved with contemporary events and depends so extensively on historical documents. Then, things must be transposed, heightened by language. Otherwise, it would often be likely to sound as if one were merely quoting from the documents. (28)



However, both Zipes and Perry draw attention to Hochhuth's conscious reproduction of a variety of jargons, military, ecclesiastical and Nazi, a preoccupation with language which Zipes described as a defining characteristic of documentary drama. Perry comments:

This differentiation of language would appear to constitute a step towards Naturalism, but, as we know, Hochhuth is not primarily interested in the characters for their own sakes, or in their environment as a conditional factor - their functions are variously to explain and demonstrate the facts of the historical situation and at the same time to act either directly or indirectly, as vehicles for the author's accusation. (29)

Quite how this is done is best expressed by Zipes when he writes: 'By transforming rhetoric into a moral barometer Hochhuth can illustrate the mettle of his characters.'  
(30)

Hochhuth is providing an ironic commentary upon language by exploring the similarities between the Nazi and the Roman Catholic Church's abuse of language when both claimed in different ways to be devoted to the word, but who each succumbed to debasing its currency through the abandonment of genuine thought for the adoption of a formulaic rhetoric. In the case of the Nazis this buttressed the moral opacity which allowed for the comfortable acceptance of extermination on a massive scale, and in the case of the Roman Catholic Church, the inability to recognise or the willingness to concede ambiguity, made of moral courage to speak out, a rhetorically justified silence.

### 3.3 Rolf Hochhuth's *The Representative* at the Aldwych

The dramatic spine of *The Representative* is provided by an ordinary Roman Catholic priest's desperate attempts to persuade the Church to condemn the deportations of the Jews. Riccardo pleads with one level of the hierarchy after another until eventually he forces his way into an audience with the Pope himself. When it is evident that he too is reluctant to act Riccardo realises that the only course of action remaining open to him is to be the true representative of Christ - and the Pope - and to share the suffering of the Jews by being transported to Auschwitz. The play ends, not with the renunciation of his vocation implicitly suggested in his intent to murder a Nazi doctor (based on Josef Mengele) in order to save a Jew, but with Riccardo's mortal wounding by the SS, in the attempt to save a Jewish life. Riccardo has proved to be the true representative of Christ by dying for the Jews, overcome by the realities of Auschwitz.

Despite Hochhuth's claim that the verse form, made his text stageable, Sidney Parham points out: 'Each director has been faced by a text which requires some seven hours to perform... His plays are written for the reader not the spectator; therefore each director has had to reshape the play for his production.' (31)

Clifford Williams's attempt at abbreviating the translation of *Der Stellvertreter* for the purposes of theatrical production may most easily be grasped in outline from the following tabulation of the structure of Hochhuth's written text, the structure of the world première directed by Piscator at the Freie Volksbühne in Berlin, alongside that of the RSC production:

<b>Written Text of <i>The Representative</i></b>		<b>Freie Volksbühne</b>	<b>Aldwych</b>
		<b>Erwin Piscator</b>	<b>Clifford Williams</b>
<b>Act I</b>	<b>August 1942</b>		
<b>Sc (i)</b>	<b>The Nuncio's residence in the Rauchstrasse Berlin. Kurt Gerstein bursts into the Papal Legation in Berlin and attempts to expose the extermination of the Jews.</b>	<b>Act I Sc (i)</b>	<b>New opening scene</b>
			<b>Documentary Film: Sequence Deportation</b>
<b>Sc (ii)</b>	<b>The 'Jagerkeller' at Falkensee outside Berlin a small hotel, where the SS relax. The plan for the extermination of the Jews is revealed.</b>	<b>Omitted</b>	<b>Act I Sc (ii)</b>
<b>Sc (iii)</b>	<b>Gerstein's apartment Berlin. Father Riccardo Fontana S.J. helps a fugitive Jew escape.</b>	<b>Act I Sc (ii) (cut)</b>	<b>Omitted</b>
<b>Act II</b>	<b>2 February 1943</b>		<b>Documentary Film Sequence</b>
<b>Sc (i)</b>	<b>Palazzo Fontano. Monte Gianicolo. Riccardo persuades his father of the truth of what is being planned for the Jews, and the necessity of protest.</b>	<b>Act I Sc (iii) (heavily cut)</b>	<b>Act I Sc (iii)</b>

**INTERVAL**

<b>Written Text of <i>The Representative</i></b>	<b>Freie Volksbühne</b>	<b>Aldwych</b>
	<b>Erwin Piscator</b>	<b>Clifford Williams</b>
<b>Act III</b>		
<b>Sc (i)</b> Rome 16 October 1943. The SS break into an Italian Jewish home.	Omitted	Omitted
<b>Sc (ii)</b> A monastery in which Jews are being hidden.	Act II Sc (i)	Act II Sc (i)
<b>Sc (iii)</b> Gestapo headquarters in Rome (the former Cultural Section of the German Embassy) The failure of the Church to protest the deportation of the Jews from Rome.	Omitted	Omitted
<b>Act IV</b>		<b>Documentary</b> <b>Film Sequence</b>
<b>Sc (i)</b> A small throne Room in the Pope's Palace. Riccardo tries to persuade the Holy Father to speak out but fails.	Act II Sc (ii)	Act II Sc (ii)
<b>Act V</b> Auschwitz	Act II Sc (iii)	
<b>Sc (i)</b> Monologues by those who are suffering	A new	
<b>Sc (ii)</b> Reintroduction of the SS characters from the Jagerkeller. Debate between the Doctor and Riccardo.	interpolation to explain Riccardo's presence, the debate (Sc ii)	Act II Sc (iii) The Debate between the Doctor and Riccardo.
<b>Sc (iii)</b> Riccardo unsuccessfully attempts to murder the Doctor	followed by the monologue which ends the play (Sc i)	Documentary Film Sequence: (Belsen)

**Fig. 3.1** The Structure of *The Representative* in text and performance. (32)

What this outline structure does not make explicit is the additional means that the RSC director and designer used in their attempt to make Hochhuth's text dramatically intelligible.

The RSC published a supplement to the usual Aldwych programme, the chief purpose of which, as Michael Kustow explained in the editorial, was to 'give space to the various opinions provoked by *The Representative* and to present historical facts and some asides'. (33) The supplement was also published as a record of the RSC's première of *The Representative* and in it the designer Ralph Koltai provided a brief résumé of the reasoning that lay behind his conceptualisation of the set:

I have aimed for a set which would convey the reality of the situation as powerfully as documentary film, but in terms of the stage. For me the underlying reality is not the dilemma of the Pope, but the relentless process of atrocity and extermination which continues behind the conflicts of the plot.

I have therefore chosen to create a metaphor by enclosing the action within the walls of a giant concrete gas chamber. Into this are dropped fragments of each scene's reality - the beer-cellar, the Nunciature in Berlin, the Vatican throne room. The selection of truth necessary to perform each scene is suspended within the larger reality: the lamps and beams of the gas chamber persist above the heads of cardinals; the Pope's magnificent door, gold studded and inlaid, hangs upon the door of the gas-chamber. This convention operates until the Auschwitz scene when a radical transformation was necessary, and I tried to open out the play as harshly as possible. (34)

### 3.4 The critical response to the RSC's production of *The Representative*

Ronald Bryden conveys something of the initial impact of Koltai's design:

You face three massive walls of blank grey concrete. In one is a door with a spyhole through which, a voice explains over a loud-speaker, guards could watch the naked Jews as the gas took effect. The bodies, the voice adds, were removed to the incinerators through large ports at the other end of the gas chamber - it is through these that you, the audience, have been looking in. Their huge slabs now roll into place, and onto them are projected goose-stepping youths, rolling tanks, a moustached man shouting to a forest of arms, faces peering from cattle trucks - all the familiar, jerky, chilling imagery of the years which led up to this place. The loudspeaker tells you that this is Auschwitz. (35)

T. C. Worsley felt the walls of the giant concrete gas chamber did not 'create a striking enough image', implying that Koltai's intention was discernible but not in Worsley's view entirely successful. *The Times* considered that they served the audience poorly as a 'screen for the projection of the irritatingly unnecessary commentary and news film extracts which punctuate the scenes'. (36)

The attempt to graft into the production the characteristic techniques of a dramaturgy developed by Piscator and Brecht more than a generation earlier with the intention to compensate dramatically for the severe excisions made necessary in a text written with scant regard for production values and modelled upon an entirely different literary tradition were the chief reasons for the production's failure in the view of the critics.

Perhaps with one notable exception, Bernard Levin writing in the *Daily Mail*, the critical response to the RSC production evidenced a broad agreement that the production had failed, and agreement over the reasons for that failure.

Despite his enthusiasm for Koltai's design Bryden is unswerving in his criticism of the director's unappealing exploitation of a dramaturgy lacking the appropriate context. In his article which he entitled 'Pseudo-event' he remarks:

Clifford Williams... has borrowed from Piscator... all the techniques of his epic theatre - film cuttings, newspaper extracts, announcers reading statistics - to make it plain that no distinction should be made between what happens on his stage and the world beyond it.

There are only two things wrong. Mr Williams's importations of documentary actuality have no place or authorisation in Hochhuth's text, nor do they bear any artistic relation to the play he has written.

To produce a Schillerian pseudo-historical drama in mid-20th century is a less noteworthy enterprise than to acculturate Piscator. (37)

Philip Hope-Wallace, felt the techniques were not merely a distraction but counter-productive, asserting: 'they do *not* reinforce what the stage itself is saying; they merely make the stage make-believe look more stagey than it need'. (38)

The critics were equally scathing about the narrowing effect the excisions of the written text created in the stage production. *The Spectator* pointed out that in Hochhuth's text,

both Gerstein, the German Protestant who joins the SS in order to destroy Nazism from within, and Father Riccardo, the Catholic on the side of intervention, are deliberately set up to show how much closer they are to the original Vicar of Christ than is Pius XII.

In the version at the Aldwych Gerstein and Riccardo are no longer twin saints: the part of Gerstein has been so much reduced that he has scarcely more importance than being the man who opens Riccardo's eyes. He is a curious character whom we would like to know more about but who is never enlarged upon. Thus the play becomes much more the story of one man's battle against the authority of his own church... It is a lesser, more traditional work than the whole text. (39)

*The Times* critic and Harold Hobson concurred with these views, the latter's comments in particular, a confirmation of a loss of complexity in the stage production, present in the written text:

Its two chief characters, Riccardo and an SS officer, Gerstein, are presented too naively. Riccardo... is merely an undifferentiated mouthpiece of unstoppable rhetoric; he has none of the human moments of doubt which come even to a Savonarola. But Gerstein is the play's outstanding failure. This man served in the death camps in order, he says, to undermine them from within... The plea may be just: but it needs investigating, and it is not investigated here. (40)

The two scenes that most of the critics felt were dramatically effective were those which came at the climax of the play and which involved an intense confrontation between ideals. This suggests that any pretensions toward epic theatre were lost, not merely because the delicate balances of Hochhuth's dramatic frame had been lost through the director's cuts in what was an inappropriate vehicle for Brechtian theatrical practice in any case, nor solely because the techniques themselves had ossified and become jaded stage clichés, redolent merely of nostalgia for the radicalism of a faded era, but because the excisions had reduced the production to a classical tragic conflict between mutually exclusive goods, and easily divisible good and evil. The warmth of response specifically to these two scenes suggests they provided what was considered to be appropriate treatment of the theme.

The first of the scenes is Riccardo's confrontation with Pope Pius as the priest presses the Pope to make a decisive and unambiguous stand against the Nazi extermination of the Jews. *The Times* critic attributed the effectiveness of this scene to the rare coincidence of Hochhuth's sense of the dramatic - mostly absent in the view of the majority of critics - and the superb nuanced portrayal of Pope Pius by Alan Webb as 'a bird-like ascetic, switching between icy political disputation and lyrical benevolence translating the scene into a powerful theatrical image', (41) successfully conveying Hochhuth's conception of the Pope as 'much less a person than an institution: big gestures, a vivid movement of his exceptionally beautiful hands and a smiling aristocratic frigidity'. (42) At the climax of the scene Pius signs an innocuous statement about the increasing concern of the Church over the atrocities, and as he does so ink runs on his fingers. There is a moment of indecision, and then a bowl is brought for him to wash his hands. The Lord Chamberlain had apparently insisted that the production should unambiguously convey that it was ink that the Pope was washing his hands of.

The majority of critics considered the final scene 'the strongest point' of the production but Ronald Bryden points out that this last scene, 'the confrontation of the young Jesuit with "The Doctor" at Auschwitz, a figure of abstract, poeticised evil who

explains his cruelties by revealing that he is a lapsed priest trying to goad God into revealing himself', is gained at the expense of Hochhuth's text: 'Mr Williams has had the sense to build this into the climax of his evening (he has done so, rather dubiously perhaps, by cutting Hochhuth's own final scene in which the Jesuit is shot down by guards while trying to kill the Doctor).' (43)

Critics found the scene to be 'tautly impressive', 'literally unbearable' and to have a 'shattering impact'. (44) Hobson describes it as possessing 'terrible authority' and begins his article with the sense of urgency this final scene had imparted to him: 'I wish that I could convey something - even if only a small part - of the dramatic power, the intellectual force and horror, the dark night of the soul, the flickering of the not yet totally extinguished illumination which are present in the final scene of Rolf Hochhuth's *The Representative*.' (45)

In the context of their theological discussions in the final scene of the written text Riccardo makes the decision that the situation calls for the supreme expression of vicarious suffering: the choice of evil and the full responsibility for that evil - the murder of the doctor - in the hope that this would both make it unnecessary for anyone else to take the task upon himself, and to free those who, shrinking from the ultimate responsibility of taking another's life, continued to suffer. In Hochhuth's text Riccardo is prevented from pursuing his role to its conclusion by being murdered and the imponderable questions of God's and man's responsibility are left unanswered.

The critics drew quite different meanings from the final scene as presented in the RSC's production. As indicated earlier, Hobson is the most fulsome:

This scene is set on the railway platform at Auschwitz, at dawn. Behind a barrier of barbed and gleaming wire the latest consignment of Jews is hurried off to the gas chambers: while in front two men, a desperate, emotional Jesuit... and the confident, challenging camp doctor debate good and evil, murder and love, the Inquisition, and the existence of God.

Throughout the play the Jesuit, Father Riccardo, has been sure of himself, indignant at the vacillation of the Church in the presence of the wholesale Nazi massacre of the Jews, certain not merely of what he ought to do himself, but of what everyone else ought to do as well. Now for the first time, in the presence of the doctor's high arrogant atheism, he discovers in himself a broken and contrite spirit, and this, I confess... I find a more powerful rebuke to the world's evil than anything that has gone before. (46)

In placing the dramatic resolution of the play firmly in the Christian tradition of the humiliation of humanity's hubris, the more powerfully so when it is a Roman Catholic priest's discovery that his own humanity is ragged with ambition, callousness and self-righteousness, albeit in a noble cause, Hobson appears to supply an appealing alternative to the 'classic' interpretation of a Christ-like noble sacrifice. But Hobson's

interpretation may be considered equally offensive, even anti-Semitic. Is he really suggesting that comfort may be taken in face of the world's evil, because it took Auschwitz to enable one Roman Catholic priest to discover a measure of humility? This is little more than the smug piety of shire-Anglicanism, whose liturgical vocabulary he borrows and the kind of reasoning with which many Jewish observers justifiably take offence.

*The Spectator* felt that the scene gained 'its strength from the fact that Riccardo, though so visibly the winner' of the historico-theological debates 'here crumples before them'. Overcome by the magnitude of human evil, 'the play ends... with what can only be seen as a crucifixion'. (47) Is there the suggestion that Riccardo's humiliation is redemptive of Auschwitz and analogous to Christ's redemption of the world through his defeat on the cross and consequently a fruitful analogy between the 'state' execution of Christ and the state extermination of four million Jews at Auschwitz? The chosen metaphor may easily be considered insensitive; its implication the more so. This final scene in the RSC's production is perhaps more susceptible to just such an interpretation due to the cuts which were made in the written text, as the scene in the RSC's production was immediately preceded by Riccardo's 'voluntary martyrdom', (48) his decision to wear the yellow badge and to allow himself to be transported to Auschwitz. As in Edward Wallant's novel *The Pawnbroker* Christian conceptions of redemption are offered as categories of reflection which appear to offer avenues toward rational sense, comfort and a veneer of ethical justification. Moral purpose is somehow dimly discernible both in the temporal and transcendent sphere and Auschwitz becomes manageable as an historical event and daily experience when interpreted through conventional Christian theological categories of vicarious redemptive suffering of the one for the many!

Not all the critics were content with such a conclusion. Worsley commented that the final scene 'is in effect a kind of Dostoevskian confrontation between the priest and the camp commandant. It quite simply doesn't work at any level and brings the play to its end with an anti-climax. To be fair to Rolf Hochhuth, it is not his ending to the play.' (49)

For Hope-Wallace it was impossible to make sense of the final scene because Riccardo's character had been so poorly drawn throughout the play, which he attributed to the 'much reduced version of the text':

Because the material is lacking we get little real insight into the young Jesuit himself. He remains a walking 'notion' of the good man urging protest 'before it is too late'... I for one need more character in a hero than is here vouchsafed. For this to be a great play or at least one which measures up to its appalling subject, we ought to be living in the mind of Fontana, the young Jesuit martyr. We are not so sufficiently to lift the play off the ground. (50)



Because of the orthodox Christian assumptions about goodness and evil, human character and the possibility of redemption, the sufficiency of a classical hero whose mind can be lived in is needed to measure up to the play's subject. Had such a tragic hero been presented more fully, resolution would follow enlightenment, and the hero would not have been merely equal to, but would overcome Auschwitz. In good Protestant style not the Pope, or the institution of the Church, but the true believer becomes the Vicar, the Representative of Christ dying triumphant over the forces of a thoroughly modern darkness.

There is perhaps no more telling if unintended assumption of the failure of the classical genre imitated by Hochhuth, the failure of the RSC production, and the failure of critical understanding than that which lies at the centre of Hope-Wallace's comments. The kind of figure he desires stands in danger of merely representing the grossest form of Christian triumphalism.

His misjudgement is further compounded by two astounding comparisons he makes in relation to *The Representative*. He writes that Hochhuth's play 'engages our attention for the plight of the Jews much less forcibly than that much slighter play *The Diary of Anne Frank*', and that it is 'not cheap, but thin and obvious' when 'one thinks of the overwhelming effect of a film like *Nuit et Brouillard*'. (51) While the *negative* comparison to *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank* is none too complimentary the intended slight in comparison to a documentary film is not without its difficulties.

The documentary film elements in the RSC production require further consideration. A number of the critics commented in some detail about the justification of the use of such material in a dramatic context, and the precise function of the documentary film in the context of Hochhuth's severely excised text. Bryden commented:

While it must be admitted that most of the impact of the spectacle at the Aldwych comes from those obscene clippings of film and the factual catalogue of horrors recited by the announcer, they aren't drama. There are nerves in all of us which when plucked releases now a conditioned and inevitable response. To employ them in conjunction with Hochhuth's rather old-fashioned dramaturgy cheapens them. (52)

A view shared by *The Financial Times*: 'It is this great load of horror and shame that affects us rather than to be frank, anything much that the author does with it.' (53) Hobson points out that '*There is, of course, plenty of injustice in the play, though most of it has been cut from the English acting version.*' [my italics] (54) It is, however, *The Daily Telegraph* that makes absolutely explicit the relationship between the excised scenes and the documentary film: 'In the original, the sufferings of the Jews are

represented on the stage; at the Aldwych, these scenes are replaced by film sequences... Consequently this part of the play becomes little more than a background to a series of debates.' (55)

In contrast to Bryden, W. A. Darlington found that the film sequences 'perhaps because they are documentary in character, do not touch the imagination quite so surely', Charles Marowitz concluding: 'The atrocity newsreels are the production's greatest misjudgement.' (56)

The unavoidable conclusion is that the RSC production removed each of the scenes which represented aspects of Jewish experience and suffering from the stage, choosing instead the expedient of film and still projection to achieve the necessary reduction in running time, to the exclusion of the stage presence of Jewish characters. Jewish presence in this context is signified by the familiar, some might claim over-familiar, filmic and photographic images of mass rallies, of routine humiliations, of deportation in cattle wagons, and, in the final moments of the production as several of the critics make clear, not documentary film of Auschwitz-Birkenau, but of piles of corpses being bulldozed into mass graves at Bergen-Belsen. (57)

Rather than the skilled presentation by the company of flesh and blood stage characters with fears and foibles, courage and resourcefulness interacting with actors in the roles of those in whose hands their survival in part lay, the RSC production removes the embodied dramatic representation of the persecuted at each stage of their bid for survival (present in the written text) and substitutes images of mute capitulation to coercion filmed by the Nazi agencies historically responsible for the implementation of the 'Final Solution'. The documentary evidence informs the dramatic action of the play by reinforcing the 'authenticity' of the dramatic frame, but neither anguish or protest, anger or abject fear are heard or seen represented on stage in fictionalised characters who are Jews.

### **3.5 *The Representative* and the Roman Catholic Church**

In May 1963 following the Berlin première of *Der Stellvertreter* George Steiner contributed an article to *The Sunday Times* anticipating the London production at the Aldwych the following autumn. After commenting upon the autism of West Germany's post-war economic reconstruction and the more recent questioning of the younger generation of Germans who were attempting to challenge the obtuse disposition of their parents' generation in relation to the Hitler years, Steiner writes of *The Representative*:

Rolf Hochhuth... inquires, with unbelieving, cold fury into one of the most abject episodes of modern history: the refusal of the Vatican to intervene against

Hitler's slaughter of the Jewish people. He asks: why did the Papacy maintain its concordat with Hitler? Why did the Pope not call upon the entire Christian world to rise, with every means at its disposal, against the annihilation of six million men, women and children? Why did Pope Pius XII make only the most perfunctory of protests when Jewish families were dragged into Gestapo vans under his very windows? What mesh of cowardice, indifference or high policy lay behind the fact (glowingly noted by Hitler's envoy to the Holy See) that the Pope 'though urged to do so by various parties' had avoided any 'trenchant pronouncement against the deportation of the Jews'?

The Catholic Church has made access to the documents difficult; but the main facts have been known to scholars of the Nazi era. Though the Vatican had information to the effect that Jews were being gassed at the rate of several thousand a day... though Pacelli [the Pontiff] must have known that a massive movement of non co-operation by European Catholics, a display of effective solidarity with their Jewish brethren, would have put severe obstacles in the path of the Final Solution, he did not move.

The King of Denmark put on a yellow star; the Vicar of Christ did not. Individual Catholic priests throughout occupied Europe behaved with superb courage; the Vatican informed by its Polish clergy of what was happening, hour by hour, in the ovens and bunkers of Belsen assured those who came to it in anguish that prayers were being said for all 'Jewish brothers'. More direct interference would violate the neutrality of the Church and involve it in secular battle. Why this evasion, this terrible silence? (58)

Rolf Hochhuth's intent was clearly polemical. He had concluded from his examination of the historical documents that Pope Pius XII possessed more than sufficient information about Nazi policy and evidence of the implementation of that policy in the systematic extermination of Europe's Jews to protest strongly. This the Pope manifestly failed to do, and his inaction became the catalyst for bitter controversy on the Continent, in the US, but in Britain caused hardly a ripple of public concern.

While the silence of Pope Pius XII and the general inactivity of the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, with notable clerical and lay exceptions, are now widely acknowledged to be incontrovertible, in 1963 these allegations were taken by many in and outside the Roman Catholic Church to be a calumny on the Pope's integrity and the courageous actions of many ordinary Catholics who had risked their lives to preserve Jewish lives. The Pope had interpreted his chief obligation to be to the unity of the Roman Catholic Church in the face of known Nazi brutality and genocide and to *avoid* making the church more vulnerable to political pressure. (59)

The central point of Steiner's article followed, then, the pattern of the controversy that had erupted, namely that *The Representative* was chiefly concerned with the silence of Pope Pius XII, a focus which, through the excisions that were considered necessary for what remained a longer than conventional performance time, the RSC production merely served to underline.

In an article which appeared in early 1964 in the Oxford published quarterly review *German Life and Letters* Hjordis Roubiczek commented that:

These are the facts which cannot be disputed: that Pius XII never denounced the concordat with the Nazi government [established before his Pontificat which began in 1939], that he never openly condemned the extermination of the Jews, that Hitler died as a member of the Roman Catholic Church and was not excommunicated. (60)

In Roubiczek's opinion,

the discussion has to a large extent centred on the Pope's refusal explicitly to condemn the Nazis for the murder of the Jews, which, though one of the most important themes [it] is not the main concern of the play. Hochhuth was driven to write it by trying to grasp the greatest crime of our age, Hitler's 'Endlösung', the plan to exterminate the Jews and the actions ensuing from it. The anguished question which obviously forced Hochhuth to study historical documents for years before he wrote the play was: How could all this ever happen? This implied such questions as:...Why did so many in positions of power and influence remain silent?.. But Hochhuth then goes on to voice the age-old outcry of the believer - how could God allow such things to happen. The title of the last and most moving act, taking place in Auschwitz is 'Die Frage an Gott'. [The Question asked of God.] (61)

Roubiczek notes that in the critical response of the mass media in Germany the almost exclusive concentration upon the issue of the Pope's silence is indicated by, in his view, a *mistitled* collection of this criticism *Summa iniuria oder dürfte der Papst schweigen? Hochhuth's "Stellvertreter" in der öffentlichen Kritik (Unfair Judgements or was the Pope Justified in Remaining Silent? Hochhuth's The Representative in public criticism)*, (62) but fails to suggest the most obvious explanation: like the RSC production, Piscator had excised the scenes which represented the persecution of the Jews, and scenes, most notably Act I, Sc (iii), Act III, Sc (i) and (iii) which represented both the callous repartee of the SS discussing plans for the 'Final Solution' over beer and skittles, and the execution of those plans in the raids on and arrest of Rome's Jews. The effect of the excisions is then to magnify the scene in which the Pope makes his appearance, and while accepting there is textual justification - the lines are most definitely in Hochhuth's script - Piscator brought emphasis to the reasons for the Pope's silence: his purely material interest in the prosperity of companies in which he holds shares and his fear, far greater than that of Nazi Germany, of the self-proclaimed atheistic empire, the Soviet Union.

It is also probable that Piscator's excisions were in large part responsible for the allegations made against Hochhuth, that he was attempting to shift the responsibility

for the Holocaust away from the German perpetrators and on to the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church's failure to make a robust public protest against Nazi Germany's treatment of the Jews. No basis can be found in the written text to sustain such an allegation and the impression most certainly derived from the production at the Freie Volksbühne in Berlin. It is also far easier to determine the degree to which the Pope is responsible for his silence - a difficult enough task - than it is to determine the degree of God's responsibility. Nevertheless both concerns serve to displace rather than engage with the central issue of the German extermination of Europe's Jews.

Another adaptation of *The Representative* by Jerome Rothenberg entitled *The Deputy* and directed by Herman Shumlin became the basis of the Broadway production which premièred at the Brooks Atkinson Theatre on 26 February 1964. Sydney Parham remarks that the

production was heavily criticised for the ineptitude of its cutting. Both the Jägerkeller and the transportation scenes were cut... Much more damaging to the play were the excisions of many of Gerstein's speeches, the Pope's hand-washing scenes, and the final debate between the Doctor and Riccardo concerning the nature of God... Even in this emasculated form the play offended both Jews and Catholics, and most critics found that the cutting robbed the play of coherence and moral significance. (63)

An avalanche of criticism followed and in due course a publication similar to that which had earlier appeared in Germany was issued before the end of 1964. Entitled *The Storm over the Deputy* it was edited by the theatre critic and translator of Brecht, Eric Bentley. The collection ran to over 200 pages and included contributions not solely from New York's theatre critics and practitioners but from Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers, Golo Mann, Susan Sontag and I. F. Stone, some of whom commented upon the German first edition of *Der Stellvertreter*. In his foreword Bentley ventures the opinion that the controversy the play had stirred 'is almost certainly the largest storm ever raised by a play in the whole history of drama'. (64)

No such volume of criticism appeared in Britain as a result of the controversy *The Representative* had provoked across Europe and the US, or in consequence of the RSC production at the Aldwych. The supplement which accompanied the usual programme for Aldwych productions is in no way comparable to the collections of criticism which appeared in both Germany and America. According to *The Times* theatre critic it was at the specific request of the Lord Chamberlain that this supplement reproduces a letter which the Catholic periodical *The Tablet* had received from Cardinal Montini, Archbishop of Milan on the very afternoon he had been elected Pope Paul VI, 21 June 1963. (65) It is one of the two items in the supplement

which seek to defend Pope Pius XII, the other being an article by the editor of the *Catholic Herald*, Desmond Fisher.

What is striking about Cardinal Montini's letter is that the greater part of it is taken up with a defence of Pius XII's personal piety. The charge of inaction appears to matter most in relation to the integrity of his personal devotion; not to truth or justice, but to a realm of experience so guarded by the discretion of Montini's letter that it suggests an over-emphasis on private spirituality at the expense of establishing truth if not justice, on less insular grounds. The writer feels compelled to defend Pius XII in these terms as he considers Pius's integrity has been impugned by Hochhuth's portrayal of him as a Pontiff too weak, vain and nervously sensitive to be capable of making a courageous stand against Nazi Germany.

But the point at issue is not what kind of man he was, but the evidence of action he took which would correct the errors of portrayal that Hochhuth is supposedly guilty of. But no evidence is forthcoming, and refuge is sought in speculation about the worse terrors that would surely have followed had Pius made a public demonstration of his and the Roman Catholic Church's opposition to the systematic extermination of Europe's Jews.

Cardinal Montini writes:

As for his omitting to take up a position of violent opposition to Hitler in order to save the lives of those millions of Jews slaughtered by the Nazis, this will be readily understood by anyone who avoids Hochhuth's mistake of trying to assess what could have been effectively and responsibly done then, in those appalling conditions of war and Nazi oppression, by the standard of what would be feasible in normal conditions... An attitude of protest and condemnation such as this young man blames the Pope for not having adopted would have been not only futile but harmful.

He concludes his letter:

In the present case the real drama, and tragedy, is not what the playwright imagines it to be: it is the tragedy of one who tries to impute to a Pope who was acutely aware both of his own moral obligations and of historical reality - and was moreover a very loyal as well as impartial friend to the people of Germany - the horrible crimes of German Nazism. (66)

This extraordinary letter completes the circle. Not only were Jews excluded from the *dramatis personae* of the stage production, but also from the debate prior to the opening of the production for, according to Cardinal Montini, the point at issue 'the real drama and tragedy' is not the failure of the Pope to protest against the mass extermination of the Jews but the scurrilous misrepresentation of Pope Pius XII by

Hochhuth. Clearly, what is most important to remember is that, the Pope was 'a very loyal as well as impartial friend to... the people of Germany'!

### 3.6 The RSC's presentation of Peter Weiss's *The Investigation*

J. C. Trewin gave his impression of the RSC's late night reading of *The Investigation* (67) at the Aldwych on 19 October 1965:

Twenty-five chairs in scarlet leather were ranged as for a board meeting. With entire simplicity the Royal Shakespeare cast uttered a requiem for the Auschwitz dead. The mechanics of play-reading, the intermittent shuffling of positions; the rustle of scripts, ceased within a moment to obtrude; at once we identified the readers with the people of an investigation that in little over two hours held all conceivable horror. No sentences were pronounced. The narrative merely stopped; the readers dispersed. I had not known a quieter audience, either in the theatre or as it came into the hush of an early-morning London. (68)

The reading of *The Investigation* by members of the RSC had been hurriedly rehearsed by Brook and David Jones and arranged to coincide with the simultaneous presentation of the play in seventeen theatres across East and West Germany on the same evening, Sunday 19 October. These included a presentation by the Berliner Ensemble, which like the RSC, gave a public reading, and a production at the Freie Volksbühne directed by Erwin Piscator.

Although marginal to the RSC's current productions, (John Barton's devised play *The Hollow Crown* was currently running at the Aldwych), Brook clearly expected to be attacked for presenting Weiss's text, even in this manner. His anxiety may well have been due to the earlier public protests by Littler about the RSC's production of Weiss's *Marat/Sade* and the more pronounced ideological orientation of *The Investigation*, and is evident in Brook's rather terse defensive foreword to a cyclo-styled Aldwych programme:

*It's the German's business not our teutonic guilt complex  
it's all over it's buried a thing of the past what good will  
it do let's forget let bygones be bygones no muck raking we know  
it by heart sick of it.*

What label can we put on Peter Weiss's script to make it respectable as theatre?

How can we defend it against the predictable attacks?

I don't know.

I only know that hearing that 12 German theatres and also the Berliner Ensemble were making a collective manifestation with this play we felt this to be right and we wished to stand with them. We share their belief that the

ingredients of the camps have not vanished from this world and that the topic of man's indifference is not yet out of date.

I suppose I've never got over hearing Alain Resnais's film about the concentration camps described as 'beautiful'.

With more time we could have prepared a more polished performance, built a set, made music. What for?

We feel our job is to transmit this text at once - to whom it may concern. (69)

*The Investigation* is notable for its theatrical minimalism: in its stage design and directions, in its dramatic form, language, and action, factors which may, if not favouring a staged reading, at least little hindered the RSC's presentation. While a matter-of-fact, mostly affectless, judicial procedure conveys a sense of foreboding, of incomprehensible but consuming vacuity, and consequently alienation from the events being recounted, the mechanics of courtroom procedure are peripheral to the dramatic focus: the relentless assault on the senses constituted by the statement of factual material by the witnesses.

The formal structure of *The Investigation* consists of eleven songs or cantos each divided into three parts in which anonymous witnesses describe the *process* of death in Auschwitz. The accused, who, unlike the witnesses, are identified, offer stock denials of, or justifications for, their actions. While this may suggest the familiar courtroom dialectic of cross-examination, the impact of *The Investigation* resides in Weiss's dramatic structure and language. The familiar details of atrocity are conveyed by somnambular, detached voices emanating from the traumatised, rather than through any animated conversation or confrontation between counsel, witnesses, the judge and the accused. The belligerent stage presence of the mostly silent accused, seated together, and who outnumber the witnesses, frequently overwhelms the lone voice of each witness, magnifying the sense of vulnerability and isolation.

The eleven cantos correspond to the separate, but related 'worlds' of the concentrationary universe of Auschwitz-Birkenau: the perpetual cycle of the processing of arrivals and departures.

In the first canto the evidence heard concerns the arrival of the detainees at the point of disembarkation known as 'the ramp', where the transports are emptied of their human cargo. The second canto concerns the transformation of deportees into camp inmates and the chances upon which immediate survival depended. In the third, evidence is provided of the methods of the 'political' department: the use of torture, medical experimentation, and the capricious, brutal murder of children. In the fourth, witnesses indicate how survival occurred for the few: the failure of the apparatus of extermination, co-operation with the camp authorities, or evacuation. Canto five chiefly concerns Lili Tofler, executed for attempting to send messages to her lover.



The remaining cantos move through the alternative means of mass murder: a matter-of-fact account of everyday routines in the life of a camp guard, quietly assisting in mass extermination (canto six); execution at the 'Black Wall' by shooting (canto seven), by lethal injection (canto eight), or through confinement, torture, or experimentation (canto nine). In the penultimate canto, witnesses give evidence about the gas, Zyklon B, including details of its manufacture, cost and effects. In the last (canto eleven) witnesses give evidence of the gassing process itself, the plundering of corpses, their removal to the crematoria, and the disposal of ash.

After all the witnesses have been heard, the accused claim ignorance, admonish the court to consign these events to history and to concentrate on contemporary achievements and prosperity. No judgement is pronounced at the conclusion of *The Investigation*. Weiss intended that his audience should not, through the mistaken belief that they had witnessed the settlement of an historic injustice, be given the opportunity for forgetfulness. In Weiss's view no such justice is possible. The prime cause of the 'Final Solution' in his view is everywhere evident in contemporary German society: market capitalism, the ideology Weiss was chiefly anxious to indict.

### 3.7 The critical reception of the RSC's presentation of *The Investigation*

Most reviewers had little to say about the form of *The Investigation* merely repeating the information that the text was divided into 'canticles'. (70) Many gave the impression that Peter Weiss had done little more than select a few sections of the transcript of the trial proceedings and strung them together, a view expressed most succinctly by Penelope Gilliat: 'The claim that the script is "by" Peter Weiss seems a crass one', (71) and repeated some years later in *The Times Literary Supplement*: '*Die Ermittlung* virtually wrote itself.' (72)

No reviewer discussed issues of a political nature: the early signs of disaffection from the Social Democratic Party (SPD), and the desire, particularly amongst students and the literary élite, for a radical opposition; or the issue of 'coming to terms with the past' which would flare into public debate amongst politicians, academics and artists in a much more volatile fashion in the 1980s, but which had risen to some prominence following the Eichmann trial. No reviewer, apart from Paul Moor writing about Erwin Piscator's production at the Freie Volksbühne, provided any context by discussing the issue of the belated prosecution of Nazi War criminals. Moor notes: 'The day before the multiple première a trial opened in Bochum against 13 former SS-men accused in connection with 17,000 Nazi murders, and the very date of the première a trial opened in Stuttgart against ten former SS-men charged with 30,000 murders.' (73)

No reviewer, with one notable exception, discussed *The Investigation* in terms of the wider problem of the dramatic representation of the Holocaust, let alone of Auschwitz, an extraordinary omission given that Weiss's play represented the first attempt to present a dramatic treatment of Auschwitz. No reviewer appears to have recognised Weiss's indictment of the West and market capitalism through his association of the values of capitalism with those of Nazi ideology, though once again Paul Moor mentioned this in his review of the production at the Freie Volksbühne. No reviewer makes explicit the identity of the victims.

As with the RSC's production of *The Representative*, Ronald Bryden's review was the most reflective, but even his article conveys the sense of critical incapacity and the need for an independent interpretative frame to make his approach to the presentation manageable. This he finds through discussing the RSC's reading in relation to a recently published book on dramatic theory, *Life of the Drama*, by Eric Bentley. In Bryden's view *The Investigation*,

gives what Hochhuth's *Representative* never achieved, a sense of having mastered and expressed its material: of having spoken the unspeakable. The essence of drama, says Bentley, is 'verbal adequacy to the most taxing of human situations'. No acting could possibly convey the horror of Auschwitz so fully as those levelly spoken words of its survivors describing in nouns and verbs, with a minimum of adjectives, its precise techniques and events, its names and its numbers. For this reason, the flat, unacted delivery is important. (74)

But Bryden continues with a major qualification about what the power of language has achieved in this instance:

What sticks in the mind from [this] new work is the imagery of torture and grey, heaped flesh, the technology of death, with a fascination which *the anonymity of its victims* renders all the more autonomous of reason. *One tries to remember the dead. Instead the imagination focuses on the impersonal process of dying*, the transition from living, individual personalities to an *anonymous* paste of meaningless tissue.

It's possible to argue that this modern face of death is a fact of our time which imagination must come to terms with; that a poetry of death is necessary, and this must be ours. To me, it's a poetry which flirts with the philosophy it ostensibly denounces, of meaninglessness and contingency. Against all the overt logic of *The Investigation*, *I found myself sympathising with the ignominious men in the dock*, protesting their helplessness, the innocent, quiet lives they were now leading. Probably most of them were guilty as charged, but... *I found myself leaning to defend their guilty peace as something at least alive, at least of more value than death or imprisonment. I can't think Weiss intended this* [my italics]. (75)

Brydens's response is due in large part to the failure of the dramatic strategy Weiss adopted to distinguish defendants and witnesses: the former are identified by name, while the latter are anonymous. Through this style of characterisation, he intended to imply that no easy distinction between perpetrator and victim could be drawn, and consequently, the degree of responsibility each group bore in relation to the events detailed in *The Investigation*, could also not be apportioned simply. The confusion arises specifically when the roles of these characters are interpreted naturalistically by spectators who failed to discern that Weiss viewed the ideological power of *The Investigation* as art, as holding greater explanatory power than the belief that the historical Auschwitz could be recovered and represented on stage realistically. Weiss's intent is clearly expressed in his note of introduction to the published edition of *The Investigation*:

Hundreds of witnesses appeared before the Court of Justice. The confrontation of witnesses and defendants, like the speeches for and against, was loaded to the breaking point with emotional power.

The personal experiences and confrontations must be softened into anonymity. Which means that the witnesses in the play lose their names and become little more than megaphones. (76)

Of the nine 'witnesses' just two defend the camp authorities. The other seven anonymous witnesses in Weiss's scheme represent the anonymous victims of Nazi design. Anonymity is preponderantly an attribute of the victims. Weiss continues his introductory remarks by saying:

Each of the 18 Defendants represents a definite person. They bear names that are taken over from the actual trial. That they have their own names is significant, for they also bore their names during the time that is the subject of this hearing, while the prisoners had lost their names.

But in the play it is not the bearers of the names who should once again be accused. They lend the author only their names, which here stand as symbols for a system which conferred guilt on those many others who never appeared before this court. (77)

Weiss's dramatic intentions are clear. The anonymity of the witnesses in *The Investigation* are preserved to symbolise the degradation and anonymity that Nazi ideology and brutality brought to *all* both victims and perpetrators, and particularly the inmates at Auschwitz-Birkenau who were from the moment of arrest, progressively stripped of *all* their identity.

Names are given to those being tried because they bore their names 'during the time that is the subject of this hearing' and in the court trial itself. It might appear that Weiss does this to underline an issue that had become current during the Eichmann

trial - that the perpetrators were not faceless bureaucrats but particular individuals, many of whom had evaded post-war justice and had since held good jobs in respectable companies. But this is not Weiss's *primary* purpose, for this would be a concession to historical accuracy. Rather, the named defendants are in Weiss's ideological view symbols for a system which conferred guilt: those seduced by fascism. It is not clear whether Weiss is imputing collective guilt to the German people during the Hitler years. This would at least be consistent with his line of argument, excluding only those who had made a specific ideological stand against Nazism, of whom, in Weiss's view, Marxists would be the pre-eminent example. But Weiss most certainly wishes to register West German capitalism as indifferent to the crimes, and to those who committed them - the defendants - who, in *The Investigation*, the *East German* prosecutors are instrumental in bringing to justice. Weiss means to imply that socialist ideology is more effective than capitalist ideology in being prepared to confront the past, the former, in his view, being less compromised than the latter in the contemporary world.

Weiss appears not to have foreseen that audiences would interpret his drama following the conventions of stage naturalism and not to have found a satisfactory dramatic means to counter such tendencies in audience reception. It may have served his ideological purposes better had he given the victim-witnesses names, and left their specific expressed memories to evoke the violence which led to their dehumanised anonymity; and, eschewing caricature, found the appropriate means to symbolise the ordinary men and women who became willing participants in mass extermination making the perpetrator-*defendants* anonymous. This was not an option for Weiss as it would necessarily carry implications of essentialist not marxist assumptions about human identity. It would also have made the agents of atrocity faceless bureaucrats, a convenient myth which enabled particular individuals guilty of specific crimes, to evade justice

Ronald Bryden's comments suggest strongly that the RSC's dramatic reading of the text failed to convey Weiss's ideological message with any clarity. Rather than solidarity with the victims amidst the appalling statistics of mass extermination, the dramatic effect had been to allow compassion be the more easily extended to the elderly, decent Nazi who had sought 'to give his best to the job'. Neither witnesses or defendants were particularly seen as victims of the capitalist spirit.

The silence of the British critics on the issue of the identity of a sizeable proportion of the victims of Auschwitz-Birkenau is on one ground, perhaps more readily understandable: the word 'Jew' is not mentioned in Weiss's text.

### 3.8 Post-production criticism of Weiss's *The Investigation*

The exigencies forced upon Brook by the belatedness of the company's preparations were coherent with Weiss's most fundamental beliefs about the possibility of representation noted in a short preface to the published text of *The Investigation*: 'In presenting this play no attempt should be made to reconstruct the courtroom before which the deliberations over the camp actually took place. Such a representation seems just as impossible to the author as a representation of the camp on stage would be.' (78)

Neither Auschwitz nor the courtroom can be appropriated by the audience as historical realities. They can at best be imagined both by the author and each member of the audience, not in terms of specific locations and identities which defy the reach of the imagination, but through the more formal categories and universal factors of form and ideology, which render particular truths more faithfully than do any vain attempt at stage realism. Erika Salloch points out that the choice of the play's title is significant in this respect, for in German "Ermittlung" is an abstract noun, indicating neither time nor place of action, thus separating the drama from the historical trial in Frankfurt'. (79)

For Weiss there is a coherence between the details of his own biography, the artist's *incapacity* for imagination, and the reality of Auschwitz, which is best summarised in the title he gave to an autobiographical novel: *Fluchtpunkt - Vanishing Point*. (80)

For the writer on Auschwitz, the word 'Fluchtpunkt' has a loaded meaning: 'The red dot which some prisoners were forced to wear, was commonly called "Fluchtpunkt". Prisoners suspected of trying to escape had to wear such a dot'. 'Fluchtpunkt' is to Weiss both the writer's imaginary ground and the stigma of... Auschwitz. (81)

The rare success of escapees 'vanishing' from Auschwitz in ways other than those designed by the camp regime indicates the ingenuity of the imagination but also the potential for the failure of imagination when confronted with the kind of rationality exercised by those who planned and implemented mass extermination at Auschwitz, the kind of thinking which is precisely the target Weiss has in view in *The Investigation*.

While attending the court sessions of the Auschwitz Trial during 1965 Weiss wrote two major articles on Dante: *Vorübung zum dreiteiligen Drama divina commedia* (*A preliminary exercise on the three parts of the Divine Comedy*) and *Gesprach über Dante* (*Talk about Dante*). In the latter Weiss indicated that he

considered Dante's *Divine Comedy* to be an 'oratorium' and that he intended to write a trilogy of his own on the subject of the trial modelled on the *Divine Comedy*: 'I was looking for a model, for a possible way of concentrating the material' but which also provided a systematic 'distribution of the objects and figures... a system of coordinates.' (82) Through the precise mathematical calculation implicit in the literary form of the *Divine Comedy* Weiss intended to convey something of the rare attention to detail, the fastidiousness upon which the functions of Auschwitz were calculated.

At first glance Weiss's choice of such a form appears surprising, given Dante's conception of transcendent realities, the regions of the *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. Consistent with his materialist assumptions, however, Weiss intended to transmute Dante's transcendent realities into immanent ones. In this way the *title* of the play and its *form* could be understood as the thesis and antithesis, a materialist dialectic creating the dramatic tension. (83)

*Purgatorio* could find no place in *The Investigation* because inherent in its reality is the possibility of the purgation of past wrongdoing and moral progress. It is possible that Weiss abandoned his projected trilogy as he realised that a tripartite form is indissolubly linked with acceptance of both transcendence and teleology - a purposive resolution - and instead opted to create a dialectic between the regions of *Inferno* and *Paradiso* along materialist lines. The *Inferno* becomes not the sphere in which the guilty are forever confined and punished, but the region in which the rational management of the mass murder of the innocent becomes a developed set of values and practices which is protected from disruption and refined in efficiency. *Paradiso* is brought down to earth where the absence rather than the fullness of the divine presence characterises the prevailing ethos. It is Erika Salloch's view that Weiss used the *Divine Comedy* as an 'anti-model':

the Weiss plan is a parody of Dante's work, i.e., the same form is filled with inverted meaning, as was often done in the Middle Ages when a spiritual work was turned to vulgar - in both senses of the word - function. To be sure, the satirical or grotesque element of the parody is lacking, because Dante's 'visions' have become concrete in Auschwitz. (84)

Jurgen Schlünk indicates that it was following a visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau with the judge, court assistants, prosecutors and defence counsels in December 1964 that another model suggested itself to which his project would be the anti-model: the structure of the medieval Station drama. Schlünk comments: 'His visit to Auschwitz provides him with the idea for the basic structure of *die Ermittlung*: he proceeds from one station to the next, and he essentially recounts in his memory the individual tortures which he knows about from the trial documents.' (85)

The claims that marxist ideology seeks to *deny* to classical conceptions of theorising are precisely those which marxist ideology wished to claim for itself, namely an untranscendable status as method and the primacy rather than the provisionality of its explanatory power. As is well known at precisely the juncture marxist ideology claims to be reducing the analysis of history and culture to a proper scientific materialist basis, - the forces and relations of production - it develops an idealist principle of intelligibility through the status granted to the explanatory power of the economic.

It is also Weiss's marxist ideological commitments and his unquestioning acceptance of the primacy of the economic, which have led a number of commentators to criticise *The Investigation* as, in Otto Best's words, a

frantic attempt to place the blame for the existence of the extermination camps not upon Nazi Germany alone, but upon the capitalist system as a whole [and] must therefore be understood as the intention of an author who sees a common denominator for fascism and capitalism. (86)

In large part the way that Weiss achieves this is to make interpolations of his own in the course of the court proceedings, the following passages being frequently cited examples from *The Investigation*:

Many of those who had been  
chosen to play the role of prisoners  
were brought up with the same values  
as those who played the role of guards.  
They had worked hard for the same nation  
and for the same incentives and rewards  
and if they hadn't been called prisoners  
they might just as easily have been guards.  
We must get rid of our exalted attitude  
that this camp world is  
beyond our comprehension  
We all knew the society  
which had produced the regime  
that could bring about such a camp  
were familiar with this order  
from its very beginnings  
and so we could still find our way  
even in its final consequence  
which allowed the exploiter  
to develop his power  
to a hitherto unknown degree. (*Inv.* p. 88)

And with regard to the era contemporary with the court proceedings, the Prosecutor declaims at the end of Canto Four:

Let us consider once again  
that the successors of this company  
amassed glittering fortunes  
and that they are now about to enter  
what is called a period of expansion. (*Inv.* p. 104)

Weiss himself was candid about his intentions: 'I say that what we have here is nothing but the ultimate manifestation of a system of exploitation which from a different viewpoint is put forward in fine colours as "Free Enterprise".' (87) Or again 'My intention is to expose capitalism as having sunk to trade with the gas chambers.' (88)

Jurgen Schlünk is correct to point out the partiality of this explanation, and the danger of distortion:

Capitalistic exploitation was just one measure among others in the systematic annihilation of the Jews, but the decisive motive for the Holocaust was the conception that the Jews posed an existential threat to the Germans on account of their religion, race, and fundamental philosophy. (89)

But the very factor which this account ignores is that a good proportion of Nazi anti-Semitic rhetoric and caricature represented the Jews as an economic threat. The conspiracy of world Jewry in Nazi rhetoric was not fundamentally religious or ethical in character but racial and economic. While Alvin Rosenfeld is right to stress:

far from exposing a profit motive for Auschwitz, the evidence all points the other way: to gratuitous waste and needless elimination of human resources. The camps, far from existing for the primary purpose of exploiting slave labour for cheap production, murdered their slaves en masse and produced little more than corpses, (90)

his comments are one sided. He views capitalism solely in terms of the aspect of wealth creation, from which perspective it makes no sense to implement measures which serve to reduce productive capacity. But he ignores the simultaneity of the aspect of the *destruction* of competition, of rivals. The dynamic that Weiss attempted to analyse was the dynamic of self-aggrandisement through the exploitation and eventual elimination of rivals, in Best's phraseology, the 'common denominator for fascism and capitalism'. The rapacious free enterprise of Adenaur's 'economic miracle' the monomaniacal thrust for economic regeneration which had throughout the 1960s progressively become the chief target of the Left's disillusion with West



German society provided Weiss with the perspective from which he could interpret the camps' heart of darkness.

Auschwitz becomes the microcosm of consumer society where the competition, is consumed, in a material sense, evidenced by the storehouses of belongings, shoes, suitcases, spectacles (as well as the 'requisition' of homes and belongings left behind); in a physiological sense - the violent misappropriation of hair, teeth and skin; and in a somatic sense, cremation - consumed by fire. The ethic of the consumer society was immortalised in the ironwork of the gate, not of Auschwitz but of Buchenwald: *'JEDEM DAS SEINE' (TO EACH HIS OWN)* - the eradication of a spiritual tradition which placed the highest ethical imperative on worship of a transcendent other and love of neighbour, by the invention of a system in which those perceived as rivals were forced to consume themselves and each other. Human society based upon altruism is reduced to the consideration of the other as a potential next meal, a theme explored in Georg Tabori's *The Cannibals*. (91)

Weiss's contention that some of Germany's chief industrial groupings - I. G. Farben, Krupp and Siemens were principally in view - were complicit in their support not merely of the Nazi party machine and its economic strategy, but the programme of extermination itself, has been more fully documented since Weiss wrote *The Investigation*. (92) Other factors serve to strengthen Weiss's main point but they may have been largely unknown to him: the degree to which rivalry existed between individuals and departments within the Nazi hierarchy, rivalries which were concerned with the degree of political influence but based very clearly on competing claims to the available 'economic' resources, the rivalry between Goering and Himmler being a chief example; the evidence that the chief figures in the party were amassing great personal fortunes; and the role of international money markets, particularly those in Switzerland, upon which the Nazi regime depended for foreign currency to continue the prosecution of the War, research programmes, and the implementation of the 'Final Solution'. (93)

It is in relation to these themes in the context of the courtroom that Jurgen Schlünk's explanation clarifies Weiss's dramatic intentions:

Weiss presents the individual witnesses facing a 'wall of solidarity' among the eighteen defendants and their defence lawyer, who not only represent the past but the present establishment as well, as becomes clear whenever the prosecution points at the intimate connection (money, influence, privilege) between the Nazi past and the present position of the defendants in the Federal Republic. The defendants' behaviour demonstrates what Karl Mannheim means by the differentiation between 'functional' and 'substantive' rationality: almost all defendants see their former actions in a moral vacuum. They acknowledge only their previous function, not their previous responsibility. And, as the... defendants are not interested in uncovering the truth but rather in denying as

much of their personal involvement as possible, the trial appears like a farce which, however, throws the reader back on himself to search for an answer within himself. Thus, the play presents a psychological challenge as it provokes the reader's solidarity with the victims. (94)

But as noted earlier, this was not Ronald Bryden's experience of the RSC presentation, and the most significant phrase in this explanation may well be 'the reader'. Schlünk is clearly referring to the direction of Weiss's dramatic intention as he reads it from the text, but the particular provocations to reflection to which Schlünk refers remain in danger of being lost entirely in performance, as suggested by Bryden's response.

Weiss, by virtue of his strong desire to demonstrate the resemblances between capitalism and fascism and by suggesting the *easy interchangeability of inmates and guards*, opens himself to the charge of readily accepting anti-Semitic stereotypes that were the stock-in-trade of Nazi rhetoric: that Jews were and are particularly guilty of rapacious capitalism. Hitler exploited the caricature, *and* realised the means to deal with the invented threat.

James Young makes precisely this point:

Weiss not only appears to be passing his interpretative constructions off as fact but seems also to be taken in by them. In as much as the economic explanation for history - even as putative methodology - tends to totalize both itself and reality no less than other forms of interpretation, this in itself may not be so surprising. But in fostering his own rhetoric of fact, Weiss the critic seems to have lost the ability to discriminate not only between his rhetoric and the events but perhaps also between the Nazi's own rhetoric of the camps and the infernal realities this rhetoric was intended to screen. For where the Nazis may indeed have dressed their 'enterprise' in the language of raw production materials, management efficiency, and cost benefit analysis, this capitalist jargon functioned partly as a bureaucratic language by which to operate the camps, partly as a rhetorical veil with which to obscure the actuality of the camps and partly as a means to justify to the Nazi military establishment the role of the death camps in the war effort itself. (95)

While the mechanical application of a unitary mode of explanation - the economic - is undoubtedly an inadequate analysis of the complex of factors involved, Weiss's critics do not appear to take sufficiently seriously the substantive connection between consumer society and the reality of Auschwitz on the ideological level. The rhetoric of capitalism admirably served as a most hygienic metaphor of the consuming nature of their 'work': the elimination of Europe's Jews, one example of the cynical exploitation of the rhetoric of another discourse to give apparent respectability to the indefensible.

### 3.9 Peter Weiss and Auschwitz

That Weiss fails to identify the Jews and effectively erases their memory as the victims of Auschwitz-Birkenau in the text of *The Investigation* calls for a more cogent explanation than ideological categories of thought admit and this may well be provided by the details of his own biography.

Born in 1916 Weiss spent his first eighteen years in Bremen and Berlin, but in 1934 his family were forced to leave Germany as his father was Jewish. The family emigrated first to England and later to Prague, from where they escaped to Switzerland. From here Weiss moved to Sweden where he worked as a painter, writer and film director. It was not until 1960, when Weiss was aged forty-four, that a first story was published which was followed by two autobiographical narratives, *Abscheid von den Eltern (Leavetaking)* in 1961 and *Fluchtpunkt (Vanishing Point)* in 1962. (96) Weiss subsequently achieved international acclaim through *Marat/Sade* in 1964. Jurgen Schlünk comments that for Weiss,

the confrontation with the topic of Auschwitz had to be worked through on the subjective level... and Weiss did this in the separate prose piece *Meine Ortshaf [My Place]* (1964). In this essay Weiss makes the most direct attempt to deal with his own identity with the victims. Again, no mention of the Jews but rather... identification is attempted in terms of belonging in a spatial sense, of place. (97)

'My Place' appeared in translation in December 1965. (98) In this article Weiss writes of Auschwitz:

Only this one place, of which I had known for a long time, but which I saw so much later, is separate and special. It is a place for which I was destined but which I managed to avoid I have had no experience of this place. I have no relation to it, except that my name was on the lists of the people who were supposed to be sent there for ever...

I come here of my own free will. I was not unloaded from a train. I was not bludgeoned into this place. I have arrived twenty years too late...

THIS IS WHERE they walked, in the slow procession, coming from all parts of Europe, this is the horizon which they still saw, these are the poplars, these the watch towers, with the sun reflected in the window panes, this is the door, through which they went into the rooms that were bathed in glaring light, and in which there were no showers, only these squared metal columns, these are the foundation walls between which they died in the sudden darkness, in the gas which streamed out of the holes. And these words, this knowledge, they tell nothing, explain nothing...

Now he is only standing in a vanished world. Here there is nothing more for him to do. For a while everything is utterly still.

Then he knows it has not ended yet. (99)

There remains an unbridgeable gulf between Weiss's personal search for meaning in the trajectory of his own biography and identity, and the historical experience of the millions who perished in Auschwitz-Birkenau, between the mythic proportions the location had assumed in his mind over a period of more than twenty years, and the reality of the location as he encounters it as he makes his personal journey around the camp in December 1964. Neither the countless victims nor the historical reality are accessible and fail to give him the sense of place in the world he had hoped to secure.

While past injustice is absent, present injustice impinges upon his consciousness. Unwilling to write about historical experience in which he has been unable to locate himself, he is left with his imagination and contemporary reports - the transcripts and journalistic reports of the trial proceedings - of an historical experience which is, in his view, unrecoverable. These at least can be exploited to provide commentary upon contemporary injustice - in South Africa and Vietnam, which he appears, entirely inconsistently, to accept to be historically more substantive than Auschwitz-Birkenau and its place in the economy of the mass destruction of European Jewry.

Ultimately ideology is always a failure of the imagination, the political equivalent of religious dogma, the pulse and quick of imagining petrified by the prejudice incumbent on power. Weiss failed in his imaginative identification with those who perished at Auschwitz-Birkenau, and with the location of their deaths, and substituted for this acknowledgement of shared human particularities a dubious identification with universal suffering wherever it was to be found in the world, but specifically with black South Africans and the Vietnamese. What he could not achieve by acknowledging a common humanity he claimed to assert through ideology of which *The Investigation* bears witness. Political fundamentalism provided the means to keep emotional realities distant, while appearing to provide, on ideological grounds, a solidarity with those suffering, in his view, at the hand of the same economic forces which he aimed to indict in *The Investigation*. Unable to embrace a particular past or to place himself resolutely in its midst as 'a kind of survivor' Weiss chooses to express his relationship to those events through his opposition to ideological forces to which he attributes chief responsibility for an event he is anxious not to acknowledge.

### **3.10 Jewish fate in *The Representative* and *The Investigation***

In the RSC's production of *The Representative* the dramatic representation of Jewish experience is diminished by the excision of scenes portraying the predicament of Italian Jews and the consequent absence of actors taking roles as Jews alongside those of other actors representing Nazi and Catholic figures. The controversy, such that it was, focussed upon the injustice done to the memory of Pope Pius XII and the

damage to his reputation, rather than on the consequences of the failure of the Pope to make a public declaration of solidarity with and to mobilise the Church to organise covert assistance for Europe's Jews, and the attitude of the contemporary church to these recent events in its history.

In respect of Peter Weiss's approach to the representation of Jewish fate in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Jurgen Schlünk speculates:

One might be tempted to view Peter Weiss's decision not to mention the Jews in the play as an ideological one. However, it seems unlikely that Weiss should have chosen not to name the Jews for ideological reasons. There is no need to name what is obvious. By not mentioning the Jews, his play gains *universality*. [my italics] (100)

This is an extraordinary assertion given what is known of Peter Weiss's biography, his ideological commitment to a position on the left of the political spectrum, his stated dramatic intentions in *The Investigation*, and personal statements which run counter to Schlünk's reticence to make an ideological issue of the absence of the identification of nearly half of all victims of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Weiss himself explained:

The Nazis did kill six million Jews, yes, but they killed millions of others. The word 'Jew' is in fact never used in the play... I do not identify myself any more with the Jews than I do with the people of Vietnam or the blacks of South Africa. I simply identify myself with the oppressed of the world... *The Investigation* is about the extreme abuse of power that alienates people from their own actions. It happens to be German power, but that again is unimportant. I see Auschwitz as a scientific instrument that could have been used by anyone to exterminate anyone. For that matter, given a different deal, the Jews could have been on the side of the Nazis. They too could have been the exterminators. *The Investigation* is a universal human problem. (101)

Given that *The Investigation* is not an attempt at a representation of the historical Auschwitz, or even of the historical Auschwitz Trial due to Weiss's ideological commitment and historical scepticism, the question becomes whether it is rationally defensible (and as a consequence potentially dramatically effective) to build a universalist case from the ideologically selective presentation of intentionally generalised factors taken from particular historical circumstances?

Weiss may legitimately defend *The Investigation* on the grounds that if its methodology and its meaning are properly understood, then oppression, exploitation and deception will be more readily recognised and resisted in whatever country and in whatever context. But such a position fails to take account of the unique factors in any historical circumstance and, in this instance, the factors that suggest that the

Holocaust is *sui generis*. It is only by working toward a better understanding of the historical particularities of the Holocaust that perspectives upon subsequent similar events may be approached more informedly.

To blur or omit historical detail in the service of ideological ends, ostensibly to universalise the truths contained therein, rather than clarify general principles, merely serves to confuse a proper assessment of current or prospective situations and to simplify the complexity of moral imagining.

Weiss may well have intended *The Investigation* to be a Brechtian lesson - his title certainly bears the weight of this interpretation - but even in an imaginative construction of an historical episode - despite Weiss's disclaimers to the contrary - by writing out details which are essential to a proper understanding of the events being averred to, Weiss runs the risk of impeding understanding of those current events and universal issues he claimed to be showing in a truer light. Universal truths are not best apprehended, however dimly, by ideological rhetoric of either right or left political persuasions.

To argue as Weiss wishes to, that German society in the 1930s and 1960s, that is to say, fascism and free enterprise capitalism, betray ideological similarity, is a claim that can be debated. But to argue that the Jews were equally likely to have been the perpetrators as the victims of racial extermination blatantly ignores a number of quite different factors. The regime, Nazi policy and those freedoms of which Jews in particular had been denied through the Nuremberg Laws, had changed radically their position in Hitler's Germany prior to the implementation of the 'Final Solution'. Depriving Jews of access to instruments of state power and civil liberties necessary for such action, makes Weiss's suggestion that Jews might equally have been guilty of such crimes, contrary to the basic and well-known facts of their existence in Nazi occupied Europe. More significantly, the ethical and cultural traditions to which the vast majority of Jews continued to express broad allegiance, made such actions at national level, inconceivable.

According to James E. Young, Weiss's own explanation for the omission of any mention of the Jews, contained in a programme note to the Berlin production, was along ideological lines:

Weiss refers neither to *Juden* in this play, nor hardly to *Opfer* (victim), but uses instead the expression *Verfolgten*, a legal term for 'those under persecution'... In order to 'brand capitalism' with the facts of Auschwitz, as Weiss explained to his audience in the programme notes, the playwright has written a 'documentary drama' that documents not so much the facts of Auschwitz but really only his own Marxian conception and interpretation of the facts, a paradigm that simply does not allow for the ethnic identification of the victims. By... substituting *Verfolgten* in the play whenever Jews appeared in the actual record, Weiss

locates the victims in an a priori dialectic of persecutor - persecuted, in which the persecuted are victims not of anti-Semitic terror but of monopoly capitalism gone mad. (102)

And Young continues by pointing out that the failure to identify the Jews cannot be justified on the grounds that Weiss intended to find an effective *dramatic* means to convey the historical reality of the anonymity of the victims. For, consistent with his *ideological* intentions, Weiss does *explicitly identify* another group of inmates, Soviet prisoners of war who function as the *representatives* of the unnamed victims of Auschwitz, and more specifically, as the ideological opponents of fascism. Thus, Nazi *ideology* attempts to destroy not people - the Jews and the Poles - but another ideological system, Marxism. Racially motivated extermination is erased from Weiss's text, and, in one instance, the Soviets (representative of Marxism) are characterised as the element that both Nazi and contemporary Germany wish to eradicate, thus completing the ideological erasure of Jewish experience and the presence of anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany and in German society in the 1960s.

On the morning following the RSC's late evening reading of *The Investigation* a London journalist asked Peter Brook, in light of the level of interest - people had to be turned away at the Aldwych theatre the night before - whether the RSC would now be considering the possibility of a full scale production of *The Investigation*. Brook replied: 'We've now demonstrated that the play can be done... It depends if anyone in London wants to see it. England has got a very poor background for this sort of thing. This was the only country in the world where Anne Frank wasn't a success.' (103)

Brook's involvement with Weiss's play had been one fact amongst many others that provoked his interest in December 1965 for a new project about British attitudes to the Vietnam war, which was eventually given the punning title *US*. In the early part of 1966 Brook was in New York with his production of Weiss's *Marat/Sade* and rehearsals for *US* did not begin on a regular basis until July. However, Albert Hunt indicates in his diary of the rehearsal period, which prefaces the published text, that it was not too long before Brook had to engage with precisely those problems that the German documentary dramatists had confronted earlier. Hunt notes Brook's reflections about his experience with *The Investigation*:

All the evening [reading of *The Investigation*] had achieved, in the end, was to demonstrate to the audience that they too, could come to accept atrocity as boring. For the first twenty minutes, he said, you were shocked; then you began to get bored; in the end you waited for the catalogue of horror to end. (104)

## 4 HOLOCAUST DRAMA IN THE WEST END: MILLER'S *INCIDENT AT VICHY* AND SHAW'S *THE MAN IN THE GLASS BOOTH*

### 4.1 Arthur Miller's *Incident at Vichy*

In early 1962 Bob Whitehead, the newly appointed head of the American National Theatre and Academy (ANTA), approached Arthur Miller to write the inaugural play for a 'national' subsidised theatre in Washington to be based in the Lincoln Center. (1) It usually took years for Miller to complete a play, but his enthusiasm for the project outweighed his reservations, and he accepted Whitehead's invitation. He was near to completing the play, when, in August 1962, news broke of Marilyn Monroe's death. (2)

Casually browsing *The International Herald Tribune* over a year later while on vacation in Austria with his third wife, Inge Morath, in the winter of 1963/64, Miller's eye had been caught by the mention of the Auschwitz Trial which had begun on 20 December. Recalling the incident in his autobiography, *Timebends* (1987), Miller explains:

I had never laid eyes on a Nazi, and I thought it worth a few hours' drive to do so... After only a few minutes [in court] a reporter from one of the wire services came over to say that he hoped I'd be writing about the trial since he and his colleagues were having trouble getting their stuff into the European, American and British press, there being a distinct absence of interest in the Nazi phenomenon now, more than fifteen years after the War. I had not come to the trial intending to write about it, but at the request of the *Tribune* I ended up doing a long piece... that was played over two pages in the *International Herald Tribune* and only slightly cut in the New York edition. (3)

Returning to the US early in 1964, it was to his play (which was to become *After the Fall*) for the Lincoln Center project that Miller felt a new compulsion, 'possibly because its theme - the paradox of denial - seemed so eminently the theme of Germany, and Germany's idealistically denied brutality, emblematic of the human dilemma in our time.' Miller's assessment was influenced not only by his attendance at the Auschwitz Trial, but the public controversy which had been running in the US since the summer of 1963 surrounding the publication of Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*. (4)

Arendt had wanted above all to focus upon the precise quality of Eichmann's guilt, to establish beyond doubt that the Holocaust had registered in human history a crime which, in a judicial sense, was unprecedented. She also wanted to register her disdain with the trial's preoccupations with Jewish suffering, anti-Semitism, the sway of a religious and latterly a nationalistic mythology which had, in her view, come to



characterise the conduct of Jewish affairs, and the ubiquitous categories of thought through which response to the outside world was framed.

But the issues which drew the fiercest response from her critics were her allegations about the passivity of European Jewry in failing to confront their persecutors, the compliance of the Nazi installed Jewish Councils (*Judenrat*) and the insensitive way Arendt had written about both phenomena.

Arendt, in placing Eichmann at centre-stage rather than Jewish suffering, as had the Jerusalem Court, presented a counter-narrative, the chief purpose of which was *not* to reiterate the perspective of the trial proceedings from the point of view of the Chief prosecutor and the State of Israel, nor to write a history of the implementation of the 'Final Solution' with Eichmann as chief and sole witness. While both of these were, in part, by-products of the approach Arendt adopted, she presented Eichmann as a case history illuminating her theories about modern societies, the chief challenge of which was, in her view, the ability to act responsibly from personal, moral convictions, if necessary in opposition to the pressure to conform, the tendency she considered such societies usually encouraged.

Miller's experiences attending the Auschwitz Trials (a few weeks before Peter Weiss), and more specifically a visit to Mauthausen concentration camp, were to provide a new device (the distinctive stone watch-towers of the camp) through which the dramatic action of the play for the inauguration of the 'national' theatre company could be distilled. Miller incorporated these final scenes into his manuscript, and the play opened on the afternoon of 23 January 1964 at the hastily erected Washington Square Theatre, the temporary home of the Vivian Beaumont Theatre Company and ANTA, prior to the opening of the Lincoln Center itself. It was entitled *After the Fall* (5) and would not be produced in Britain until October 1967, an absence which would markedly influence the British reception of *Incident at Vichy*. (6)

*After the Fall* was execrated by the New York critics who viewed it as a didactic exercise in self-exculpation in respect of Miller's relationship with Marilyn Monroe, whom Maggie, the central female character, was widely interpreted to resemble. Incensed by, in his view, its misconceived critical reception, Miller defended the play and Monroe's memory in a feature article in *Life* magazine. (7) While *After the Fall* continued its run, Miller's article on the Auschwitz Trial appeared on 15 March 1964 in the *New York Herald Tribune* beneath the title, 'Arthur Miller: How the Nazi Trials Search the Hearts of all Germans'. It appeared in Britain in the *Daily Express* on the following day, entitled simply 'Auschwitz'. (8)

Despite the scathing reception given to *After the Fall*, Bob Whitehead and Harold Clurman approached Miller for another play. 'With my weakness for solidarity, as well as the tempting availability of what I knew was a superior acting company',

Miller has commented, 'I began *Incident at Vichy* and completed it in a short time.' (9) In fact Miller wrote the play in just three weeks in May 1964.

In early November, when the rehearsals for the Lincoln Center Repertory Company production of *Incident at Vichy* were drawing to a close, Miller granted an interview to the editor of *Playbill*, Walter Wager, in which he referred to his visit to the Auschwitz Trial, and to the gestation period for this latest play: 'The basic story of *Incident at Vichy* I had known at least ten years ago, but I hadn't really known how to make a play out of it.' (10) Miller elaborates on some elements of this 'basic story' in *Timebends*:

The root of *Vichy* came from my friend and former psychologist Dr Rudolph Loewenstein, who had hidden out in Vichy France during the war, before the Nazis openly occupied the country. But all I recalled was the bare outline of his story: a Jewish analyst picked up with false papers and saved by a man he had never seen before. This unknown man, a gentile, had substituted himself in a line of suspects waiting to have their papers and penises inspected in a hunt for Jews posing as Frenchman.

There was a second root in an old friend of Inge's, Prince Josef von Schwarzenberg, senior surviving member of a very ancient Austrian noble line, who had 'declined' to co-operate with the Nazis and had suffered for it during the war. He was a source for Von Berg, the prince in my play who steps in to take the place of a condemned analyst. It was not altogether a romantic idealisation... He denied the Nazi movement the glory of his name and never considered any other course; there had simply been no choice, and he could not imagine deserving the remotest sort of credit for his dangerous refusal. (11)

But in his November 1964 interview with Wager, Miller places these details in a broader context in answer to an enquiry about what precisely had drawn him to the subject of *Incident at Vichy*:

I have always felt - and as the years go by I feel even more strongly - that the period of the Nazi occupation of Europe was the turning point of this age. I think as time goes by we'll be seeing more and more it is that. Not only in the political sense, but in the whole attitude of Man towards himself. (12)

Directed by Harold Clurman, *Incident at Vichy* premièred in the US at the Washington Square Theatre on 3 December 1964.

The London production of Arthur Miller's *Incident at Vichy* involved an unexpected irony. Written to sustain the initiative for a subsidised 'national' theatre in the US, it was presented in London's West End by a commercial company which some nine years previously had produced Goodrich and Hackett's *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank*, of which Miller had been highly critical. The company was H. M. Tennent Ltd., headed still by a much changed Hugh 'Binkie' Beaumont.

Times had changed. The West End was no longer the same as in 'Binkie's' heyday. In the summer of 1964 Clive Barker commented: 'For the first time we have a National Theatre. The Royal Shakespeare Company offers a varied repertoire in London [and] the English Stage Company offers a season of classical productions with distinguished casts', (13) developments which were, from Beaumont's point of view, not necessarily a cause for celebration.

Another contemporary commentator, Irving Wardle, confirmed the economic impact of the subsidised companies presence, commenting that 'in comparison with them even the most powerful of the commercial managements, looked puny and insecure'. But their impact was also noticeable in ways which 'Binkie' felt particularly keenly:

Between them, the two companies controlled some 180 actors (120 for the Royal Shakespeare's two theatres in London and Stratford-upon-Avon; sixty for the National Theatre). This fact prompted the Society of West End Managers to protest that the subsidised organisations had created a star famine that was killing the popular (i.e. commercial) theatre... as public trust grew in the Royal Shakespeare and National companies, so it declined in the West End. (14)

But there was worse. Barker also noted a less welcome change in London theatre:

The West End is quietly being taken over in a series of property and amalgamation deals. Outside of the Albany group and Tennents, still a force though in decline, the little men look in danger of being forced out by two new combines. One is a link up between EMI and Delfont, the other is an extension of Jack Hylton's interests and including television tie-ups.

As the smaller managements seek to emulate the bigger managements... we will almost certainly find the field of West End serious drama more and more reduced in scope and more and more eccentric in theme and treatment... The work... is hopelessly lacking in quality and the considerations of the producing management are neither for your artistic development nor for the practice of your craft. Money, money, money is the only criterion. (15)

While money may have been pouring into the pockets of some of the new theatre owners and producers, money was precisely the problem which faced Hugh Beaumont and H. M. Tennent Ltd in this period. Richard Huggett says of these years: 'Money had been running short and Binkie found it difficult to get new backers since the old ones were mostly annoyingly placing their funds in the hands of rival managers. The empire had been shrinking fast.' (16)

In 1964 Tennents produced just four plays and all survived for only one month. But for Noel Coward's *Present Laughter* (364 performances) and *Hello Dolly* (794

performances), 1965 would also have been a disastrous year. In 1966 Beaumont secured just six London productions, and only three of these were new plays.

These new plays were (in reverse chronology of their opening): Neil Simon's *The Odd Couple* at the Queen's which opened on 12 October 1966 (352 performances); Noel Coward's *Suite in Three Keys*, 14 April 1966, also at the Queen's (124 performances); and Arthur Miller's *Incident at Vichy* at the Phoenix Theatre, 26 January 1966. Miller's latest play was scheduled for a three and a half month run. In the event it ran for 91 performances to poor audiences. (17)

While Beaumont's strategy of populating his shows with stars had begun to appear a little thin, and finding actors of the right calibre had become increasingly difficult due to the growing stature of the subsidised companies, Beaumont had not lost his touch entirely. He was able to attract a star-studded cast for Miller's play. Faithful to the traditions of H. M. Tennent's heyday, he had secured the services of Alec Guinness and Anthony Quayle to take the lead roles.

Miller flew into London on 13 December 1965 for the final rehearsals, a little over a year since *Vichy* had opened in New York, where it was still playing. (*After the Fall* was also currently enjoying success in several countries on the European continent.) (18) Miller spoke of his dramatic intentions in the play to Penelope Gilliatt:

In a way... *Incident at Vichy* is a natural progression from *After the Fall*... in my quest to develop a social conception of individual guilt and responsibility towards one's fellow men. I wasn't really concerned with either Jews or Nazis, but with the underlying situation which that particular struggle so vividly symbolised, namely, the destruction of one part of the population by another part.

The idea for a play based on the Jewish holocaust fascinated me since 1950 and I wanted to write about it, purely for its own sake. Only when I completed the play did I realise its deeper and broader significance, and that I could set it in the context of all humanity, rather than as solely the pathetic and tragic consequence of being Jewish. (19)

#### 4.2 *Incident at Vichy*

Self-absorbed and betraying the anxiety laden feigned disinterest with the unfamiliar, six men and a young boy sit in uncomfortable proximity to one another on the sole bench in a hastily improvised reception area. The occupants of the bench shift uneasily, and their agitation soon finds expression in nervous complaint about being kept waiting, the decor, or a petulant demand for a cup of coffee - complaints which are lobbed into the public arena in the hope of an echo, some expression of commonality.

It quickly becomes apparent that the occupants of the bench have all been apprehended in the streets and detained for questioning. They fear that there may be a common basis for their apprehension but they are reluctant, if not to draw the obvious conclusion, then to name it publicly. As the assembled group waits to be summoned one by one into an office to be questioned by a civilian professor and a major from the Wehrmacht, the contours of the detainees' lives begin to emerge.

Lebeau sees the situation clearly but tries to deny the issues as he is powerless to effect any change while in detention. The only acknowledgement he makes of his fear is his projection of 'blame' and anger onto others for his predicament: his mother's sentimental attachment to a few possessions. 'I'm here because of a brass bed and some fourth-rate crockery. And a stubborn ignorant woman.' (*IAV*. p. 248); and onto a Gypsy because he represents the idea of otherness that he is himself a victim of. The humour of fatuous distortion is used as a defence against seeing himself as his persecutors see him.

Three more detainees, an old Hasid, Leduc who is a psychiatrist, and Von Berg, a Viennese Catholic aristocrat, join those already in the detention centre: Lebeau, an artist, Bayard, an electrician, Monceau, an actor, and Marchand, a businessman. Their pursuit of central questions precipitated by their confinement, (How have I come to be here? What should I do now? What does it mean to take responsibility? In whom or what can I trust?) provide the dramatic impetus of the opening scenes.

The arts as a guarantee against barbarity, indicative of refinement and the moral parameters implicit in 'good taste' are the first of the humanising capacities to be revealed as totally ineffective. Von Berg asks with characteristic civil naïvety: 'Can people with respect for art go about hounding Jews? Making a prison of Europe, pushing themselves forward as a race of policemen and brutes? Is that possible for artistic people?' (*IAV*. p. 260) All it takes is for Monceau to point out the German passion for, and sensitivity to music and Von Berg's illusion collapses: 'I'm afraid I know many cultivated people who... did become Nazis. Yes, they did. Art is perhaps no defence against this. It's curious how one takes certain ideas for granted. Until this moment I had thought of art as a...' (*IAV*. p. 260)

If the developed capacity for artistic appreciation itself does not inform the mind, refine sensibility and temper responsibility, perhaps it is the natural capacity for moral imagining which is the guardian of the soul? Monceau claims 'One must create one's own reality in this world. I'm an actor, we do this all the time. Any thought that makes you feel... valuable. After all, you are trying to create an illusion; to make them believe you are who your papers say you are.' To which Bayard replies 'My friend, you're in a bad way if you have to put on an act to feel your rightness.' (*IAV*. p. 264)

In Bayard's view there is a greater principle at work, historical inevitability and the promise of a bright future hope: 'It is faith in the future; and the future is Socialist. And that is what I take in there with *me*... None of us is alone. We're members of history. Some of us don't know it, but you'd better learn it for your own preservation... The day, when the working class is master of the world. *That's* my confidence.' (*IAV*. pp. 264, 265)

Bayard admonishes the men to take courage from his socialist view of the *facts* from which historically *inevitable* conclusions will follow. But Von Berg begs to differ about precisely what those facts are, and where they lead: 'What if nothing comes of the facts but endless, endless disaster?... to give your faith to a... a class of people is impossible, simply impossible - ninety-nine per cent of the Nazis are ordinary working-class people!... They adore [Hitler], the salt of the earth.' (*IAV*. pp. 266, 267) Commitment to political ideology is no better ground upon which to base responsible action.

His papers checked and cleared, the café proprietor Ferrand prepares to leave. As he does he hastily informs another of the detainees, a waiter of his, that he has overheard a conversation in the office in which it was suggested that those transported to Poland were not being deported for the purpose of work, but merely to be 'burned up in furnaces'. (*IAV*. p. 268) The assertion is greeted with disbelief and after Bayard is called into the office a struggle to make sense of the new information ensues: 'What good are dead Jews to them?' Marceau asks, answering his own incredulity with commonsense logic: 'They want free labour. It's senseless.' (*IAV*. p. 269) But Von Berg considers it futile to attempt to make sense of what they have heard on the basis of obsolete nineteenth-century ideas of rational calculation of gains and losses: 'They are poets, they are striving for a new nobility, the nobility of the totally vulgar... Win or lose this war, they have pointed the way to the future. What one used to conceive a human being to be will have no room on this earth.' (*IAV*. p. 270)

It transpires that those conducting the questioning are not solely checking the detainees papers, but their penises too. The major is presented as an honourable member of the Wehrmacht who finds himself caught up in this 'distasteful racial business', a defence that the professor does not accept: 'The Army's responsibility is quite as great as mine here.' (*IAV*. p. 272) The professor is from the 'Race Institute' and holds a degree in 'racial anthropology', (*IAV*. p. 271) the dangerous absurdity of which challenges comfortable assumptions about rationality: it too can no longer be considered to have a straightforward relationship to moral responsibility, can no longer be taken on trust.

Their minds concentrated by the turn of events, the detainees discuss the possibility of escape and are portrayed as disbelieving the indications that have been

given about the intentions of their questioners. Increasingly strained by the tension Leduc projects his anguish into Monceau berating him for his reticence to take decisive action: 'Why do you feel this desire to be sacrificial?... You are making a gift of yourself. You are the only able-bodied man here, aside from me, and yet you feel no impulse to do something? I don't understand your air of confidence.' (*IAV*. p. 276) But Monceau is going to cling tenaciously to his belief in an illusion and turns the accusation against Leduc:

Everyone is playing the victim these days; hapless, hysterical, they always assume the worst. I have papers; I will present them with the single idea that they must be honoured... You accuse us of acting the part the Germans created for us; I think you're the one who's doing that by acting so desperate. (*IAV*. pp. 276-277)

Leduc next seizes upon a remark of Lebeau's in which he expresses a longing to be viewed as innocent, a sentiment that Leduc considers highly suspect as it suggests that Lebeau feels guilty for being Jewish. In an aside aimed at Monceau, Leduc associates Monceau's complacency in believing he can adopt the right role, with Lebeau's feeling of guilt. Both stances betray a dangerous degree of self-doubt which Monceau denies he feels, preferring to trust the law: 'The fact is there are laws and every government enforces its laws; and I want it understood that I have nothing to do with any of this talk', to which Leduc replies angrily, 'Every government does not have laws condemning people because of their race.' (*IAV*. pp. 277, 278)

But Monceau clinging to his contradictory beliefs reveals, that just like the creation of art or the capacity to imagine, faith in a class of people or a transcendent principle, decisive action or acquiescence, law itself cannot adequately embody the responsible possession of freedom:

Monceau: I beg your pardon. The Russians condemn the middle class, the English have condemned the Indians, Africans, and anybody else they could lay their hands on, the French, the Italians... every nation has condemned somebody because of his race, including the Americans and what they do to Negroes. The vast majority of mankind is condemned because of its race. What do you advise all these people – suicide?

Leduc: What do you advise?

Monceau, *seeking and finding conviction*: I go on the assumption that if I obey the law with dignity I will live in peace. (*IAV*. pp. 278-279)

Monceau blind to the evidence of his own eyes and to the contradictions in his own position is unable to recognise the force of his own argument that law itself will not bestow upon him the responsibility he desires: freedom from the threat of murder in order to live openly. Moreover, it is not merely the failure of the law but the failure of

love, another implication of his own beliefs that he misses. The belief that love is an expression of responsibility for another is the final illusion to be shattered.

Three instances in the closing scenes of the play suggest that the capacity to give and receive love is an illusion, and as such, is *not* an expression of responsibility. Monceau, oblivious to his own vulnerability to the state of human affairs he is intent on reminding the others about, remarks caustically: 'And if by some miracle you did knock out that guard you would find yourself in a city where not one person in a thousand would help you. And it's got nothing to do with being Jewish or not Jewish. It is what the world is.' (*IAV*. p. 279) Charitable love cannot be relied upon.

The Wehrmacht major returns drunk from having absented himself from his duties, confessing to Leduc that 'this is all as inconceivable to me as it is to you.' (*IAV*. p. 280) Leduc does not miss the opportunity to challenge him to assist their escape, but Leduc's promised gratitude means nothing to the major who reviles Leduc for still not having grasped the transformation in relationships that has occurred: 'It's amazing; you don't understand anything. Nothing of that kind is left, don't you understand that yet?... There are no persons any more, don't you see that? There will never be persons again. What do I care if you love me?... You – *turning to all of them* – goddamned Jews?' (*IAV*. pp. 280-281) Honour between honourable men cannot be assumed to be a sound basis upon which to proceed, but before an answer is given, the Major turns contemptuously upon the old Hasid and, in a brief cameo scene, Jewish passivity, Nazi efficiency and the rationalisation of obedience become the dramatic focus.

The major speaks as though in the Hasid's absence: 'Look what happens when I yell at him. Dog! He doesn't move. Does he move? Do you see him moving?... But we move, don't we?... we keep moving continually,' and drawing his gun, disdainfully asks Leduc, 'Tell me... how there can be persons any more. I have you at the end of this revolver - *indicates the Professor* - he has me - and somebody has him - and somebody has somebody else... What do you make of that?' (*IAV*. p. 281)

Leduc's love is immediately put to the test by the Major's offer of his release on condition of another's continued detention and implied demise. But when Leduc refuses to be blackmailed into precipitating another's unwilling sacrifice for the sake of his personal survival, when he refuses, in short, to go along with the Major's threatening offer, the Major challenges Leduc's reticence: 'I am trying to understand why you are better for the world than me... I have that duty and you do not? To make a gift of myself.' (*IAV*. p. 282) Self-sacrificial love is suspect, and an inadequate expression of responsibility. All that is left is to dramatise this fact in the cases of Leduc and Von Berg.



Lebeau, Monceau and the boy are all summoned into the office for questioning more or less simultaneously, leaving the old Hasid, Leduc and Von Berg alone on the stage for the dénouement. The moral dilemma with which Leduc has been confronted by the inebriated, pistol waving Major is recapitulated in negative image through Leduc's confrontation with Von Berg. Threatened with the possibility of summary execution by the Major, Leduc had been forced to admit that his desire to live was greater than his compassionate concern for the fate of the other detainees, and even overrid any thought of protest against the Major's complicity in their murder. Threatened once again with death, (his summons into the office is imminent), Leduc forces Von Berg to admit his complicity in what is happening.

Leduc has confessed that his arrest came about in the most pathetic circumstances. A partner, for whom he no longer feels any love, was suffering from toothache, and, caught in the dilemma, his indifference towards her, a residual concern for her welfare and a lack of resolve to refuse the errand, he had left the house to go in search of some painkillers, aware that his careless action would expose him to the danger of arrest. The failure of romantic love is thus signalled.

It is amidst the death of love and the consequent suffering that 'can never be shared', 'never be a lesson', that is, 'a total and absolute waste', (*IAV*. p. 285) that Leduc wishes to confront Von Berg, not with his self-interest, but with his hatred of the other. It is Von Berg's part in the loss of the ideals and the necessity to engage with life despite the realisation of their loss with which Leduc wishes to confront Von Berg as Leduc recognises Von Berg's assumption of innocence in this respect.

The old Hasid is summoned to the office and in the scuffle that breaks out following his lack of response, a bundle that he has been clutching protectively to himself, bursts open, and the stage is filled with airy white feathers which settle on them both.

With only themselves remaining to be called, Von Berg appeals to Leduc for his friendship, and Leduc replies:

I am only angry that I should have been born before the day when man has accepted his own nature; that he is *not* reasonable, that he is full of murder, that his ideals are only the little tax he pays for the right to hate and kill with a clear conscience. I am only angry that, knowing this, I still deluded myself. That there was not time to truly make part of myself what I know, and to teach others the truth. (*IAV*. pp. 287-288)

Von Berg offers Leduc bland assurances that 'there are people who would find it easier to die than stain one finger with this murder', (*IAV*. p. 288) but Leduc's response is to confront Von Berg with the murderous intentions of his own mind:

And Jew is only the name we give to that stranger, that agony we cannot feel, that death we look at like a cold abstraction. Each man has his Jew; it is the other. And the Jews have their Jews. And now, now above all, you must see that you have yours - the man whose death leaves you relieved that you are not him, despite your decency. And that is why there is nothing and will be nothing - until you face your own complicity with this... your own humanity. (*IAV*. p. 288)

Von Berg resists Leduc's implications and protests his innocence, but Leduc reminds him of the occasion he spoke with familial warmth of Baron Kessler, his cousin. Leduc informs him about a matter of which Von Berg had been aware but which he had refused to register emotionally: that his cousin Kessler had been responsible for removing all the Jewish doctors from the medical school in which he, Leduc, had worked. Leduc concludes mournfully: 'It's not your guilt I want, it's your responsibility - that might have helped. Yes, if you had understood that Baron Kessler was in part, in some part, in some small and frightful part - doing your will. You might have done something then, with your standing, and your name and your decency, aside from shooting yourself!' (*IAV*. p. 289)

Von Berg is reduced to despair and shouts in anguished response: 'What can ever save us?' (*IAV*. p. 289) upon which he is summoned to the office for questioning but is not detained for any length of time. Passing from the office to the corridor Von Berg gives Leduc the pass he has just been granted, and before Leduc can be summoned, he strides firmly from the detention centre flourishing the pass at the guard, making good his escape.

His absence is quickly discovered and after a flurry of activity the stage directions indicate that the Major and Von Berg are momentarily left alone on the empty stage:

*[The Major] turns slowly to Von Berg, who is staring straight ahead. Von Berg turns and faces him. Then he gets to his feet. The moment lengthens, and lengthens yet. A look of anguish and fury is stiffening the Major's face; he is closing his fists. They stand there, forever incomprehensible to one another, looking into each other's eyes... At the head of the corridor four new men, prisoners, appear. (IAV. p. 291)*

Miller leaves open the question of the efficacy, beyond Leduc's immediate escape, of this act of self-sacrificial love.

#### **4.3 Press reactions to *Incident at Vichy***

The reaction of British critics was muddled. This may say something about the absence of the broadly defining context which the extended public controversy over

Hannah Arendt's book *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and the earlier critical debate surrounding *After the Fall* had created for the reception of *Incident at Vichy* in the US. (20)

The British reviews betray a debilitating resistance to articulating the issues the play seeks to analyse. The prevailing opinion that Miller's play was a second rate melodrama is most clearly expressed not in the cogency of argument, but almost without exception in the poorly focused, ill-shaped notices which exude either a bland polite respect or a prosaic lethargy. Even reviewers such as Harold Hobson and Ronald Bryden who had shown rare and courageous critical insight when writing about earlier plays such as *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank* and *The Representative* appear to find writing about Miller's play an effort.

Changes had been made to the London production of *Incident at Vichy*. Miller had been adapting the script of the New York production during the rehearsal period, and in Rolf Gerard's set the corridor exit was replaced by a 'bleak flight of stone steps that twists up out of sight to an upper gallery and a turning where a police guard is always ready to block that "unseen door" to the outside world. (21) Rather than some improvised detention centre in a requisitioned building which had had some former life, the anteroom in which the detainees await their fate is some kind of cellar. This is plausible enough, and makes dramatic sense in that escape is made more unlikely from the depths of a cellar. But the suspicion arises that the set was chosen because the neatness of Miller's melodrama found a perfect match in the conception of the French cellar in which the Gestapo are unfailingly found interrogating English spies in popular film representation.

*The Times* commented that, 'as a conventional Resistance melodrama *Vichy* holds up in the theatre', but 'what entirely fails to come through theatrically is its intellectual content', (22) a view with which Bryden concurred, describing Miller's play as 'part of the same old Resistance film with Alan Ladd parachuting into French haystacks and Paul Henreid slinging raincoats round his shoulders without putting his arms through the sleeves'. (23)

Bryden attributed the responsibility for creating this misleading impression in large part to the director Peter Wood, and accused him of 'playing up the melodrama of Miller's plot unnecessarily while playing down the moments of real drama', amongst which he included the revelation of the existence of the crematoria and Leduc's protestation of enduring love and gratitude if the Wehrmacht major were only to assist their escape. (24)

But the responsibility cannot be fairly said to be the director's alone. Wood himself commented: 'It was beyond our wildest dreams that he' - Sir Alec Guinness - 'would take the part at all', (25) and 'Binkie' Beaumont anxious to preserve the

traditions of H. M. Tennent Ltd had managed to secure a cast which not only included Sir Alec Guinness, but also Anthony Quayle and Brian Blessed. Guinness and Quayle were by this time British institutions and deeply associated in the popular imagination with countless war film melodramas. The epitome of British resolve and fair play, of eminent good sense, Guinness was amiably well suited to the role of Von Berg in which, Philip Hope-Wallace commented, 'he towers above his colleagues (who do not avoid the label of simple war film types.)'! (26) With Beaumont's success in securing a star-studded cast with strong popular associations to war film, stereotypical minor roles in Miller's script, and melodramatic directing from Peter Wood, the production could hardly avoid the accusation that it was little more than the stuff of matinée fodder.

However, another fairly strong indication of critical reticence is the number of critics who defer to Miller's explanation of what the play is about at precisely the moment they wish to summarise the play's meaning, and do so without comment. W. A. Darlington begins his review by indicating that Miller considers that 'in all of us... even in the best of us, there is a touch of the Nazi. Unless the human conscience can be awakened to admit that fact, there is little hope for us.' (27) Darlington's summary of Miller's thesis goes without further comment.

B. A. Young remarks:

The play is in fact not about the persecution of the Jews but about guilt. 'Each man, ' says Mr Miller at the end, 'has his own Jew'... It is an offence today in various parts of the world to be a Communist, or a Negro, or a homosexual... The extent to which it [*Vichy*] will grip is bound to depend on the audience's concern with persecuted minorities. (28)

Whereas Darlington did not find it necessary to challenge the view that 'there is a Nazi in us all', Young does not appear to consider it pressing to question the validity of the analogy being drawn between the position of Jews during the Hitler years and Communists, Negroes and homosexuals in the contemporary period.

In her review Hilary Spurling is content to quote from Miller's *Observer* interview: "I wasn't really concerned with either Jews or Nazis", says Mr Miller; his theme is man's inhumanity to man', (29) as though no further comment is required. The failure to engage, the 'lite' conversational passing references to crucial issues are amongst the most odd features of the reviews. The lack of critical rigour is due to a number of factors.

While candid in his view that that he found *Incident at Vichy* unsatisfactory, there are early signs of the British love affair with Miller – an uncritical acceptance of him

as playwright and seer – in Bryden's comments concerning the anticipation and willed success which preceded the opening of *Incident at Vichy*:

What is the peculiar curse on Miller's talent which prevents his plays from ever quite rising to their themes, himself from becoming the playwright we hoped in the days of *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible*? For one did hope, and one still cares anxiously that he should succeed... For all his curse, Miller is the most honourable dramatist we have, focusing all his seriousness on problems of conscience. (30)

Is the critical reticence a product of the awe in which Miller was held? Almost a year before the opening of *Vichy*, *The Crucible* directed by Laurence Olivier had enjoyed an immensely successful revival at the National Theatre. More than any other play it was responsible for the mythologising of Miller, such that his moral stature frequently evoked comparisons with the solidity and visionary austerity of Lincoln's Mount Rushmore profile. Or is the reticence due to a lack of sufficient context? *The Times* review noted in its opening paragraph: '*Incident at Vichy*... is a one-act debate on the "Final Solution", written... as a companion piece to Miller's previous play, *After the Fall* (still not seen in this country).' (31)

It must be conceded that the most likely explanation for this passing over issues, is British insularity from the concerns Miller was attempting to dramatise. For most British critics Miller's play would not find its obvious context in the controversy over *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and Hannah Arendt's thesis about the 'banality of evil'. (32) Two critical notices - in *The Guardian* and *The Times* - mention Hannah Arendt, but it is *The Times* alone that places Miller's play in the context that most US critics had been aware of: 'He has visited the Frankfurt [Auschwitz] trials, and read Hannah Arendt : and his two new plays are an attempt to encompass the experience of Nazi Europe and persuade the spectator to accept complicity in the evil of his own nature.' (33)

Another noticeable feature of the British critical response is an often extended comparison of *Incident at Vichy* with other literature, another play or a novel, which in each case conveys the sense that critics have little to say about Miller's play and that another reference point is needed with which *Vichy* can be contrasted unfavourably. Moreover, the clear implication of some of the comparisons is that *Vichy* was understood to be an attempt at classical tragedy. Bryden comments:

I have to pause in mid-stroke to wonder at the fact of a contemporary playwright dealing in the same currency of ideas as Graham Greene. How many other living dramatists can you name who would even attempt to import the matter of Auschwitz into the theatre in the form of shaped, classical tragedy? (34)

Nevertheless Bryden considered Greene's novel *The Comedians* a better melodrama with a more effective and affecting conclusion. Hobson remarks: 'There is no doubt that Mr Miller has tried hard to write something more than a melodrama', (35) but the result does not match Martin-Harvey's play, *The Only Way*, a dramatisation of Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*; and a number of critics referred to Dickens's novel to make unfavourable comparisons: 'Miller's prince reminds me, and others, only of Sidney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities*.' (36)

Spurling on the other hand proclaimed with assurance:

Mr Miller... is castigated for failing to achieve what the critic had in mind for him to do. In short, the corpse was a dummy, a dummy of the executioner's own creating... What Mr Miller has actually done... seems largely to have escaped attention. He has chosen an inflammable subject - the 'Final Solution' - and cast it in a form which is reassuringly simple and familiar from *Grand Hotel* to *Ten Little Niggers*: a group of total strangers, flung together by circumstances, cooped up and subjected to pressure. In this case, ten frightened suspects picked up as Jews by Nazi detectives in 1942. (37)

It is doubtful whether Miller's play, bad as it is, can justifiably be confused with Agatha Christie! Spurling's historical sense appears to be badly awry.

The interpretation of a play involving the enforced confinement of Jews as an example of a 'balloon debate' has already been met in some interpretations of *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank*, and is once again proposed by Spurling as *the* frame of meaning through which *Incident at Vichy* should be approached, a view with which Hobson concurs, but, unlike Spurling, finds wanting:

Arthur Miller's *Incident at Vichy* takes a handful of Jews and one Gentile, coops them up behind barbed wire in a railway station in Vichy, and sends them one by one to an interrogation... Its only viable effects are melodramatic. They derive from highly coloured individuals seizing a moment of danger to show off their personal bravura. Sometimes they do this very well, but, in view of the subject, it is not sufficient. (38)

Spurling may be perspicacious in one respect: confusion and frustration are evident. Is it a classical tragedy or less? A good or an ineffective melodrama? A didactic platonic debate about the nature of evil, or a parlour game? The confusion is indicative of critical disappointment that Miller had failed to find the appropriate form for the issues he wished to explore, and that the failure of form is consequent upon the forcing of the particularities of a specific set of historical circumstances into distorted universal truths. In short, Miller's dubious universalist thesis *required* a melodramatic treatment, and the failure of the melodramatic form is due to the particularities which issue from a specific historical circumstance which he has been unable to account for

properly in this universalist thesis. These issues are at their most sharply focused in the final scene.

The dramatic dénouement in *Vichy*, and the way in which Sir Alec Guinness played Von Berg in the London production, caused the greatest confusion amongst the critics and led to significant misunderstanding. But the range of misunderstanding in the following accounts is extraordinary:

*The Times:*

The only non-Jew among the victims is an Austrian Prince beautifully played by Alec Guinness in a view of punctilious courtesy, constantly collapsing into horror-stricken vacancy at the meaninglessness of courtesy in such a world. It is the Prince's function to jest at the beliefs and self-delusions of the other characters and finally to perform an act of heroic self-sacrifice which brings the play to an end on a note of qualified hope for the human animal. The lesson of the play (and it is didactic) is that of the Jewish legend of the ten just men. (39)

*The Financial Times:*

Alec Guinness an ivory-tower intellectual, is well placed to demolish the arguments that are based upon environmental conditions: also he is apparently queer, with no pressing family responsibilities, and this, combined with his confidence in his eventual release gives him the advantage of almost total detachment from his circumstances. It's this detachment, rather than any inherent courage - for he doesn't seem to be a particularly courageous man - that leads him when he has been given his pass to freedom, to hand it to Leduc. (40)

*The Sunday Times:*

The Aryan Prince sacrifices himself for the Jewish doctor... Mr Miller's mix of high-sounding words cannot obscure the fact that, to the question why the Jew felt himself justified in letting the Christian die for him, there is no acceptable answer... Leduc makes off with the prince's papers with almost indecent alacrity.

Mr Miller cannot be telling us that it is a question of social guilt; for Leduc has helped to create society as much as the Prince. He cannot be telling us that a Jew's life is worth more than a Gentile's; for that would be an example of the racialism he is condemning. He can only be saying that *this* Jew is worth more than *that* Gentile, and unless we regard homosexuality as an unforgiveable sin, there is no evidence of this at all. (41)

*Plays and Players:*

Von Berg is a fastidious man who loathes the Nazis as vulgarians; but this is veneer. What induces him to give his life for the doctor, Leduc, is never clear;

the *author* states his (Von Berg's) motives, but Von Berg doesn't. And why does Leduc *permit* the sacrifice? (42)

A just Jew or righteous gentile? A detached, homosexual intellectual or a Gentile Aryan Prince? A fastidious Nazi hater or an unconscious anti-Semite?

It seems inexcusable that the critics appear to have missed entirely the import of Miller's emphasis upon the Catholic, aristocratic and aesthetic sensibilities of Von Berg as symbolic of the civilised values of Europe and, on the one hand, the long established ideological commitments to anti-Bolshevism and anti-Semitism, deeply rooted in Roman Catholic teaching, and, on the other, the *ex nihilo* challenge of Nazism to the established values of European civilisation.

To a degree, fault may be found with the London production, but the responsibility is also Miller's, as Bryden indicated:

Most of the blame comes home to the star, Alec Guinness, and to the playwright himself. Guinness has always shown a weakness for saintly parts: for the lifted jaw, the luminous blue stare, the gentle unnerving answer. Here he indulges his weakness to the full, making the most of a similar hankering in Miller himself. For the basic trouble with Miller is that, in all his searching exploration of guilt, he seems to see it mainly as an obstacle to innocence. His admiration for martyrs seems to have roots in a feeling that through martyrdom lies instant sainthood, a short cut to guiltlessness. (43)

Bryden's intuition found explicit expression in an interview Miller himself gave to *The Sunday Times* shortly before the London opening of *Incident at Vichy*:

In this [new play] a man gives his life because he can't bear the image as one who escapes the fate of the damned.

A prince who is not a Jew, and therefore not doomed to die, decides not to escape, as he could do. Instead, he slips himself in place of a Jew and dies.

The prince realises a life of negation is a lost one. He is against the Nazis. But he decides to protest against injustice, not just crab about it... There is a negative element in it, but it is meaningful.

In the play, the prince through his own struggling also realises that he is not as innocent as he'd presumed. There is a little bit of the Nazi in him, as there is in all of us. (44)

Miller's summary of the play's issues closely resembles formulations of Hannah Arendt's which had appeared in *The Listener*, in August 1964, in an article entitled 'Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship', where she wrote of those who refused to collaborate: 'They also chose to die when they were forced to participate. To put it crudely, they refused to murder, not so much because they held fast to the command 'Thou shalt not kill', as because they were unwilling to live together with a murderer



– themselves.’ (45) This makes of the failure to resist or to take one’s own life a conscious expression of murderous complicity.

Von Berg apparently chooses death because he does not share an essential aspect of the Jews’ humanity and cannot tolerate survival on the grounds that it is simply a matter of not being a Jew. To precipitate his own death is relatively easy but Von Berg’s suicide could not spring from the identical ‘cause’ of the Jews’ murder, a factor which is beyond his power to change. While *not* sharing the essential characteristic of those doomed to die he *does* share, in Miller’s view, an essential characteristic of those dealing in death, and which is another factor he is powerless to change: he shares the evil human nature of the Nazi.

Von Berg is then doubly culpable in his own eyes: he is not a Jew, and his essential nature is evil. On this understanding his act of taking his own life could be taken as an act of self-immolation borne of his insurmountable sense of alienation where he feels dissatisfied whatever he does: neither a vicarious act nor one of blind faith, but of despair.

The almost complete absence of critical engagement with the implications of Miller’s position is the most significant omission in the leading notices. However, recognition of these difficulties is not wholly absent, and the straightforward manner in which two critics do express their reservations (in very *different* publications) does leave the puzzling question as to why most of the leading critics failed to comment on the issues, and instead, presented an immensely confused and confusing account of the production.

Hugh Leonard comments:

What Miller has done - not for the first time - is to distort events and characters so that they become no more than exhibits in the case he is making in support of his chosen premise.

We are all equally guilty, not only for the fate of the Jews in Hitler’s Europe, but for apartheid in South Africa, the racial problem in the United States and landlordism in Notting Hill: this is Mr Miller’s message. There is something dangerously self-indulgent about collective guilt, just as long as none of us is more guilty than others; there is a kind of chummy togetherness about mass self-abasement: one can... cry ‘Mea culpa’ with an exquisite sense of social-consciousness, safe in the knowledge that none of our fellow cretins dares spoil the fun, by entering the plea of ‘Not Guilty’. Well, *I* do, here and now. I admit my personal responsibility towards, but not *for*, these events... Mr Miller’s sincerity is not in question, but he stands indicted on a charge of intellectual woolliness and - in this case - sheer dullness. (46)

Milton Shulman is more incisive:

As a play about the extermination of the Jews, it is less touching than *The Diary of Anne Frank* and less demanding than *The Representative*.

If it is meant to be a symbolic illustration of the thin line that divides every man from fear and hate then the symbolism is swamped by the unique quality of the Jewish tragedy.

It is obvious that we all have the capacity to love and hate. But between the deeds of Eichmann and the deeds of Schweitzer lie most of us. Few of us are either beasts or saints.

Genocide was the concept of a few madmen. There were some who helped; many who acquiesced. Most Germans knew nothing about it.

To assume that within all of us there is a desire or a need to exterminate millions because we hate a few is both facile and unprovable. What happened to the Jews under Hitler is too specific to be converted as yet, into a dramatic generalisation. (47)

Finally, only one critic, Hugh Leonard once again, made more than a passing reference to the old Hasid, silent throughout the play, but finally summoned for the obviously superfluous cross-examination. Leonard comments: 'Only at one moment did the play flame into dramatic life, and that was when a bag of feathers burst asunder. Only then did the tragedy of the concentration camps reach human dimensions.' (48)

#### 4.4 *Incident at Vichy* in post-production criticism

Some ten years after the production of *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank*, fewer since the production of *The Representative* and *The Investigation*, the same contentious issues surrounding the attempt to engage dramatically with Jewish fate during the Holocaust continue to persist in elaborated form in the discussion of *Incident at Vichy*: the allegation of Jewish passivity; the evasion of the realities of 'Auschwitz'; the tendency toward bringing 'balance' to the perspectives of agent and victim through the appeal to the evident evil nature of all humanity; a distinct reticence in relation to the identity of the majority of victims; and the desire to present some plausible resolution as a minimal ground for future hope.

In a 1967 essay Gerald Weales (49) clearly reflects continued preoccupation with the issues provoked by Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*:

One of the lines of action in *Incident at Vichy* - although it might be called a line of inaction - has to do with the failure of the waiting men to resist what is being done to them...The implication is that their failure to agree to attack the guard is their way of consenting to their own destruction... the consenting victims of *Incident at Vichy* are products turned out on the Bruno Bettelheim - Hannah Arendt line - explanations of totalitarian success which almost become apologies for it. (50)

The dramatic momentum emphasises the terrible success of the Nazi system to oppress, effect a swift capitulation to the 'inevitable' in its victims, and the total collapse of those values which had hitherto been assumed to hold some power to prevent a slide into barbarity. While not wishing to diminish the terror of the Nazi killing machine, Weales is posing a legitimate question: could Miller not have found a dramatic means at least to qualify that 'inevitability', and not appear to accept uncritically Arendt's accusation of the Jewish community's alleged collaboration and passivity? Weales is suggesting that the preservation of one individual Jewish life by an act of apparent self-sacrifice by a conscience stricken Catholic aristocrat weighs too slightly against the inexorable movement of Miller's drama.

Weales also finds fault not merely with Miller's apparent adoption of certain specific contemporary trends of thought on European Jewry, but also a laxity peculiar to his own recent experience:

It would seem that the events of the eight years before the writing of *Vichy* made Miller find in himself qualities that he can accept only with difficulty. The accepting becomes possible, however, by extending the *mea culpa* to take in all men... He uses the complicity gambit to turn personal guilt into public guilt. What this means to Miller as a playwright is that he no longer deals with man's struggle against the images being forced on him; instead, he becomes an image-forcer himself... Everyman as Executioner. Both plays [*After the Fall* and *Incident at Vichy*] suggest - insist really - that once this label is accepted, once the illusion is pushed aside, a man is free to act - even to act as a lover (like Quentin) or a martyr (like Von Berg). (51)

Having discovered his ferocious instinct for his own survival, Von Berg acts in an apparently selfless way. However, if the action he takes is prompted by the thought that it is better to be dead than have to live with the murderer who is oneself, reasoning which reflects Arendt's thinking on personal responsibility, it is conceivable that Von Berg's martyrdom is an expression of despairing *self-regard*.

It is the interpretation of Von Berg's action in relation to Miller's own thesis that 'there is a little bit of the Nazi in him', and the implications this has for Miller's view of Jewish fate which becomes the recurrent focus of much of the subsequent criticism.

Raymond Reno (52) indicates that problems exist in the constellation of issues surrounding Von Berg's choice, but in his view it is the position of Leduc which is problematic:

As saviour, Quentin [in *After the Fall*] found himself in need of redemption and could effect this only by forgiving himself. What he had to forgive was the capacity for murder he discovered in himself. Leduc, however actually *commits* a murder - he lets another person die in his place. And he does so with full knowledge of what is involved, full knowledge of all the guilt he is taking on.

His problem, therefore, is far more acute than Quentin's, and, unlike *After the Fall*, the play ends with a terrible question rather than a possible answer: Can Leduc forgive himself?... Who will forgive us what we cannot forgive ourselves? (53)

Reno's comments encourage that necessary distinctions be made between the capacity for murderous actions, the act of murder, and involvement in circumstances in which murder results. Quentin had discovered his capacity for murder through his complicitous involvement in 'the death' of his relationships and the redemptive solution was also to develop the capacity to forgive himself. Reno inaccurately states that Leduc murders Von Berg. He assumes, though Miller himself is careful to leave this open, that Von Berg's fate is sealed, and that this being the case Leduc has effectively murdered him.

To live 'together explicitly with oneself', an expression used by Hannah Arendt in her discussion of personal responsibility under dictatorship to describe those unable to conceive of collaboration with an oppressor, (54) may conceivably include the taking of one's own life as an act of good conscience. But Reno's remarks concerning Leduc are also open to a more dangerous interpretation: that his easy acceptance of Von Berg's pass, effectively consigns Von Berg to death, suggesting that a Jew's actions are responsible for a Christian's death, and Jewish survival is predicated on callous disregard for others, both tropes of anti-Semitic discourse.

Ruby Cohn, (55) on the other hand, interprets Von Berg's action as an unambiguous 'moral triumph'. She detects 'a new departure' for Miller in this, however, because he renders this triumph 'silently'. After Leduc's exit with Von Berg's pass, '*Von Berg turns and faces [the Major]... The moment lengthens, and lengthens... They stand there, forever incomprehensible to one another, looking into each other's eyes.*' (56)

Prompted by Leduc's plea for responsibility and not merely guilt, Von Berg has, Cohn suggests, both *refused* the regime's image of him as a pliable aristocrat and *embraced* the necessity of selfless action to preserve his good conscience. Cohn indicates that, unlike the Wehrmacht major, Von Berg has found the moral courage to break from his benevolently distant, but nevertheless complicitous relationship to the regime through *his* defiance of *their* wish to include Leduc among the deportees by disposing of his pass to make possible Leduc's escape.

However, Enoch Brater asked:

Is Von Berg's 'heroic' action prompted by a recognition of Leduc's social contract, or is it merely the way out for a decadent aristocracy to expiate its guilt? Does an isolated act of heroism have any meaning at all in a world gone mad? Is Quentin right in *After the Fall* when he says that 'no man lives who

would not rather be the sole survivor of this place [a camp] than all its finest victims'?

But if the prince's motives cannot be calibrated, his action certainly can. Compared to the 'decent' army major, who hates the round-up but goes along with it for fear of alienating his superiors Von Berg offers his 'pass' so that Leduc, one Jew, can live. In the last moments of the play the moral aristocrat and the Nazi stand face to face... But before the curtain falls on this tableau, four more victims are brought into this cell of horror - and that is where guilt must end and responsibility begin. In light of the Jewish history Miller takes as the setting for this play even the heroes are victims. Martyrdom has become an anachronism. *Incident at Vichy*, therefore, expands a Jewish crisis and makes of it a universal one. (57)

It makes no difference to the fact of Jewish fate whether Von Berg's actions were an act of heroism or self-exculpation: the inexorable operation of racial policy, of mass-murder legitimised on the ground of immutable biological inheritance remains undisturbed by either grace or self-regard. Only recognition of a universal declaration of human rights rather than an acknowledgement of the universal propensity to murderous action could potentially provide a radical challenge to a racial state.

Miller's failure to give due weight to the structural as opposed to the merely existential considerations in relation to his representation of Jewish fate is brought into focus sharply by an article entitled 'Arthur Miller's *Incident at Vichy*. A Sartrean Interpretation'. (58) Its author, Lawrence Lowenthal, describes the play as 'a clear structural example of Sartre's definition of the existential "theatre of situation"' and as 'an explicit dramatic rendition of Sartre's treatise on Jews', *Anti-Semite and Jew*. (59)

Lowenthal first draws attention to the lecture *Forgers of Myths* which Sartre delivered in New York in 1946, and published in *Theatre Arts* in June of that year. (60) The lecture was addressed to an audience who wanted to learn something of what had happened to French theatre during the Occupation, and immediately after the Liberation. Sartre writes in *Forgers of Myths*:

As a successor to the theater of characters we want to have a theater of situations.

We feel no need of registering the imperceptible evolution of a character or a plot: one does not reach death by degrees, one is suddenly confronted with it... By taking our *dramatis personae* and precipitating them, in the very first scene, into the highest pitch of their conflicts we turn to the well known pattern of classic tragedy, which always seizes upon the action at the very moment it is headed for catastrophe.

Since it is their aim to forge myths, to project for the audience an enlarged and enhanced image of its own sufferings... Dramas... are short, and violent, sometimes reduced to the dimensions of a single long act... dramas entirely centered on one event - usually a conflict of rights, bearing on some very general situation - written in a sparse, extremely tense style, with a small cast

not presented for their individual characters but thrust into a conjunction where they are forced to make a choice - this is the theater, austere, moral, mythic, and ceremonial in aspect which has given birth to new plays in Paris during the Occupation and especially since the end of the war. (61)

In Lowenthal's view Miller's play is the very model of the form of drama Sartre outlines here. The characters in *Vichy*, argues Lowenthal,

reveal themselves through their choices of behaviour, and their choices often prove to be surprising. They are all faced with undeniable limits to these choices, but within these limits they are always free to act. The Jew can resist or submit; the German can murder or rebel. The structural movement of the play is existential in that individual possibilities for evading choice are methodically decreased... The traditional palliatives of reason civilisation, political ideology, and culture which ordinarily stand between men and the absurd are dispelled one by one, until each character is made to face the realities of torture and irrational deaths.

The central crisis is, of course, precipitated by Nazism, but Miller's analysis of the cause of this evil is more existential than political or sociological. (62)

The 'traditional palliatives', the rationalisations and evasions are swept away through the debate between the detainees, and in this sense *Vichy* dramatises something of the nature of the existential threat, 'the banality of evil', to the characters' chosen and cherished ideals, securities and evasions. Nazism is well characterised as an assault on every conceivable discretion, on privacy, and on the expression of human solidarity. *But*, the inherent danger of a purely existential interpretation of the implementation of the 'Final Solution' and Nazi ideology, is the atomisation and personalisation of a phenomenon which was far from a merely private affair. Lowenthal's easy appeal to the seemingly effortless choices the detainees were 'free' to make is misleading, given the conditions prevailing in Vichy France and the structures the detainees were faced with once arrested.

In an interview in 1980 Miller himself was specifically asked whether he had been aware of Sartre's description of the French theatre during the Occupation given in his lecture the *Forger of Myths*. Miller replied:

I did not know about Sartre's description of the Theatre of Situations. The quotation you have given [included in the above quotation] does seem to fit my play... In the situation of *Incident at Vichy*, the fact of the matter is that the victims are collected into a police room and they are not permitted to move. This happened before any playwright thought about them - even Sartre. (63)

The entire force of Miller's response indicates his universalisation of particular circumstances: 'victims' in a 'police room' who could be individuals erroneously detained by agencies of the state in any time or place.

Lowenthal's second chief point is that Sartre's existential analysis of anti-Semitism, also fits well with Miller's own interpretation of Arendt's 'banality of evil': 'the Jews have their Jews'. (*IAV*. p. 288) Lowenthal points out that in *Incident at Vichy*,

the Jews are thrust into their Jewishness. The victims in the play, aside from the religious old man are either indifferent or hostile to their Jewishness. Each considers himself French and each identifies himself with his profession or political ideology rather than his religion. There is no feeling of unity in their mutual crisis and even their physical movements on stage lead away from their fellow victims toward a brooding isolation. What unites them technically into a 'we' consciousness is simply the fact that the Nazi, or the 'third' as Sartre would call him, looks upon them with hostility as a collective unit. The Jew experiences the 'the look of the anti-Semite' as a community alienation, but his sense of 'community' ironically arouses only fear and antagonism. (64)

Miller's dramatic conclusion to *Incident at Vichy* (which is the exact equivalent to Quentin's in *After the Fall*, 'We are all separate people and very dangerous') is explicitly stated when Leduc insists that man 'is not reasonable... he is full of murder... his ideals are only the little tax he pays for the right to hate and kill with a clear conscience'. (*IAV* p. 287) The correlative to this is precisely the conclusion Miller reaches when Monceau proclaims 'Every nation has condemned somebody because of his race.' (*IAV* p. 279) and Leduc, in his debate with Von Berg in the closing scenes, says: 'Each man has his Jew... And the Jews have their Jews.' (*IAV*. p. 288) The particular identity and fate of the Jews in Vichy France is obscured not only through the neglect of structural factors but also through Miller's preference for existential categories of interpretation when thinking about basic human nature This is Miller's prime concern rather than dramatic engagement with the demanding issue of Jewish identity in Vichy France in 1942. The clear implication is that in *Incident at Vichy* Jews are not discernible from Nazis: each individual is alone in his hatred of all 'the others'.

Miller was highly critical of Goodrich and Hackett's dramatic adaptation of Anne Frank's diary, and his position is a conscious reversal of the controversial line in that play, (which was itself a gross distortion of Anne's diary entry): 'We're not the only people that've had to suffer. There've always been people that've had to - sometimes one race - sometimes another.' (*PDAF* p. 137) Miller's is the more austere view of humanity: not all victims of injustice, but agents of cruel oppression, a universalisation of theme which makes any reasonable examination of the relative

positions of the various Nazi agencies, the collaborating French authorities and the populace, including the Jews in Vichy France, more, rather than less, difficult to discern.

Lawrence Langer takes up the themes of the Nazi threat to the basic assumptions of European civilisation, specifically the fate of art, (65) and the identity of the victims, in relation to the existential predicament of isolation discussed by Lowenthal, and arrives at the opposite conclusion about the *scope* of available choices, given the collapse of familiar values and the Jews place in the Nazi scheme of things:

*Incident at Vichy* may be seen as concisely dramatised dialogues between points of view... When humanistic precedents collapse, the individual loses the security of collective identity; neither family nor group nor profession protects: the prisoners in this play are isolated, alone, searching for private strategies to ensure their release - unaware that the Nazi determination to destroy all Jews has deprived them of choice. The contest is unequal before it begins. If art is an illusion we submit to for greater insight, life - the life depicted in *Incident at Vichy* - is an illusion we submit to from greater ignorance. (66)

Miller has not given due weight to some of the arguments *Incident at Vichy* actually rehearses. It is Von Berg who concludes that those of a refined nature simply do not possess the kind of imagination which can take in Nazi *real politik*, and that the rational basis of European civilisation since the Enlightenment has become obsolete almost overnight. This message is driven home by Leduc when he points out that the Nazis are always one step ahead because they are quick to anticipate the avenues down which these habits of mind will take their victims, are ready with the alternatives, and are able to exploit both with alacrity. The game of human decency can be played to the threshold of the gas chamber if need be, as can the purely existential description of human endeavour: *Arbeit macht frei*.

While Langer is clearly appreciative of Miller's 'artistic integrity' in exposing 'the impotence of facile rhetoric' (67) through the various stances that are presented dramatically and then demolished, he registers two problems in a constructive fashion.

The first of Langer's points affirms the criticism levelled at Lowenthal's Sartrean interpretation. Langer writes: 'Miller provides insight into the psychology - not necessarily of the Jew - but of the hunted, the humiliated, the disenfranchised, the abandoned, the scorned.' (68) This is an acknowledgement that in *Vichy* the Holocaust is used as a metaphor for the experience Langer briefly outlines. Somewhat surprisingly he does not elaborate upon the implications of using the Holocaust as a rhetorical device to inform audiences about the 'universality of murderous hostility, guilt and victimhood' in a play that is ostensibly based upon a specific incident set in



a recognisable historical period, beyond his acerbic remark that the life depicted in *Vichy* 'is an illusion we submit to from greater ignorance'.

In the second of his reservations Langer returns to the subject of Von Berg's act of self-sacrifice and he re-emphasises Enoch Brater's questions about the role of Von Berg in the resolution of the play's themes. Langer writes: 'Holocaust writing itself serves two masters: a clear intellectual perception of how Nazism shrank the area of dignified choice and reduced the options for human gestures; and the instinct to have victims survive heroically even within these less-than-human alternatives.' (69)

In Langer's view Miller succumbs to this instinct albeit in a less than conventional and unambiguous manner, in that Von Berg himself is an ambiguous hero-victim whose survival is left in the balance as the play ends. He points out that Von Berg's 'gesture simply imposes on a hopeless situation the temporary idealism of self-sacrifice', and continues:

How does one measure his private deed of generosity against the slaughter of millions? Does it invalidate Leduc's melancholy charge, only too familiar to survivors of the death camps, that, 'Each man has his Jew... the man whose death leaves you relieved that you are not him, despite your decency?' ... The magnitude of the sorrow and loss dwarfs the deed, however noble, of one man for one man; *Incident at Vichy* illuminates the difficulty, perhaps the impossibility of affirming the tragic dignity of the individual man, when it has been soiled by the ashes of anonymous millions. (70)

In so far as the affirmation of tragic dignity has traditionally been grounded in mythological categories of thought, and in so far as these are precisely those interpretations of life which are demolished as the play proceeds, Miller could fairly be said to be 'illuminating the impossibility of affirming tragic destiny' in face of the reversal of these humane traditions through the less-than-human alternatives the Nazi regime substituted, and ultimately through their extermination of millions. English critics were well wide of the mark in attempting to see in *Incident at Vichy* a tragedy of classical proportion.

Properly speaking, if Miller's dramatic form were to express his argument, *Incident at Vichy* could be conceived as an anti-model to classical tragedy in an analogous fashion to Weiss's design of *The Investigation* as an anti-model to Dante's *Divine Comedy*. But it is doubtful whether Miller's intention to expose the flaws in Western European humanism in the structure of his play have been thoroughly carried through in the final scene.

It was the closing moments of the play which gave some London critics grounds for believing that Miller was reaching for a classically tragic ending, but which serves rather to underline that the *futility* of Von Berg's action (indicated by the arrival of

more detainees in the closing moments of the play) had not been sufficiently stressed in dramatic terms. This suggests that Miller failed to provide a cogent dramatic conclusion.

The tragic ideal breaks under the demands placed on it: the impropriety of the suggestion that Von Berg's sacrifice somehow ameliorates the Holocaust fails to imbue the conclusion with tragic resonance. And, pulling back from his own dramatic argument throughout the play, Miller's austere vision of humanity lacks a concluding incisive metaphor, and is apparently contradicted by the audience welcoming the superficial, ultimately untenable, 'tragic resolution' Von Berg's action is assumed to be.

For most critics the conventional dramatic equation of one man's life for another was problematic enough, let alone for countless millions. In this sense Langer may strictly speaking be correct to point out that *the play's value resides in what it manifestly fails to accomplish*, which is simply a positive expression of the majority critical view that *Incident at Vichy* was a conventional melodrama which concluded with a less than convincing *coup de théâtre* and the suspenseful uncertainty of Von Berg's entirely ambiguous action and undisclosed fate.

In contrast to the volume of US criticism, the British contributions to the post-production critical assessment of *Incident at Vichy* have been sporadic and meagre, and yet they attempt to engage with issues, however summarily, which US critics writing more volubly do not explicitly discuss. The chief issues which surface in these brief discussions are the play's problematic relationship to Vichy France and Miller's quite openly stated dramatic purpose, to abstract from a specific historical episode, an existential phenomenology, in Langer's phrase, of 'the hunted'.

S. B. John asserts that Miller 'explores the moral climate of Vichy France and the consequences for French citizens of racist legislation passed by a French government supported, or at least accepted by, the great majority of Frenchman in 1942, the period in which the play is set'. (71) But John cites not textual evidence to support his assertion that Miller intended to evoke the historical situation prevailing in Vichy France in 1942, and he pretty well concedes this when he acknowledges that while references to forged papers, the Unoccupied Zone, and extermination camps 'reinforce the sense of historical authenticity, the play is not primarily concerned to examine the working of anti-Semitic laws in France but to probe the more general human experience of evil, guilt responsibility and atonement'. (72) The public and particular assumptions, values, laws and precise circumstances which could be said to characterise Vichy France are wholly absent from the play.

It is left to Christopher Bigsby to indicate the chief reason for Miller's failure in terms which relate his theme to his dramaturgical practice: 'While the play argues

against a process which encourages people to see themselves and others as symbols, it simultaneously uses just such a process as its *theatrical strategy*. *Reductivism* is not merely the subject of the play it is also its *methodology*.` [my italics] (73)

Miller's methodology makes the text less than inclusive, and deprives the audience of any substantial understanding of the particular circumstances of Vichy France in 1942. Its reductivism is the key feature that makes the text susceptible to analysis from the standpoint of existential phenomenology, and places it in dangerous proximity to Nazi ideology: the implementation of the 'Final Solution' was intended to be reductive of the whole of humanity. While *Incident at Vichy* is not as *judenfrei* as Peter Weiss's *The Investigation* there is a sense in which, although there may be verisimilitude in the representation of the slow, cautious acknowledgement the characters make of their Jewishness in a setting which demanded precisely this, which is both psychologically plausible and dramatically desirable (and may, moreover, be indicative of the character's reticence to accept Nazi imposed definitions of Jewishness), it is nevertheless difficult to escape the conclusion that Miller is not anxious to draw attention to the Jewish identity of his characters.

To have done this would have been opposite to his avowed anti-realistic dramaturgy and contrary to his universalist intentions with regard to the play's message. Miller exploits historical reality - a differentiated Jewishness - to metaphorical purpose: characters evade acknowledging their *Jewish* identity which is the one irremediable factor for which they are pursued and murdered, while they are simultaneously portrayed as lamenting aspects of European sensibility and culture upon which their *identity* appears to be entirely based but which have failed them when confronted by Nazi imagination and ingenuity. *Vichy's* 'Jews' are humanists disenchanted by the discovery that they are no different from the Nazis.

The fact that gas chambers and crematoria are mentioned is one indication of the central fallacy upon which *Incident at Vichy* is based. It ultimately depends for its meaning on the assumptions that the Holocaust is *sui generis*, that the chief victims of the Holocaust were Jews, and that Vichy France had a particular historical ambience.

In short, the play seeks to deny the very particularity upon which the sense of its universalist claims rest. In so denying, the universalist claims collapse in the attempt made to graft them to an historical and particular reality they seek to avoid.

A final irony is perhaps that just one of the London critics, Hugh Leonard, commented in passing on how affecting he had found the sudden bursting of the old Hasid's bag and the flurry of swirling feathers, a dramatic *detail* of uncertain, but resonant meaning. Miller was asked about this particular detail in an interview almost twenty years later, and his reply is perhaps the most eloquent commentary on the

reasons for *Vichy*'s dramatic failure, both in its chosen methodology and its universalism. Miller replied to the interviewer's inquiry about the bursting of the bag:

I'll tell you that I didn't know myself what was in the bag, and that when I suddenly saw that they were feathers, it was totally out of some subconscious pocket in my mind. Then sometime later I saw a film, *The Shop on Main Street*, which is a Czech film, about a little town in Bohemia where all the Jews are rounded up. And they're told to bring a few things; they don't know where they're going, but they're going to their deaths of course. They're loaded on the trucks, and the whole town is devastated; that is, it is emptied out of all the Jews that live in this town. And there's a shot of the town square where a little while ago we saw this crowd of people assembled and thrown into the vehicles. And what's blowing around on the square is the feathers. And this was a kind of a race memory of mine, quite frankly, because nothing like that ever happened in my family... But feathers-you see, you carry your bedding. It's the refugees' only possible property. It's light, it's warm, it's a touch of home... And also its plumage of birds that are blown about. They're weak things - it does have an aspect of weakness, but also of domesticity, an uprooted domesticity. Then once they're released you can't capture them any more. And there's a pathetic quality to that: the fact that the old guy's clutching what to our minds would be a practically valueless bag of nothing, of air. It's his identity, though. (74)

Had Miller been able to dramatise the particularity of Vichy France with such resonance, through the use of particular dramatic symbols like the drifting of millions of feathers across an empty wind swept square, *Vichy* might well have been a different play.

#### 4.5 Robert Shaw's *The Man in the Glass Booth*

Robert Shaw's *The Man in the Glass Booth* is the one play by a British writer which, if not by virtue of its central thematic concern, then by virtue of its title and dramatic action, relies in substantial degree upon associations being made with the trial of Adolf Eichmann and Hannah Arendt's book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*. (75)

Suggestive as it is of the scrutiny of the problem of German guilt, specimen-like in a glass case, the dramatic dynamic of the play rather than being redolent of rational scientific examination, is closer to the sadistic curiosity of the audience watching the grotesqueries of the circus show, with its frequent pseudo-scientific justification. The circus the Israeli authorities had arranged in the Jerusalem courtroom (in Arendt's view), with which the audience were disappointed when the main attraction turned out not to be the grotesque monster imagined, but a greying fastidious administrator in a two-piece suit, is the 'injustice' which Shaw intends to compensate for, through the

performance of Arthur Goldman in *The Man in the Glass Booth*. Shaw sets out to test audience understanding by giving 'them' what they apparently craved.

Robert Shaw was known to mass audiences chiefly through his television and film roles, (76) but between 1959 and 1964 he had also published three novels: *The Hiding Place* (1959); *The Sun Doctor* (1961), which won the Hawthornden Prize for 1962, (previous winners included Sean O'Casey, Robert Graves and Evelyn Waugh – Shaw's novel being likened to Graham Greene's *A Burnt-Out Case* and Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King*); and *The Flag* (1964), derived from the life of Conrad Noel, the Red Vicar of Thaxted, which was greeted with undisguised embarrassment.

In January 1967 Shaw's fourth novel was published. It was entitled *The Man in the Glass Booth*. The central character of the novel is a fast-talking, wise cracking New York real estate magnate, Arthur Goldman. His true identity remains obscure for most of the novel, but after the rapidly changing contours of his mental state and his real estate game-playing has been evoked, he allows himself to be abducted from New York by Israeli agents. Once in Israel, he is placed on trial as a former member of the SS, a course of events clearly related to the case of Adolf Eichmann. It is while Goldman is in court that he confronts judge and jury from within a glass booth.

The reviewers were not enthusiastic. The *New Statesman* found 'the symbolic equations... suggestive but bewildering', and dismissed the novel as 'heartless notation'. *The Listener* was even less kind, describing it as 'a souped-up re-hash of the Eichmann trial', 'appalling', 'baroque flummery'. *Punch* dismissed it as 'cobbled together'. Charles Landstone, in the *Jewish Chronicle* found Shaw's novel 'disturbing' and 'obscure'. In contrast *The Spectator* found the book 'stupendously ingenious' while conceding that the novel's 'opening section is too long and too confusing' and 'the inquisition of Goldman by the Israeli authorities... perfunctory'. (77) By far the most serious evaluation appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement*:

Robert Shaw has written a novel about the Nazi persecution of the Jews, without seeming trivial, callous or self-righteous. He is an actor much admired for his performance in strong, shallow roles... His novel is, in a way, a by-product of his talent for mimicry and self-dramatisation, and it is no surprise that there are already plans for turning it into a play. (78)

The review goes on to identify the two factors which provide the essentially dramatic impetus of the novel: the questions surrounding the exact identity of Goldman, and the reasons he has for delivering himself into the hands of Israel's agents to stand trial in Jerusalem. The reviewer concludes:

What is surprising is that [Shaw's] bold, brutal strokes have created something so fair-minded and sensitive... [He] presents [Goldman] for consideration and

encounter, without posing judgement. This ambitious novel is like a drama... and achieves its aim by the exercise of tact in a field where this quality is least to be anticipated. (79)

In the first months of 1967 Shaw worked on the stage adaptation with the assistance of his friend Harold Pinter, who

volunteered to direct the play in the West End. It would be the first time he had directed work other than his own. Further, Pinter thought Donald Pleasence would be ideal for the lead, though Shaw had privately imagined he would play the part himself. As the three of them had previously been involved in setting up the film of *The Caretaker* it seemed natural that they should put on the play themselves. With the help of Terence Baker, an agent who had joined Richard Hatton's office to deal with literary matters, they formed *Glasshouse Productions*. The veteran West End producer Peter Bridge, was approached to be *Glasshouses'* co-producer and with his help there was no trouble in securing a theatre, especially with the 'marquee' value of the three main participants. (80)

On 5 June war erupted in the Middle East and in six days the Israeli army conquered the Gaza strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, together with East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. While Israel's victory in the Six-Day War was greeted with almost universal approval by the general public, and support for Israel within mainstream Jewish communities had hardly ever reached such a high point since 1948, Israel's victory in 1967 also marked a decisive turn in left and left-liberal opinion against Israel and Israeli policy. (81)

*The Man in the Glass Booth* opened at St Martin's Theatre a few weeks later, on 27 July.

#### 4.6 *The Man in the Glass Booth*

Goldman is a Jewish stock market speculator with a portfolio of property interests in Manhattan. An apparently eccentric and an emotionally unpredictable figure Goldman's autocratic fastidiousness manifests itself in a considerable degree of self-indulgence – and an overcrowded diary – particularly the day on which the dramatic action begins, 20 November, because it is his birthday.

Paintings are adjusted or exchanged to suit his mood, flowers are delivered, the phone rings mysteriously, his tailor arrives to measure him for some new clothes, events which are not out of the ordinary for a man as wealthy as Goldman, particularly as it is his birthday. But Goldman's eccentricity extends to mysterious family members: a deceased wife to whom he pays homage, kneeling before her ashes in his apartment to Verdi's *Requiem* on the turntable; an enigmatic cousin, who may

or may not be alive. And there is also a room which is kept securely private. A glass sided elevator brings guests directly into Goldman's apartment.

Amidst the teeming disparate demands, the wise-cracking rhetoric which calls for no response because none is genuinely desired, but if given, not heard amidst the bark of instructions and the carefully cultivated cynicism of the victim knowingly observing an unchanging world, the suspicion arises that this delirium of apparent disassociations is driven by some kind of buried obsession.

Goldman is taken by surprise at the sudden announcement that the Pope has forgiven the Jews, news which Goldman receives, particularly on his birthday, with ironic contempt. What use is the announcement, what comfort could it possibly bring - to the already *deceased*? But turning the sound of the television commentary down to the level of the indistinguishable murmur and monotonous cadences of formal sanctimony as the programme switches from the news reader to the Vatican commentator, Goldman improvises a half-muttered commentary of his own in which Hitler is warning the Pope of the pariah nature of the Jews: 'The Führer said, "Your Holiness: In order to carry on his existence as a parasite on other peoples, the Judlein is forced to deny his inner nature. The more intelligent the individual Jew is, the more... the more he will succeed in his deception."' (MITGB. p. 12)

While Goldman is watching the broadcast some flowers are brought in and he is alarmed by the uncanny familiarity of the delivery man. Goldman is reminded of his cousin, Adolf Karl Dorff, but concludes that it cannot be him. His ruminations on the man's identity are the catalyst for his sudden but undisclosed apprehension of a solution to the difficulties he faces in accomplishing some plans he has had in mind for some time, and which had been aggravated into clearer conception by the Pope's presumptuous declaration with regard to the Jews.

The threads of Goldman's scheming are allusively brought together during his morning appointments, particularly through a call by his personal physician, Dr Kessel. While Goldman's conversation betrays minimal engagement with the doctor, it precipitates the slight haemorrhage of his brooding obsession:

You see, Doc, I can't go out? I'm under observation. They're on to me. I've got to stay here with you guys and work somethin' out. Don't think I'm fevered. As I recall the Führer said... The Führer said: 'In the Jewish people the will to self sacrifice does not go beyond the individual's naked instinct for self-preservation.' Not a bad writer. (MITGB. p. 15)

Goldman's instinct for more than self-preservation, for the transformation of pure self-interest, to be the one Jew who might stand for something other than putrescence and corruption, who might take the stand as a witness to history; and more than that, to be *the* intermediary... But Dr Kessel misunderstands:

Kessel: I think you *are* a little bit fevered, Mr Goldman.

Goldman: Don't you call me a liar.

Kessel: I wouldn't dream of it.

Goldman: Don't you call me a liar. Let's sit quiet. Let's pay our respects. (*Goldman sits on the love seat.*) Doc, I'm seeking both to inspire and distract myself.

Kessel: From what?

Goldman: From the arbeit-macht-frei grey stone edifices... the innumerable three-floor-high-identical-edifices. Charlie, you call this a metropolis... that place... that place... was boundless. Being an athlete stood me in good stead... It's the living who are in neglect. Its not ended you know. (*MITGB. pp. 17-18*)

Goldman's tailor, Rudin, arrives in the building and is invited up to the apartment through the intercom while Goldman bitinglly observes: 'In Israel they can't even define it. J...E...W. Can't define that word in Israel. They got Councils workin' at it: Boards and Councils (*To CHARLIE*) Identify him. We're all Germans, Charlie. All Germans and all J...E...W s.' (*MITGB. p. 19*)

When Rudin enters Goldman greets him with the question: 'What do you think of the Pope's edict, Rudin?', to which Rudin replies: 'Who needs it?' (*MITGB. p. 19*) But Goldman is still scheming, still working on a solution to the situation and he reassures Dr Kessel that he is not in ill-health, that his condition is 'Just an old wound opening up... I'll close it. I'll close it when I work it out... you follow?' (*MITGB. p. 21*)

When, a short time later, Goldman draws his pistol on his associates, Charlie Cohn, his secretary and Dr Kessel, and announces: 'Sorry to bother you, fellas. I've gotta get rid of you - I'm almost there... it's a matter of cunning from here on in', (*MITGB. p. 23*) Goldman signals that he has finally put all the pieces of the solution to the problem together, and which he expresses in a song he sings softly at the end of the scene: 'What bells will ring for those who died defiled? For those who died in excrement? Rest eternal grant them light eternal shine upon them.' (*MITGB. p. 25*)

The scene ends with Goldman taking a lighted cigar upon which he has drawn deeply and which he ascetically stubs under his left armpit, a suggestive but obscure indication of a necessary detail in the plan he is about to embark on.

Through Charlie's checking the answer phone at the beginning of the second scene of Act 1, it becomes apparent that Arthur Goldman has in the meantime visited Buenos Aires. The phone calls which turn out to be wrong numbers, the delivery of flowers by an uncannily familiar person, and the interest in hiring a body guard, detailed in the first scene are deliberately ambiguous. It is only at the end of the second scene that these episodes are understood to be the operational activities of Israeli agents attempting to confirm Goldman's identity and to map the layout of his



apartment, all part of a conspiracy to kidnap and abduct him to stand trial in Israel as Adolph Karl Dorff, Colonel in the SS *Einsatzgruppen*.

Informed on his return from Buenos Aires by his secretary that the apartment is under surveillance, Goldman's suspicions are confirmed, and the opportunity for which he has been waiting, and then actively planning in Buenos Aires, presents itself. Precisely what this opportunity is, is alluded to shortly before Goldman himself invites the Israeli agents into the apartment :

The final assimilation. What the council said, Charlie... what the Pope's council said was: 'The Jewish people should never be presented as one rejected, cursed, or guilty of deicide, and the council deplors and condemns hatred and persecution of Jews whether they arose in former or in our own days.'

Hey, there's a guy in Carolina upset. Goddam Jewish father's gotta boy actin' Jesus Christ in the School Nativity. Boy won't give up the part. Says it's a great role.

I don't know if they're enemies or friends, you see. (*Pause.*) Jesus, I hope I'm right to do this. (*MITGB. pp. 28-29, 30*)

Goldman must appear to be working to prevent his abduction while allowing himself to be taken into custody for the role he has decided he must play.

The Israeli agents accept Goldman's invitation into the apartment with surprising ease and an absence of suspicion, interpreting his apparently comfortable capitulation as an admission of defeat and his desire to avoid being the victim of unnecessary force. But Goldman retains the initiative by deliberately misleading them with a number of carefully planned deceptions: giving them the false impression that he intended to buy his way out; that he was prepared under certain circumstances to take his own life by swallowing a poison capsule that he had pre-emptively placed in his mouth; and, most significantly, that his identity is other than it appears, confirming the Israelis in their *mistaken* identification, a ruse accomplished by the recently self-inflicted tell tale scar in his left arm pit, the usual location of the tattoo identifying membership of the SS.

Goldman's captors do not question his capitulation and are pleased to have resisted his attempts at bribery, foiled his potential suicide and apprehended Adolph Karl Dorff, Colonel in the SS *Einsatzgruppen*. But Goldman's imagination is pre-eminent: they are deceived, he has chosen his own destiny of self-sacrifice and delivered himself into his enemies hands to be accused. The day of redemption is at hand.

The second act begins with Goldman in custody in an Israeli prison. Mrs Rosen, one of the agents who had assisted in Goldman's apprehension and abduction from New York questions him in an attempt to establish beyond reasonable doubt his

identity. Believing him to be Adolph Dorff, she accuses him of murdering Goldman, assuming his identity, and using his documentation to obtain US citizenship.

Goldman follows where she leads, seemingly content to incriminate himself. When questioned further about his identity he volunteers detailed descriptions of mass executions in Auschwitz and in Dubno, apparently providing unequivocal evidence of his identity and his guilt:

Mrs Rosen:... Adolf Karl Dorff - one time Colonel in the *Einsatzgruppen* - are you, Colonel, Jewish?

Goldman:... Am I Jewish? We light cigarettes and we start the shooting. We fill up the bottom. They lay in from the top. The blood runs down from their heads. They lay in from the sides. We pack `em more, and underneath, there's movement. Waving arms and such like. Naked they go down the steps, they climb on the heads of the people below and I tell `em exactly where. I'm a great packer - should have made trunks. Am I Jewish? They lay on top of their dead or dying and we shot, shot, shot... Am I Jewish? I don't know about my mother, but my father was pure-blooded Aryan. That I'm proud of. (*MITGB*. p. 41)

Insisting that he defend himself, and now in full, clean and pressed SS uniform, Goldman enters the court. Consistent with his role as the Aryan-Jew representative of the German people, he seeks to delimit the extent of his responsibility and diminish the severity of his own guilt by drawing the court's attention to a number of mitigating circumstances. First, the necessary judicial distinction between his own actions for which he is responsible, and 'the whole tragedy of Jewry', for which he is not. Second, the complicity and passivity of the Jews in their own fate for which they are culpable and not he: 'anyway, why did all these people keep gettin' into cattle trains and goin' to quarries and suchlike?' (*MITGB*. p. 49) Third, the fact that numerous officials who had enjoyed high office during the Third Reich, continue to do so in private companies and public office throughout Germany, unimpeded either by German or Israeli law enforcement agencies. And finally, the present injustice in a racist state, South Africa, which Jews are content to tolerate and even profit from through international trade.

But Goldman ends his defence of himself as Adolf Karl Dorff with an impassioned paean of praise for the Führer, and with an appeal to the Israeli court and to the Jews, to understand the nature of this love, to understand what it meant to feel chosen by the Führer:

People of Jewry, let me speak to you of my Führer with love... He who answered our German need. He who rescued us from the depths... He gave us our history. He gave us our news, he gave us our art. He gave us our holidays, he gave us our leisure... At the end we loved him... He never deserted us. All but he: He, only loved to the end. While he lived Germany lived... And if, if he

were able to rise from the dead, he would prove it to you now. All over again. If only... if only we had someone to rise to... throw out our arms to... love... and stamp our feet for. Someone... someone to lead (*Pause. Then calculatedly.*) People of Israel... people of Israel, if he had chosen you... if he had chosen you... you also would have followed where he led. (*MITGB. pp. 53 and 54*)

The dénouement is provided by an old woman who testifies that both Arthur Goldman and Adolf Dorff were in Auschwitz. She had known them both. She recalls Dorff coming to taunt Goldman in the camp, and to play sadistically on their family ties, calling him 'Cousin Arthur'. She recalls too that Goldman's family died in the camp, and testifies finally that Dorff had died at the hands of the liberating Russian army, positively identifying the man in the glass booth as Dorff's cousin, Arthur Goldman.

The Judge enquires: 'Why did you do it? (*Silence.*) Haven't you done us more harm than good? Is not what you have said against us that will be remembered?' (*MITGB. p. 57*) Mrs Rosen interjects: 'After all that has happened, nobody has the right. He wanted to go to Calvary, Your Honour. So get out his nails. Take him, part his raiment. Cast your lots. This is the King of the Jews, Your Honour. Offer him vinegar. He wants to be crucified. Let him make his sacrifice.' (*MITGB. pp. 57-58*)

The woman who has identified him implores him for an answer and the answer Goldman gives is that they are no different from others:

Goldman:... I chose ya because you're Jewish. I chose ya because you're the chosen. I chose ya for remembrance.

Woman (*Desperately.*): You chose us because you love us.

Goldman:... After the wire... We crushed them, we trampled them, we ravaged them... We kicked in their golden heads. We who were German and Jewish. We did that. (*MITGB. pp. 58 and 59*)

Goldman had wanted to incriminate and redeem himself, the German and the Israeli nation, as a German Jew. To stand trial for the crimes of both nations and like the Pope, to utter the divine fiat, absolving all.

#### 4.7 The critics' response to *The Man in The Glass Booth*.

The kitsch opulence of Goldman's Manhattan apartment was given visually stunning expression in Voytek's stage set which had,

cavernous designs on impenetrable walls, doors that can be opened with a wheel and a great slab of marble in the centre fashioned into the tycoon's desk. These walls open like a Venetian blind to let in some air and show the Manhattan skyline when the day's business begins. (82)

And the critics were almost unanimous in their praise of Donald Pleasence's performance as Goldman and the cogency with which he evoked, in the initial scene, the delirium of Goldman's fantastic wealth evidenced in the design of his apartment; 'the banter of the bourse': share prices and real estate values; and of his private obsession: the unresolved guilt of the Germans and the chauvinism of Israel.

Pinter's choice of Pleasence to take the lead role which Shaw himself had coveted for a short while was completely vindicated: 'Pleasence has a quality few players share: he can make our flesh creep. Physically, in this piece, he looks like the toad that "lives upon the vapour of a dungeon"; vocally, he gives a cruel rhythm to the rasped, thickly accented speech, his silences chill.' (83) Or in John Mortimer's simile: 'His tycoon is as dry as pretzels, treacherous... under it he manages to play a grey sadistic German colonel, and under *that* the kind of bewildered but cunning innocent he has conceived Goldman to be.' (84) The result was that Pleasence had evoked a character so compelling that W. A. Darlington considered it 'impossible to imagine any other actor attempting it'. (85)

The sheer magnetism that Pleasence brought to his performance, the virtuosity with which he expressed Goldman's rapid changes of mood, belligerent one moment, conciliatory the next, may have contributed to obscuring, rather than clarifying crucial details it was necessary to grasp to catch the drift of Goldman's rumination.

The critics failed to make the necessary associations between details of the initial dramatic action: Goldman's ritual of remembrance before the ashes of a former wife; his reference to a second, American wife, carrying the inference that there must also have been a non-American, that is, a former German wife; his mention of a deceased Jewish friend – all details designed to create suspicions about Goldman's identity: a German Jew with an enigmatic past and a future calling.

It is apparent both from explicit comments and aspects of the opening scenes left unremarked, that most of the press night critics failed to grasp Shaw's dramatic intentions, and that this was largely due to the unrealistic demands he made in these opening scenes. For many his allusions were either too obscure or too quickly passed over, or both. Shaw's skill in rendering most effectively the delirium of an eccentric and obsessive mind wavering in and out of meaningful 'connection' with the staff around him, was an ability which Shaw over indulged.

The pivotal scene, Shaw's dramatic justification of Goldman's subsequent actions, and upon which comprehension of the ensuing scenes depend, is the news that the Pope has forgiven the Jews, with the significant omission of any explicit mention of the crime they were being forgiven for. Shaw assumed the answer would readily spring to mind, namely that the Pope was absolving the Jews of responsibility for the death of Christ, a 'guilt' which had been the official teaching of the Roman Catholic

Church for centuries, but which is only finally made explicit in Shaw's play in scene two. More significantly, Shaw was also depending upon the audience to immediately ask a question which was to him the logical corollary of the Pope's edict forgiving the Jews. He was creating a dramatic space for the rhetorical enquiry: Who will absolve the Germans of their crime? With the implication: could it be he? Could it be Arthur Goldman?

Shaw was demanding a great deal of critics and audiences in a largely secular, pre-dominantly protestant Britain. In all likelihood the majority of the audience would have been ignorant of the Papal edict which held the Jewish race responsible for the death of Christ, that this official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church had been a significant factor in Christian anti-Semitism in Europe for centuries, and that it formed the backcloth to which the Holocaust itself had been perpetrated.

Pope Paul VI had promulgated a decree in October 1965 which exonerated the Jews of responsibility for the death of Christ, the earlier draft of which was approved on 20 November 1964, the date Shaw had made Goldman's birthday, an ironic identification probably lost on most of the audience who could hardly be expected to be aware of the date of the *draft* of the Papal edict. (86)

The salvific fantasies fomenting in Goldman's mind in relation to German guilt for the Holocaust are almost impossible to discern at this early stage of the play, as are the precise causes of Goldman's anxiety over a potential threat from an unidentified agency. In the initial scenes of the play this threat is susceptible to a variety of interpretations and associations: incipient insanity or corrupt business practice. While the uncertainty was no doubt dramatically intended to heighten suspense, it is apparent that the critics did not grasp sufficient detail to make adequate sense of the action.

While Philip Hope-Wallace commented: 'I don't believe so much time need be spent in the first half building up a character who remains and has to remain enigmatic until curtain fall', Irving Wardle was more harsh: 'Mr Shaw is so intent on showing his protagonist foxing the other characters that he leaves the audience at the end bewildered.' (87) Peter Lewis felt the play 'mistakes obscurity for profundity and does nothing to illuminate the riddle that the persecution of the Jews poses for everyone's conscience'. (88)

Harold Hobson makes possibly the most revealing remarks about the dramatic key to the first scene:

In the present theatrical atmosphere any references to religion, to Christ, to the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Pope is automatically considered funny. Audiences have conditioned reflexes. Thus when Goldman... reads in the paper that the Pope has absolved the Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus there is a

tendency to laughter, which is repeated each time the Holy Father's action is referred to. (89)

Hobson appears to wish to maintain due deference to the 'Holy Father' and his observations may simply indicate a general difference in perception between himself and secular iconoclasts in the post-war world. There is not a little evidence of patrician disdain for modern scepticism of a revered institution in Hobson's view. The crucial question is what precisely did the audience find amusing? Was the laughter a nervous release at the portrayal of Goldman's - a Jew - instant exclamation upon hearing the Pope's promulgation - no doubt played with exquisite timing by Pleasence? Or was it amused acknowledgement of the absurdity of a temporal authority so belatedly announcing that the church had made an error about the guilt of an entire race over a period approaching 2000 years, as if such a pronouncement could have some *effective* purpose? - a response which has implications for the credibility of Goldman as the representative, the sacrificial speculator upon German guilt in the perception of the audience.

A number of critics appear to have missed entirely Shaw's intention in this regard. W. A. Darlington demonstrates that he has not made the necessary connection between Goldman's German-Jewish identity and atoning representation: 'The constantly reiterated demand of the inquisitress, why, if he is Dorff, he should have pretended to be Jewish, can be matched by another of our own - why, if he is Jewish, he should pretend that he is Dorff?' (90) Wardle also appears confused. He writes that, 'the play simply hinges on the question of whether Goldman is a war criminal or whether he is masquerading as one. Beyond this, the aim is to show the response of a Jewish court to a Nazi who frankly tells them that he loved his work.' (91)

Neither statement is quite accurate. Goldman is masquerading, and the question the play hinges upon is: 'Why?' not 'If?' Goldman is playing a part, but it is not merely to reveal the obvious, that a courtroom of Israelis would become murderously angry on hearing a member of the SS declare that he loved dearly the inventor of a perverse ideology, and his own task of implementing that ideology. His role is also to be *their* representative, to take upon himself their anger and hatred as a Jew and a German, as well as the guilt of the Germans as a German-Jew. Oddly enough Wardle approaches this understanding in the next sentence when he writes that Goldman also puts 'in a plea for a Final Assimilation of all hostile sects by means of a conspicuous martyrdom'. (92)

There is little evidence in the notices to suggest that Goldman's Jewish and *German* identity had been discerned. Lewis came closest to an explicit statement of the play's dramatic intentions when he remarks: 'Goldman's motives presumably were Christ-like: he wanted to be the victim atoning for the sins of his persecutors',

(93) given that Lewis intended his persecutors to be understood to refer both to the Germans and Israelis, which is not obvious from the context.

Confused by the first scene, critics hardly mention the perfunctory nature of the second scene in which Goldman allows himself to be apprehended. It is far from clear whether the pretence at resistance, the offer of a bribe, and the potential act of suicide were understood as just this, a pretence, and that it was essential to have recognised the *voluntary aspect* of his abduction to understand properly the second act.

Critical of the confusion inherent in the *overwriting* of the first scene of Act I, many reviewers were damning of the implausibility and the *underwritten* second act. B. A. Young commented:

The second act gives us a glimpse of Goldman/Dorff's interrogation, followed by the trial. The trial I found oddly earth-bound. It shouldn't have been so... Witnesses go blandly into the box, do their stuff without visible emotion, and walk out again with no legal examination. Goldman/Dorff emerges from his box when he feels like it and walks across to them as if he were Perry Mason. (94)

Young's comments indicate that the actors were struggling to make something of the minimal nature of the material. That Shaw had failed to give this act proper consideration and engage with the issues he had set in train in Act one is remarked upon by Mary Holland:

Questions of guilt, responsibility, awareness, acceptance, suffering, forgiveness must be raised. Nothing happens. Not only does nothing happen but even at a technical level the play suddenly becomes like a cut price thriller. The Israeli girl agent, in fuchsia suede jerkin and thigh boots, conducts, lamely, the prosecution. The judge seems bored, the accused pops in and out of his witness box. There is not attempt at any discussion, argument, exposition even, of the issues involved. (95)

Wardle pinpoints the explanation for, in his view, the lack of discipline:

The assault grows monotonous and leaves you feeling that Mr Shaw is so much enjoying his command of an idiom that he is using it for its own sake. You feel, that is, less in the hands of a writer than an actor; and the ultimate impression is one of emotional indulgence in the last subject that can tolerate such an approach. (96)

The perfunctory dénouement in which Goldman is positively identified, and Dorff is claimed to have been killed by Russian forces also goes without critical comment save for those by *The Financial Times*:

Without calling any more evidence, the court thereupon acquits the accused. This seems to me a shift unworthy of Mr Shaw's ability, and I left the theatre dissatisfied. It's true that the play has by this time been revealed as plain melodrama rather than a serious study of criminal psychology, but it really shouldn't be let trickle away like this. (97)

Most reviewers acknowledge merely in passing the derivative nature of specific features of the play - the nature of the abduction, the public trial and most pertinently, the glass booth - with the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961. With one notable exception they do not treat the play as an attempt to dramatise the procedure of the Eichmann trial in a documentary fashion as had Peter Weiss the Auschwitz Trials in *The Investigation*.

The surprising exception goes some way toward explaining the sense of disappointment from an otherwise perceptive review, to which reference has already been made. Young appears to accept the almost exact identification of the play with the Eichmann trial:

The protagonist of Robert Shaw's piece is based on a criminal as flamboyant as you could want - Eichmann, mass-murderer of the Jews, illegally snatched from his country of sanctuary and tried in Israel with every attendant circumstance of theatricality (including a glass booth). But this story is too huge to go straight onto the stage... Mr Shaw has therefore taken only the skeleton of the arrest and trial, clothed it in handsome theatrical flesh and added a conclusion of pure melodrama. (98)

Young has clearly not read his Arendt where the banality not the flamboyance of Eichmann was the issue. His assumption appears not to effect unduly his appraisal of the play, but in commenting upon the trial scene, leads to a bizarre comment, 'I never felt that I was assisting at a function so tremendous as this must have been', (99) an extraordinary expression of a desire for participation in historical memory, an experience which eludes him, he implies, because the dramatist has not chosen a sufficiently realistic documentary mode of representation!

Most critics were a lot more direct: 'Mr Shaw is way, way out of his depth. So are much greater writers, of course, but a play like this leaves a nasty taste. It is an evening of brilliant playing around a vast and complex subject in a grossly inadequate play.' (100) More succinctly Lewis concluded of *The Man in the Glass Booth*, 'It is certainly hypnotic - until you stop to think about it.' (101)

The overwhelming opinion of the critics was negative. But as with Goodrich and Hackett's *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank* there was one dissenting opinion, and as in that instance, it was the critical voice of Harold Hobson. Whereas he had found the courage to identify the chief fault in the conception of the Franks' predicament in



Goodrich and Hackett's adaptation, Hobson found much to praise in *The Man in the Glass Booth*. This may have been due to the more leisurely period of consideration at his disposal, and more column inches to make a defence of the production. It is evident that Hobson also considered he had grasped Shaw's dramatic intentions and considered that these had been executed with panache:

Robert Shaw's *The Man in the Glass Booth* at the St Martin's, is a rich complex play which has some big-sized booby-traps in it for the unsophisticated.

The chief of these is the invitation to assume that the piece is a melodrama whose effectiveness depends on its final revelation not being given away beforehand. (102)

All that is required to challenge the accuracy of this statement is to imagine that Goldman's true identity and purpose *had been* clearly established in the opening minutes of the play and it is clear that the dramatic action would collapse in the transparent absurdity of its thesis. This is the point many other critics were making: the play's opacity and pseudo-profundity were an ill-conceived disguise for an argument which could not stand up to scrutiny. But Hobson continues:

The essence of the matter lies elsewhere. The important question is not whether Goldman is Dorff, but why, with so much to lose, and with such racial memories he should say that he is Dorff. Why should he speak of Hitler in words that burn with worship? Why should he rejoice in the murder of so many men, women, and children of his own nation and religion?

Mr Shaw has prepared his answers to these questions with creative care. They strike down to the roots of human (and divine) nature, and of modern history. The clues to them are given with extreme skill; and at the end, in two impressive speeches (the one by its reason and coolness, the other by its contempt), the presiding judge and the prosecuting counsel... set out in explicit and unmistakable terms the motives of Goldman's action. (103)

Hobson is correct to point out that the crucial question of Goldman is not 'if' but 'why', but the answer to this question can and does only come at the end of the play. There are hints and clues but as many of the other critics observed in the welter of activity in the first scenes these indications were difficult to identify and this was judged to be dramatic failure, rather than unthinking observation.

The central issue that those speeches reveal, is, according to Hobson, 'the problem of forgiveness and absolution'. He continues: 'If the Jews are absolved from the killing of Jesus, should not the Germans be absolved from the killing of Jews?' (104) This too had been remarked upon by other critics, albeit in slightly less explicit, sometimes half-confused, terms. But it is at this juncture that Hobson advances an interpretation not found in any other review:

Goldman knows what his answer is, and it is No. There shall be an end of sentimental nonsense about 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do.' The Nazis knew what they were doing. They enjoyed it. They would do it again. For Goldman there may be absolution, but from him not. There shall be hatred and damnation forever.

It is hard on the Germans, for whom, through Goldman, it says there is no redemption; and it is hard on the Jews, maintaining that they would behave like the Germans if they got the chance. It is hard, too, on the conventional notions of Christ, whose mantle this strange man is ready to assume. He will, he says, go one better than JC taking on his own shoulders the sins of other men, not so they may be washed clean, but in order that the men who committed them may be rendered eternally hateful. (105)

There is no textual or implied justification for Hobson's conclusion that Goldman is asserting that he will not absolve, that there will be 'hatred and damnation forever' for the Germans, and that 'the men who committed them may be rendered eternally hateful'. The evocation of atrocity and adulation is not intended to remind the court of an indelible crime, but to convict them of their capacity for identical actions.

If anything the vision expressed by Shaw is more extreme, dramatically unavoidable given the events set in train, and, the reason why most critics found the play unsatisfactory. Shaw provides no real resolution, and certainly not the one suggested by Hobson. But the direction of Goldman's argument suggests that, because of the impossibility of innocent judging, as all are guilty, all will be absolved.

What Shaw attempts, as Hobson acknowledges, and for which there is textual support, is to portray Goldman as arguing that the Israeli's cannot judge the German nation because the Israelis had acted, as he had also, in an identical manner to those Germans implicated in the Holocaust. They had so acted in the camps, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, and were doing so currently in places such as South Africa.

In becoming a German to his fellow Jews he wishes to reveal the fanatical love they too are capable of, and to grant absolution analogous to, but with broader efficacy than that which the Pope had granted the Jews, in that Goldman's forgiveness must extend to both Germans and Jews each of whom are equally susceptible to expressing murderous brutality as they are blind adulation.

It is then, as a German-Jew that Goldman offers himself to die for the murderous actions of Germans and Jews (Israelis), but his salvific self-mythologising is spoilt by the recognition of his pretence. He is not guilty as indicted (for war crimes) but a guilty German-Jew whose self-confessed post-war actions morally indict him. Forgiven for Christ's death, who can now absolve both Germans and Jews, and German Jews of their guilt for the Holocaust? No answer is given other than a glimpse of 'unaccommodated man':

*(Goldman goes to the glass booth. He takes the door key and locks himself inside. He takes off the rest of his clothes. The Guards beat on the door. The Judge descends from the bench and walks slowly to the naked Man in the booth. But Goldman is silent...)* (MITGB. p. 59)

After the predominantly negative first night press notices, 'Shaw was ecstatic' with Hobson's review. 'Hobson seemed to have genuinely understood what he was trying to achieve in the play and the issues he was trying to address.' (106)

The London production had a respectable but not markedly successful run at St Martin's Theatre closing on 16 December 1967. Shaw, Pinter and Pleasence had hoped that the run would be much longer.

The play did, however, transfer to New York late the following year, opening at the Royale Theater on 26 September 1968. Adverse comment by a section of the Jewish community in New York, compelled Shaw to defend the play, but his comments about its meaning do not square easily with Hobson's view of Goldman, or with Shaw's evident pleasure with his interpretation:

Certain Jews... claim that the play is pro-German, anti-Semitic. Well, they are stupid Jews. They are stupid Jews, you know, though one isn't allowed to say that, because they've been so insulted... But it is only the stupid Jews who get so emotional about the German thing in it. Intelligent Jews are terribly moved by the play.

[Goldman] does it for a multitude of reasons, all of them quite simple and straightforward... First, Goldman sees that he lives in a very stupid and cruel world, where terrible things like the Nazi atrocities have been going on for centuries and no one has yet learned a damn thing from any of them. Two, he is convinced that it is time for the Jews to forgive the Germans. Not forget, exactly, but forgive. Three, he wants to stand up in a court and publicly acknowledge a guilt that no true Nazi would ever acknowledge. And he is an old man, and wants one last grand gesture... That's all... Goldman is not a psychotic, a masochist or a Christ figure. He is Christlike only in that he is courageous - prepared to be shot, hanged, crucified, anything, in order to make his point publicly... if I send people out of that theater pondering the situation - what happened under Nazism, and why it happened, and what their position is in relation to it, then... I have achieved something marvellous! (107)

Shaw's analysis provides little help in understanding either the intended motive or the nature of the action around which Act two of *The Man in the Glass Booth* revolves, and if anything confirms the thoughtlessness evident in the treatment of the play's themes and the carelessness manifest in their dramatic development.

#### 4.8 *The Glass Booth: a director's reappraisal*

*The Man in the Glass Booth* has not attracted a great deal of post first production comment either in Britain or in the US and is indicative of the generally low critical opinion of Shaw's play. (108) However, a revival at the Theatre Exchange, Los Angeles, in 1979 prompted its director, Robert Egan, into a substantial reappraisal. In an essay published in 1984 (109) he makes explicit the implications of the established critical interpretations of Shaw's view of Jewish identity and fate, articulated in the themes and form of *The Man in the Glass Booth*.

Egan makes some valuable initial points with regard to the play's relationship to the Eichmann trial which assist in understanding Shaw's dramatic intentions. Shaw was not attempting to provide a historical reconstruction of the trial along the classical lines of historical drama, or the predominantly ideologically motivated techniques of documentary drama, but rather to present a counter-narrative, the main inspiration and source for which was Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*:

Arendt argues that the trial was intended by the prosecution and government to be a didactic play for a world audience, with a monstrous central character embodying the essence of Nazi violence and anti-Semitism, and that it *failed* as such because Eichmann himself was incapable of fulfilling his allotted role, typifying instead the 'banal' evil of the middle-level bureaucrat who (in his careerism and thirst for respectability) fails to question or apply any moral criteria to the murderous results of his paperwork. *It seems clear that Shaw's seminal concept was the notion of a character who consciously sets out, as an actor, to play the very role for which Eichmann was inappropriate, thereby fulfilling the dramatic design and accomplishing the tremendous theatrical event which the Eichmann trial failed to be. [my italics]* (110)

Egan offers no evidence for making this connection and it must remain an inspired and plausible speculation. This would appear to imply, that in some sense the play was a settling of scores, giving the Israeli court, the Israelis and the world what they had really wanted. This sadistic motivation surfaces throughout the play, as will become clear.

To enquire about Goldman's motives is pointless. The sole motive is purely performance. There is no specific end in sight, no redemptive role to be adopted. To play is intrinsically worthwhile as a defining characteristic of what it means to be human. It is aimless in the way that much children's play is (apparently) aimless, that all art is pointless. In Goldman there is dis-play, animation, life, counter to Eichmann, the lifeless inanimate desk murderer whose energies were consumed by his function to act 'everywhere and all at once', the bid for omnipotence. Goldman is the dramatic exemplar of art without political objective, merely the heightening of the

consciousness through pretence. Referring to *The Man in the Glass Booth* Egan expresses it thus: 'This is a work that evaluates the act of histrionic play, its uses and significances as human endeavour, by measuring them directly against... the most terrible event in recent human history.' (111)

Although aware of the source of Shaw's conception, Egan's perspective is not particularly novel, as acknowledgement of Goldman's pretence is fundamental to comprehending the play and production from the outset. Donald Pleasence is playing Goldman, and Goldman is playing... Who he is playing and for what purpose become the immediate enigmas which audiences are attempting to resolve through watching the dramatic action closely. At first blush Egan appears to be suggesting that Goldman is playing only himself and no one else, and that there is no public dimension or private goal other than pleasure. Though Egan makes no reference to this theme, it is prominent throughout the play, and the pleasure of the performance Goldman gives is analogous to sexual pleasure, and hence the sexual innuendo that is liberally scattered in Goldman's language. But Egan does attribute cultural significance to the performance.

He is aware that any kind of play, whether of the teasing or spoiling kind, needs an audience, and he acknowledges that Goldman is also playing to the audience (as is Pleasence) but he does not acknowledge the sadistic aspects of the relationship between performer and audience, which is widely acknowledged to be a basic dynamic between the charismatic figure and those offering adulation. Goldman's play is not without public dimension, there is a purpose to the play and that is to teach 'the living' a lesson. Goldman says, 'It's the living who are in neglect... What can we do for the living?' (*MITGB*. p. 18) It is clear that Goldman through Dorff wishes to teach the Jews a lesson through a performance. Egan comments that Goldman,

plans to conjure into flesh and blood a ghost from the Nazi past to confront and challenge the negligent living. He expands on the necessity of that confrontation in reflecting upon what he calls the 'final assimilation': the blurring and fading of Jewish identity as the issues of the Holocaust are forgotten. His assumption of the role of Dorff, by reviving those issues, will provide an opportunity for his witnesses to re-identify themselves. (112)

Egan is suggesting that Dorff's performance is to be a stimulus to Jewish national memory, a revival of mythological categories of self-understanding, of chosenness and destiny. There appears to be a fundamental misreading of the text in this instance motivated by Egan's desire to provide Goldman with a *positive* motive for his performance as Dorff. It is not that the Israelis have 'forgotten the issues of the Holocaust' nor is the 'final assimilation' to which Goldman refers due to a change in perception of Jews by Israelis, but by the Roman Catholic Church.

The lesson 'the living' (the whole world) are to be taught, the lesson the Israeli court is to be taught, is quite simply the lesson that Eichmann (and those before him at Nuremberg) *failed* to teach: that there is *no* difference between Nazis and Jews, Germans and Israelis, that all humanity is one, and that the basic characteristic of that humanity is most clearly expressed in the Nazi mass-murderous activity of the Holocaust. In short no moral distinction may be made and no Israeli court should have stood in judgement over Eichmann, but as it did, Goldman as Dorff is about to stand in judgement over the Jews and will find them wanting.

As such, performance is an hysterical response to being placed beyond morality, beyond conventional understandings of good and evil through Goldman's experience during the Holocaust. His strategy connects with that strain of thought in the European tradition from Shakespeare through to Nietzsche that associates 'playing the fool' with a collapse in the moral order, and the transition to a new understanding of consciousness. (113)

#### 4.9 Miller, Shaw and Jewish fate

While both the symbols and the issues with which Arthur Miller is concerned stand in direct relationship to the Holocaust, and he acknowledges the 'paradigmatic example' of the Holocaust dramatically, he seeks to disassociate the issues from the specific historical circumstances of Vichy France in 1942 through the purely existential arguments presented by his characters. They must resign themselves to the universality of specific attributes, and in consequence their identity both as Jewish and, in the context of the 'Final Solution', as victims, is erased through the levelling discovery that no basic differences exist between human beings: consumed by self-regard, they betray a marked preference for evasion, and are ruthless in their dealings with others.

In creating a purely existential rhetoric of the Holocaust Miller runs the danger of debasing historical understanding of a much more complex phenomenon than his metaphorical usage allows. A disregard for the historical detail which defines a specific period – Vichy France in 1942 – leads to dramatic over-simplification in the portrayal of characters as representative stances, rather than as particular individuals with markedly different ways of thinking about their identity as Jews when confronted by the acquiescence of their own government and people in oppressive legislation, and ultimately in a policy of murderous extermination.

*Incident at Vichy* is not the last example of Miller's dramatic exploitation of symbols and situations related to the Holocaust. In September 1980 CBS broadcast *Playing for Time*, a television adaptation of Fania Fénelon's *The Musicians of*

*Auschwitz*. The screenplay was broadcast on British television on Sunday 11 January 1981 by London Weekend Television (LWT). (114) Miller returned to the theme of the Holocaust once more in his most recent play, *Broken Glass*, which received its US première at the Long Wharf Theatre, New Haven on 9 March 1994 before transferring to the Booth Theatre on Broadway on 24 April, (115) opening later in the year, on 4 August 1994, at the Royal National Theatre, London. *Broken Glass* is an existential phenomenology of self-hatred much as *Incident at Vichy* is of responsibility and guilt, and *Playing for Time*, survivorship.

Edward Isser has commented of Miller's approach to the Holocaust:

Miller... is not interested in the historical narrative of the Holocaust *per se*. He does not attempt to shed light on unknown details or to address the political repercussions of the event... Instead Miller is concerned with the ethical issues confronting an individual in the face of monolithic power. He explores the possibility for 'authentic' action when there is little recourse, and even less hope.

He consciously chooses to ground *Incident at Vichy*... within a resonating historical model... He draws upon the collective memory of his audience to create dramatic tension and places the action in a naturalistic setting that suggests historical veracity. In the end, however, the plays lack artistic integrity because the historical record is perverted in order to justify rhetoric. (116)

The particularities of Jewish fate during the Holocaust are thus dissolved in Miller's broader concern to illuminate capacities and susceptibilities that he considers characterise the human predicament.

While Isser is disparaging of Arthur Miller's achievement, Robert Skloot is none too complimentary about Shaw's *The Man in the Glass Booth*. He comments in his study of Holocaust drama, *The Darkness We Carry*:

As a playwright he creates a pattern of unexplained incident and motivation, exploiting the audience's natural curiosity for information by providing much of it not (or not only) to 'throw them off' but to conceal the fact that he has not come to any meaningful conclusion about the momentous issues he discusses... he is more interested in providing entertainment than clarity, titillation than confrontation... From a performance standpoint, he does the job well.

To achieve its effects, the play relies on the exploitation of real historical suffering as well as genuine frustration over our inability to understand the reasons for it. Shaw energises his writing by placing at the play's centre the astonishing image of Jew as Nazi as Jew. His protagonist moves between both personalities because, after all, as he has told us, even the Israelis cannot agree upon the truth about Jewish identity. In sum, the knowledge that some Germans were good Jews and some Jews were bad Germans is not a license to obscure historical truth. In *The Man in the Glass Booth*, the purposeful maintenance of thematic confusion has become more attractive and important than the resolution of the play's moral tension. (117)

These criticisms can hardly be gainsaid, but Skloot has missed the importance of anarchic performance as a signifier of moral collapse, 'madness' as the response to the realisation that moral agency has been so corrupted and distorted that it has proved itself capable of mass extermination, the emptiness of an insane rhetoric which would seek to punish the whole of humanity for injustices suffered, and the implied psychic negotiation of a new understanding of the self. Nevertheless, the imperative is the pursuit of rational understanding and moral discernment which Shaw's play does little to assist, as Skloot rightly emphasises.

The gentle voice of sanity is heard from the old woman who arises from the audience - 'all humanity' - and looks upon Goldman with compassion for all that he has suffered in the camps:

She negates and strips away the role-self of Dorff to reveal the naked human being, the Jewish Arthur Goldman, beneath - not only by revealing his true identity but by telling over with devastating simplicity, the names of the four lost ones whose memory Goldman has hitherto shunned in his most naked moments. The impact of their names on the silent Goldman is a vital dimension of the moment: 'Mr Goldman had three children. Teresa died on the train. Arthur and Jacob in the first year. Mrs Goldman in the second.' (118)

The 'divine' madness of Goldman's self-calling, the empty rhetoric of universal guilt and the desire to teach the living a lesson is revealed for what it is: anger for having survived when others did not; anger with the impossibility of 'explanation' or to effect any transformation, and the consequent desire to make the whole world guilty; the mourning of a lost conception of the integrity of the self, as he acknowledges his own capacity for murder and recalls the faces of his own dead children.

The most significant feature these plays share is the dramatic conceit that a single character can both represent *and* accomplish mediation between the evidence of the extermination of millions by virtue of their race - the identity of whom is acknowledged, but diminished in service of rhetorical purpose in Miller's play, and painfully exploited in Shaw's - and the knowing innocence or informed complicity of those who were not also similarly condemned. Each metaphor of potential reconciliation is, in Langer's telling expression, 'an illusion we submit to from greater ignorance' (119) - of the dimensions of the Holocaust, and of its impenetrability.



## 5 THE ROYAL COURT AND PETER BARNES'S *LAUGHTER!*

### 5.1 The Royal Court and 'Alternative Theatre'

Toward the end of 1966 John Russell Taylor acknowledged that the English Stage Company (ESC) 'has been accused from time to time of left-wing bias in its choice of plays'. While he found this 'understandable considering that virtually every dramatist to emerge since 1956 would vote Labour if he voted at all', he concluded that any leaning to the left was 'not apparent from the list of plays the company has actually produced'. (1)

Taylor considered 'George Devine had never wanted to found a politically oriented theatre, and never had any clearly defined idea of what function his company ought to exercise in society beyond providing all playgoers with the best drama', that 'the "social" phase of the English Stage Company' had been 'over almost before it had begun', and that the following generation, Arden, Jellicoe and Simpson could not be fairly claimed as 'proponents of dramas as a weapon in the battle of ideas'. (2)

William Gaskill's tenure as artistic director (1956-1972) is also indicative of this ambiguity in the Royal Court's political stance. Janelle Reinelt can justifiably describe Gaskill as 'the British director who most exemplifies the Brechtian legacy and whose work has in many ways been responsible for translating that legacy into British staging practices'; (3) while she also notes that Gaskill shared George Devine's enthusiasm for the work of the Berliner Ensemble; that the stage of the Royal Court was conceived as an epic playing space; and that in the early years of his artistic directorship (1958-1960) he pioneered experiments with Brechtian acting in the Writers Group from which 'he learned the necessity of understanding a play in terms of the socio-political meaning of its actions'. (4)

However, Gaskill's direction of the early and influential Brecht productions in Britain - including *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1962), *Baal* (1963) and *Mother Courage* (1965) - were not at the Royal Court, but for the RSC, in the West End and for the National Theatre respectively. In later years Gaskill also considered Edward Bond's description of Joint Stock as 'the Royal Court in exile' (indicating that they were the more radical of the two companies) to be a just appellation. (5)

Irving Wardle, theatre critic for *The Times* and biographer of George Devine, while acknowledging that in the early years the theatre's political leanings were toward the left ('the Court as an organisation... had, no matter how unexpressed or how unsystematized, a left wing position') considered that these commitments had in those years always been tempered by 'the feeling of the decent thing to do', (6) propriety which persisted until the arrival of the 'Bond generation',

at which point all this comes down in flames. I think this is one reason why I and so many other people were shattered by the first night of *Saved*. In retrospect, one can see that the great English bluff has been called... the whole idea of England as a decent place to live, where people are kind to each other and everything is as good as it can be... gave way to the idea of a Hell on Earth. (7)

The challenge to the Lord Chamberlain's powers precipitated by the Royal Court's *Saved* in November 1965 and *Early Morning* in March 1968, contributed substantially to the decision to abolish censorship in September 1968. Wardle concludes that the emergence of a politically vocal theatrical counter-culture, 'the politicised generation', made Bond's vision of modernity more, rather than less, pronounced, (8) and presented the most serious challenge to the position of the Royal Court at the forefront of those theatres producing new writing.

Toward the end of 1975 Catherine Itzin characterised the change in the British theatre scene over the previous ten years:

In the early 'sixties the alternatives to establishment theatre were called underground - with the implication that they were at least slightly subversive. In the late 'sixties and at the turn of the decade, the label changed... and establishment alternatives were called fringe with the implication that they were on the periphery of a centre. Now the alternatives are being called, simply alternative.

The implication - indeed, the assumption - is... that there are now two separate things (establishment theatre and alternative theatre), and that, by dictionary definition, 'one or the other may be chosen, and the choice of one involves the rejection of the other'. (9)

The importance of Itzin's article lies in her recognition of the decisive change in this theatrical phenomenon, from its marginal experimental roots in the underground, through its absorption by the counter-culture of the mid 1960s as one expression of its variegated life, to a much more specifically defined oppositional theatrical endeavour posing questions about current political belief and practice. As such, of equal interest, is an article by Howard Brenton, 'Petrol Bombs Through the Proscenium Arch', which appeared earlier in the same year in which he judged 'the fringe' defined as politically oppositional, to have failed by 1974. (10)

Itzin's broad judgement of the emergence of a self-consciously oppositional theatre is widely accepted, although later commentators identify the crucial year for its emergence as 1968, somewhat earlier than Itzin's analysis might suggest. Christopher Bigsby comments:

The single most significant development in British theatre in the decade 1968 to 1978 was the rise of socialist theatre... 1968 was a psychological, if not a social,

economic and political watershed. Thereafter an increasing number of 'fringe' companies were formed... Some of these subscribed to socialist principles, while several of the more interesting and accomplished new writers chose to describe themselves as socialists (Arden, Bond, Hare, Brenton, Edgar, McGrath, Griffiths, Churchill). (11)

Accurate though Itzin's identification of the existence of an alternative political theatre proved to be, Bigsby sees the significance of this theatre in broader terms which serve to confirm Irving Wardle's recollections of the impact of the 'Bond generation':

The compelling power of avowedly socialist writers... lay finally less in their elaborations of Marxist paradigms than in their creation of images of moral and spiritual collapse... What was lost was any concept of transcending values... The alarm which they feel begins at a social level but... it ends with an apprehension that the collapse is more radical in nature and more profound in origins. We may be witnessing the decay of a system, but more disturbingly, they suggest we can observe the collapse of character, of worlds and of the whole notion of a morally sensitized existence. (12)

A key figure in alternative theatre in the decade 1968-1978 not included amongst the dramatists mentioned by Bigsby was Pip Simmons, (13) whose production *An Die Musik* markedly influenced another dramatist of ardent left-wing persuasion, also not mentioned by Bigsby: Peter Barnes.

After a two year absence in Holland, The Pip Simmons Group returned to London to present the British production of their performance piece *An Die Musik* at the Institute of Contemporary Arts on 1 July 1975. The production had premièred in Rotterdam earlier in the year to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps. *An Die Musik* was constructed around a representation of a performance of the camp orchestra at Auschwitz, during which, short scenes of Jewish experience and camp life were dramatically interwoven with the concert to provide ironic commentary upon the recital of items of German music.

The first part of the performance was a one act 'operetta' entitled 'The Dream of Anne Frank' and based upon H. Leivick's version of the Yiddish folk tale of *The Golem*. While a cacophony of sound raucously parodies the gentility of the undemanding pleasures of operetta, it also provides suitable commentary upon the mimed enactment of a traditional family Passover celebration, taking place on another part of the stage. But it is a Passover meal with a difference: it is conducted under duress 'in the camp', and the celebrants are force-fed with a variety of inedible substances - including human limbs - by their SS overseers. The scene is intended to parody the Passover meal in Goodrich and Hackett's dramatic adaptation of *Anne*

*Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* (Anne is heard reading the lines affirming the universal goodness of humanity), and to indicate the realities of camp life.

The second part consists of a recital by 'the camp' orchestra during which 'punishment' is meted out for poor performance technique. During these scenes a reading is heard from a book by Bruno Bettelheim which encapsulates the well-worn theme of 'Jewish passivity'. The conclusion to this series of humiliations includes Jewish comics reciting, under duress, self-deprecating gags for the entertainment of the SS, and the entire group being 'led' to the gas chamber where they are engulfed in clouds of gas.

*An Die Musik*'s themes were almost wholly retrospective. Benedict Nightingale commented that the piece suggests 'once again that victims tend to collaborate with their persecutors', and that the later scenes inferred 'that the capacity for evil has no human boundary', none of which he considered 'exactly startling or original thinking'. (14) But dramaturgically, the piece anticipated two much more substantial plays by British dramatists: Peter Barnes and C. P. Taylor.

Simmons's intention was to indict his audience by making them complicitous with the stage events, placing 'the audience in the situation of being fascists'. (15) In *Laughter!* Barnes places the audience in complicitous relation with bureaucrat and victim alike with regard to their easy resort to humour to defend against reality. *An Die Musik* anticipates C. P. Taylor's *Good* by making music, and the performance of the camp orchestra at Auschwitz, the chief metaphor for the themes being explored. (16)

On the eve of 1977, Michael Billington wrote of an artistic crisis at the Royal Court Theatre which he considered had existed more-or-less throughout the tenure of the Court's current artistic directors, Nicholas Wright and Robert Kidd. Billington complained of 'the sheer ineptitude with which the Court has been run over the last 12 months' and considered Wright and Kidd to be 'hopelessly attached to yesterday's notion of what is new and experimental'. (17)

The crisis was not solely artistic, however. The Council of the English Stage Company (ESC), anticipating the accumulation of a huge deficit, approached the Arts Council in January 1977 about the possibility of an advance on the subsidy for the financial year beginning in April. The Arts Council acceded to the proposal, but insisted that the ESC operate within existing cash resources and, by the end of June, 'decide either to pay off outstanding creditors as at that date, out of the balance of available subsidy and then cease operation, or if successful during the next six months, present a viable budget and programme for the remainder of 1977-78'. (18)

On 13 January Kidd released a letter of resignation to the press accusing the ESC Council and Greville Poke in particular of 'complacently, hurriedly and most crassly... selling the Royal Court down the river'. (19) *The Daily Telegraph* led its report of the

crisis with the banner headline 'LEFT-WING PLAYS BLAMED FOR ROYAL COURT'S PROBLEMS'. The source of the judgement was an ESC Council member, John Osborne, who had commented that perhaps there had been too many 'boring Left-wing productions at the Royal Court' of late. (20)

Kidd's resignation effectively terminated the directorship of Nicholas Wright as the two were linked contractually, and the appointment of their successor, Stuart Burge, was confirmed at an ESC Council meeting on 24 January, to be effective from 1 February. Shortly before Burge took up his appointment, Nicholas de Jongh interviewed him in an attempt to glean something of his plans for the theatre. Burge commented: 'I've always felt myself good at epic plays... and I'd like to try to evolve a style... which is not too expensive.' (21) The Court's financial crisis was the immediate priority however, and Burge's desire to stage epic plays would have to wait for a while.

*Once a Catholic* (10 August) by Mary O'Malley, which also transferred to Wyndham's Theatre, for a successful West End run, marked the beginning of a much needed reversal of fortunes for the Royal Court which continued for the remainder of the year and included a production of Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan* (10 October) with Janet Suzman taking the lead role. The play which broke Burge's much needed run of box office success was by a writer Burge was determined to bring to the Court. He considered that the theatre's directorship had consistently overlooked a playwright whom he believed to be a provocative writer of epic plays, and whose early big success, *The Ruling Class*, Burge had directed at The Nottingham Playhouse. The playwright was Peter Barnes, and his new play *Laughter!* was to be the opening production in the Royal Court's main auditorium for 1978.

Charles Marowitz, a key figure in the establishment of London's alternative theatre scene in the late 1960s, and who had directed two earlier one-act plays of Barnes's, *Leonardo's Last Supper* and *Noonday Demons* in December 1969 at the Open Space Theatre, was to direct the production.

## 5.2 Peter Barnes's *Laughter!*

Peter Barnes's *Laughter!* has two distinct parts, *Tsar* and *Auschwitz*. (22) In both parts Barnes is concerned to address the issue of the role of comedy in a world in which atrocity repeatedly occurs. *Tsar*, the first part of *Laughter!* is taken up with the murderous career of Ivan the Terrible, responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children in medieval Russia and representative in Barnes's play of the arbitrary cruelty of a tyrant; in the second part, *Auschwitz*, Barnes explores the issue of comedy in relation to the Nazi genocide of the Jews.

*Laughter!* opens with an announcement by 'the Author':

Author: Ladies and Gentlemen...

*A hand slaps a large custard pie straight in his face. As he wipes it off a laughing voice declares: It's going to be that kind of a show, folks!*

No it isn't. Gangrene has set in. Comedy itself is the enemy. Laughter only confuses and corrupts everything we try to say. It cures nothing except our consciences and so ends by making the nightmare worse. A sense of humour's no remedy for evil... Laughter's the ally of tyrants. It softens our hatred. An excuse to change nothing, for nothing needs changing when it's all a joke.

*His bow tie whirls round and round; he angrily pulls it off.*

So we must try and root out comedy, strangle mirth, let the heart pump sulphuric acid, not blood.

*The carnation in his buttonhole squirts water; he tears it off desperately. (L. p. 343)*

The play then moves to the recognisable milieu of an office on Christmas eve with its atmosphere of exhilaration and exhaustion, urgency and lethargy, brittle with the clipped cadences of dictation, the forced determination to maintain a businesslike routine before the festive spirit robs the staff of their meagre attention to the tasks in hand. There is a suspicion of a conspiracy. The Head of the Department, Viktor Cranach, is occupied with a most urgent administrative duty: the dictation to his secretary, Fraulein Else Jost, a prim, but not entirely proper *Hitlermädchen*, of an urgent memo to avert the abolition of his department by a rival section headed by an Ernst Röhm look-alike, Hans Gottlieb.

The office in WVHA Department, Amt C (Building), Oranienburg, Berlin, 1942, is staffed by just one other, besides Cranach and Else, the bumbling and maleable Heinz Strop. The one gesture toward the festive season that the office has thus far allowed itself is to surround the beloved Führer's portrait with holly. The approaching holiday serves only to increase the urgency of the pressing administrative tasks the office is labouring under. Cranach remarks: 'We're now dealing with an estimated 74,000 administrative units in the three complexes in Upper Silesia alone, instead of 15,000 of just a year ago, and that's only the beginning', and amidst much shuffling of paperwork he discovers a concealed listening device placed by the rival department. But Cranach is not going to give up without a fight.

The interdepartmental conflict concerns the appliance CP3(m), and the rival tenders for the production of the order for the appliance by three separate commercial concerns, Krupps, Tesch and Stabenow, and Degesch. It is imperative that Cranach, to ensure the survival of his own department, should make the right recommendation to *Obergruppenführer*, Dr Kammler. The final decision favours Tesch and Stabenow.

Gottlieb, Cranach's arch rival, arrives and hands a document to him for his signature acknowledging receipt of an instruction instigating a new departure in the numerical method of recording deaths. But Cranach does not rise to the disparagement implied in his demand, responding:

This is war, Gottlieb, a million words've died on us. We no longer believe in a secure sentence structure. Neutral symbols've become the safest means of communication. I certainly endorse the use of coded symbols rather than consecutive numbering in recording cases of death. It's more concise and less emotive. (*L. p. 379*)

The chief purpose of Gottlieb's visit is, however, to ascertain which of the tenders for appliances CP3(m) Cranach's department has recommended, and, true to his sense of absolute frankness in administrative matters, Cranach informs Gottlieb of his department's recommendation.

Gottlieb, convinced that Cranach has compromised himself by accepting black market schnapps from Wochner, who, having just entered the office in festive mood is completely oblivious to the potentially damaging situation he has created, triumphantly informs Cranach that the office is bugged. Gottlieb stoops to shout under the desk, 'You hear that, Winklemann? He's dealing in blacks! blacks!' (*L. p. 381*) only to be confronted by, as he straightens up and twists around to face Cranach, the surveillance wire dangling from Cranach's hand! Momentarily this is grist to Gottlieb's mill: destroying government property; but the apparent opportunity is dealt a mortal blow mid-accusation by Wochner's nonchalant inquiry 'Herr Gottlieb, will you take your bottles now or should I deliver them to your office.' (*L. p. 381*) Taking the schnapps Gottlieb attempts to short-change Wochner and while reluctantly handing over the remainder of the money comments on Wochner's blackmarketeering: 'I've been watching you, Wochner... (*he mimes counting bank notes*) That's not the Aryan way of counting money. It's a sign of philo-Semite blood, counting money. Panza-fast. Jew blood, Jew-signs.' (*L. p. 382*)

The well oiled desire to outdo each other in the liberality of their patriotic toasts dissolves into unashamed sentiment for the achievements and beneficence of the beloved Führer and they raise their glasses to his portrait festooned in holly, and together sing the choral opening of *Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg*, but Cranach and Gottlieb become embroiled in a heated debate about the significance of Hitler. Cranach declaims: 'National Socialism is part of the great conservative tradition. It is based on solid middle-class values.' (*L. p. 385*) But Gottlieb begs to differ:

Status quo, status quo, I shit on your status quo... We flung the old order out of orbit, swept away the stiff collars, monocles and cutaways, gave Germany social-

fluidity, permanent institutional anarchy. Before, our lives lacked the larger significance, he filled it with drama; there's always something happening in the Third Reich. He gave us faith in the sword, not in the Cross; that foul Semite servility. (L. p. 386)

Stroop momentarily finding a resoluteness which is, for the most part absent, chimes in: 'The truth is, as Jews can be simultaneously scum and dregs, so National Socialism can simultaneously embody revolutionary and conservative principles and black and white the same colour grey. That's the miracle of it.' (L. p. 386) Predictably, Wochner the black marketeer sees German ascendancy in purely commercial terms.

While Gottleb dismisses Wochner's view as so much detritus: 'Materialistic filth!... Our Nation will never descend to prosperity. I shit on prosperity. Hideous self-sacrifice is our way of life', (L. p. 387) Cranach warms to the theme of the ideal future for German culture: 'We Germans've always had the divine capacity for visions which transcended the merely commercial. That's why the Reichführer SS Heinrich Himmler himself, decreed that our first complex should be built in the forest outside Weimar, the very seat of German classical tradition.' (L. pp. 386-387)

Cranach has meanwhile continued work on the memos and concludes, finally, that he can find no justifiable grounds for recommending Krupps. Gottleb's trenchant opposition to Cranach's choice, Tesch and Stabenow, has apparently mellowed, helped by a skin full of schnapps. Cranach taken in by Gottleb's apparently conciliatory stance softens, and, in an effusively generous gesture, concedes that the case could go back to Himmler for final arbitration.

But Gottleb's amiability is a pretence to catch Cranach off guard, and to induce him into making some incriminating remark about the Nazi hierarchy. Gottleb needs a lever to wrest the recommendation for the tender for the appliances CP3(M) from Cranach's clutches, foreclose on the competition, offer the order to his preferred tender, Krupps, and close Cranach's department.

Cranach duly obliges by cracking a joke about Hitler. Gottleb accuses Cranach of defaming the beloved Führer, whereupon Cranach issues a dead-pan denial of Gottleb's allegations and protests the department's ineffable loyalty to 'every part of the Führer's super-human anatomy'. 'We worship him', opines Cranach, 'as a flawless being, a divinity, and you talk of his arse.' (L. p. 396) - a neat reversal of the allegation, a strategy which the other members of the department immediately intuit and dutifully fall into line, gesturing their feigned innocence.

In an absurd counter-*coup de théâtre* Gottleb casually but triumphantly produces an item, which is the latest in Aryan technology, and which he just happened to have secreted in his briefcase, a magnetic tape-recording machine which he had activated when Cranach had started to regale the office with his jokes. 'You look ill, Cranach,



and you, Strop', Gottlieb icily observes. 'I'll play it back, see if you think it's still funny. Somehow I don't think you'll laugh this time around, jokes've a way of dying too.' (L. p. 397) Gottlieb starts to wind the tape back. The moment of truth arrives and the office braces itself for the worst, but the latest in Aryan technology only produces a cacophony of electrical static, whines and screeches.

Gottlieb appeals to Strop's and Else's sense of self-interest and the certain prospect of promotion if they are able to discern the requisite incriminating phrases amidst the noise. Replaying the tape once again Gottlieb leads Else and Strop into a line by line recitation of Cranach's joke to the background accompaniment of the screeching tape-recording.

Gottlieb is delirious with the triumph of having gained, with minimal coercion, Strop's and Else's apparent co-operation. Else insists that she must tell the truth about *what* has been said in the office and Gottlieb thinking himself home and dry exclaims with triumphant relief: 'Now it falls, it falls!' (L. p. 400) But Else has been careful in her choice of words, not mentioning who she considered had been speaking, and promptly turns the tables on Gottlieb by accusing him of recounting the joke. Gottlieb complains: 'In the old days every good German was an informer, now you can't rely on anyone to betray the right people.' (L. p. 400)

Else, Strop and Cranach all don Christmas paper hats and produce children's party squeakers which they blow furiously in triumph over Gottlieb. Outmanoeuvred, Gottlieb collapses into a chair, begins to chunter to himself, and, as his words begin to register, Else, Strop and Cranach stop their party antics and listen:

Gottlieb: I'm tired in advance. All these years fighting. The forces of reaction're too strong. Pulled down by blind moles in winged collars. Your kind can't be reformed, only obliterated. As you build 'em, we should find room for you in one of our complexes in Upper Silesia: Birkenau, Monowitz or Auschwitz

Else *and* Strop *stop jeering.*

That's where I should be too. Out in the field. Not stuck behind a desk in Orientburg, but in the gas chambers of Auschwitz, working with people. Dealing with flesh and blood, not deadly abstractions: I'm suffocating in this limbo of paper. Auschwitz is where it's happening, where we exterminate the carrion hordes of racial maggots. I'd come into my own there on the Auschwitz ramp, making the only decision that matters, who lives, who dies. (L. p. 401)

Else, Strop and Cranach defend against acknowledging the clear implication of Gottlieb's whining complaints about being frustrated in his professional aspiration and the detailing of his desired professional location:

Else: I only type and file WVHA Amt C 1 (Building) to WVHA AMT D IV/5 your reference QZV/12/01 regulation E (5) PRV 24/6 DS 4591/1942.

Stroop: We only deal in concrete. We're Amt C1 (Building). Test procedure 17 as specified structural work on outer surfaces of component CP3(M) described in regulation E(5), what's CP 3(M) to do with life and death in Upper Silesia? Everybody knows I'm sixty-four years old.

Gottlieb (*rising*): You know extermination facilities were established in Auschwitz in June for the complete liquidation of all Jews in Europe. CP3(M) described in regulation E(5) is the new concrete flue for the crematoriums.

Cranach, Else *and* Stroop *sit*.

Cranach: Who knows that?

Else: } We don't know that.

Stroop: } We don't know that.

Gottlieb: You don't know that only knowing enough to know you don't want to know that. (*L. pp. 401-402*)

Gottlieb, insisting that he is going to split their 'minds to the sights, sounds and smells of Auschwitz', (*L. p. 402*) launches into a detailed description of the grim realities of extermination at Auschwitz-Birkenau the apparatus of which Cranach's department have only known by their numerical designation. Gottlieb's harrowing description includes: the unloading of the transports of Jewish deportees from all over Europe, the conditions in the inmates blocks and the harsh realities of the regime, the deceptions involved in disguising the function of the gas chambers, the operation of the gas chambers, the medical experiments, and the varieties of ways in which death could be meted. During Gottlieb's detailed description he once again takes the trouble to identify the object of their rivalry, namely, CP3(m), the new, vastly more efficient concrete flues for the crematoria at Birkenau. After his strenuous detailing of the sights, sounds and smells of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Gottlieb concludes: 'You see it now!' to which Cranach, Else and Stroop respond: 'We don't see! We don't see!', and Gottlieb bellows 'LOOK... SEE':

*As the sound of the gas chamber door being opened reverberates, the whole of the filing section Up Stage slowly splits and its two parts slide Up Stage Left, and Up Stage Right to reveal Up Stage Centre, a vast mound of filthy, wet straw dummies; vapour, the remains of the gas, still hangs about them. They spill forward to show all are painted light blue, have no faces, and numbers tattooed on their left arms.*

*Cranach, Stroop and Else stare in horror and Gottlieb smiles as two monstrous figures appear out of the vapour, dressed in black rubber suits, thigh-length waders and gas-masks. Each has a large iron hook, knife, pincers and a small sack hanging from his belt. As they clump forward, they hit the dummies with thick wooden clubs. Each time they do so there is the splintering sound of a skull being smashed. (*L. pp. 404-405*)*

After witnessing the Jewish *Sonderkommando* gathering valuables from the corpses of Jewish victims, Cranach, Else and Stroop justify their willing co-operation in terms of

cosy domesticity: a mortgage, new furniture, approaching retirement; but confronted with the final obscenity of the crematoria represented on stage by the neat piles of torn dummies stacked by the hook wielding *Sonderkommando*, Cranach makes a hysterical bid for self-control and takes refuge in the sanitised abstraction of numericised bureaucratic efficiency:

Cranach: Fight. Fight. Can't let him win. We're Civil Servants, words on paper, not pictures in the mind, memo AS/7/42 reference SR 273/849/6. Writers write, builders build, potters potter, book-keepers keep books. E(5) Class I and II, L11, L12, F280/515 your reference AMN 23D/7. 'Gas chambers', 'fire-ovens', 'ramps', he's using words to make us see images... He was lying. I could tell, he used *adjectives*. We merely administer camps which concentrate people from all over Europe... We're trained to kill imagination before it kills us... (L. pp. 406-407)

As Else and Stroop ritualistically incant the bureaucratic numerical designation first intoned by Cranach, *'the steel door of the gas chamber is heard slowly closing and the two sections of the filing cabinet Up Stage Left and Right begin to slide back into position Up Stage Centre'*, (L. p. 407) and with them the *Sonderkommando* and the dummies disappear from view.

For Cranach, admitting the reality is the truly subversive action, whereas for Gottleb it is the *inability* to embrace the full detail of the atrocity with the simple conviction that to be a part of such a noble task is to share in the high calling and destiny of the *Volk*. But any fool knows that ideology is no match for good management; and Cranach's fastidious paper shifting will triumph over Gottleb's ideology.

Common-sense (banality) prevails; Gottleb is disposed of as a bureaucratic irrelevance, and the department settles down into normal routine once again. Stroop and Else are effusive in their praise of Cranach's success in saving the department, to which adulation Cranach responds:

Thank you, Fräulein. In centuries to come when our complexes at Auschwitz're empty ruins, monuments to a past civilisation, tourist attractions, they'll ask... what kind of men built and maintained these extraordinary structures. They'll find it hard to believe they weren't heroic visionaries, mighty rulers, but ordinary people, people who liked people, people like them, you, me, us. (L. p. 409)

In the kitsch camaraderie of finales, fists lightly clenched, elbows bent, arms swinging, knees lifting in a jubilant march, Else and Stroop join Cranach down stage and continue their jaunty stationary march, while singing *at* the audience with *'increasing savagery'*:

'This is a brotherhood of man. A benevolent brotherhood of man. A noble tie that binds, all human hearts and minds. Into a brotherhood of man. Your life-long membership is free. Keep a-giving each brother all you can. Oh aren't you proud to be in that fraternity. The great big brotherhood of man.' Sing! Everybody sing! (L. p. 409)

An epilogue indicates that the drama thus far presented has been part of Birkenau's Christmas Concert produced by the 'Prisoners Advisory Committee of Block B, Auschwitz II', (L. p. 410) and as a finale to the camp entertainment the Boffo Boys of Birkenau, Abe Bimko and Hymie Bieberstein, are going to give, what can only be, their *final* performance. The audience is encouraged to 'please welcome': 'Bimko and Bieberstein!' (L. p. 410)

Bimko and Bieberstein wear striped prison garb, yellow stars pinned to their rough woven tunics, wooden clogs protruding from beneath pyjama width trousers - but each wears an undertaker's black top hat adorned with a ribbon of mourning. They begin a double act routine, the straightman and the stooge, the antiphonal representation of workaday routine with a humorous gloss:

Bieberstien: The Campo foreman kept hitting me with a rubber truncheon yesterday - *hit, hit, hit*. I said, 'You hitting me for a joke or on purpose?' 'On purpose!' he yelled. *Hit, hit, hit*. 'Good', I said, 'because such jokes I don't like.'

Bimko: The way to beat hydro-cyanide gas is by holding your breath for five minutes. It's just a question of mind over matter. They don't mind and we don't matter... Dear Lord God, you help strangers so why shouldn't you help us? We're the chosen people.

Bieberstein: Abe, so what did we have to do to be chosen?

Bimko: Do me a favour, don't ask. Whatever it was it was too much... Hymie you were right, this act's dead on its feet.

*The spot fades out.*

Bieberstein: Oh mother...

*They die in darkness. (L. pp. 410 and 411)*

Barnes desired the seemingly unachievable: a comedy which would inform and reform the audiences sense of the atrocious to equip them to face a future full of managers and stand-up comedians, all oblivious to, and unquestioning of the human cost of bureaucratic efficiency, a comedy and management culture like the irrelevant Bimko and Bierberstein, dead on their feet.

### 5.3 The press response to *Laughter!*

The critical reviews of *Laughter!* were for the most part confused, cursory and damning. Expressions of both good will and high expectation are in evidence in some,

but the generally negative critical reaction was perhaps due to the disappointment of hopes for a dramatically daring play, as well as a predictable response to such audacious failure.

Irving Wardle, for example, wrote: 'Nothing is more exciting in the theatre than a moment of genuine stylistic change: when the old dramatic categories crack apart under pressure of new experience... I got this sensation from the opening of Peter Barnes's new play which declares war on the one element that does most to keep the theatre in business. *Laughter*'. (23) Michael Billington confessed that he 'expected something dangerous and hair-raising that [would] challenge all our stock liberal responses', (24) and Robert Cushman remarked: 'Peter Barnes has all the right ideas. He wants theatre to matter, to change our thoughts and if possible, our lives.' (25)

The critics' reviews betray considerable anxiety about making the appropriate response to a potentially offensive and disturbing issue: the comic treatment of atrocity. *The Spectator*'s observation is exemplary: '*Laughter!*... opens with a stand-up comic warning us that comedy anaesthetises the moral sense. Is this our moral for the evening? I don't know, because Barnes promptly has the comic given the custard pie treatment.' (26) This became the central dilemma for most reviewers: which of these views of comedy did Barnes hope his audience would identify and learn from: comedy as anaesthetic to political will, or humour as subversive of political authority?

Wardle commented that the opening scene was 'a marvellous double-edged statement', which Barnes then put to the test in the following two parts of the play. But, Wardle continues,

the main question about laughter is who is doing it. The laughter of a theatre audience is not that of a man going to the gallows; and it does not contribute much to the discussion to pick out two spectacularly atrocious historical episodes simply for the sake of saying: 'There now, laugh at that if you can'.

Mr Barnes is, admittedly, saying more than that. If he is out to display the impotence of comedy, he is also striving to extract whatever comic effects he can from the most impossible material. (27)

Wardle is not entirely convinced by his own analysis and there are a few too many dramatic loose ends to allow the conflict to be so effortlessly tied up with his neat formula.

Billington conveys a similar sense of critical uncertainty: 'I presume Barnes's intention is to goad us into a nervous laughter and then freeze the smile on our faces', (28) while Robert Cushman attempts to extrapolate several possible interpretations of Barnes's chief point:

Mr Barnes latest, a double bill at the Royal Court... overall title: *Laughter!*, purpose uncertain. It may be to demonstrate that you can laugh at anything however horrible and feel better for it; or that you can laugh at anything however horrible and feel worse for it; or that some things are so horrible you can't laugh at all. The aim may be to challenge black comedy as a genre, or to show how people (as opposed to playwrights and audiences) can only contemplate atrocity by making jokes. Here Mr Barnes runs up against two handicaps: (a) he can't write people and (b) he can't write jokes. (29)

Nor was Benedict Nightingale immune to being puzzled and scathing of Barnes's ability as a writer:

Quite why Peter Barnes has christened his new play *Laughter!* is hard to see, because it doesn't provoke it and isn't really about it. True, someone stumbles out front to tell the audience that a sense of humour is no remedy for evil, that jokes help tyrants because they soften hatred. True, his button-hole squirts water and his trousers tumble down as he spouts this austere wisdom.

But Nightingale questions the direction in which the subsequent two parts of *Laughter!* appear to lead:

Can we laugh at the most blatant means Western civilisation has yet devised of demonstrating its preference for property over people? Perhaps; but, if so, why, how, how far, and with what effect on our moral health?

If the play were more wholeheartedly concentrated upon its supposed subject, it might be tantamount to disproof of the first-minute claim, that humour is always reactionary. Alas, the jokes are too random, too unfunny, too intermittent and unrelated, to prove anything except that Barnes might do well to change his play's title from *Laughter!* to *Lachrymation*. (30)

In short, Barnes was considered to present an uncertain thesis in the opening speech which he failed to bring any clarity to, or explore in the following dramatic episodes.

The critics' objections are fundamental. They are sufficiently unsure of Barnes's intentions to be asking the most basic question of his play: Who is being asked to laugh, at what and to what purpose? Most critics reacted in such a defensively rationalistic fashion that their responses appear to indicate both Barnes's *success* in choosing an issue with which considerable difficulty exists, and his *failure* to provide an effective dramatic exposition of the problems of drawing the themes of humour and the Holocaust together.

However, a number of reviewers recognised that the difficulties lay not so much with the critics themselves, as with Barnes's 'almost entirely academic' conception of mirth. (31) John Elsom and John Lahr share the majority critical views of Barnes's lack of clarity and his limited conception of humour, but whereas Elsom considers Barnes's

style of writing too cautious, Lahr judges his entire conception of the problem drily theoretical. In short, Barnes maintains too tight a control of his material. Elsom and Lahr are exceptional in that they take the opposite view of most critics; while acknowledging that the opening scene is 'double edged' they are less *uncertain* that Barnes intended to demonstrate the *subversive power* of humour, as much as its narcotic dangers.

In Elsom's view, 'Peter Barnes asked a rather academic question in *Laughter!...* Should we laugh at Auschwitz?... The question is academic because very few of us do laugh at Auschwitz', and this, argues Elsom, 'is Barnes's point':

To commit atrocities, you must start by losing your sense of humour... the gloomy bureaucrats of the Third Reich worked diligently through the transport logistics without a smile to lighten the day. And why? Because jokes could threaten their enterprises. Laughter challenges authority.

'What do you call a man who sticks his finger up Hitler's...? 'A brain surgeon' is one answer, but another could be 'A comic'. The comic says 'Up yours!' to foreman and Führer, and reduces them both to human proportion. Laughter, like death, is a great leveller. We are all equal, in the eyes of God and the gag book. (32)

And so Elsom's answer to Nightingale's question: 'Can we laugh at the most blatant means Western civilisation has yet devised of demonstrating its preference for property over people?' (33) is an unequivocal 'yes', for he continues:

It is particularly hard to get massacres into perspective. We get hysterical about them or censorious or swear revenges or make good resolutions; and in doing so, we lose the one human talent which could stop them from happening again, a sense of humour. (34)

This would appear to imply that the vast majority who find it difficult to laugh at Auschwitz, the average humourless citizen, is an Eichmann in waiting, while those who maintain a healthy disrespect for authority and who make fun of it, are less likely to be taken in by the pompous claims of the kinds of ideology these bureaucrats serve. The desire to control appeals to the humourless and the morally tidy, while the comic sees the folly and fallibility of all humanity.

But the questions which stand behind Barnes's warnings of the attenuating effects of humour on political resolve and which present a direct challenge to Elsom's view of the relationship of humour to Auschwitz are still potent: how exactly does humour reduce Auschwitz to 'human proportion'? How can humour be subversive of the purpose of, and the kind of regime which existed in Auschwitz? Could humour claim any meaningful and effective purchase on the administrators of Auschwitz? Can

humour be anything more than the psychic defence of self-deprecation in the face of the overwhelming reality of mass annihilation - better to dismiss oneself linguistically and emotionally, than be 'dismissed' by another?

There is in Elsom's review a concession to critical uncertainty about whether the subversive view of humour was indeed Barnes's pre-eminent theme, while there is no mistaking his assessment of the effectiveness of *Laughter!*, assuming that humorous subversion was Barnes's chief preoccupation. Elsom writes: 'If I have understood Barnes correctly, his job as a dramatist is clear: it is to force us to see the funny side of Auschwitz. Mass murder... is not just an outrage, but a farce, although a bloody farce. The penalty of taking life too seriously is the taking of life.' Barnes's humour should be outrageous, but,

unfortunately, Barnes is as inhibited as the rest of us. He, too, does not want to be thought hard-hearted; and so he roars as gently as any sucking dove. *Laughter!* is a very self-conscious play. The jokes are mainly old, and when they are not, they are carefully labelled jokes, to prevent confusion.

Worse still, when he sets up a heartless farce about Auschwitz he proceeds to tell us what we know already - that hundreds of thousands of people were dying in there, and shows us their bodies piled up most unfunny... and points out that it is the grey people who live quiet, civil service lives who are the dangerous ones. (35)

John Lahr entertains least doubt about Barnes's dramatic intentions and in consequence is the more certain of the fact of his failure and the reasons for it. Lahr is in no doubt about the *intended* ambiguity of the opening scene:

Peter Barnes tries to embody this ironic position in the first minute of *Laughter!* when The Author gravely addresses his audience on the nature of humour. 'Laughter's the ally of tyrants. It softens our hatred. An excuse to change nothing'... This Puritan twaddle is counterpointed by sight gags in which The Author gets a pie in the face... The Author who stands before us is a walking contradiction, a confusion of energies, an unproven hypothesis. And sadly, so is *Laughter!* (36)

Barnes lacks the most fundamental capacity necessary in making this kind of approach to atrocity work: an *affective* capacity to engage with the horror, neither to defend against nor to be overcome by it, and to recast the experience so that the representation is both coherent with historical experience and adds to its interpretation by the particular shape and tone of his considered, but humorous reflections on atrocity. In this most basic of dramatic tasks Lahr considers Barnes to have failed:



His arid stage world has no feeling of real life, only literature. Barnes has the rhetorical power, but not the theatrical resources to create genuinely convulsive and grotesque juxtapositions. He is all talk, and no action. The result is a slap-*shtick* of history... comic language cannot devastate if it has no clear purchase on reality. (37)

While those remarks elaborate upon Billington's observation that Barnes's conception of humour is 'almost entirely academic', Lahr's subsequent remarks enlarge on Elsom's judgement that the humour is rather self-conscious and inhibited:

In a dictatorship where fear and strict compliance to regulations govern, there is no place for laughter because it is an assertion of will, a symbolic rebellion which poses questions where no dissent is allowed.

Barnes must work harder to clarify the mechanisms of defence and make them visible through metaphor. But his theatrical imagination fails him. His ideas are good; but his images pull back from the task. (38)

For Lahr the most grievous failures of Barnes's imagination are his resort to 'documentary speechifying as Gottleb tries to paint a word picture of the gas chambers the civil servants refuse to admit they know anything about', and the dramatic representation of the actions of the *Sonderkommando*, the effect of which is, 'inconsequential horror trivialised rather than illuminated'. (39) In short, Lahr confirms Elsom's conclusions: 'Having set laughter a noble challenge, Barnes never meets it. His writing is all sweat and no inspiration. He loves a clown's dangerous laughter, but he won't risk the clown's outrageous vulgarity.' (40)

Indeed it was the conclusion which many critics drew. Billington was anxious to point out that there was no inherent problem with the genre, 'Munk's *Eroica*, Kubrick's *Strangelove*, Kurt Vonnegut's novels have in the past shown us that laughter can be used to make a moral point', but Billington also shares Elsom's and Lahr's conclusion: 'Barnes's play lacks that kind of grisly finesse and leaves us, in the end, neither shaken nor stirred.' (41)

The majority critical opinion was that Barnes was simply not saying anything new in *Laughter!* and came nowhere near succeeding in presenting old truths in a dramatically engaging new way. Barnes remarked in an interview in the *Jewish Chronicle*:

The concentration camps were one of the great traumatic episodes of the twentieth century... and the problem for a writer is how to incorporate that into art. It was so stunning, so horrendous that there seemed no way into it. But it happened to human beings and anything that happens to human beings must be dealt with.

I could not treat it head on so I had to find a concrete situation which showed a bigger picture. One of the ways those things happen is through the use of language. The bureaucrats who organised it used their own language, the language of the civil servant today. (42)

Traces of weariness in the critics' response to the repetition of 'well-worn' truths are in evidence in a number of the notices, perhaps most explicitly in Bernard Levin's review: 'Mr Barnes appears... to have discovered Hannah Arendt's phrase "the banality of evil" and been much impressed by it.' (43) David Nathan also writes that 'since the Eichmann trial' Barnes's perspective has become 'commonplace', (44) while Milton Shulman adds that *Laughter!* 'reminds us that little men are as capable of grotesque slaughter as tyrants... the fun is forced, faded and familiar'. (45)

Confusion over Barnes's precise meaning, the failure to meet the demands placed upon his art by the subjects he had chosen to explore, the issue of the nature of the relationship between humour and atrocity, his constrained rational treatment of the issue, his failure to find within himself the kind of affective engagement that comic treatment of atrocity necessarily demanded and the belatedness of his dramatic interest in the 'ordinariness' of desk murderers, summarise the chief features of the prevailing critical opinion. The conclusions shared by the critics were also reflected in their strikingly similar choice of adjectives: 'leaden' (*Daily Mail*), 'glum' (*The Daily Telegraph*), 'ponderous' (*The Guardian*), 'faded and familiar' (*Evening Standard*), 'unoriginal' (*New Statesman*), 'conventional', 'feeble', 'ersatz' (*The Observer*), 'strained' (*The Spectator*), and 'all-too-obvious' (*The Times*). The critics were not amused. (46)

The critical reviews made two notable omissions and drew some curious conclusions. There is little reference to the two brief but significant scenes with which *Auschwitz* closed. The first of these scenes is the song sung at the conclusion of *Auschwitz*, about which Lahr remarks: 'The play fizzles out with the civil servants *incongruously* breaking into a Frank Loesser song from *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying*.' (47)

Why should Lahr find the song incongruous? The meaning Barnes intended is elicited from the context, and is plain enough. 'Eichmann' is our brother, and in this deft single stroke, Barnes makes the point that it took Arthur Miller two full plays to establish: the *universal* propensity to deny and evade, to be complicitous in murder. The kitsch camaraderie of office farce becomes ominous in Barnes's finale.

The other scene which most critics failed to mention is the 'Epilogue' which depicts a vaudeville duo telling jokes from within the gas chamber. B. A. Young, one of the few critics to comment on this final tableau, writes: 'Two Auschwitz prisoners present a music hall act, swapping jokes about their situation... The jokes were

undeniably funny. Too bad they should be bound to cause such pain to so many people.' (48)

No critic sought to examine why Barnes had spent the vast majority of the second part of *Laughter!* apparently making an ironic commentary on humourless bureaucrats through the use of humour, a tried and tested, even a 'faded and familiar strategy', and so little time exploring the kind of humour presented in the 'Epilogue': the self-deprecating humour of the victims, purposefully placed in the most incongruous setting for biting parody effect, a gas chamber. The reason for Barnes largely withholding this style of humour until the final scene is simply that the 'Epilogue' represents Barnes's counter punchline to the humour of the preceding drama, and as such it must be reserved until the last moment, and be economic relative to the length of the preceding scenes. But the significant difference between the humour used to subvert humourless bureaucrats - parody and satire - is that the basis for such humour is found in the other and reflected back at them, whereas the gas chamber humour of the Jewish vaudeville duo in no way subverts humourless administrators of Auschwitz, but is self-deprecating. Barnes intended that the final gags, though humorous, should not be laughed at. Save for one instance, this intention is nowhere commented upon by the critics.

*Throughout* his play Barnes is both inviting laughter through a variety of comic means and sources, period one-liners from the 1939-45 war, examples of Jewish humour from the war years and the concentration camps, the staple humour of office routine and the armed services transposed into a Nazi setting, and also posing throughout the implicit question: should you be laughing?

Barnes is claiming that those who are occupied with trying to be funny, those who *make* the jokes, are distracted from offering resistance to their oppressors. The targets of such jokes quietly go about their business to accomplish their goals before the deadly seriousness of their routines and regulations are properly appreciated by those consumed by their efforts to be the office comic. And again, laughing at the marvellous ability of the Jews to ironise, even in a concentration camp gas chamber, is assumed to represent a triumph of the human spirit over dire circumstance and utter desperation. Barnes suggests that this is an evasion; that this self-deprecating humour is an expression of acceptance of the persecutor's view: the negative evaluation of their worth and the 'inevitability' of their fate as the persecuted. This is why Barnes could say of the final scene: 'On the good nights nobody laughs.' (49)

Barnes's real target is then, the comfort taken from the supposed triumph of humour over atrocity, and his challenge to the audience is to provoke them to question whether humour can be entertained as any kind of triumph over the annihilation of millions.

Robert Cushman was alone in making an interpretation of these final scenes in relation to the thesis announced at the beginning of the play:

At the end Mr Barnes does make a couple of points. He has his characters break into 'The Brotherhood of Man' ... Loesser's amiable satire on office life suddenly becomes sabre-toothed... Then a pair of Jews do a cross-talk on their way to the gas chamber... Some good lines have been appropriated, and we do laugh, and then we do feel sheepish: needlessly, since our revulsion at Auschwitz is not altered in the slightest. (50)

This was exactly Barnes's point: not to allow the humour, and particularly self-deprecating humour to blind anyone to the evil of atrocity. Consistent with his thesis, *not* to find the Jewish humour of the 'Epilogue' amusing marks success: the realisation that self-deprecation is an internalisation of the persecutors' sadism. Consistent with his craft, audiences and critics laughed, thus demonstrating the abyss between industrialised mass extermination on the one hand, and unthinking amusement with ineffectual self-deprecating humour on the other: an indication of the incommensurability between state sanctioned mass murder and humour, even when turned against oneself, and thus a vindication of Barnes's thesis.

The general confusion of the critics was justified. Elsom's and Lahr's interpretation of Barnes's chief purpose as the demonstration of the subversive power of humour is misplaced. The cause of the confusion was the highly ambiguous opening scene in which the Author warns of the potential of humour to dissipate political resistance, and the slapstick response to the austerity of this claim. The critics' basic misunderstanding was chiefly generated by the *mistaken identification* of the slapstick response to the Author's puritanical claims with Barnes's personal point of view, *his* comment upon the views expressed by the Author.

Barnes's intended meaning was to make the slapstick response representative of conventional expectation: of irrepressible humour undermining action (political opposition), precisely the austere truth about humour the Author and Barnes were proposing for audience consideration. Barnes attempted to achieve this in the most predictable way: making amusement out of a serious proposition, but which the critics mistook for Barnes's advocacy of the view of humour as subversive, rather than the view that humour is a diversion from effective political resistance.

Barnes appears to be suggesting that there is no place for a humorous response to the Holocaust and making this point through the use of comedy so that the failure of comedy says something substantial about the nature of mass extermination. Humour withers in the presence of those with the kind of imagination capable of conceiving and implementing the 'Final Solution'. A humorous response aestheticises horror; it

reduces it to comical, human proportion and Barnes considers this an improper function of comedy.

Barnes's chief mistake was identified by Elsom: *Laughter!* is built upon the assumption that most people attempt to evade the reality of Auschwitz through making a joke of it. But if this is not the typical response, as Elsom suggested, then to make fun of it would be a possible response, not in order to evade or reduce the seriousness of Auschwitz but to register the atrocity, for which, as Billington indicated, there exists effective literary and other artistic precedents.

*Laughter!* closed after just 23 performances playing to a 26% capacity house! The production lost close to £13,000. The failure had a negative impact on Barnes's career as Robin Thornber noted a little over eighteen months later:

Ten years ago, when *The Ruling Class* transferred from Nottingham to the West End, Peter Barnes won the *Evening Standard's* Most Promising Playwright award... It was a West End hit, a successful film, and went all round the reps. I said that if someone with all that under his belt couldn't get their plays staged, things looked fairly gloomy for an unknown. 'It's fairly gloomy for people who've got *Laughter!* behind them', he said.

Critics and audiences seemed to think that Auschwitz was no laughing matter. Mr Barnes is unrepentant. 'No human experience is outside the scope of art. To say "That is *verboten*" is very dangerous. An artist should be able to treat any subject. Auschwitz is one of the most tragic episodes of human experience and cannot be ignored.' (51)

#### 5.4 Post-production criticism of Peter Barnes's *Laughter!*

'The truth is that I am not a popular writer', Barnes lamented in his interview with Thornber. (52) His self-assessment finds confirmation of a sort in a glance at the contents pages of the chief surveys of post-war British drama published in the late 1970s and 1980s. Barnes is barely mentioned in Ronald Hayman's *British Theatre since 1955* (1979), in John Elsom's *Post-War British Theatre* (Rev ed 1979) or in Chamber and Prior's *Playwright's Progress* (1987), and receives only marginal coverage in Richard Allen Cave's *New British Drama in Performance on the London Stage* (1987). Perhaps most surprising is the complete omission of Barnes from David Ian Rabey's *British and Irish Political Drama in the Twentieth Century* (1986) where his name occurs only once. No published monograph or brief production compendium by a British author exists on Barnes's plays. (53)

British critics are not alone in failing to include Barnes in the constellation of broadly socialist oppositional theatre in the 1968-1978 period. In a recent study of left-wing playwrights by Janelle Reinelt, *After Brecht: British Epic Theatre*, Barnes receives no mention. (54)

Nevertheless, most comment has come from US theatre critics and scholars: they include Bernard F. Dukore's *The Theatre of Peter Barnes* (1981) and some articles ('"People Like You and Me": The Auschwitz Plays of Peter Barnes and C.P. Taylor' and 'Peter Barnes and the Problem of Goodness'); (55) and comments made by Robert Skloot in *The Darkness We Carry*, (56) and by W. B. Worthen in *Modern Drama and the Rhetoric of Theatre*. (57) Brief as these contributions are, a clearer picture of Barnes's dramatic intentions can be construed from their different perspectives.

Dukore places Barnes firmly in the Brechtian epic tradition:

Like Bertolt Brecht... he writes in order to change the world... Although he distrusts parties of both right and left, he inclines toward socialism and anarchism. Class hatred permeates his plays, he agrees, and he explains, 'Class hatred's there because class is a total force in England, and in a different way than in most western societies... but everything's changeable: the world is changeable, human beings are changeable, human nature is changeable.' (58)

Irving Wardle in one of the more lucid notices in the British press specifically commented that *Laughter!* 'consists of a power struggle between a chief clerk of the old school and a Streicher-like party zealot, Gottleb. The immediate conflict... is really fuelled by class hatreds, and by the mutual contempt of the desk worker, and the man who is up to his elbows in blood, "working with people", as Gottleb puts it.' (59)

Wardle's formulation is slightly inaccurate in that Gottleb is himself an administrator longing to escape from his desk duties: 'That's where I should be too. Out in the field. Not stuck behind a desk in Orienberg, but in the gas chambers of Auschwitz, working with people. Dealing with flesh and blood, not deadly abstractions: I'm suffocating in this limbo of paper.' (L. p. 401) Nevertheless Wardle is correct to draw attention to a conflict which is better characterised as one between a career manager, Cranach, and an old party cadre who has risen through the ranks from the barricades to the board. Gottleb represents an Ernst Röhm or Streicher kind of figure, a street fighting, *Bierkeller* ideologue in whom sentiment matters more than sophistry, and lack of sentiment more than sophistication. (60)

It is this element of conflict which, alone amongst the British critics, Wardle identified, and which Dukore argues is the key to Barnes's dramatic strategy. Dukore comments that the 'bureaucratic rivalry' is the chief dramatic means which Barnes employs in the 'manipulation of his audiences', (61) and,

before Gottleb enters, Barnes conditions them [the spectators] to side with the functionaries against him. The civil servants are likeable people, suffer as ordinary people do from food shortages and the loss of loved ones during the war... After he [Gottleb] enters, his fanaticism concerning Nazism estranges him

from audiences, thereby continuing to divide their sympathies toward the functionaries and what they represent, against him and what he represents.

While it is immediately clear what he symbolises, Barnes withholds what the civil service functionaries stand for, though he provides hints... Audiences delight in the defeat of the Nazi zealot by people with whom they identify - if only because they do not identify with him. (62)

Dukore overstates his case by ignoring the effect of the parodic and ironic representation of Cranach's department. It is the obvious pretence that a distinction can be made between the objects of their endeavours through which Barnes engages the audience's suspension of disbelief; better to draw the audience into the collusion with comedy which is Barnes's chief aim, than the affective identification with the chief protagonist. Nevertheless, the value of Dukore's comments is to have drawn attention to the basic *playful* dramatic conflict - the expression of Barnes's ubiquitous views of class conflict - as an important element through which Barnes achieves his chief dramatic end. That the contrast exists in some of the most significant features of Barnes's representation of Nazism and the implementation of the final solution is borne out by the text. (See Fig. 5.1. below.)

Spectators are sufficiently informed to recognise the parodic and ironic elements in the performance and to recognise that Cranach and Gottleb represent the same regime in different guises. Indeed Stroop gives voice to this perspective (which has been implicit in the interdepartmental rivalry throughout) in the context of Cranach's department's *view of the Jews*, albeit that the 'blinding insight' into the contradictory nature of National Socialism is ironised by Barnes through the geriatric simple-mindedness of Stroop: 'The truth is, as Jews can be simultaneously scum and dregs, so National Socialism can simultaneously embody revolutionary and conservative principles and black and white the same colour grey. That's the miracle of it.' (L. p. 386)

The audience shares the character's ignorance of the precise nature of CP(3)m. But the intrigue of precisely what this equipment will turn out to be, is predicated upon the audience's full knowledge of the purpose of the department's activity counter to the dramatic pretence of their ignorance, the contradiction which carries the parodic and ironic elements throughout the play until the moment of dramatic disclosure through Gottleb's verbal description of the realities behind the numeracy, and then its visual dramatisation.

The effectiveness of Barnes's *Auschwitz* depends upon the audience's consciousness of the enterprise of theatre itself and the consequent *dramatic* judgement of their willing complicity in the enjoyment of a comical dramatic treatment of the implementation of the Nazi genocide. This is represented in a variety of ways: the verbal description of the various procedures in Auschwitz-Birkenau by Gottleb (the

SUBJECT	CRANACH'S DEPARTMENT	GOTTLER
Power	'In the old days, politicians were despised, administrators revered. Now politicians're sacrosanct and we've become the whipping boys' (L. p.374)	'I warned Brigadefuhrer Glucks about you and your kind... You've no business here with your damn bureaucratic principles of promotion by merit... I shit on merit. We old Party-men didn't fight in the streets' etc. (L. p.377)
The mechanism of government	'The German people've always preferred strong government to self government' (L. p.376)	'Without bribery you could never attract the better class of people into politics... Corruption has more natural justice to it.' (L. p.380)
Language	'A million words've died on us. We no longer believe in a secure sentence structure. Neutral symbols've become the safest means of communication. I certainly endorse the use of coded symbols.' (L. p.379)	'We need images of light to find the mind, words to set the heart salmon leaping' (L. p.379) 'You only understood the words But the sounds! What about the sounds?' (He imitates the harsh nasal sounds of Hitler's stabbing lower middle-class, Austrian accent.) (L. p.385)
Politics	'National Socialism is part of the great conservative tradition. It is based on solid middleclass values.' (L. p.385)	'Anyone can take his share if he's strong or weak enough. It binds all men together. That's the National Socialist way. Nature's way' (L. p.380) 'We've replaced hypocritical bourgeois morality with honest National Socialist immorality.' (L. p.389)
Culture	'We Germans've always had the divine capacity for visions... That's why the Reichsfuhrer SS Heinrich Himmler, decreed that our first complex should be built in the forest outside Weimar, the very seat of the German classical tradition.' (L. p.386)	'We showed 'em books is nothing! I've burnt ten thousand books in a night, reduced 'em to a pile of ash.' (L. p.394)
The Jews	'The truth is... Jews can be simultaneously scum and dregs.' (L. p.386)	'I shit on politeness. It stinks of philo-semite decadence... Let Judah perish.' (L. p.378) 'Ah, the Reichfuhrer's a truly great man, trying to recreate the pure Aryan race according to Mendel's laws. His commitment to the community's total, TOTAL.' (L. p.390)

Fig. 5.1 The 'conflicting' class attitudes of the rival departments?



details of which are granted the status of historical veracity by virtue of the speech's didactic tone), the dramatic visualisation of procedures within the gas chambers and crematoria (which have the raw impact of a reality far removed from the office farce of the earlier scenes), and finally the use of authentic examples of Jewish humour from the Nazi concentration camps, the impact of which are *opposed* by the force of the dramatic representation of two comics in camp garb *within the gas chamber* recounting the gags with the implied invitation to and judgement of, audience laughter.

Dukore is well aware of this dramatic strategy for he comments that Barnes's conception of 'theatricality includes the theatre conscious of itself as theatre' (63) and later provides a brief description of what this entails:

Barnes's most distinctive artistic signature... consists of disorienting and reorienting transformations from one theatrical mode to another. Swiftly, lightly and with precision actors switch from intellectual discourse, the period argot, to poetry to modern slang, to rhetoric, to musical comedy, to ritual,... to slapstick - thereby creating what Barnes calls 'a comic theatre of contrasting moods and opposites, where everything is simultaneously tragic and ridiculous'... Entertainingly, he juggles the audience's moods and enables them to examine critically, detached and with a smile, the social values and attitudes he scrutinises. (64)

Although in the case of *Laughter!*, 'the slapstick comedy provides a demonstration of how laughter diverts us from ideas that should engage our attention. The more we respond to the comedy, the less we respond to the Author's argument' in the prologue to the two plays. (65)

But the significant point is that the various elements of popular entertainment traditions are the means by which the audience are drawn into the dramatic reality of the drama, through which the manner of their participation will become the primary factor in the assessment of their affective comprehension of the issue of the relationship between humour and atrocity. In short, affective identification with Cranach and his department over against Gottleb is not the effective agency of the drama but the renegotiation of the audience's relation to the drama through the inclusion of a variety of forms, techniques and details in the *mise en scène* which work to remove the conventional relationship between audience and drama in stage realism, and replace it with conventions that make the audience responsible participants rather than encouraging unthinking identification.

W. B. Worthen situates such a strategy firmly within the Brechtian tradition, and the British interpretation of that tradition as it was given expression at the Royal Court:

Brecht fashions the absent, voyeuristic spectator of the realistic theater as an agent of the production... transforming the audience's activity into a kind of *gest*: an apparently private or individual behaviour shown in its public determinants and consequences.

In practice the rhetoric of political theatre has worked to stage the spectator's performance as part of the point of the spectacle. In Britain political theatre has often adopted the strategy of John Osborne's *The Entertainer*, juxtaposing popular performance traditions with the conventions of the legitimate stage as a way of foregrounding the audience's performance.

The drama of the 1970s and 1980s follows the lead offered by *The Entertainer*, and the theater has worked in a variety of ways to bring the spectator into a more urgent and actual relation to the stage. (66)

In the brief consideration of *Laughter!* in *The Darkness We Carry* (1988) Skloot essentially agrees with Dukore, but issues a timely reminder that it is not solely from *ideas* that laughter diverts attention, but from compassionate action:

Barnes's point is that people resort to joking when in the presence of suffering, and by distancing themselves through laughter they absolve themselves of the need for concern or compassion.

In *Laughter!* Barnes asks whether rooting out comedy, were it possible to do so, would restore the crucial links to others in distress. He makes the inquiry using his own play to exemplify the dilemma the comic stance produces in a corrupt and inhumane world. In *Auschwitz*, the comedy temporarily locates the play in that protected realm where danger and hurt are not to be seriously considered. (67)

But having suggested this much broader, more generous view of Barnes's concerns Skloot is in danger of presenting too limited an interpretation of Barnes's theatrical achievement:

Most of the play is a theatrical cartoon more interested in satirising the impersonal language and inherent corruption of large bureaucracies, German efficiency and sentimentality, ideological fanaticism, and most pointedly, Hitler and the Nazi regime itself... Barnes uses comic language to prove his intellectual point: that the horror of atrocity can be neutralised if it is referred to in language detached from serious feeling, and that no institution does this to greater effect than governmental bureaucracies. (68)

But Barnes's intention was not merely to indict an idea and an historical practice but a constituency – his audience – and he achieved this not solely through exploiting a parodic style of bureaucratise to draw attention to the potential for obfuscation and evasion such language holds, but through a conception of theatricality that Dukore described as 'theatre conscious of itself as theatre', (69) and Worthen, as Brechtian.

## 5.5 *Laughter!*, Barnes and Jewish fate

Dukore remarks that, 'particularly important in an Auschwitz play are attitudes characters have to Jews. In "Auschwitz" only the Nazi Gottleb rants against "Jew-blood" and "Jew talk".' (70) While strictly accurate - no other character does rant against the Jews or reviles 'Jewish' characteristics in the manner which Gottleb does - Dukore is in danger of creating a misleading impression. There is at least one occasion when Stroop speaks of the Jews in highly derogatory terms as 'scum' and 'dregs'. But more significantly the subjects of the department's bureaucratic attention are present throughout in the absence of their specific identification in all the bureaucratic procedures that are enacted and discussed by the characters. Amongst these are the procedures which concern 'future cases of death' and the required change to their numerical identification; those relating to the equipment CP3(m) as well as the conversations about the creation of a pure Aryan race between Gottleb and Else; and the reference to the construction of the 'first complex' to be built on the outskirts of Weimar. The audience is witness to all this, and it is another element of the audience's knowing complicity in the pretence of naïvety. This willed ignorance and silent complicity is 'broken' by Gottleb's provocative decision to make Cranach's department face reality, by vocalising the processes and conditions in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Subsequently these are represented on stage in the characters of the 'sanitation squad', the *Sonderkommando*, and most explicitly in the 'Epilogue' by the comedy double-act. In each scene the victims are unambiguously identified as Jews.

It is precisely in relation to compassionate responsibility toward those who suffer, and the historical suffering of the Jews that Barnes's conception of theatre formulated by Dukore as 'theatre conscious of itself as theatre' and not solely Barnes's use of comic language, which indicts not merely an idea, humour as corrosive of responsible action, or a conception of language, the bureaucratise of which Cranach's usage is a parody, but indicts the complicity of theatre as an agency of evasion and the audience *enjoying laughter/Laughter!* This perspective is implicit in Dukore's formulation, and is made explicit when he writes: '*Auschwitz* confronts, challenges and indicts spectators... making his audiences laugh, Barnes also prods them into recognising the inadequacy of doing so and their similarity to those who by employing so feeble a weapon help to perpetuate what they should fight.' (71) Worthen similarly comments:

To read *Laughter!* as about Auschwitz alone is crucially to misread the plays theatrical design, which depends in large measure on the way that popular performance genres inscribe a kind of activity for the audience in the performance itself... *Laughter!* stages the spectator's performance as part of its critique of history. *Laughter!* places the audience before the spectacle of the holocaust, and identifies our performance as its theatrical - and historical - cause.

If laughter - our laughter - is the ally of tyrants, Barnes must dramatise the social consequences of laughter in the events of the stage. To accomplish this, Barnes juxtaposes the evasions of laughter against the confrontational seeing of theater. (72)

With the realities of Auschwitz variously represented on stage, in the unadorned language employed by Gottleb, which Barnes intends to stand in sharp contrast to the obfuscation of bureaucratese, and in the visually graphic depiction of the action of the *Sonderkommando* which contrasts strongly with abstract numerical denotation of corpses, Worthen points out that 'the consequences of the audience's laughter have been brought into view'. He continues:

Laughter at the comic Nazis is reconstituted as a sign of complicity with their project, an acceptance of conventional 'words and symbols' - the comic conventions of the stage - and so of the work they do. The bureaucrats' language, the manipulative devices of comedy, and the audience's theatrical response lead to a common, final solution: the gas chamber. (73)

The *common* agency is underlined by Barnes's use of the musical comedy number, 'The Brotherhood of Man', but the sentimental resignation to the comedy of errors that is modern office life, the 'we-are-all-in-this-together' of office camaraderie inherent in the jaunty song is used as a bitingly ironic commentary upon theatrical comedy's, and therefore the audience's complicity, in genocide.

Skloot indicates that the epilogue emphasises the chief points which Barnes wishes to make: that comedy is no match for violent coercion and is swept away entirely by capricious murder, that comedy distracts the victims from their final fate, and that the audience happily accepts the distraction of laughter.

Barnes, mercilessly, refuses to let the audience leave with so simple an irony, [as 'The Brotherhood of Man'] no matter how bitter. He appends an epilogue to the play, one of the most audacious passages in all Holocaust drama: violent, horrifying, and inexpressibly sad. The Announcer's voice calls on stage a vaudeville duo of two emaciated concentration camp inmates named Bimko and Bieberstein to perform their final skit before the deadly blue gas claims them. (74)

Dressed in prisoner's garb (in the Royal Court production each carried a Chaplinesque cane, and, rather than the undertaker's hat, they each sport a straw boater) Skloot remarks of this final comic tableaux :

As they dance and joke their strength fades until at last, they succumb. The comedy is finally rooted out with the killing of the comedians; '*they are in darkness*'.

The epilogue... relentlessly... drives home Barnes's passionate point in *Laughter!* that in the face of atrocity, laughter is useless and immoral... For those who use it to distract themselves from the reality of evil (as audiences are asked to do before Barnes turns the laughter back on them), laughter itself becomes an instrument of death. (75)

It is this final stark point of Skloot's, that laughter becomes the means of death, and the *audience* become responsible for the *theatricalisation* of genocide which is also expressed with devastating effect by Worthen:

Only when our 'imaginary' absence from the dramatic spectacle has been reconstituted as an authorising complicity are we prepared for Barnes's epilogue: the vaudeville routine... Barnes's attempt to 'dramatize' both cause and effect, action and consequence... The Boffo Boys perform for our entertainment...[but] don't 'slay' us, 'kill' us with their routine. We execute them by assenting to the role of comic audience; the final cause of the scene is less their joking than the audience's potential for laughter.

Representing the idiom of the comic, *Laughter!* stages our laughter as a *gest*, an action figured in a social and historical framework subject to the performance, we become the subject of the drama, and of the history it brings to the stage. The passive audience becomes the author of the spectacle of genocide. (76)

However, Christopher Bigsby presents a radical challenge to the dramatic effectiveness of the Brechtian *gestus* over which Worthen enthuses. In his view it is the interpretation of history implicit in the aesthetic stance of the Brechtian *gestus* and agit-prop generally in relation to the audience which fails to present a coherent and plausible potential socio-political position for consideration by audiences. The claim of achievable radical political transformation inherent within Brechtian dramaturgy and which it is designed to provoke the audience into embracing is wholly unrealistic. Bigsby comments first on the appeal of the Brechtian aesthetic:

When these devices are most effective, the consequence in dramatic terms is directness of effect, a raw power which derives from the total release of energy, that total release being its primary function and method. The subversive view of historical process, after all, has its own *frisson*. The audience is offered the flattering role of appearing as the cutting edge of history, the culmination of historic process.

Theatre becomes an epiphany. It asserts a continuity between theatrical experience and the social world which is not simply the somewhat mystical one claimed by Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski, but an engagement with the immediate: in some degree the theatre is an image of that communal experience which it claims as its subject. (77)

Agit-prop dares to suggest that the moment of epiphany is the moment when the total experience of the production becomes the agency of the political transformation of the issue. It is an inflationary claim without any real substance because it flatters the audience into casting themselves in a role that historical reality will not sustain. 'At its worst', Bigsby adds, 'it is... the unreality of its realism which threatens its truth', concluding that the paradox is that,

while these plays are aesthetically open... inviting the involvement and commitment of the... audience to whom they are addressed - many of them remain ideologically closed. They begin with their conclusions... and insofar as this theatre not only assaults historic injustice and inveterate class diabolism, but also adopts the reductive process whereby entire classes are dismissed as wholly knowable and hence wholly ignorable, it becomes guilty of similar offences. (78)

In defence of Barnes's craft Robert Skloot comments that: 'There is no better way to prove [Barnes's] argument [about comedy] than for a master comedian to use comedy to make comedy impossible; in order to root it out, it must be made as tragic as the human imagination can create and endure.' (79) This exposes precisely the assumptions behind Barnes's response when asked 'Did the audience laugh at the jokes in the "Epilogue"?' He replied drily: 'On the good nights, they didn't.' (80)

None of the critics inquire of the significance of the self-deprecating nature of the humour of the Boffo Boys, either as an internalisation of pervasive Nazi attitudes towards the Jews or as a psychological preparation for death, a self-diminution before a final diminution meted out by their persecutors. But Worthen does take up perhaps the most controversial deduction that may be made: that Jewish humour *in particular is responsible* for Jewish victimisation, that, in short, Jews are responsible for their own genocide. Barnes has come perilously close to proposing this as a speculative argument and a partial explanation for the Holocaust on a number of occasions. During the production of *Laughter!* at the Royal Court Barnes commented:

I wanted to write a play that deals with my feelings about comedy - is comedy helpful - is laughter helpful in the world as we know it today? The cliché runs that if you can laugh at your suffering and misery, that, in some ways helps, but I wonder if it does. I wonder if we double up with laughter as an excuse to do nothing about the suffering and the injustice that we have to suffer in the world... Maybe the fact that the Jews have such a great sense of humour... is not something they should be proud of but maybe it is a curse that has made them suffer so much over the centuries, maybe if they didn't have such a sense of humour, and a stronger feeling of hatred about their oppressors they would have done something stronger. (81)

Barnes advanced these same views with minimal qualification in a published interview in 1981:

One of the reasons the second part of *Laughter!* is about Auschwitz is because the Jews have a great reputation of being able to laugh and make the most marvellous one-line jokes about their situation. I wonder if one of the reasons they have been persecuted (not the only reason of course) and haven't done anything about it is because of their ability to laugh at it, laugh at the terrors that have afflicted them. (82)

Nor has time inured Barnes against such views, for in a more recent interview published in *New Theatre Quarterly* in 1990 Barnes reiterates them:

I've always queried the adage that if you can laugh at a subject, that somehow alleviates the injustice or the cruelty or the oppression. I postulate that sometimes, indeed very often, laughter, far from alleviating it, actually encourages oppression and cruelty... Also, I think it's not a very good weapon against a man with a machine gun, no matter what anyone says.

That's one of the reasons I wrote *Auschwitz*. There is a very curious thing about Jews and Jewish humour - the fact that everybody glorifies Jewish humour and the fact that over centuries of oppression they have been able to laugh at what's happening.

I wonder sometimes if they hadn't been able to laugh would they have done something about their oppression. If they hadn't turned it into a joke, maybe you would have had a whole different history of the Jewish people. I'm not putting that forward as a conclusion, merely a point of argument... Winners don't have to laugh; it's only losers who have to laugh. (83)

With specific reference to the 1981 interview, Worthen commented that he had 'no desire to salvage the scene that Barnes describes here in which the Jews' laughter, rather than the Nazis' brutality or the Allies indifference, is said to cause the holocaust'. (84) The primary issue is whether the dramatic scene that Barnes describes in his interview 'is the scene that is produced in the theatre'. (85)

In this respect, Barnes states most clearly what the final scene should achieve:

If that does not get a laugh then I think we have succeeded in shocking people and upsetting people into an awareness of what is actually at stake. It isn't enough to say that they went to their death smiling, with a joke on their lips... they should have gone if they had to go at all, with a curse on their lips. (86)

The universalisation of the responsibility for the Holocaust was achieved dramatically through the conventions of melodrama in the case of Arthur Miller. In *Laughter!* Barnes achieves the same ends, and more, through the Brechtian techniques of epic

theatre, specifically his idea of a *gestus* as Worthen has so eloquently made clear. Barnes merely replaces the evasion he rightly considers laughter frequently to be, with the evasion of forcing the audience into the role of perpetrators of atrocity, a spurious identification made possible through the coercive Brechtian dramaturgy Barnes utilised. The same objections arise with equal urgency as those raised by the critics commenting upon Miller's plays: if all are responsible does that not suggest that no one can be held to account specifically, and if this be the case, what does it imply about the particular individuals and agencies who contributed to the administration of the 'Final Solution'?

Though he is careful not to express it in dramatically clear-cut terms, Barnes is specifically indicting the assumed Jewish capacity to find amusement in the most extreme circumstances and the contributory role this tendency has had in attracting and perpetuating Jewish victimisation, specifically during the Holocaust. A self-deprecating, ironic humour, Barnes appears to be suggesting, rather than an existential *consequence* of persecution, is a pre-existent *cause* of persecution, and thus Jewish self-hatred becomes a contributory ground for the Holocaust.

By directing anger at those not responsible for the implementation of the 'Final Solution' - the Royal Court's audiences - and by directing his frustration with political impotence at the victims themselves (in this, as well as in his chosen dramatic locus, Eichmannesque bureaucratic procedure and language, echoes of Hannah Arendt's harsh views of the Jewish leadership can be detected, as can Robert Shaw's intention, 'to teach "them" a lesson'), Barnes fails in his dramatic purpose. He *perpetuates* the trends to which he is so vehemently opposed, the tyranny of the Nazi ruling elite, whose first and chief crime was indifference to the pain of ordinary Jews, *and* fails to *oppose* firmly the perpetrators of atrocity, cruelty and injustice.



## 6 THE RSC AT THE WAREHOUSE AND C. P. TAYLOR'S *GOOD. A TRAGEDY*

### 6.1 The RSC at The Warehouse and C. P. Taylor

By 1976 after a period of financial difficulty and artistically uneven productions in the early part of the decade, the Royal Shakespeare Company appeared to have found its pace once more. The company mounted a total of twenty-five productions during the year, amongst them Trevor Nunn's widely praised production of *Macbeth*, and the première of David Edgar's outstanding play, *Destiny*. The previous year's *Henry V* also transferred to the Aldwych Theatre successfully. In Sally Beauman's view this marked a breakthrough for the RSC in its classical work, and was 'the first Stratford season in which the company achieved equally strong work both in its large and small theatres'. It was, in short, 'a triumph for the company'. (1)

In this mood of optimism an agreement was reached to open a new small theatre in London. A number of arguments were advanced in favour of expansion: an additional small scale London base would give the RSC's Other Place productions a deserved longer lease of life by transferring to London; the kind of encouragement given to new writers (pioneered by Buzz Goodbody at the Other Place in Stratford) was also needed in London and the Aldwych simply could not provide the base for this kind of work. Finally, the addition of a new venue would enable the RSC to retain the services of its best young directors, amongst them Howard Davies.

However, the difficulties of such a venture were clear. A new London base would be a considerable financial risk. The RSC owned the Other Place, but a new building in London would involve paying rent and rates. Whereas the Other Place could call upon the services of the Stratford workshops, a new theatre in the metropolis would be obliged to seek independent contractors for the construction of its sets. Clearly all this pushed up production costs with the attendant risks of overspending and greater potential losses if a production failed. The RSC management was quite aware of the dangers. So too was the Arts Council, who opposed the scheme.

It was also no secret that Howard Davies was a reluctant colleague in the Royal Shakespeare Company. He had made his professional directorial debut with the Bristol Old Vic after spending some years as a stage manager. Subsequently he became the artistic director of the Bristol Old Vic Studio and it was shortly after his resignation from this post over the censorship by Val May of a drama documentary based upon the *Oz* trial which he had been working on, that he met Buzz Goodbody. She had seen the play and wanted to stage *The Oz Trial* as part of the 1974 RSC season at The Place in London. 'I wanted to direct, not sit on someone else's shoulder; I'd done enough of

that as a stage manager', Davies commented to Judith Cook, (2) and so he became an assistant director with the RSC.

He first assisted John Barton with a production of *King John*, later directed Snoo Wilson's *The Beast* at The Place in London, and productions in Wales and Birmingham. He returned for a second season at The Other Place and directed a version of Brecht's *Man Is Man* by Steve Gooch. Subsequently Trevor Nunn asked him to direct Brecht's *Schweyk in the Second World War* and Edward Bond's *Bingo*, and in between these two plays he directed O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* at the Aldwych. 'It was during the rehearsals for the O'Neill play that Nunn approached Davies to become an RSC associate director - which, apart from the early case of Michel Saint-Denis, was unprecedented for someone who had not directed Shakespeare with the company and did not want to.' (3) Davies himself recalls 'Trevor... asked me to join the company as a director but I told him I couldn't. I didn't see myself as a Shakespeare director. I couldn't trust myself with Shakespeare as it didn't feel right for me, but if he were to set up a new play policy I would love to run that. For six months I heard nothing at all.' (4)

Davies was wary that the momentum of an institution like the RSC may simply sweep him along in a direction he had no desire to take, but recalling Buzz Goodbody's admonitions about fighting the organisation from within, he sought the advice of other friends and colleagues, amongst them Edward Bond. His support was unequivocal. If the result was to be a venue with a *raison d'être* in new writing then the opportunity must be grasped. Bond offered to write Davies a new play for the opening season of the theatre. 'Then Trevor came back... everyone thought the best way was to find a permanent building where that kind of work could go on in London, as an adjunct to the Aldwych. Would I a) find it (which was no small problem) and b) run it? It was a scary challenge.' (5)

All this happened in January 1977 and it was agreed that the new venue would open in July 1977 with the first season's programme in place. The lack of a suitable building was a fairly serious obstacle when it was envisioned that the first full season would begin in a little less than six months.

The company's requirements could no longer be met by venues which the RSC had used in the past, such as The Place off the Euston Road, and The Roundhouse in Chalk Farm, and logistically, if not financially, it made sense to find an available building near the Aldwych Theatre and the Covent Garden rehearsal rooms in Floral Street. After the failure of their first choice, Poupert's Warehouse in Covent Garden, from which the RSC had to withdraw because of complications and costs concerned with fire regulations, the company settled upon the Donmar rehearsal rooms in Earlham Street, Covent Garden.

The building had had a chequered history. A vat room for a brewery in the nineteenth century, a film studio in the 1920s, and later a fruit warehouse; in 1960, the theatre manager Donald Albery bought it and named it 'Donmar' after himself and Margot Fonteyn. Brook and Marowitz had used the space to stage scenes from Jean Genet's *The Screens* as part of their *Theatre of Cruelty* season in 1964 and the RSC rehearsed there before the building in Floral Street had been opened.

The Donmar was not without its problems and the minimum conversion work needed for the occasional performing licence granted to cover the opening night of the venue included the usual wiring and plumbing, but also work on the entrance and emergency exits as the auditorium was not at street level. More spacious than The Other Place, technically better equipped and seating a maximum of 200 on three sides of the stage, the auditorium was not only intended to receive transfers from The Other Place, but consciously designed to take productions from the Newcastle Gulbenkian Studio which, in Colin Chambers view, 'partly explains the poor sightlines it shares with that theatre'. The overall effect was 'a feeling of being inside a box inside another box'. (6)

Renamed The Warehouse, the first production in the new venue was a transfer from The Other Place of *Schweyk in the Second World War* which opened on 18 July 1977. But the play chosen as the official opening production was new, *That Good Between Us* by Howard Barker. Of the eight other plays that made up The Warehouse's first season four were revivals from Stratford, and four were new plays, namely, *Frozen Assets* by Barrie Keefe; *Factory Birds* by James Robson, which won the *Evening Standard* Best New Play Award; *The Bundle* by Edward Bond, (the play he had promised Davies he would write specifically for the opening of the new theatre) and C. P. Taylor's *Bandits*.

Taylor's breakthrough as a playwright had come many years earlier, in 1962. 'By happy chance it was the centenary year of the Blaydon Races and me being an opportunist, if nothing else, wrote a musical about the event, which was, of course, an allegory on capitalism.' (7) *Aa Went tae Blaydon Races* was chosen as the opening production for the new Flora Robson Theatre in Newcastle. The musical, an allegory built around a pit strike which occurred in Tyneside in 1862, was a popular success, and Taylor himself attracted a good measure of national publicity as a result. He was, however, disappointed that 'the reviews tended not to see the message and that the public just came out laughing'. (8)

His next professionally produced play, *Happy Days Are Here Again* (1965) initiated a long-standing working relationship with the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh, which regularly staged Taylor's plays. These included *Bread & Butter* (1966), *Lies about Vietnam* (1969), *The Black and White Minstrels* (1972), *Next Year in Tel Aviv*

(1973), *Schippel* (1974), *Gynt* (1975), and *Withdrawal Symptoms* (1978), a co-production with Foco Novo.

An American, Jim Haynes had acquired the original Traverse Theatre Club in the Grassmarket, Edinburgh in 1963 and began to stage the best of the American and European avant-garde along with new young British playwrights such as Heathcote Williams. By the time Taylor's first play was presented there, the venue had already gained the reputation as an experimental theatre space with an artistic director willing to take risks. Subsequent directors, amongst them Max Stafford-Clarke and Chris Parr, continued the tradition of nurturing Scottish dramatists.

These were formative years for Taylor. The Traverse provided precisely the kind of theatrical milieu he required to develop his skills: he had the freedom to experiment with dramatic form, directors and performers sympathetic to his artistic and political visions, and a small theatre space well suited to the intimacy of his writing style. Simultaneous with this work, and extending over an almost identical period, 1968 to 1978, Taylor worked as a playwright-adviser with the Northumberland Youth Theatre and with the Tyneside Theatre Trust which involved him in workshops in local schools, in drama therapy with the mentally handicapped at Northgate Hospital, Morpeth, and in writing a number of plays for Live Theatre Company, a Community Theatre group based in Newcastle.

Working with the Northumberland Youth Theatre transformed his approach to writing. Taylor explained that previously his practice had been to come 'down from his ivory tower and hand over his masterpiece to a professional company', (9) but in his involvement with the youth theatre he now spent several months chatting with the kids and their parents to discover what really interested them. Only after this period of gauging their real preoccupations would he write a first draft and return later to get their reaction to what he had written. After this he would often rewrite sections before finally handing it over to a group of professional actors to work on and take into local schools.

Peter Mortimer, a life long friend and critic of Taylor's, and editor of Iron Press, assessed the impact of Taylor's way of working on his subsequent writing:

His characters didn't represent points of view, or symbolise an aspect of modern civilisation (though obviously they often did that as well), they *lived*. They lived so much he couldn't resist making them turn to talk to the audience - one of his hallmarks. Even in mid-sentence he would at times freeze the action as a character turned to offer his confidantialities.

Seeing the technique refined to such a degree makes it look easy, a dramatic short cut even, but Taylor's secret was in dovetailing such confidences into the play itself, so we never had the impression of a character stopping to make a speech. (10)

Clearly the dramatic effect of this style of writing was the creation of an intense 'empathy between [the characters] and the audience' which worked especially well in the small intimate venues so often frequented by Live Theatre Company. (11) In an interview with Cordelia Oliver Taylor commented that this was precisely the result he was striving for in his writing: 'a looser form, so that the audience is... taken into the actor's confidence from time to time' rather than the pretence that 'there is no audience out there'. (12)

Taylor was quick to apply the techniques he had used in gathering material for his various youth theatre projects to new theatrical initiatives with Live Theatre Company, commenting:

Because of my growing awareness of the ever increasing gap between contemporary drama and ordinary audiences and my own personal failure to do anything about this during my years as Literary Manager of University Theatre, I decided to work for a year exploring for myself this new and growing area of community theatre.

The writing approach involved using a technique I had evolved in my work with children and young people I call 'tuning in' to an audience. (13)

This method of working is quite evident in the plays upon which he collaborated with Live Theatre Company in the closing years of the decade, *Some Enchanted Evening* (1977), *And a Nightingale Sang* (1978) and *The Saints Go Marching In* (1980).

A characteristic style had by this time established itself in Taylor's dramaturgical practice, the features of which frequently included the identification of a specific community which the play was intended to address. Taylor wrote: 'Theatre surely must be conceived in relation to the community it serves. It must answer, as all good drama in the past has done... the deep needs of the community.' (14) This involved Taylor in what he referred to as his 'tuning in' process: interviewing local people, gathering material from the local media and testing out ideas with the locals before approaching a group of professional theatre practitioners. His aim was that his writing should reflect local colour but be acute in its interpretation of popular conception. To this end he frequently incorporated traditional forms in his writing, whether 'classical' or avant-garde, recognisable popular melodies, classic comic characters or routines, and wild anarchic humour as ironic commentary.

Taylor was also concerned to 'attempt to present the inner landscapes of people's lives', (15) 'working people exploring their feelings, philosophies and relationships with the same concern and sensitivity that had usually been the province of plays of middle-class origin and angst' (16) and which led Taylor to allow his characters to address the audience directly in the seamless fashion described by Peter Mortimer. This frequently suggested the choice of domestic diplomacy as a dramatic locus, not for the shrill

ideological politicisation of family relations, with strident dialogue expressing categorical truths about gender relations, but rather to *challenge* the tendency to make categories of political thought and action impervious to moral scrutiny. By taking the justifications of *real politik* and expediency, and placing the bureaucrats who reason in this fashion in shared social and emotional proximity Taylor aimed to make them *more* not less susceptible to moral evaluation by the audience. No longer semi-mythological figures on the stage of history, their domestication places them on human scale.

The sequential development of chronological time as a *total* frame for dramatic action is dispensed with in Taylor's plays. Instead he employs chronological time to underpin the base-line of the dramatic direction, and alternative time frames to inhibit or hasten, disclose or disguise the significance of the action. Consequently dialogue becomes episodic, in a rolling cyclical fashion, and conversations occurring between different characters often stand in a contrapuntal relationship to one another between synchrony and diachrony.

Most of these features are particularly evident in *Bandits* (1977) and in his later play, *Good. A Tragedy* (1981). Davies chose *Bandits* for production in The Warehouse's first season because he considered it to be 'a fine example of social realism' and because it represented 'the best of the excellent work that is being carried out by community theatres up and down the country'. (17)

The RSC, as it happened, had just returned from the first of its annual seasons to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where the play is set, and where in 1976 *Bandits*, directed by Paul Chamberlain, had received a first production by the Newcastle Polytechnic student theatre group, On The Side. Davies was keen on promoting writers who were not based in London (18) and the subject matter of *Bandits* fitted perfectly with this 'unapologetically Socialist season of new work' which itself represented 'a considerable break with anything the RSC had attempted in the past'. (19) Significantly Howard Davies's ideas about rehearsal dovetailed with Taylor's methods of researching and writing:

The luxury of working within the RSC meant that I had six or seven weeks rehearsal and I could explore the text in many different ways... I had a deep resistance to the kind of loose improvisational techniques used by many people working on the fringe... they had begun to be seen as a way of rehearsing instead of as an adjunct to it... In rehearsal I tended to work out exercises or explanatory projects which would fit the specific work I was engaged upon. (20)

Davies, also wanted very much to

encourage writers to be part of the rehearsal process, so that plays might be considerably changed by rehearsal discoveries and the editorial judgement of

directors. It was, in effect, a kind of journalistic process adapted to theatre, and it placed more emphasis on the development of writers than on the mounting of totally achieved and successful work. The Warehouse was to be a workshop as much as a showcase. (21)

In the eighteen months following The Warehouse's opening season, Davies drew a small and informal team of directors around him to assist with the theatre's programme. The group included: Barry Kyle who was the senior director of the team, having worked for the RSC since 1973; Walter Donohue who was appointed as the Literary Manager of The Warehouse, the theatre's chief point of contact with writers. He had worked with Charles Marowitz at the Open Space, with Howard Davies when he was the artistic director of the Old Vic Studio in Bristol, and had directed at many other theatres, including the National Theatre and the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs; and Bill Alexander, who became a resident director in 1978 after joining the RSC as an assistant director the year before. Alexander had worked with Davies at the Bristol Old Vic, and directed in London at the Royal Court Theatre, and in Nottingham and Newcastle. John Caird also became a resident director having joined the RSC in 1977.

In Colin Chambers assessment the productions which comprised the first season of the RSC's residency at The Warehouse 'were a success, artistically, and with the public' but in his view, 'the programme went adrift' almost immediately. (22) He cites a number of reasons for this. The artistic director had no overall control of his most basic responsibility, the theatre's programme, half the productions being 'chosen by someone else in Stratford'. In addition the programming of transfers and new commissions in relation to one another was less than straightforward - alternating them seemed to be 'the most successful artistically'. Nor did commissioning new writing turn out to be as adventurous and uncomplicated as initial excitement at the prospect appeared to promise. Chambers explained: 'Some writers do not like to write to deadlines, and even less to a subject. Others may agree, and then not come up with the goods, or may produce a script that is not up to standard...There are serious consequences if it is not honoured in full - or, worse, if it is not honoured at all.' (23)

Moreover, the adoption of a repertoire system, rather than the straight run also made it difficult for both the actors and the audiences. No sooner did a cast find the rhythms of a new play and feel at home in their roles, than attention had to be switched to a different production. This tendency worked against both the measured cultivation of new writing in the process of building a strong production *and* the kind of momentum that could gather when a production could have a long run.

Chambers also points to problems with the relative locations of the RSC auditoriums. The absence of an on-site box office also proved to be an inhibiting factor. Tickets had to be bought at the Aldwych Theatre - and an almost invisible front

of house led to a failure to attract new audiences both to The Warehouse's Shakespeare performances and new plays. Finally, The Warehouse 'had to operate within the limits of shamefully inadequate funding' and Howard Davies had 'little or precarious' say in the allocation of resources. The continued survival of the RSC depended upon careful budgeting and required almost prophetic accuracy in predicting box-office takings. With The Warehouse locked into a symbiotic relationship with The Other Place in Stratford and the Aldwych in London, its health tended to rise and fall with the fortunes of each production in the contributory venues. (24)

Despite these difficulties the RSC was able to offer The Warehouse resources and an identity which were of clear benefit. The Warehouse developed strong links with a substantial number of writers who were invited to see performances and work-in-progress, to familiarise themselves with the space, the technical possibilities and limitations, and the Company's developing styles of acting in the 'relative luxury of a long rehearsal period'. (25) 'When considering', Chambers observes, 'a majority sampling of the plays presented at The Warehouse in its first four seasons... the common denominator is clear. The 'naturalistic', understated, unrhetorical style of such work'. (26) The intimacy of the space, the style of acting, and the possibility that new work could be seen within three months of being written explains to some degree the immediacy of the productions - conditions which also favoured writing which presented a 'slice of life'.

Walter Donohue, the Literary Manager, attempted to elaborate upon these preferences:

We tend to choose plays that have a very clear statement to make about the social contexts of the characters in the plays, which comes of course from the writers own concern about the social context in which they themselves live.

The landscape they are concerned with are not interior landscapes but wider social ones. And they also write, in a sense, epic plays. Instead of them being small, domestic, intimately emotional plays, they tend to write plays which are wider than that... The sets that have worked... have been sets which have been very minimal, and the plays that have worked there the best have been those that used the minimal nature of The Warehouse.

What we offer, in a sense, is a space, a group of actors, technical resources so that a writer has an opportunity to write... the focus of The Warehouse isn't plays but writers... We are interested in the process... and... we are trying to engage ourselves and our work in the social struggle that is going on at the moment. (27)

Donohue's inclusive description of the plays is a concession to the desired ideological conformity of the repertoire and an expression of the traditional sentiment of



opposition to bourgeois dramaturgy as well as the definite location of the The Warehouse within the tradition of left-wing oppositional theatre.

Howard Davies's commissioning of a new play from Taylor following the success of *Bandits* in 1977 may have provided the impetus Taylor required to return to an adaptation of *Faust* he had worked on many years earlier with the director Michael Bogdonov when they were both connected with Tyneside Theatre Company.

Ultimately nothing had come of this collaboration, but the early versions of *Good* demonstrate the development of the Faust material quite clearly. 'The Halder character is called Faust, and there is a character called Mephistopheles who eventually becomes Hitler', (28) and although the overt use of the circus as a metaphor for the Third Reich - Faust becomes a superb juggler under the tutelage of Mephistopheles - does not survive the early versions, the use of the democratising dramatic technique, popular music, does. Taylor had finished writing the revised script by the end of 1979. However, rehearsals did not begin until the autumn of 1981, and a further delay to the production ensued due to conflicting professional schedules: the existing commitments of Davies abroad and Alan Howard in Stratford.

Davies was confronted by a number of problems in his preparation. Taylor had not abandoned his usual method of writing, and the manuscript badly needed editing. Taylor's drafts often betrayed their origins in the extemporaneous work of group sessions and hence the need for an unsentimental editorial eye, usually Taylor's own. On this occasion, the process of editing proved beyond his emotional resources. Taylor was experiencing a number of personal crises and he could not tolerate the prospect of the editing process. At Taylor's request Howard Davies took on the task of editing the manuscript, and with Taylor's approval reduced the play from three to two acts. (29)

*Good* also provoked questions in rehearsal about the most appropriate method of approaching the play. Davies has commented:

In the case of... Cecil Taylor's *Good*, which is so fragmented in form, it became apparent after a short period of rehearsal that we would have to talk about that dirty word, 'style'. People had very different ideas of style and we were able to spend days on what it meant, on whether it could help the play, and, if it did, what we would choose to be *our* style... I had the time to explore such avenues which came out of a more rigorous approach to the play and what I wanted to do with it, an awareness that there were options, instead of being committed to an avenue of thought from day one of rehearsals. (30)

In a later interview Davies described his chosen style for the production of *Good* as 'pointillist', (31) indicating that meaning does not arise solely from a fixed point of localised colour, but also from a broader perspective, where apparently unrelated fragments merge to produce recognisable patterns of meaning. The pointillist style

corresponded to Taylor's elision of synchrony and diachrony. Davies's gift was in discovering the phrasing of the dynamics within the dramatic movement - much as a pianist has to do with a musical score - so that the meanings in Taylor's script were drawn out with a clarity which could otherwise have been lost.

During the rehearsal period Davies also faced the difficulty of his own and the cast's knowledge of the fate of European Jewry. Davies commented: 'We realised that the more we emoted about this play, or the more we gave historical hindsight about how awful the events were afterwards, the less people would be clear about events, and we wouldn't get that ghastly innocence.' (32)

Taylor and Davies had set themselves a most difficult challenge: to attempt an imaginative reconstruction of the processes both institutional and personal, public and private by which a highly educated and cultured man bemusedly finds and places himself at the disposal of political power, and to do this without recourse to dramatic techniques which could so easily impart a kitsch sense of unfolding inevitability as had been the case in varying degrees with Arthur Miller's *Incident at Vichy* and *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank*.

Once Taylor had confessed to a friend: 'I want to write a play about the concentration camps. It's got to be a comedy. It's the only way to deal with the subject.' (33) In his note which prefaces the published play he comments:

Although *Good* is obviously based on facts of recent history, documentary material, and is peopled in some cases by real characters, this story of how a 'good' man gets caught up in the nightmare of the Third Reich is a work of the imagination. What the tragedy which I have written as a comedy, or musical-comedy is about, will hopefully emerge in the performance. (34)

For Taylor humour broke the stranglehold of any suggestion of inevitability. *Good* finally opened at The Warehouse in Covent Garden on 2 September 1981.

## 6.2 *Good. A Tragedy*

Halder is a lecturer in German literature at Frankfurt University, both a perceptive literary critic - he has a number of academic texts to his credit - and a successful novelist. His swimmingly urbane manner, shot through with the hypersensitivity of his profession, lends his svelte intellect a squeamish aspect: creative imagination is the faculty he both celebrates and defends against.

Halder's latest novel is drawn from his experience of his mother's senile dementia and he arrives at particularly uncompromising conclusions about the fate of those who show clear signs of mental deterioration. It is his earnest, his genuinely pained

reluctance to draw such conclusions which attracts the attention of the Committee for Research into Hereditary Diseases at Tiergartenstrasse Four.

Over-leader Bouller casually, but purposefully, lets slip in conversation with Halder that both Goebbels and Hitler are impressed with his novel because they appreciate it is 'written from the heart'. (G. p. 20) Observing that his remarks hit home in their appeal to Halder's vanity, Bouller makes further appeal to it by suggesting that Halder has the potential to be the compassionate and moderating influence the party needs in the kind of institution for the elderly he has written about, and which unfortunately can often be susceptible to contrary tendencies. If Halder were 'on board' then Bouller could rest assured that 'the whole question of humanity would never be lost from the initial stages of planning, to the final implementation'. (G. p. 28) What would be equally useful would be an academic paper 'arguing along the same lines as you do in your novel... mercy killings of the incurable and hopelessly insane, on the grounds of humanity and compassion'. (G. p. 27)

Halder's wife Helen is a slob. She suffers from the ennui of the creative artist (she is a pianist) and the sentimentality of the intellectually lazy. The immense sense of frustration she feels with herself is projected into driving others to be ambitious on her behalf, consequently compensating for the absence of *any* ambitions of her own. Halder elicits promises of loyalty from her, because he needs the reassurance that *his own* reciprocal avowals of love and faithfulness will momentarily grant him in his bid to convince himself that his marriage is not really going awry. At the same time he is also planning to leave both his mother and family, for one of his students, Anne, a Rhine- maiden beauty, so convinced is he of the basic soundness of his relationship to his wife.

While they study the contemporary significance of *Faust* in romantic evening meetings, Halder fantasises about creating a bucolic idyll in the forest to which they will escape, while also candidly confessing to Anne that he could never leave his children.

Party membership is urged upon Halder by Helen as a proper expression of his concern for his family: 'For the sake of your children and me... You must join the National Socialists.' She follows the admonition, with the persecutory insinuation: 'You'll get nowhere in the University now unless you join the party', and, for good measure, the potential disapproval of the in-laws: 'Johnnie... Father says you could even lose your lectureship.' (G. p. 12) Taylor suggests that it is Halder's confusion about his marriage, and considerations about the welfare of his young family, his career prospects, and his family's good name, each manipulated by a slatternly wife ambitious only for her own indolence, which are the factors that shape his decision making, not rational consideration based upon an objective critical examination of party creed and ideology.

The ultimate reversal of his justification for party membership follows swiftly. Halder has left his wife Helen and rationalises his decision to join the party to his lover Anne as an expression of his concern for the fate of the Jews: 'If people like us join them... instead of keeping away from them, being purist... And push them a bit towards humanity... Is that kidding yourself?' (*G.* p. 26)

When Anne replies, 'What if they push *us* the other way?' (*G.* p. 26), Halder suggests that there may still be the possibility of escape from the regime, which reveals in an instant Halder's fears of being crushed by the momentum of the party machinery, and a confirmation both of the speciousness of his declared love for the Jews and his opacity to his lover's anti-Semitism; for the 'they' in her mind, are not the Nazis, but the Jews. Her anxieties are stirred, not by politically orchestrated violence, but by prejudice: a conception of conspiratorial Jews.

The most significant relationship through which Taylor represents 'how a "good" man gets caught up in the nightmare of the Third Reich' (*G.*, Author's note) is that which exists between Halder and his friend Maurice, who is an analyst and a Jew. Taylor juxtaposes the increasingly desperate Maurice with Halder's complicitous and deepening involvement with the party's murderous plans.

Maurice has no illusions about his friendship with Halder: 'Hitler has perverted the whole nature of our relationship. Bugged up one of the few friendships I valued', nor about the unbridgeable difference in their positions: 'You can stay in Frankfurt for the rest of your life. End up Professor - Vice Chancellor... I cannot predict what pillow I'll be resting my head on tonight.' (*G.* p. 8) Maurice's acidic reasonableness about Nazi anti-Semitism, recognising that the policy may *not* be a particularly astute move and may simply serve to create further problems for the party, is the defence of self-deprecation, for he is also convinced on a gut-level that the prejudices which have been systematically aroused will not be easily pacified. Halder, on the other hand, who has been drawn further into the euthanasia programme, is flattered into joining the SS: 'Herr Doctor... You can't join the SA. How can a man like you join the SA? That amuses me. The modest opinion you have of yourself... The Kaiser had his own élite regiment... now we have our élite. The SS. Clearly, that is the only place for you. In the élite along with us.' (*G.* pp. 29-30)

Maurice pleads with Halder to use his influence as a member of the SS to secure his safe-conduct out of the country. Halder certainly has a new life in mind. His own. He has designs on Maurice's family home at Burgsinn as the perfect rural idyll for himself and Anne. When the moment presents itself he raises the subject with Maurice in a direct fashion. 'I don't want to push you about the cottage... But if we could have it even just for a few months... You're not using it anyway, just now... It would be exactly the right start for us.' (*G.* p. 47)

The fundamental break in his relationship with Maurice has already occurred by this time, Halder having decided that it is possible only to meet covertly in a park where it is unlikely they will be recognised. Excusing his faltering affection, Halder attempts to convince himself a measure of altruism remains. He murmurs under his breath: 'I *have* gone out of my way to meet him here, just now... I know I'm after his cottage... But it's not entirely that... Is it?' (G. p. 46) But Halder has taken no steps to assist Maurice's escape.

Halder's dissemblance in his friendship with Maurice has been preceded by a new departure and dissemblance in his professional life. He has been requested to attend an institution for the 'care' of the elderly, his involvement being justified in terms of the 'advisory capacity' which he is persuaded is the sole basis of his presence. Halder's considered and humane assessment indicates his obligation to,

make sure... that the procedure is carried out humanely... Their last hour must be absolutely free from any trace of anxiety...

This room is adequate... But it needs to be much more ordinary and reassuring... Could it be made to look like a bathroom, perhaps... So that the patients are reassured and believe they are being taken for a bath. (G. pp. 44, 45)

With a touching attention to detail Halder translates imagination into reality. He moves with Anne from their rural idyll to a Professor Mandelstam's vacant mansion, and, as it so happens, to his vacant Professorial Chair. Halder also moves from burning books to burning buildings and it is amidst the fires of *Reichkristallnacht* that Halder and Maurice 'encounter' each other for the final time.

In their first encounter Halder had confided to Maurice of feeling anxious, of his inability to be attentive. Halder is self-absorbed to the point of alienation. He also hears music. 'I can't get *lost* you see? I can't lose myself in people or situations. Everything's acted out against this bloody musical background... The whole of my life is a performance? Is that too glib, do you think, Maurice?' (G. p. 5)

It is at precisely the moments of moral complexity, crisis and then evasion that Halder soothes his overtaxed mind and sorely vexed spirit with the banality of awful melody- the muzak of pure Teutonic/German *Kultur*, the sentimental associations of which serve as stimulant to and substitute for the absence of genuine passion, for the absence of discerned relations and attachment, and for the failure of genuine imaginative thought. It is a mechanism which allows him to drown out and escape the feelings and thoughts he does not wish to hear.

Wagner accompanies the lighting of fires, and Halder's collaboration in the burning of books; Richard Tauber, Marlene Dietrich and Schubert lieder accompany the blossoming of romance between Halder and Anne; a Bavarian mountain band

accompanies new departures, the lovers to their rural idyll, and the elderly and infirm to theirs; Halder joins the SS in a magnificent grandiloquent mansion which turns 'everything into 'The Student Prince'. 'God forgive me!', exclaims Halder, 'it was a wonderful feeling - joining. You have no idea the emotional heights it lifted me to', (G. p. 29) as the rousing verses of 'The Drinking Song' are belted out by the SS; smoke curls into the sky as Halder and Anne enjoy a cosy fireside tryst, and books burn while a crooner sings 'My Blue Heaven'.

On the morning of the *Reichkristallnacht*, Maurice appears to Halder playing a movement from Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto. Halder, accused by Maurice's presence in his reverie, rationalises the action which the party is planning to avenge the murder of a German attaché in Paris by a Jewish student: 'This is a regime in its childhood... It's social experiment in its earliest stages... I see tonight... As a basically humane action... It's going to shock the Jews into the *reality* of their situation in Nazi Germany', (G. p. 57) and when they 'encounter' each other amidst the flames of burning buildings, 'Frankfurt looking more like the set of "Götterdämmerung" at Bayreuth', (G. p. 64) Halder makes his final rationalisation and, it may be assumed, his final reversal: 'Instead of daring to confront ourselves with reality maybe, Maurice, maybe... It's the Jews fault... They are responsible... I'm not blaming you. I forgive you... Maurice.' (G. pp. 65, 66) In the background the Frankfurt Jewish Male Voice Choir is singing 'Jesus Joy of Man's Desiring'.

Earlier Eichmann had summoned Halder to see him to assess his suitability for special service in the domain of Jewish affairs, and as Eichmann browses through the files, he casually refers to a note about 'some kind of friendship with a Gluckstein... Maurice Gluckstein'. Halder makes light of the association with a perfunctory dismissal of any suggestion that a relationship had existed on anything other than purely professional grounds, 'as a doctor'. To which Eichmann, without visible emotion, replies, 'That's right... He was a doctor... I have it down here.' [my italics] (G. p. 55)

Shortly afterwards, Halder is posted in service of Eichmann's office. As he prepares to leave Anne to travel East, she, in the romantic moments of postponement of their parting confesses: 'Whatever happens... around us... However we get pushed... I know we're good people... both of us', to which Halder replies: 'Yes... We probably are... good... Yes... Whatever that means...' (G. p. 68)

On the next occasion Halder hears music, he has been chauffeured to a camp a little way from 'an ordinary dirty industrial town'. (G. p. 68) He is greeted by the camp Commandant and becomes immediately aware that something is not all that it should be with the officer facing him. Halder addresses the audience as he shakes hands with the Commandant: 'I was trying to work out what exactly it was, all the time he was

welcoming me.' (G. p. 64) After exchanging pleasantries, the realisation breaks upon Halder: 'He showed no emotion. That was it.' Halder is in Auschwitz speaking with Commandant Höss. And,

the funny thing was... I heard this band. Playing a Schubert march. 'Oh', I registered to myself 'We're having Schubert, now' ...

Then I became aware that there was in fact a group of prisoners... maybe in my honour. I'm not sure... The important thing was... The significant thing... the band was *real!* (G. p. 69)

With these final lines Taylor presents us with the final and appalling reversal. The psychic retreat of his sentimental musical fantasy is confronted by a grotesque reality so fantastic that it is hardly believable: the band is real. Yet this absolutely unimaginable reality is surveyed with the equanimity which belongs to everyday mundane routine. The vacant presence of Höss, this consuming abstraction may represent the only human possibility if the 'Professor of Denial' fails once more to use, rather than to escape into, his imagination, a capacity he had once implored his senile mother to employ, when she was still alive: 'Use your imagination... You'll never be able to bloody live on your own if you don't give yourself a shake.' (G. p. 41)

### 6.3 The critical reception of *Good*

What is most noticeable about the critical response to *Good* is its almost unanimous warmth. The prime reason for this admiration is indicated by Michael Billington: 'What Taylor has done is to reclaim the cliché figure, the *good* Nazi, and to show that it is nonsense: that you cannot divorce the private conscience from the political activity.' [my italics] (35) Taylor had succeeded in presenting a credible human being, neither monster nor hero.

The challenge facing Taylor had been to represent a thoroughly believable *human* portrait in Halder, and not succumb either to the temptation to present a *kitsch* evil Nazi, where the expression of evil is simplistically defined and the inevitability of choice a foregone conclusion, or the noble officer whose inexorable rise through party ranks implies no moral complexity whatsoever, and who remains obedient and *honourable* throughout, thus providing an apologia for Nazi action during the Holocaust.

Halder's humanity was his most appealing feature in the production, and John Elsom observes that Taylor 'had a natural gift for creating characters who were instantly recognisable. They sprang to life from the page and you got involved with them, much as you would do with your mates in the pub.' (36) But there were other

factors, not least Alan Howard's performance as John Halder. The vast majority of critics shared the opinion, best represented by Billington once again, when he writes of Howard: 'the weak smiles, the black button eyes behind silver glasses, the slight embarrassment about what to do with his body... convey perfectly Taylor's neurotic intellectual.' (37) But it is in the appeal of the writing and the acting that the consequent danger lies. Would the sympathetic portrayal of Halder make his actions comprehensible and therefore justifiable?

Although Taylor's skill with characterisation enabled him to represent effectively the academic buffeted by domestic difficulties seeking a quick fix, and making choices which involved acts of duplicity, compromise and rationalisation, human frailty does not become the sole justification, nor the total explanation of his course of action. Taylor succeeds in carving out and preserving a dramatic space for Halder's lack of resolve through a grimly ironic counter-narrative. It is largely constructed from two complementary dramatic devices, an on-stage café quintet, and Taylor's treatment of dramatic time. The biting ironic commentary serves to highlight the blatant nature of Halder's compromise and rationalisation and the sense that other possible courses of action were open to him at the moment he chooses to lose himself in his musical musing. While both dramatic features drew the approbation of most critics they were not necessarily accurately understood by all.

Taylor was not solely aiming for historical accuracy through his use of period songs to evoke in detail a particular era, as other English dramatists had done with a marked degree of success. He was more interested in provoking a shared emotional resonance, an identification with Halder's defensive strategy and a sense of alienation between audience and the dramatic action, evoked not by historical exactitude - (the likelihood that this piece of music could have been heard by those kinds of people at this particular time) - but the capacity of the music to convey accurately a mood of ironic commentary on the action. The audience might identify with Halder's frailty as in good classical theory but the propensity of the audience to do this is countered by the equally strong intention and appeal of the musical motifs which, along with the other dramatic elements, ironise Halder, making it clear that his reasoning is in fact rationalisation.

To describe *Good* as "Holocaust" [the US television series of that title] with "Pennies from Heaven" [Dennis Potter] (38) or, as 'a cartoon image of what it was like to live in Germany relying on such obvious atmospheric tricks as Tauber's songs', (39) or to say 'the period before the war comes alive through snatches of music' (40) is to miss the point. Again Billington captures Taylor's intentions:

What gives the play its distinctive style and tone is the use of music as a metaphor for reality-evasion.



A café orchestra sits on stage along with the entire cast (a current RSC trademark) and strikes up the tunes that flit through the hero's head in moments of crisis... This is not the bad-taste joke... of counterpointing savage acts with jaunty music. It becomes a direct way of expressing the self-kidding fantasies of a man who believes that once the economy is sorted out, Nazism will go away. (41)

But Elsom comes closest to Taylor's arguably Stanislavskian intention to tap affective memory rather than test the accuracy of the audience's knowledge of the history of music:

Music plays an important part in *Good...* It is used partly for its nostalgic quality... partly to evoke the sentimentality of the times, the grotesque mixture in the Nazi culture of patriotism, heroism and family virtue; and partly to conjure up an atmosphere of escapist kitsch where Halder can wander vacant and bemused, with a half smile playing on his lips. (42)

It is precisely these affective associations Taylor is playing with, not, as Billington rightly remarks, for the sake of pseudo-profundity through a kitsch counterpoint of the light-hearted with the brutal, but as Elsom has indicated, to create a fruitful juxtaposition of 'historical sensibilities' whose colour and texture are themselves ironised in relation to the dramatic action. For example, the clearly intended irony on the occasion Halder joins the National Socialists to the strains of 'The Drinking Song' from *The Student Prince*. Halder joins the Nazis in an atmosphere of erotic celebration - it is the moment he feels most alive - all of which influences audience interpretation of the episodes by which the incident is framed, deeper involvement in the euthanasia programme and his consideration of membership of the SS, providing multiple dramatic perspectives on the stifling of conscience through Halder's willingness to be taken in.

The *style* of the dramatic action also contributes to the ironising process, and is another reason for the generous reception of the play. In this instance, it is Irving Wardle who best expresses the significance of Taylor's kind of writing:

Its great technical achievement is to combine a fluid interplay of past and present with a purposeful unfolding of events. The production thus draws you into sympathy with his [Halder's] detachment from his family and friends, while at the same time intercutting scenes so as to present an ominously ironic perspective. The control of stage time is masterly. (43)

By introducing several narrative lines, and returning to each in a synchronic, relational rather than a totally diachronic developmental sense, Taylor is able to achieve through this juxtaposition startlingly dramatic disclosures, and heightened suspense. For

example, when a scene presenting the domestic difficulties which have arisen through the presence of Halder's infirm mother *at home*, her attempts to negotiate the stairs and the bathroom and his frustration with her infirmity, resolves into a scene of calm clinical discussion between Halder and other staff members about the kind of attention to detail that is required to maintain the *pretence* of care, and to preserve the peace of mind of those unsuspecting victims who have 'found their way' into an *institution* for euthanasia, there is no dramatic need for further elaboration about the ultimate destiny of Halder's mother. The dramatic meaning is bitingly clear. Each scene acts as an ironic commentary on the other - on the idea of care, and the fate of the individual: attentive care is needed for the living, but is given to sanitise murderous actions!

Wardle is not alone in his assessment of the collage-style of the production and a number of critics gave Howard Davies due credit for his handling of Taylor's complex material. Michael Coveney commented, 'Howard Davies's production is a model of clarity and restraint', (44) and Mark Amory observed that it might 'sound complicated but is never for a moment baffling'. (45)

Elsom reflected that '*Good* can be regarded as an attempt to create in dramatic terms the confusions of Halder's mind', a view shared by Wardle. But, Elsom is quick to add, 'it is not a formless play. The tight control of its subject matter never slackens.' (46) It was no small matter that Robert Cushman could also claim, 'No recent play has had so macabrely elegant an ending.' (47)

The critic who raised most objections was Alan Jenkins. In many respects his view of the play's preoccupations does not markedly differ from those of other critics:

C. P. Taylor is... less interested in stirring pity for the sufferers and victims than in provoking reflection on the monsters and torturers. His play sets out to be thoroughly didactic. For the grimmest irony is how an intelligent though innocent, bemused and ineffectual man like Halder succumbs with something approaching gratitude to the gruesome distortion of his works and aims which is effected by the SS to further their own. Such collusion may spring from deeply buried psychological sources, and a few are canvassed: the overriding need for love and acceptance, the talismanic virtue of a uniform and so on. (48)

But Jenkins's real concern is that Taylor has reduced deliberate state policy, its systematic planning and execution to individual foible: 'Taylor implies that the real causes are ignorance, blindness, self-delusion, a fatal misreading of historical reality and a failure to grasp the subplot of history, the meaning of directions taken by events', (49) and goes on to challenge the dramatic plausibility of Halder's stance:

Inflation, growing militarism, the deadly words of Hitler, all the sinister stage management of a circus whose public theatre provided the spectacle of beatings, burnings, lootings and killings - all this was obvious enough. So how is it that

Halder can rationalise it as something not to be taken seriously? And how, when the full terror has been unleashed, can he see it as something the Jews have brought on themselves? (50)

Jenkins concedes that these questions are those which pressed in upon Taylor's mind, but in Jenkins's assessment they are 'not answered in any coherent way'. He considers Taylor's ironic stance through the ludicrously extreme rationalisations which Halder makes to appease his own conscience an insufficient dramatic strategy. He accuses him of side-stepping the central issue by 'the simple expedient of his title', also dramatised in the explicit action of the play by the assumption that 'such people as they' are purely and naïvely good. In Jenkins's words, Taylor 'regards the civilised humane intellectual's innocence as *automatically* self-aggrandising, hypocritical, contemptible' and this merely adds 'the semblance of a problematic dimension to... a superficial argument'. (51) In short, Jenkins's accusation is that Taylor is *more* concerned with condemning self-indulgent liberal *attitudes* - be they hubris, naiveté or expediency, or a combination of these, which allowed such 'civilised' individuals to commit such crimes while continuing to consider themselves good - than he is with the immensity of the *actions* themselves, which are self-evidently evil. He comments: 'In such historical circumstances as Halder's, "good" is not a matter of conscience, of scruple, and dwelling on the event: it is shown only in action. Acting as Halder does, a man automatically forfeits his claim to be "good".' (52)

The play's approximate *chronological* span is 1933-1942, so that there is nothing hurried about the inexorable and corrosive progress of Halder's compromise. Before the action starts, Halder committed himself to his incorrigible wife at least long enough to begin a family, during which time he also cared for an increasingly infirm mother and pursued professional ambitions in the writing of academic texts and novels.

Taylor did not write about heroic virtue or the discovery of unsuspected moral and emotional resources in an individual's confrontation with Nazism, but about moral cowardice masquerading as aspiration to goodness, dutiful social conformity with pretensions to virtue, and the distortion of good intentions by mundane emotional demand, hence the ironic title. Taylor's play is not about the sudden and catastrophic moral disintegration of a previously saintly individual or the making of one, but the erosion of the will by everyday adversity, and the ease with which the offer of affirmation in the limitless horizon of sterile obligation through the appreciation of a student and the flattery of colleagues become through compromise, indulgence and easy acquiescence, *capitulation* to dubious notions of loyalty to family, friends, party or state. There is virtue enough, or the aspiration to virtue, but what Taylor has sketched is not the epic clash of good versus evil, where a tragic flaw leads to the hero's undoing, but the demise of the myth of integrity.

By focusing his exploration of the propensity to compromise and rationalisation, moral long-sightedness and opportunism upon a particular highly intelligent and articulate figure whose sensibilities are saturated in a critical understanding of the cultural history of his country, less 'excuse' can be found for his complicitous behaviour in his social background - the lack of an enlightened milieu - or in innate *inability* - his intellectual *incapacity* - the easiest lines of recourse for 'ordinary people' scratching around for something or someone to blame, rather than accept that choices have been made.

Taylor succeeds in focusing the audience's attention upon more complex dynamics. He may have failed in laying bare the complex motivations of the ordinary German's propensity to complicitous silence, thus providing a cogent explanation for the historical facts, but his achievement is to have given a rare insight into the tone and pitch of, on the one hand, manipulation through the glib benevolence of the insincere, and on the other, moral compromise and capitulation, each of which contributed to the absence of resistance to Nazism, and sealed the fate of European Jewry.

Jenkins holds that Taylor has wilfully missed the central issue: making a clear dramatic statement about *actions* taken for which ample evidence exists, and upon which basis moral conclusions may be reached. But Taylor's prime interest was to embody in Halder the kind of outlook which preceded action, in order better to understand both. The malaise of the imagination and apathy of will that makes prejudice (and its attendant sentimental symbolic representations, caricature and cliché), a moral capitulation in the *pre-meditation* of racial violence and state organised extermination, and the absence or failure of moral imperatives, are deemed by Jenkins not to be issues of the *first* magnitude. It is those issues which exercise Taylor's mind and which are far from superficial. Or as Hannah Arendt observed, the question as to the nature of genuine thought is of almost equal import to the question of the existence of God. For Taylor the fate of the Jews can only be understood through a better appreciation of the failure of the German imagination.

Michael Coveney warned - though he thought it an unlikely response from the sophisticated audience who frequented The Warehouse - that the production was so effective in conveying the seductive power of National Socialism and Halder's urbane rationalisations, that it ran the risk of being received in a fashion, counter to its intended dramatic purpose, making involvement in Nazi ideology appear more, not less attractive.

This is precisely the territory Taylor is attempting to explore: the seductive power of political organisation over disorganised mercurial individuals who relish being 'knocked into shape' within a uniformed organisation, while also able to find justifications for brutality toward Jews within their own liberal traditions.

Jenkins shares Coveney's concern and goes further by questioning even the possibility of dramatisation:

More important, surely, than those details of entertainment-value is not just the residual sense of triviality which surrounds such a project when weighed against the witness of a Paul Celan or Charlotte Delbo, or the familiar, appalling newsreels, but the question of whether some things not only cannot be said, but should not be done, at all. (53)

This is as succinct a summary as may be found of one tradition of argument in the area of Holocaust literature studies. Silence as the only proper, indeed the only permissible response. It allows of no creative expression by any individual, other than that by those directly involved in the events of 1933-1945, the assumption being that the more strictly a work stands to personal experience of the historical events, the greater its validity. The problems with such a position are immense not least because creative works fail in their prime intent not because of the radically *unimaginable* reality they are seeking to express, or because of any failure of courage in grappling with personal trauma, but because the creative reach and skill of many a victim or eye witness are so limited that their chosen narrative strategies fail to offer dimensions of understanding and representation that make writing - whether historical or imaginative - an experience of disclosure. Being a witness is no guarantee of historical veracity or representational clarity.

It appears that Jenkins wants no plays at all, or if there are to be plays, characters such as Halder should be represented as committing specific actions in *full* self-consciousness that their actions constitute the most extreme evil. This would be as much a historical distortion as that which Jenkins accuses Taylor of making, and is precisely the issue Taylor is attempting to explore, namely the moral purview of those who joined the SS. (54)

The kinds of questions Taylor attempted to explore dramatically in *Good* have in the last two decades increasingly become a legitimate focus of scholarly enquiry, so that the values, opinions and actions of a variety of sections of the civilian population and uniformed organisations in relation to the implementation of National Socialist policy, and subsequently the 'Final Solution' are under scrutiny, some for the first time. To make these issues the focus of dramatic representation appears to be an example of dramatic art taking a critical stance toward contemporary belief and behaviour. To condemn the attempt, as Jenkins does, as superficial artifice is an ungenerous interpretation of Taylor's intentions, and a serious misunderstanding of areas of human experience which traditionally have been legitimately explored through dramatic art.

Taylor may have been careless to imply in his preface (expressing his intellectual awareness of the West's implication in contemporary 'Auschwitzes') that the Holocaust was anything other than *sui generis*. (55) But he was surely not wrong to imply that the nature of political culture and the tendency to conformity within bureaucratic infrastructures often betray a similarity too close to Nazi Germany for comfort. It is the rationalisation and the compromise in government agencies - by identifiable individuals - which are the targets of Taylor's play. *Good* is attempting to challenge an audience about analogous situations, and durable propensities in human nature and the relevance of this to the democracies through a highly nuanced representation of the *particular individual* who is seduced into, and succumbs to the particular ambience of Nazism. Whether Taylor has done this effectively can be discussed but the stress on the highly individual personal traits of Halder and on historical veracity (in so far as specific historical events form the backcloth to the fictional narrative of *Good*) is precisely the opposite approach to the symbolic characterisation and abstracted dramatic locus of Arthur Miller's *Incident at Vichy*.

#### 6.4 Post-production criticism: culture, society and conscience

In a note to *Good* Taylor wrote:

The writing of the play is my response to a deeply felt, and deeply experienced trauma in recent history, the Third Reich's war on the Jews, as well as an intellectual awareness, not at all deeply felt, of my role as a 'Peace Criminal' in the Peace 'Crimes' of the West against the Third World - my part in the Auschwitzes we are all perpetrating today. (56)

Snoo Wilson, himself a 'political' playwright of the 1960s generation, reviewing *Good* in that most 60s of publications, *Time Out*, felt it worth spelling out in true socialist style, lest we miss the point: 'Taylor's play is about moral compromise in a political fog, and like all good plays is as much about now as then.' (57)

David Ian Rabey's estimation of Cecil Taylor's play is tempered by the same reservations Alan Jenkins and Michael Coveney held about the portrayal of Halder:

Some of the play's intended power to alert audiences to what Taylor terms 'peace crimes', to perpetrate daily 'Auschwitzes' may be blurred by its close sympathetic involvement with Halder, whose... adaptation to circumstances is delineated with so much sympathy as to make his co-operation seem almost necessary or unavoidable. (58)

Rabey is nevertheless prepared to entertain the play's rehabilitation to the English tradition of liberal tragedy:

If the play's direction can establish its moral lessons beyond its protagonist's perspective and its particular historical setting, it provides a fine development of Galsworthy's 'liberal tragedies' by internally demonstrating the sometimes paralysed practical position of the typical reasonable broad-minded 'good' man. (59)

Eschewing the question of the distribution of power in any given society, a highly significant factor in relation to the Jews in Nazi Germany deprived not only of any semblance of civil rights but the means of livelihood and survival, how are such moral imperatives, the need for ethical vigilance and resolve to be given due consideration in dramatic representation? The key is the way in which imagination itself is shown to work. This is a most significant omission in the critics' treatment of *Good*.

Halder is, in at least one sense, no ordinary German. He is a published academic, a novelist, an expert on German literature - 'The Goethe man' as Freddie, the SS major, refers to him. The cultural imagination is his professional domain and his personal musing are so intense that they constitute the pathological formation of a psychic retreat. The imagination is his most evident strength, and yet his most obvious failing. It is the failure of Halder's moral imagination which Richard Allen Cave identifies as the defining topic of Taylor's play:

*Good* offers a potent image that takes us right to the heart of his play: Halder's mother, stricken with blindness in old age, cannot adjust to the need to now *feel* her way about her home; 'use your imagination' Halder impatiently advises her. Halder is invariably impatient - with his wife, his friend Maurice... with anyone who asks him to spare a little consideration, to *imagine* anxieties other than his own. (60)

And Susan Friesner offers an unadorned statement of the wider political implications of the failure of imagination:

Expertise on the subject of Goethe's *Faust* has not in fact taught Halder anything about the real nature of bargains made with the devil. It is not possible to make easy assumptions about the ennobling influence of the arts in a world where the organisers of concentration camps are fond of classical music. (61)

Taylor is clearly aware of the issue. In one scene Hitler is dressed as a street musician, playing a Yiddish folksong! Halder does a double take - his arm automatically shooting up in the Nazi salute in momentary unconscious obedient, imitation of the Führer, 'I

think it was Hitler, might've been a bit of Charlie Chaplin', and in the next instant his fingers flutter against his cheek - in a gesture imitative of the latter (G. p. 24):

Halder: I'm standing in the square by the fountain. Paralysed. Not physically. Whatever part of me is responsible for decision taking. That seemed to have gone out of action... On my way to join the Party.

Hitler (*putting down his violin and addressing the world*): Understandable. Totally understandable. You make a deal with yourself one minute, you totally repudiate it the next...

Maurice: Sounds more like Chaplin than Adolf.

Hitler (*to the world*): The complexity of the human central nervous system. All the forces playing on the human organism...

Maurice: Shit!

Hitler (*to the world*): Basically, what have we in a human being? A complex electrical network. No. Even more complex - a complex electrical and *chemical* network... Man does not live by bread alone.

Halder: I'm not sure about that

Hitler (*conversationally*): I'm not sure about anything. That's the human condition 'Man you are born to uncertainty. You can be sure of nothing.'

Maurice: Sounds more like Chaplin than Adolf to me. (G. p. 24)

An indication of Taylor's incisive comic talent, he gives Hitler, dressed as a Yiddish folk singer, the qualities characteristic of the Jewish comic figure: namely, anxiety and scepticism. Taylor makes the target of this doubt and uncertainty the existential problem of being human in its material, rational and emotional aspects. What can be known? And what known, understood? And what understood, acted upon? And what act will be sustained? And if sustained will it necessarily remain good? But Taylor's point is that the moral imagination must develop the capacity to discriminate between the serious if incredible dreams and plans of a Führer, and the comic incisiveness of a Chaplin satirising human foible and fallibility. In Halder, Taylor has dramatised the consequences of the failure both of *empathic* imagination - the ability to imagine anxieties other than his own (those of Maurice for example) - and *analytic* imagination - the capacity to recognise the desire for power and domination in himself and others.

In the presence of grotesque cynical oppression, the camp orchestra at Auschwitz, Halder realises that 'the band is real'. It suggests that aspects of reality hitherto defended against through his melodious escapism, have begun to impinge upon his mind. It may be that Halder 'is "cured" at precisely the moment when he is effectively damned', (62) but Taylor makes no bid for omniscience or an apocalyptic resolution. Rather, the poise of the final lines of the play reside in Taylor's refusal to be drawn into a neat resolution, leaving Halder finely balanced on the edge of the precipice: finding comfort and personal reassurance in *atrocious* because, to his great relief, he realises that the music is real; and, the *potential* of his grasping the contrary, precisely because



of the extremity of the horrific reality, the significance of which the abuse of his imagination has hitherto blotted out.

## 6.5 *Good*, the critics and Jewish fate

More significant than Alan Jenkins complaints are the aspects of the play which are notable for their almost complete absence from the published reviews and the meagre post production criticism. Maurice is the only Jew in the play and its chief comic character; yet in most reviews and, with one notable exception, in subsequent critical comment, each receive passing reference only, a particularly surprising omission given Taylor's own generic description of his play as a 'tragedy which I have written as a comedy, or musical comedy', and that Maurice is Halder's antagonist almost throughout the entire play.

Cecil Taylor was born in 1929 into an Orthodox Jewish family living in the Crosshill area of Govanhill in Glasgow. The earliest Jewish immigrants to the city were Lithuanian, but Taylor's grandparents were amongst the large number of Russian Jews who had fled westward in the last decades of the nineteenth century to escape the pogroms of 1881 in the wake of the assassination of Alexander II. Taylor spent his childhood in a community that held tenaciously to 'its historic past and its sense of difference from its non-Jewish neighbours... the memories of pogrom... never far below the surface'. (63) Taylor himself recalled, in a city renowned for its sectarian division: 'We were working class, but Jewish working class... Not Protestant or Catholic working class.' (64) 'You shut your curtains on a Friday night so they wouldn't see the candles.' (65)

Taylor prefaced the published edition of *Good* with a personal note in which he mentions some of the pressures which had given rise to his writing the play:

I grew up during the war under a deeply felt anxiety that the Germans might win the war, overrun Britain and that I and my mother and father would end up, like my less fortunate co-religionists, in a Nazi Death Camp - perhaps specially built in Scotland or England. There seems to have been some pressure building up in me for a long time to write a play about the Final Solution, marking and responding to a great historical and personal trauma. Not as a Jew, wanting to add my wreath to those already piled high at the graves of the Six Million, but as my own little gesture *to revive their memory in our consciousness*. It still seems that there are lessons to be learned if we can examine the atrocities of the Third Reich as the result of the infinite complexity of contemporary human society, and not a simple conspiracy of criminals and psychopaths.[my italics] (66)

Robert Skloot, the sole commentator on the tragicomic vision of Taylor's play and Maurice's place within it remarks:

Maurice, a psychiatrist, is the play's consummate outsider: a Jew who dislikes most other Jews. He is comic in his traditional attempt to adapt to his increasingly desperate situation. His intelligence continually refutes his optimism that the persecution of Jews will stop, and, caught between what he knows and what he wants to believe, he is a bundle of nervous contradictions, never more so than in his use of vulgar language for expressing two common components of Jewish humour: anxiety and scepticism... Gradually, Maurice comes to recognise that he too has compromised and adapted for too long, finally jeopardising his very life... although... so far as the crimes of the Third Reich are concerned, wholly blameless. (67)

Perhaps the episode which encapsulates many of those themes best is the occasion in Act 2 when Maurice and Halder furtively meet in a park in the middle of winter:

Halder (*to himself*): This friendship. All I get from it now, is pain, anxiety and panic. I *know*. This is not *good*. The shallowness of my feelings for the one friend I have in the world (*Looking at Maurice*). On the other hand, I could be underestimating my love for him. My feelings may not be quite as shallow as I imagine. I *have* gone out of my way to meet him here, just now... I know. I'm after his cottage... But it's not entirely that... Is it?... (*To Maurice*:) Going to your house, Maurice. During this temporary racist aberration. It's not a sensible action... For your sake or mine.

Maurice: So how does the cat come over the water? I can't come to *your* house.

Halder: *Worse*. Coming to *my* house.

Maurice: Listen, Johnnie... I know... I can understand that... You can't get me these exit papers... I know... It's asking too much of you... (*handing him a parcel*) I brought you some cheesecake... Where will you get Jewish cheesecake, when you've locked up all the Jews?

Halder (*alarmed*): Is that somebody coming? Somebody's coming. Feed the pigeons, Maurice.

Maurice: Nobody's coming...

Halder: Feed the pigeons, Maurice.

Maurice: I've nothing to feed the fucking pigeons with!

Halder (*offering the cheesecake*): Here. Give them some cheesecake.

Maurice: I'm not feeding good, Jewish *cheesecake* to fucking *pigeons*!

Halder: There is somebody coming.

Maurice: They've come to listen to your band. It's an unusual attraction for the park in winter... You understand what I'm saying, Johnnie... It's too much to ask from you. The exit papers... Forget the papers... Just get me five tickets to Switzerland...

Halder: Maurice... how can I go to the station and ask for five single tickets to Switzerland, for God's sake!

Maurice: Ask for *returns*.

Halder: Or returns. I'm a bloody officer in the SS.

Maurice: That cheesecake. I bought it at Epstein's. I can't *stand* them. I can't stand *Jews*. I spent thirty-five Marks in there at one go, and they couldn't even give me a 'good afternoon'... You're right. There's something seriously wrong with Jews. I can see Hitler's point. (*G. pp. 45-47*)

Throughout the play Maurice remains Halder's analyst-confessor challenging his perceptions and interpretations, his evasions and rationalisations and eventually the ultimate reversal, Halder 'blaming the victim', imputing to the Jews themselves the responsibility for the terrible plight into which they have been forced. Maurice moves from mediator (between Halder's conscious and subconscious, his disinclination to become involved in, and his inability to resist, Nazi politics) to supplicant. As Halder's stock rises, Maurice's inexorably falls, victim of his friend's callous betrayal in the pursuit of preferment in the party machine. Unacceptable reality appears never to become an integral part of Halder's consciousness nor Maurice's resort to comical evasion as a means of coping with despair:

Halder: You're right... I can't see people lasting much longer on this earth...

Maurice: Best thing. A finish to people torturing the earth. I'm telling you. Who needs us? (*G.* p. 67)

Although Milton Shulman had claimed to be 'amused almost as much as... repelled' by Maurice's humour, (68) the sombre sense of the depletion of human resourcefulness and of the absence of choice pervades the final scenes. Halder's realisation that the band at Auschwitz is real, evokes in the spectators a sense of delight with his recognition that the music is not a delusion, and of horror at the affirmation that Halder may potentially draw from the realisation: the atrocious as an indication of his recovery of connectedness with the 'ordinary' world! Perhaps this is explanation enough for the absence of Maurice in much of the critical response, for to acknowledge Maurice, as it would have been for Halder, is to be drawn into the desperate plight of European Jewry. Skloot, equally ill at ease in his assessment of the character of Maurice, comments:

In *Good*, adaptive comic behaviour is a useless tactic insofar as Maurice uses it to soften the reality of the evil that surrounds him. As the play advances chronologically, the laughter he evokes in the play gets more desperate and the tragic inevitability becomes much more apparent to the audience... Maurice's attempt at *compromise* and *evasion*, which in a less threatening situation would be comic behaviour, in the Holocaust context produces a dangerous tragicomic response. [ my italics] (69)

Once again it is Taylor's peculiar achievement to have sketched the portrait of a relationship between a German drawn into the Nazi party through a process of rationalisation and moral cowardice, and a German Jew who also fails to engage with the realities around him, and, though the danger of interpreting the figures as equally

culpable may exist, Taylor has rendered an elegy to Jewish fate, Maurice inextricably victim of Nazi moral opacity.

Skloot is justifiably generous in his estimation of the stature of Taylor's achievement:

Taylor sees in the story of Holocaust Jewry the best case-study of the world's previous ethical failures; in observing the way Jews were treated by the Nazis and the way others remained largely indifferent, he finds a standard of measure for evil in the modern world.

*Good...* is a denunciation of people who... believe that actions have no lasting repercussions and that active opposition to evil is unnecessary...

Thematically speaking, failure to take a stand, refusing to resist the presence of evil is the tragedy of our modern age, according to Taylor. In other words, accommodating to and accepting new definitions of 'good' is both a ludicrous and risky exercise of moral relativism. (70)

In the week prior to *Good* opening at The Warehouse an interview with Cecil Taylor appeared in *The Guardian*. 'Do you know', Taylor asked the interviewer Steve Grant, 'that *The Guardian* classifieds have this Warehouse play down as "Goodbye C. P. Taylor" ? Is that a prophecy, I wonder? Mind you in many ways it's right. I feel as if my whole career has been a series of phases involving other C. P. Taylor's. In fact *Good* represents the last work of my last phase.' (71) In reality Taylor was already working on several new projects, including a play about Stalin. But shortly after a visit to London to discuss the production of *Happy Lies* which had opened at the New Albany Empire, in Deptford, Taylor died of a heart attack, on 9 December 1981.

The unexpectedness of his death and the fact that it followed so closely upon the critical and commercial success of *Good* made his loss the more keenly felt, not only by close personal friends, but by those journalists and theatre practitioners who had followed his career over the years and who had grown to love the man, the style of his work, and who had grown in admiration for his dedication to a great variety of school and community based projects. John Elsom expresses these sentiments most aptly: 'His appeal was that of a warm, humane and humorous man who put people before politics without ever forgetting how deeply politics could influence people.' (72)

In her assessment of Taylor's place in the alternative, largely left-wing theatre of the 1960s and 1970s Susan Friesner echoes Elsom's reflections: 'His was a humane view of people's failings at a time when the fashionable left-wing theatrical voice was either austere and spartan, or violent, anarchic, and destructive. Taylor preferred to laugh at failure and hypocrisy rather than simplistically to condemn it.' (73)

In their reviews a number of the critics had urged the RSC to allow *Good* the wider exposure they believed it deserved. The production transferred to the Aldwych

Theatre in 1982, opening on 20 April, and later in the year travelled to the Booth Theatre on Broadway in New York, opening on 13 of October. Howard Davies is reported to have commented in the US: 'In London, the audiences rolled on the floor laughing at the humour in the first act... People take it more seriously here. I have the feeling that everyone has a relative who was there.' (74)

## 7 **GEORGE STEINER'S THE PORTAGE TO SAN CRISTOBAL OF A. H.**

### 7.1 **The Mermaid Theatre and Christopher Hampton's *George Steiner's The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.***

The Mermaid Theatre had played without interruption between May 1959 and October 1978, staging 152 productions and selling 2.93 million tickets. Financially, it was on a pretty even keel, its expenditure over the period had been £4,624,000, balanced by receipts of £3,773,000, and £851,000 in grants from the Arts Council and the Corporation of the City of London. In his column in *The Financial Times* Antony Thorncroft commented: 'relying on the Arts Council and the City for around 18 per cent of its income is a remarkably low figure in the theatrical world. It is one of the few theatres which continually risked having its Arts Council money cut because it was earning enough revenue through the box office to cover its costs.' (1)

The repertoire reflected the populist policy for which Bernard Miles had been a strong advocate since the theatre's inception. Productions included Antrobus's *The Bed Sitting Room* with Spike Milligan of *Goon Show* fame, Bill Naughton's *Alfie* and *Spring and Port Wine* - all in 1963. Ian McKellen repeated his much acclaimed performances of *Richard II* and Marlowe's *Edward II* in 1969 and there were musical tributes to Noel Coward and Cole Porter in 1972 and 1974 respectively. Stephen Sondheim's *Side by Side* was produced in 1976. After the last performance of the Tom Stoppard/André Previn collaboration, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, on 30 August 1978, the theatre closed for reconstruction.

Barely two months after its reopening, on 7 July 1981, The Mermaid Theatre was in grave financial difficulties. Its opening productions, the revival of a musical adaptation of *Eastward Ho!* and *Shakespeare's Rome*, had failed badly at the box-office, and Miles needed a play that would turn the financial tide. In October Alan Hamilton commented:

The problem remains of finding the required smash hit. The Mermaid is investing a great deal of faith and hope in Christopher Hampton's dramatisation of George Steiner's book *The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.* which will be produced early in the New Year once Long John Silver has vacated the stage... the need for a long-running smash hit... was never more urgent. (2)

George Steiner had long-standing links with the Mermaid mainly through his patronage of the Molecule Club, an educational enterprise explaining the physical sciences and technological developments to young playgoers. The reconstruction of the Mermaid

had included a new small auditorium of 250 seats - the Molecule Theatre - to provide a base for children's theatre and Josephine Miles's scientific shows. Lord Miles had frequently pressed Steiner for a play and it was in response to the last such request that Steiner had sent Miles *The Kenyon Review* of Spring 1979, in which *The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.* had first appeared. (3)

It was then amidst, and as a partial solution to, the unsettling financial situation of The Mermaid that Steiner realised a personal ambition to have a fictional work of his adapted and produced on a London stage, while also offering generous support to an old friend. That the play might stir controversy was not a wholly unwelcome prospect from either a critical or a financial perspective.

For three decades and more, George Steiner had been practically the sole voice to be heard in British critical discourse urging attention be paid to the European catastrophe. His role as commentator and critic, teacher and polemicist on the European catastrophe is without parallel in post-war Britain. Steiner claimed that his short novel, was an attempt to address issues he considered best approached in the form of a fictional narrative, yet he had addressed many of the ideas central to his novel, and particularly those that would be the focus of the controversy following The Mermaid Theatre's production of its dramatic adaptation, in earlier critical essays, lectures and books which span a period from the late 1950s until the early 1980s.

Lord Miles dispatched *The Kenyon Review* to Christopher Hampton asking whether he would be interested in adapting the novel for the stage. Hampton accepted the challenge because he found the novel 'very bold'. He was an obvious choice given his knowledge of European languages, his familiarity with Brazil through his work on *Savages*, his clear dramatic interest in the telling of stories, and not least his record of acclaimed adaptations. (4) Subsequently Miles sent a copy of both the novel and Hampton's adaptation to John Dexter while he was rehearsing Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* for the National (opening in the Olivier Theatre on the 19 June 1981). Dexter described the adaptation as the best new play he had read in twenty years. (5)

It was between two triple bills - *Parade* in 1981 which contained Satie's ballet of that name, Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* and Ravel's *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, and a centenary tribute to Stravinsky in 1982 including *The Rite of Spring*, *The Nightingale* and *Oedipus Rex* - that Dexter agreed to direct Hampton's *George Steiner's The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.* and began to make it known that he was looking for a semi-permanent base in the non-lyric theatre. On 15 February 1982, just two days before the opening night of the play, Dexter accepted the joint artistic directorship of the Mermaid Theatre.

Rehearsals had begun on Monday 11 January and in separate interviews, which appeared in the press on the same day, both Dexter and Hampton made early comments on *The Portage*. Dexter places the play in a British tradition, reflects upon the demands made upon the actors and audience by the play, and gives a fairly broad hint of the aesthetic tone he was aiming for:

The immediate parallels are with Shaw. The scenes outside the jungle are wryly funny: they have a satiric edge to release the tension of the pursuit and that 'portage' of Hitler back to civilisation. The two great monologues... are purely Shavian and they act as counter poises to one another. Lieber, who provides the goad to the Brazilian expedition, delivers his litany - or, possibly better, liturgy - stopping short before certain words... I want the actor, who will be Sebastian Shaw, to be totally devoid of emotion when he delivers the speech. And I'm well aware that staging this and Hitler's final monologue will be as difficult as anything in *St Joan*, or *Man and Superman*.

The casting of A. H. is obviously crucial. I sent the script to Olivier in Brighton and by the next post to Alec McCowen, admitting that it had gone elsewhere... And Alec will be playing the part.

The staging will be difficult, particularly in the Mermaid's open theatre... The audience must be made to listen as intently as an Old Bailey jury. The facts are presented and the issue is *not* whether Hitler might be innocent but whether the spectators are guilty of indifference. It is demanded of everybody that they check up morally on where they are now. At the same time it is an adventure story. We have to find a point midway between *J. Robert Oppenheimer* [Heinar Kipphardt] and *The Boys from Brazil*. (6)

Not surprisingly, Hampton too is drawn to Hitler's monologue, and the position of the audience vis-à-vis his speech, and comments specifically on each:

What do we have? Hitler is discovered in the South American jungle. The Israeli's go in to get him out and take him back to stand trial like Eichmann. M16 and the CIA are both involved.

Finding Hitler at this time presents a great dilemma to all the world leaders. The play has scenes in London, Moscow, Washington and Paris as well as in Brazil.

Throughout the play Hitler hardly says a word... but at the end of the play he has a fantastic 25 minute speech.

That monologue is a very blunt speech for the defence of Hitler. It puts the issues before the audience and leaves them to make the decisions.

In the play he does put a case. He presented the reality of evil and yet he could still be spell-binding... The implications are enormous. (7)

While Hampton prefaced these remarks with what appears to be a genuine expression of uncertainty as to the likely audience reaction, 'Quite honestly, I can't even guess at what sort of reception the play will get. Some people might find it quite hard to take. It



is an assault on the audience's sensitivities', (8) there seems little doubt that the audience reaction expected was of a quite different kind to that more usually experienced in the theatre, even though Hampton is hard pushed to express the difference in precise terms.

Most reviewers of the Faber edition of Steiner's novel, published in May 1981, were excessively respectful and remarkably enthusiastic. Steven Schonberg commented upon Steiner's 'intellectual brilliance' offering the accolade that he possessed the 'sensitivity of the poet Paul Celan'. (9) Melvyn Bragg described it as 'an extraordinary novel' which 'soars into one tour-de-force after another' (10) and Penelope Lively acclaimed it as an 'extraordinarily powerful novel... a litany of remembrance... which... achieves a kind of poetry'. (11) But warning signs were given:

Steiner's treatment of Hitler ultimately moves him from history to myth. He has been brave in writing this book, since literal-minded Jewish readers may find it objectionable, missing the subtler dimensions and seeing it simply as an attempt to whitewash Hitler. I hope not. Two readings have convinced me that this is a fiction of extraordinary power and thoughtfulness, despite much that is tiresome and inept in the writing. (12)

Anthony Burgess declaimed:

The book encloses no debate but bids the debate now start. But, being a work of literature, its aim is not didactic. It claims the same right as the plays of Shakespeare to find an eloquence for evil which evil is too stupid to find for itself... Orwell, in 1942 writes of... Hitler... becoming the bore of a Swiss *pension*. He is far from being a bore in Steiner's astonishing book. He has become the dark archangel of a new liturgy. (13)

But in an earlier review the unfortunate similarities between Steiner's eloquence and his representation of Hitler, and the shared tendency toward kitsch is pointed up:

Steiner's abiding preoccupation is the alliance between European high culture and Nazi barbarism. In surveying the cultural history of the West, Steiner is elated by art and eloquence but appalled by their readiness to lend themselves to perversity, and dismayed by their moral inefficiency. The essays remorselessly prosecute art and language for their crimes against humanity... The moral licence of fiction allows him to explore his own imaginative infatuation with the historical dementia he elsewhere reviles.

Hitler is throughout analysed as a linguistic phenomenon, a freak of megaphonic loquacity... What apter emblem for Steiner's sense of himself as a marked man than the fragile, stigmatised rhetorician holed up in the jungle, internationally reviled because of his enviable eloquence and his inspired theatricality.

In Steiner too the persona of tragic prophet is liable to lapse into an exhibitionistic hucksterism. Like his hero, he's a virtuoso mis-user of language... Its putative model is *Heart of Darkness*; actually *The Portage* is an intellectualised version of *The Boys from Brazil*. (14)

What is remarkable about these reviews of Steiner's novel is the marked contrast in both the tone and the assessment of the novel between the earlier and later reviews which were barely a year apart. How could critical opinion of the novel's qualities have changed so radically in such a short period? Controversy would rage, however, only following Alec McCowen's mesmerising portrayal of the 'dark archangel' in Hampton's stage adaptation of the novel.

## 7.2 Hampton's *George Steiner's Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.*

In a remote part of the Brazilian rainforest a Jewish search party has found the object of their thirty-year quest. Through the staccato atmospherics of their radio receiver, Simeon, the leader of the group, is warned by their 'home base' commander, the relentlessly, unforgiving Emmanuel Lieber, not to allow their captive to speak. Just such a thoughtless lapse of discipline, just such an *underestimation* of the danger of the mesmerising power of his words would jeopardise everything. For their captive had brought into existence a speech for hell.

The search party faces the task of making its way through the rainforest to San Cristobal and the nearest safe landing strip. They are exhausted, and their radio equipment is in poor shape. Additionally, they bear the burdens of their success: the knowledge of Hitler's existence, the consequent secrecy which must be preserved at all costs, and responsibility for his survival. As they progress, snake-like, the dilemmas and contradictions of their position surface: the *cacophony* of the forest and their self-imposed *silence*, Lieber's words intermittently breaking guardian *silence*, to warn of the dangers of *language*; the *length* of their quest and the *brevity* with which punishment might be meted out to Hitler, the significance of justice and judgement for *themselves* and the world: who will own responsibility for *Hitler* and to what purpose?; the *part* that Hitler has played in their lives and the part they will play in *representing* his to the world; the suspicion long held by some that Hitler's obsessions could only be susceptible to one highly plausible explanation: *Hitler the Jew*.

On two occasions the radio transmitter modulates from atmospheric interference into receptive audition and Lieber is heard, first, to intone a taxonomy of the sadistic humiliation and persecution heaped upon Jewish individuals and families on various occasions and in diverse places throughout Europe during the Hitler years, and, later, a

second litany of suffering and death which finds its focus not so much in the naming of families and towns, as in the identification of the sites of mass extermination.

The substantive fact of the diplomatic, legal and moral implications of Hitler's apprehension at different stages in their journey is mediated through the insertion of scenes set in different countries implicated in the discovery of Hitler. They are set in a sedate study in Oxford, an office in the KGB headquarters at Lubyanskaya Place in Moscow; the home of a refined bourgeois in Cologne, a sultry boudoir in Paris; and a press reception room in the White House. Apartments and Departments of Darkness. An ironic contrast is intended between the values of civilisation: varieties of urbane rationalism and rationalisation, the primitivism of modernity; and the 'camouflage' afforded the search party by the elemental luxury of the rain forest: the temptation of summary justice for their captive, the modernity of primitives.

In Oxford the dry, clipped accents of scholarly rhetoric and irony are polished on the subjects of the failure of political will to bomb the rail links to Auschwitz and the evidence of the use of a double for Hitler during the war years, with the explicit suggestion that the individual discovered in the jungle may conceivably be this double. In Moscow, on the other hand, the vagaries of historical revisionism and political expediency involve Gruzdev having to affirm what he once denied: namely, that the corpse identified as Hitler's in Berlin was a KGB conspiracy to mislead the West about Hitler's survival.

In Cologne Rothling is nostalgic for the intensity of the life he lived during the Third Reich and highly dubious of the possibility that the individual discovered in Brazil is a double, doubts which serve to support rather than undermine the credibility of the stories being whispered in diplomatic circles of Hitler's discovery. Strenuous denial is always considered suspect. While alert to the *legal* complexities of the due process of law - establishing nationality, extradition, prosecution and legal responsibility for Hitler's fate - Rothling entertains doubts about the Holocaust having any meta-historical significance, thus providing dramatic justification for the subsequent tribunal in the Brazilian rain forest.

In Paris a cameo of sultry sophistication overlays an act of venal betrayal. To preempt international wrangling over jurisdiction in the unlikely event of the positive identification of the figure in Brazil, Josquin is preparing an assassination squad to eliminate Hitler *and* the Jewish pursuit party so that no opportunity is afforded an international tribunal to uncover the misdeeds of the Vichy government. Finally, in Washington, a spokesman for the President is grilled about the developing situation by the press.

The British Government has an intelligence agent in the 'hot spot' by the name of Rodriguez Kulken who is monitoring Lieber's and the search party's radio

communication from a dilapidated outpost in Orosso. Kulken had been the first to transmit news of the discovery to the West. But it is a bullish freelance journalist, Marvin Crownbacker, who informs Kulken that the old man in the party is not Martin Bormann, as British Intelligence had allowed Kulken to believe, but Adolf Hitler. Conveniently Kulken also has the means of learning the group's movements and moods through the native Indians, who track the group for him. Crownbacker is merely in it for the money. He knows he can make millions if he can secure exclusive rights to the story.

Crownbacker needs Kulken's co-operation as only he knows the approximate location of the group and could provide the necessary back-up Crownbacker would need to get his scoop. Kulken realises that Crownbacker has not even begun to understand the nature of the asset sitting in the Brazilian forest, and is derisive of Crownbacker's poverty of imagination. The stakes in the game are much higher than waiting to see which media magnate is willing to make the highest bid; it is with governments they should be negotiating because Hitler represents still the biggest political threat the West has ever faced.

Hitler is not addressed and hardly speaks throughout the play. He is led at the end of a long rope, and is tethered at night. It is a native American Indian, Teku, who succumbs to Hitler's wordless charisma, first venturing a votive offering of flowers, and then carving a crude ceremonial stool for his putative king. Because of Hitler's rising anima, the search party's increasing exhaustion, the depletion of their resources, and uncertainty about what awaits them once the rain forest is behind them, the decision is taken to hold a tribunal when the rains have stopped. Once convened, Hitler is permitted finally to speak in his own defence.

The speech forms the entirety of the play's last scene and is some twenty-five minutes in duration. No response is made to the speech, no rebuttals or questioning of the claims. The play closes with the scene being raked by the down draught of two helicopters. Turbulent wind, a recurrent biblical metaphor for the divine presence, sweeps over Hitler who magisterially takes his place on his throne, with Teku showing due deference to his oratorical power.

### **7.3 The critic's response to Hampton's *Portage***

In Jocelyn Herbert's design the production had three acting spaces: the black central area edged with dark mesh suggesting the dark interior of the Brazilian rain forest; an upper gallery occupied by Emmanuel Lieber hunched over his radio transmitter; and finally a small circular platform which was trucked on from back stage for the interior scenes set around the world. While James Fenton felt the production created 'a

marvellous alternation between civilisation and jungle, appropriate for an argument in which those two terms are effectively interchangeable', (15) Benedict Nightingale held the opposite view: 'black metal gauze, energetic mime, and the squawking of theatrical parrots aren't enough to evoke the bog-and-bat ridden place in all its literal and metaphoric sultriness'. (16) Nicholas de Jongh agreeing that the design was a 'sparse, limited and unsatisfactory evocation of the forest' also felt Dexter had shown 'a general contempt for the potential of lighting'. In his view the result was a rather bloodless production, 'a cold demonstration of the text'. (17)

Almost universal condemnation greeted Christopher Hampton's adaptation. Placing responsibility firmly with George Steiner, the *Jewish Chronicle* described the production as 'an astonishing failure of the imagination', (18) *The Financial Times* as 'a dramatic fraud and a dubious exhibition of cool logic'. (19) *Plays and Players* judged it to be a 'vulgar and superficial production'. (20) Victoria Radin summarised these acerbic remarks: 'This shallow, cleverly staged adaptation is a nasty middle-brow work designed for people who don't think too deeply; and a dangerous one for those who don't think at all.' (21)

Signs of strain began to show in the customary tone of urbane reasonableness as some critics struggled to preserve a balanced assessment. With varying degrees of understatement, the production is described as shifting, 'a piece of philosophic fiction in the direction of melodrama', (22) a 'thesis dressed up as a limp thriller', (23) and a work 'entirely lacking in moral judgement', leaving 'the play... thematically and imaginatively... unresolved'. (24)

Clearly some critics were intimidated by the triumvirate of Steiner, Hampton and Dexter, and they could hardly bring themselves to entertain the possibility that just such a combination might be capable of artistic failure: 'Steiner and Hampton flounder at the Mermaid. BUT RARELY can anyone have floundered so articulately, provocatively and importantly', (25) and: 'One test of the play's ultimate success is that one is more interested in discussing the ideas than their presentation... *The Portage*... may not be a great play. But it certainly contains a great final speech.' (26)

Others were less reticent: 'Mr Steiner, so brilliantly fertile of ideas, has little gift for characterisation or dialogue'; (27) 'Mr Hampton's adaptation sticks limply to the printed page' (28) and, 'the concern with ideas leaves no room for humour or character... its talented creators were passionately committed to this play and felt that they were dealing with immediate moral issues and emotions; none of this reached us.' (29)

Michael Billington gives an indication of just how pivotal the interior international scenes are:

These scenes pitch some provocative notions at the audience. To whom does Hitler rightly belong? What justice can be commensurate with his crimes?... Is genocide susceptible to common law? Was Hitler himself a Jew? Does a younger generation care about the enormity of his actions? Are obsessive Hitler hunters perpetuating his myth? All vital and fascinating questions and Mr Hampton has excavated them from the novel with some skill. (30)

But Billington felt along with many other critics that, although the political, legal, diplomatic and moral issues were 'interestingly aired', they were not 'strenuously debated' because neither the trek through the rain forest nor the international interludes 'allowed the big issues the breathing space they needed'. (31) Mark Amory is clearly quite aggravated by the tone of these interludes:

We... see the ripples set up across the world as Oxford dons discuss over sherry the possibility of the rumour being true, a Russian colonel tries to check the original evidence of the death, a journalist smells big money to be made. Though these scenes make up the bulk of the evening they feel perfunctory, as if they were side issues and my impatience with each sprang from the central fact that *I was not being asked on any level to believe in them.* [my italics] (32)

Radin bluntly remarks that the scenes offer 'banal stereotypes' (33) and de Jongh spells out the dramatic consequences:

The scenes in the world's capitals do not enlarge or develop the scope of the play, indeed they retard progress in the forest, in exchange for ironic overstressed counterpoint. The English behave with moral detachment and languor, the Russians are sinister, the French bedroom-bound. The stereotypes provide attributes of national character rather than essences. (34)

Irving Wardle may well be justified in claiming that the 'central meaning' of the play resides 'in these glimpses of the external world. These people, no less than the unnumbered victims of the death camps, are inheritors of the Nazi legacy; numbed by the normality of genocide, and incapable of the human response of former ages', (35) but this is a dangerously generous interpretation, making inactive witnesses to and active collaborators in crimes against humanity as much the victim of their times, as those who suffered persecution, the extermination of their families and the destruction of a culture.

Generous too in that the clear indication of the other critics is that the characterisation of national attitudes veers wilfully close to stereotype. No doubt Steiner's point is that the passage of time has failed to modify entrenched attitudes, and where 'Nazism' appears in the postmodern world there is precious little evidence of attitudinal changes for the better. Each hold to their own version of events. But all of

these scenes are open to the charge that they have been thrown together in a rather cavalier fashion. While they find a degree of justification in the heightened sense of dramatic tension achieved when a note of scepticism about the genuine identity of the individual discovered in the Brazilian rain forest is introduced, and through the commentary they provide upon the implications of the discovery, if it is he, they resist a coherent integration into the main narrative line.

The chief reason for this is the undisguised exploitation of the international interludes for bravura displays of technical knowledge whether of international law, of conspiracy theories or diplomatic protocol. We become more aware of authorial expertise on a variety of subjects rather than a deeply observed dramatically cogent scene. The issues remain the author's objects posited in a narrative flow and are insufficiently dissolved into the play's subjectivity.

Hampton, faithful to Steiner, has succumbed to the temptation to use a myriad of crucially important issues which receive due consideration in speculative and historical thinking. The unsuccessful grafting of the issues into the organic life of the drama has produced a hybrid which is neither lecture nor play. The play fails not because the attempt at representation of the unimaginable creates insurmountable challenges, but because of the inexcusable choice of the author not to be other than at the centre of attention in a work of art which should have an autonomous life, and be itself the focus of audience attention. Instead we are left with a clearer impression of the author, his presence and preoccupations, rather than precisely these qualities and enthusiasms invested in and mediated through the autonomous life of the play. None of the wry humour or intended satire mentioned by Dexter conveyed itself to the critics, and the fact that these scenes were not taken seriously either as biting satiric portraits or as realistic portrayals is indicative of Steiner's awkward levity as a defence against his own anger in relation to the themes he tackles in the international scenes.

The failure of proper characterisation is not limited to these interludes. Nightingale indicates a further weakness by complaining that no 'sharp sense of the individual Jews abducting Hitler, or, indeed, of his effect upon them' is gained through the production, (36) an impression which was shared by de Jongh: 'There is no sense of the group's degeneration or of excitement engendered by a rival plan to capture Hitler for commercial ends.' (37)

The sense that the play fails as an integrated whole is increased for some critics by the role of Lieber. Peter Ackroyd comments: 'The crimes of the Third Reich are presented in factual "documentary" by an old man reciting into a microphone, and are *set at a curious distance from the action of the play itself*. And, since *they have not been assimilated in dramatic terms*, they run the risk of seeming almost superfluous.' [my italics] (38) Furthermore, according to more than one critic, the details of atrocity

were `retailed by [Lieber] with a quavering casualness rather than in the tones of a man who cannot wash his mind clean of recurring images of horror'. (39)

There was little critical disagreement about Alec McCowen's bravura performance as Hitler. Billington enthused about the final speech, `one of the greatest pieces of acting I have ever seen`:

A shuffling, grizzled, hunched, baggy figure, yet suggests the mono-maniac power of the Nuremberg rallies inhabiting the frail vessel of this old man's body. He delivers the ideas with exemplary clarity; yet the convulsive clutch of the left hand and the barking shriek in the voice chillingly transport one back to the figure glimpsed in old newsreels. (40)

Other critics delighted in other aspects of McCowen's performance:

Derision, loathing, parody and a grating vocal sound like a clarinet with a split reed, are the colours he uses; all the more powerful for avoiding any attempt at direct vocal imitation. (41)

His eyes boggling black dots inside white circles, his hand sometimes covering his mouth, as in disbelief at his own audacity. And every now and then the verbal rust becomes heavy metal, vibrant with scorn, hatred and a terrible arrogance. (42)

Slowly he acquires Hitler's malign mesmerising authority. Few other actors on the English stage today possess this quality of pent-up fury which flares then passes, as if he were frightened by the strength of it, and McCowen uses the device in soaring notes of derisive contempt... The whole speech is composed... with the rhythmic detail and subtlety of music. (43)

De Jongh concludes his review with the following admission: `I sat, horrified and enthralled, and for all my reservations, the whole evening exerted an invincible hold. The emotional affect is large and the moral issues nag away at the mind long after leaving.` (44) Victoria Radin, on the other hand, records: `At the end, instead of a horrified silence there was an immediate storm of applause and shouts of "Bravo". I think they were in some measure for Hitler.` (45)

The force of the entire play is directed toward the crescendo of the final scene. Previously Hitler has uttered just three words. This is the sole occasion when Hitler has a sustained speech, taken unaltered from Steiner's novel. It is an attempt to justify a specific interpretation of Hitler's self-understanding, a product of Steiner's imagination, and as with the international interludes, finds only faint justification in the dramatic context. It betrays little genuine attempt at construing the kind of thoughts Hitler might have had, and instead becomes a vehicle for theses that are blatantly



Steiner's own: unadorned statements of historico-political interpretation with little artifice or art to justify the speech as plausible within the context of the play's aesthetic. In short we are presented, not with a kitsch Hitler, nor a comical Hitler, nor an absurd Hitler, nor a ridiculous or a satirical Hitler, nor a Brechtian Hitler, nor an aged demonic Hitler. In fact not Hitler at all, but Steiner.

#### 7.4 Steiner's Hitler: criticism and controversy in the press

The voice that you actually hear most clearly at the moment of the defence speech is that of Professor Steiner himself - and that voice in this context, cannot fail to be impressive.

Nobody knows more clearly than Steiner himself that, with the subject of the Holocaust, failure is written in to the artist's contract. That has always been one of the great Steinerian themes. For the purpose of the play, we must find something recognisable in Hitler - the imagination must be allowed its point of entry. (46)

This is a quite extraordinary statement from James Fenton. A clearer - if unintended - acknowledgement of the *dramatic* failure of Hitler's speech would be hard to find. The play's aesthetic could in no way be accurately described by generic labels such as agit-prop or Brechtian, requiring recognition of the theatre enterprise as conscious of itself. The stage aesthetic is a mundane realism. This being the case, if the authorial voice is the *most* obvious to the audience, then the drama is failing in its most basic function: the creation of a fictional circumstance that is persuasive enough to suspend the audience's *disbelief*. Rather than be impressed by the prominence of Steiner's voice, as Fenton would have it, the audience might have more properly winced at the abuse proffered.

Steiner and Hampton's abuse of drama, the exploitation of Alec McCowen and the audience are inexcusable, precisely because of Steiner's intimacy with the problems of representation. He holds the audience in contempt because he does not allow 'the imagination... its point of entry'. Rather it is trampled upon by the harangue the audience is asked to believe is Hitler's.

That the ensuing controversy was rarely focused on the play's merits and specifically on the plausibility, or otherwise, of Hitler's speech, serves only to underline the dramatic failure the speech represents. The debate does not ask whether the speech is within the bounds of possibility, whether Hitler could conceivably have become an authority on the Torah and Talmud, Mishnah and Kabbala, and be sufficiently versed in post-war political developments and the camp system in the Soviet Union. That an intelligent audience is asked to believe that this speech could be Hitler's is insulting and

absurd. It is Steiner to whom we listen, and Steiner to whom the subsequent attacks were addressed.

The speech has four strophes, each containing a central argument upon which A. H. bases his meta-historical justification. First, the Jews are said to be morally responsible for racism and for originating the idea of a superior race, not he: 'My racism was a parody of yours, a hungry imitation. What is a thousand-year Reich compared to the eternity of Zion? Perhaps I was the false Messiah sent before. Judge me and you must judge yourselves. *Übermenschen*. Chosen ones.' (CHPAH. p. 69) Second, A. H. claims that the Jews are responsible for the germination and cultivation of conscience and the knowledge of guilt. Because of these facts alone the implementation of a final solution became almost a certainty:

You are not Godkillers, but *Godmakers*. And that is infinitely worse. The Jew invented conscience... First, the invisible but all-seeing, the unattainable but all-demanding God of Sinai. Second, the terrible sweetness of Christ... Third,... the covenant of Marxism... Three times the Jew has pressed on us the blackmail of transcendence. Three times he has infected our blood and brains with the bacillus of perfection... A final solution. How could there be any other? (CHPAH. pp. 70, 71, 72)

Third, he claims he was merely a victim of the times in which he lived, simply following the genocidal example of his political forebears - but not to the *same* extremes. Hitler is aggrieved because Stalin was eulogised as a great world leader at his death, while he has suffered perpetual vilification and has been hunted down like an animal. And yet what are six million murders compared to the sixty-six million of the Soviet Gulags? 'You've made me out some mad devil, the quintessence of evil, hell embodied. When in truth I was only a man of my time... How many Jews did Stalin kill?' And what of a world that 'continues to do these things quite without my help?' (CHPAH. pp. 72, 73) Fourth and finally, he says that Israel has him to thank for its existence. He and the successful implementation of the 'Final Solution' were the chief forces in the foundation of the nation of Israel:

Did Herzl create Israel? Or did I? Examine the question fairly. Would Palestine have become Israel... had it not been for the Holocaust?... It was the Holocaust that gave you the courage of injustice, that made you drive the Arab out of his home... Perhaps I *am* the Messiah, the true Messiah, the new Sabbatai, whose infamous deeds were allowed by God in order to bring his people home. (CHPAH. p. 74)

This speech represents the most programmatic speculative expression of the historical trajectory of European Jewry to be made by a leading Jewish academic and cultural

critic in the plays considered here. While careful to avoid language which may invite interpretations which suggest the 'inevitability' of the Holocaust, Steiner is nevertheless clearly proposing that the 'Final Solution' was the long postponed wrathful response of European instinct breaking under pressure and the attempt to eliminate the perceived mediators of an impossible spiritual and ethical demand for exclusive devotion, the Jews.

Radin accuses Steiner of 'the sin of arrogance, impossibly exalting the Jews as victimised purveyors of all that is noble, remaking them into the hated, feared and alien chosen people', (47) and Michael Coveney, employing a short quotation from the autobiographical sketch of Steiner's 'A Kind of Survivor', (48) criticised the 'central thesis that "the Jews are people whom totalitarian barbarism must choose for its hatred"' as 'despicable and insulting'. (49)

Billington, the most fulsome in his praise of the production, attacked the 'arguments about Judaism', in more measured language: 'The notion that we have throughout history been cowed by the Judaic "bacillus of perfection" is to suggest erroneously that conscience and guilt are inventions of religious systems'. With regard to the Holocaust and the emergence of the state of Israel, he also remarks that 'the good that evil produces is no vindication of the evil itself', as Steiner appears to imply. Nevertheless, Billington is prepared to defend the third justification - the West's culpability in allowing and perpetrating far greater crimes against humanity than Hitler's - on the grounds that 'these are not in any way justifications of Hitler' but Steiner and Hampton's 'use of Hitler as a vehicle for uncovering our own intellectual double think', a point of view which he finds 'so powerful as to be unarguable'. (50)

The danger with this last argument is that its emotive force grants a measure of acceptability to, and therefore justification of, the Nazi genocide as a lesser crime. Steiner runs the risk of appearing to suggest that Hitler may be somewhat exonerated on the grounds of the West's careless and permissive attitude to mass extermination, and its inability to prevent subsequent genocides. The attack on Western hypocrisy is a specious argument in support of a relativization of the Nazi genocide. Clearly this was not the *intended* effect, which is why there is some justification for Radin's remark that the play is a 'shallow... nasty middle-brow work designed for people who don't think too deeply; and a dangerous one for those who don't think at all', (51) and for Coveney's observation that the theatre is in this instance, 'an odd, imperfect medium for careful, if dangerous argument'. (52)

Benedict Nightingale challenges these perspectives: 'It's wrong to assume, as some of my colleagues have done, that Steiner endorses Hitler's self-justifications', (53) which suggests, as it must, that Nightingale considers the writing is of such an order that most critics have been effectively drawn into the fiction, and through this

identification have experienced both something of the power of the historical Hitler's barbaric eloquence, and the skill of Steiner in being able to imitate Hitler's seductive oratorical power. After all, it can be said of any playwright that 'the language and ideas are so much his own', characters being recognisably Chekhov's, Tennessee Williams's or Harold Pinter's for example. So why not Hitler as a recognisably Steinerian character?

That the subsequent controversy in the British press failed to resolve the dramatic issues conclusively, but rather polarised around two particularly painful issues was no surprise. It indicates that, like the reviewers who criticised Hitler's speech not on the grounds of its plausibility and its effectiveness as a portrayal of Hitler, but on the assumption that these views were Steiner's own, found particular resonance in the reaction of a section of the Jewish community. *The degree to which Steiner himself could be identified as the progenitor of these views rather than the historical or a stage representation of Hitler became the chief focus of the ensuing controversy as this was considered essential to the task of discerning the substance and defensibility of such an interpretation of Jewish fate during the Holocaust.*

The most sustained response to Steiner came from a historian, Martin Gilbert, made first in the *Jewish Chronicle* and subsequently in *The Times*. In the first of his articles, Gilbert remarks:

But the fundamental flaw in this drama remains – the Hitler monologue with which the play ends. This is presented as Hitler's defence. Point after point is raised by Hitler, to which no answer or argument is even attempted. This leaves Hitler not only the last word, but, in fact, the first and only word on these new and complicated issues.

*The Jews on the stage sit around listening to him silent and pathetic. The audience must also listen, but unless you have a strong triple training in theology, political philosophy and recent history, you will have no means of knowing whether what Hitler says is true or false. [my italics] (54)*

Gilbert's overriding concern is Steiner's moral responsibility in placing cogent arguments in the mouth of Hitler. It is the plausibility of the arguments and the disposition of the audience vis-à-vis Hitler's speech which Gilbert chiefly takes issue with. It is his concern that the *average* member of the audience is not equipped to make an informed and critical assessment of the claims made in Hitler's speech.

In the *Jewish Chronicle* Gilbert offers only brief remarks on the claims central to Hitler's speech. Of the charge that the Jews were the original author's of the idea of racial supremacy Gilbert comments:

There is, in fact, no biblical term for 'the Chosen People' as such. In the Bible story, every act involving divine 'choice' is immediately followed by some specific obligation.

The Jew is chosen for obligations not for privileges, and not for eminence. Yet Hitler, in this play, rubs in that 'chosen' means elitism and dominance and self-vaunting, and that the superiority of the Nazi man was only a derivative and a copying of the Jew's own self-aggrandisement.

Why did the author at least not give some clue that the 'Chosen People' accusation might be a well-worn, and frequently abused, myth? (55)

Gilbert finds the second of the claims, that the Jews have been the chief generators of the phenomenon of conscience, 'complimentary' and the claims made for monotheism, Jesus and Marx 'good subjects for philosophical debate'. (56) But he is silent on Hitler's claim that he too was a victim of the bloody times in which he lived.

Hitler's speech touches upon two particularly sensitive issues and it is Gilbert's response to these which constitute by far the most substantial points he makes both in the *Jewish Chronicle* and *The Times*. As it was to the latter which Steiner subsequently replied, reference will be chiefly made to this article. The issues with which each are concerned are the alleged passivity of the Jews during the Holocaust, and the complex relationship between the events in Europe from 1933 to 1945 and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.

*The Times* article appeared on 6 March beneath the headline, 'Who do you think you are kidding, Mr Hitler?', the title of a popular war time song. Prior to Hitler's speech in *The Portage*, one of the pursuit-party, Gideon, probes the basis of Hitler's self-assurance in relation to the Jews and is jolted by the sudden suspicion that Hitler desired to be the last Jew: 'How else could he have understood us so perfectly? How else could he know we would walk so calm into the fire?' (*CHPAH*. p. 40) Hitler asserts, 'When I turned on the Jew, no one came to his rescue. No one', (*CHPAH*. p. 71) because all desired the extermination of the 'bacillus of perfection'. Though brief, both remarks are taken with the utmost seriousness by Gilbert, as in his view they represent yet another contribution to the myth of Jewish passivity and helplessness. In the first instance Gilbert accuses Steiner of 'a lack of knowledge... of the Jewish response to persecution in the war years', and in the second, wilful misrepresentation of the historical record, some of which Gilbert cites in vindication of his view that 'in fact thousands of non-Jews helped Jews', (57) including the ruling political authorities in Bulgaria, Denmark and Sweden.

But Gilbert devotes by far the greatest space to his arguments against the assertion 'that without the Holocaust, there would have been no state of Israel', (58) an assertion all the more objectionable to Gilbert as in the specific context 'the Jews on the stage... are made to appear as meek, mawkish schoolboys, caught out by the legacy of their

own wrongdoing, and are forced to listen to an unprecedented but deserved rebuke'.  
(59)

Acknowledging that events in Europe after 1939 radicalised the Zionist movement and prompted leaders to begin to think more exclusively in terms of statehood, Gilbert outlines a much broader historical perspective in refutation of Steiner's claim that the Holocaust led to the establishment of Israel. Gilbert makes four points: the Holocaust robbed the new state of the very people that the pre-war Zionists envisaged would lay the foundations of the new state; rather than the Holocaust *per se*, it was Jewish experience in central Europe in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust which instigated mass emigration. When the remaining Jews of Europe returned to their homes they encountered open hostility, and despite their suffering in the camps, some were murdered by gangs. 'After the murder of 41 Jewish men, women and children in the Polish town of Kielce in April 1946, the exodus began: not the Holocaust, but its aftermath was the cause'; (60) Jewish emigration to Palestine had been occurring since the end of the nineteenth century, encouraged by Zionist ideology, Jewish devotional belief, experience of persecution and legal provision in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the League of Nations Mandate of 1922; and finally, 'The United Nations vote of 1947, in which the votes of the Soviet Union and its Communist allies are a numerical *sine qua non*, had reasons far too complex to be dismissed as the Holocaust alone.' Nor was the United States vote purely a response to the Nazi horrors perpetrated in Europe, but due to the British Government's refusal, during Truman's presidency, to allow the Jewish survivors to enter Palestine. 'The capture of the immigrant ship Exodus made its emotional impact because the return of its refugees to Europe was laid at the door of the British Government.' (61) In brief Gilbert argues that the processes by which Israel attained statehood are far too complex to be susceptible to the simplistic and sensational explanation that the Holocaust was the prime catalyst for the establishment of Israel as implied by Steiner.

In conclusion Gilbert draws attention to the fascist aesthetic which underlies Hitler's speech:

The argument... was presented, not only with demonic vehemence as indeed befitted Hitler, but with a show of historic knowledge which suggested an embarrassing truth. Ironically, the real Hitler had understood from his earliest days that falsehood and innuendo, if presented with sufficient flurry of indignation, and apparent truth, could fool most of the people, most of the time, and turn hitherto eccentric fringe lunacies into acceptable argument and then belief. (62)

Quite clearly, Gilbert responded not to the imaginary claims of a fictional character, but to the substantive meta-historical theses of George Steiner.

For his part Steiner was not slow to offer in *The Times*, the following week, a rebuttal by dint of argument, of each of Martin Gilbert's points. On the fate of European Jewry, Steiner replied:

Nothing is more unconvincing in Dr Gilbert's article - and this by the light of his own scholarship - than the attempt to deny the *fictional* Hitler's argument that the world at large did not choose to rescue European and Russian Jewry. Dr Gilbert is being either disingenuous or purely sophistic when he points to individual and even small-scale communal acts of help. We know of these, and they are deeply honoured in Jewish remembrance.

But on the large scale, the picture was one of utter cynicism, indifference or even complicity. (63)

And he gives a brief résumé of actions which characterise the national responses to Jewish fate and which bear terrible testimony to neglect, the obstruction of potential help by Britain and the US and active participation in Nazi crimes, by France and Russia.

Nor is Steiner convinced by Gilbert's attempt to place the establishment of the State of Israel in a wider historical context in order to demonstrate Israel's emergence as a political entity as due to a number of factors which far outweigh the Holocaust. Steiner comments briefly both on the history of Zionism and the United Nations Conference of 1947:

Herzl's rhetoric and vision were inseparable from the unification of Germany under Bismarck. For a time, he himself related the destiny of a future Israel to that of a benevolent imperial German patronage. There are deep grim ironies here. *Pace*. Dr Gilbert, the unprecedented and, very possibly, never-to-be-repeated unanimity of the eastern and western blocks in supporting, in making possible, the statehood of Israel, was profoundly rooted in the horror of the Holocaust.

For a brief historical instant, the world's conscience and bad conscience were allowed to speak out. Hence the paradostic fantasy of 'A. H.' ... that he is indeed the 'anti-Messiah' whose acts can pass for messianic.

But Martin Gilbert's motives, in this article as well as in his attacks published elsewhere, are those of an ardent Zionist. Here lies our true difference. (64)

Not content, merely to refute the arguments advanced by Martin Gilbert, Steiner took the opportunity to articulate the grounds upon which the veracity of his novel and Hampton's adaptation are based:

What *The Portage* asks is, 'what are the final roots of Hitler's insane and monomaniacal Jew-hatred, of a hatred so consequent that, even during the last stages of a lost world war, he chose to pursue the 'Final Solution' rather than divert to

military and economic survival - the transport and the manpower needed to carry it out?' The deep psychic sources of this madness, and of the echo it struck in millions are the matter of metaphor and conjecture in the play. (65)

In Steiner's view Gilbert had simply not addressed the most crucial issue: a rational explanation for the fate of European Jewry.

The issue resurfaced in *The Times* in an article by Arnold Wesker. He fears that the claim that the Jews invented conscience suggests a dangerous misinterpretation: the Jews as the scapegoats upon whom the frustrations of European instinct are vented justly:

Hitler's assertions in their simplified form, taking away the rhetoric and embellishments,... appear simply to be saying 'Serves you right'. Some will delight in wickedness parading in such attractive daring arrogance. But I can't help suspecting that this psychopath has more to do with cheap theatrics than disturbing insights.

The question must be asked: does he [Steiner] have sympathy for the reasons Hitler is offering for his slaughter of Jews?

Steiner's outrage for what Hitler *did* is unquestionable, but there is implicit in the Hitler monologue a certain acceptance of its inevitability, given the nature of the Jews. Does Steiner really believe this to be the true nature of the Jews or not, and if it is, does he applaud or deplore it? If he's applauding it, then his irony is of a degree of sophistication to take it... beyond the reach of ordinary mortals. (66)

Were the audience to leave the theatre accepting that there exists a sound rational basis for interpreting the Holocaust as a deserved punishment of the Jews for being the goad to virtue for a recalcitrant Europe? Steiner gave an unambiguous response:

Taking Hitler's statement 'the Jews have invented conscience', as a starting point, I have put forward, in my essays and fiction, the hypothesis that anti-Semitism is, ultimately, an attempt to eradicate the demands of the ideal, the exactions of perfection, the 'blackmail of the absolute', as those are manifest in Mosaic Law, in the teachings of Christ, and in the post-messianic aspirations of Marx. In short, it is within the long crisis of monotheism that we may come to recognise the foundations of the hatred of Jew and Judaism. (67)

On condition that the paper also print simultaneously a personal declaration (see Appendix a (iii)) by way of a formal rebuttal to specific allegations made public in its pages, George Steiner reluctantly granted an interview to the *Jewish Chronicle*. Conducted by David Nathan, the newspaper's theatre critic who had been less than complimentary about the production, he sought to bring clarity to the question of the



correspondence between the views espoused by A. H., and the beliefs of Steiner himself.

Steiner told David Nathan:

I will go the whole way. There are the four points: I believe that however much the *modern* Jewish feeling about the notion of election tries to transfer it into a metaphysical metaphor or to say that we were elected for our suffering and hence it is a contrary of privilege, I don't buy it. That is to fake an important mystery of history in the name of which we have gone back to Israel. I also stand by the idea that Hitler, like many of his predecessors in the great burst of modern, insane, racism, parodied, copied from and was jealous of this idea.

My second point is that Hitler was, enormously, a man of his time. He could not have done it without the help of all of us... We live in a morass and we are accomplices to anything that leaves us indifferent... I see no answer and I don't want the audience to get away with it.

Third point: Moses, Christ and Marx and the great blackmail of the ideal, the idea that the Jew has asked too much of himself and of man. I challenge the historians, sociologists, economists whose explanations of anti-Semitism seem to me so *jejune*, so superficial, to explain to me why in lands where nearly every Jew has been killed... anti-Semitism continues to blaze? It is a metaphysical, religious problem.

Now comes the most terrible thing, the fourth point which is inexcusable, the obscenity of my suggestion that the Holocaust was responsible for the creation of the State of Israel. Teku (the name of the Indian in the play) is the word the rabbis used to mean let eternity decide between them whenever they could not resolve an argument.

The Russian/American agreement... made Israel officially possible [and] came ... I believe... in one brief, terrible moment of bad conscience [when] they acted as *Menschen* and not as superpowers. (68)

The recurrent cry, particularly from Jewish critics and commentators, had been the aggrieved, 'Why is there no reply?', 'Why have you quite deliberately allowed Hitler the *final* word?' and in several instances Steiner allows that there is some force to this challenge. To David Nathan, Steiner offered this defence: 'To have answered that speech... would have been to set up a didactic Shavian debate, not a work of art.' (69) Citing a number of literary precedents, such as the lack of response to the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, and Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello*, Steiner claims that it is the absence of a conclusive answer to the Manichean possibility of the triumph of evil which 'constitutes the impact and freedom of a literary text'. (70) Any answer that is ventured, he continues, 'must come from the audience, from the readers... The relation between writer and audience is one of trust, it is, in Sartre's phrase, "a pact of generosity". To answer for one's reader or audience would be to break this pact.' (71)

But what is the nature of the 'pact of generosity' Steiner has offered his audience? It is not the absence of a response, nor even the absence of the possibility of a response to Hitler's speech that makes this text less than dramatic art, it is rather the violation of autonomy represented by the almost total lack of differentiation between the authorial voice and the imagined life of the drama in its numerous scenes and issues. The author is never other than the focus of attention, there is no clear differentiation between ego and object (the work of art). The two are merged, and this intrusion, or lack of separation serves finally to smother the independent life of the play. It is a lifeless, bloodless exercise.

There is no vocation for a free response implicit in a text which does not itself possess a genuinely autonomous life in the guardianship granted to its creator, by virtue of his authorship. The only possibility left to the audience is to respond, not to the created autonomous work of art, but to the author-in-the-text, confirmation of which Steiner gives fulsomely in his interview with the *Jewish Chronicle*. The author has trusted neither the free reign of his imagination, nor his audience. He has not presented anything which is open for the audience to discuss outside his own person, and the audience may intuit that the theatre is an inappropriate context in which to be subjected to arguments such as these.

Specifically, it is in the form of the final speech that no pact of generosity can exist. The audience is compelled into prior acceptance of the imperatives implicit in the structural position and orientation given to the speech of A. H. In short, the audience must be content with being dictated to. While this may be consistent with the attempt to represent Hitler's oratory as a totalitarian leader, it nevertheless represents Steiner's violation of precisely those values of trust and generosity that he expects to be granted to him by the audience. He is not inviting a discussion of a work of art, but personal praise or attack. No proper response can be given and the spectators are reduced either to silence, because they intuit that the kind of response appropriate to the text would not be appropriate to the context, or to a highly charged response focused on the author personally. Steiner's views were dissented with on rational criteria, but the tone of the disagreement, was evoked by the position Steiner himself had placed the audience in vis-à-vis his own failure of imagination.

Steiner readily acknowledged to the *Jewish Chronicle* that the arguments in the final speech are his own. He also commented: 'I am not sure A. H. can be answered', (72) which is tantamount to him claiming, 'I am not sure *I* can be answered.' This, in relation to the final speech, is to describe the dynamics of the Nuremberg Rallies.

The subsequent debate centred on the condemnation of Steiner by some Jewish scholars for placing what are patently his own arguments about Jewish fate in Europe in 1933-1945 in the mouth of a stage representation of Hitler, and those scholars who

felt obligated to present arguments with the intent of placing distance between the points made by the stage Hitler and Steiner's own critical writing over a period of some thirty years.

### 7.5 Post-production criticism of Steiner's *Portage*.

Very little impression is gained from the press night reviews, and still less understanding from the controversy which followed the production of the prominence of these issues in a number of Steiner's essays and lectures published in the preceding three decades. The seriousness with which the adaptation was received is indicative of the pre-eminence of George Steiner in British literary and cultural debate and also his stature in Europe and the US.

In the spring of 1982, following the US publication of Steiner's novel the controversy moved to the review pages of the literary supplements, (73) into the scholarly papers of reputable journals, and finally appeared in books published by the academic houses. Hampton's adaptation opened on 31 December 1982, presented by the Hartford Stage Company in Hartford, Connecticut, and ran until 6 March 1983.

Alvin Rosenfeld's discussion of *The Portage*, 'Steiner's Hitler', first appeared in *Salmagundi*, and later formed a chapter of his book, *Imagining Hitler*. (74) His comments are characterised by a hesitancy to trust the evidence of his own reading, and a reluctance to condemn both the novel and Steiner, leaving the door ajar either for the possibility that he has himself erred in not instantly recognising Steiner's incisive intellect, or for Steiner's subsequent 'return to the fold'. In *Imagining Hitler* Rosenfeld says that the speech of A. H. 'is, in fact, Hitler's self-defence, or at least the self-defence of a character in the book who is called by Hitler's name and charged with his crimes'. (75) Quite aware of the sources of the stage Hitler's speech in Steiner's own writings, (76) Rosenfeld continues:

What *baffles* in this instance, though, are not Steiner's ideas but their transference almost verbatim into the mouth of Hitler, *as if* Steiner's understanding of Hitler were identical with the latter's self-understanding... A necessary distance between the author and his principal character has collapsed here. [my italics] (77)

Robert Boyers (78) concedes that Alvin Rosenfeld is correct, in respect of Hitler's speech, to argue that,

as one listens to it, and inevitably juxtaposes Steiner's Hitler with his historical prototype, it becomes clear that most of the terms of the argument and, even more so, of the particular style of rhetoric in which they are presented, point

away from this fictitious Hitler and toward his creator as the true source of their perverse energy and brilliance. For try as one may to suspend disbelief and to allow a writer to fully indulge all the liberties of fiction, it is altogether unlikely that Adolf Hitler, the Führer of the Third Reich, would think or speak in the terms of this discourse, whose subtleties, ironies and manifold historical and theological allusions pass beyond the range of Hitler's mind. This judgement is made, to be sure, through references that are external to the novel itself, but the name Hitler is not a literary fabrication, and, at least at this point in history, cannot be reduced solely to the fictive. (79)

But despite Rosenfeld's views, Boyers himself feels justified in maintaining that,

the fact that the historical Hitler would not have been likely to say the things we find in *The Portage* should not be taken to indicate that Steiner went out of his way to support them, whatever violations of credibility the procedure might have demanded of him. Hitler is made to offer his various 'inspired' suggestions... because only by placing such suggestions in Hitler's mouth can Steiner embody in his character the potential for radical transvaluation, hence radical evil, which it is the novelists obligation to confront. (80)

The interest in the juxtaposition of these two quotations lies in the contrast created. Rosenfeld is markedly *reticent* to draw the clear conclusion suggested by the evident disparity between the rhetorical style and the historical personage, which is to say, that Steiner and A. H. *are* one voice, settling rather for an argument lower down the register upon which the speech should be criticised: the historical implausibility and fictive incongruity, in other words the violations to credibility are unacceptable as the fact of Hitler's existence is not exhausted by fictive construals. Boyers, on the other hand, denies that the evident disparity points to Steiner's 'support' of, or identification with the points made in the speech, and argues that they are 'just plausible' historically and defensible as a literary strategy. This is why Boyers, apparently oblivious to the deep irony implicit in his own argument, is able to continue:

In *The Portage*, of course, Steiner operates not so much as critic or as historian but as a novelist. His object is embodiment rather than analysis, though he may not be averse to analysis *so long as it is compatible with embodiment*. [my italics] Hitler's speech in *The Portage* is not a formal presentation of ideas; it is an elaborate self-defence mounted by a *character*... The speech should disappoint only those who expect Hitler to sound like the standard Hitler who addressed mass rallies. (81)

This is surely the chief point. Critics, Rosenfeld and Boyers amongst them, recognise a historical Hitler - Boyers conceded Rosenfeld's claim that 'Hitler' could not be construed as a solely fictive device. They recognise, too, Steiner's role both as a

speculative writer on a range of literary and cultural issues, not least the impact of the Holocaust on perceptions of European literary and cultural tradition, and his liberty to create fiction. But the 'violation of credibility', the '[in]compatible embodiment' - both phrases of Boyers - which the vast majority of critics have identified are the attempt to graft critical ideas and language (obviously Steiner's own as cultural critic) into a literary frame and fictional representation of a historical figure with little heed to the difference in literary form, historical coherence or fictive credibility. The speech is disappointing not because it does not sound like the 'standard Hitler' but primarily because A. H. sounds *identical* to Steiner. The substance of the claims made by Hitler in the final speech are a most significant, but an entirely different matter.

For Boyers to argue otherwise would be to imply that it is *plausible* for a fictional representation of Hitler, who on Boyers's own terms cannot be solely a fictive cipher and therefore must stand with a high degree of coherence to the historical Hitler (and indeed he does so within the fictive frame on the ground of chronological age and natural diminution), to have appropriated *Steiner's* language and rhetoric himself. This is precisely what Boyers argues:

Is it not the very point of Steiner's portrait to suggest that the power of transvaluation embodied in the historical figure can be understood only by seeing it as a radical power of rhetorical persuasion allied with an utterly ruthless disregard of historical fact and theological or moral scruple?

The final speech demonstrates that a Hitler can appropriate a Steiner for his purposes by wilfully ignoring and thus violating the spirit and intent of Steiner's original utterances and turning them to totally alien purposes. To accuse Steiner of perversity in this case is to suppose that Steiner acquiesces in the perversion of his survivor's vocabulary as practised by one who sought to incinerate those with whom Steiner is inalienably identified. (82)

The desire to protect Steiner from some of the more grossly expressed accusations of anti-Semitism, and to elevate him as a 'Kind of Survivor' above the vulgarisation of the controversy that surrounded the publication and the stage adaptation of *The Portage* which can be detected in this passage is laudable, but a mistaken defence of Steiner's literary objectives.

A number of criticisms can be levelled at Boyers's arguments. First, if he is to remain faithful to the criteria he has accepted earlier, the figure of A. H. cannot merely function as a fictive reality, the character must demonstrate coherence with historical categories of thought and consistency within the play's implicit aesthetic. If this is the case, then the frankly absurd questions of how the fictional A. H. came by Steiner's work in the Brazilian rain forest, and why such a great orator as A. H. should find it necessary to mimic the rhetorical style found in Steiner's critical work must be asked.

Or a plausible fictive argument is needed to explain the manifest break with his previous rhetorical style evidenced in *Mein Kampf* and in his speeches, and the adoption of a rhetorical style recognisably Steiner's own. But none is given. It is precisely because the audience has heard and knows how Hitler reasoned and spoke, that these questions must be asked.

Second, if Steiner's point was to demonstrate graphically this dark art of 'transvaluation', the radical corruption of language, the 'ruthless disregard' for all civilised values of discourse (and this is not doubted as one of Steiner's objectives in the final speech) was it necessary, as Boyers appears to suggest, for Steiner, as the author of *The Portage*, to choose *his own* previous work as the object of the 'transvaluation' to achieve this end? Would it not have been more effective to invent a speech or to use other known literary sources where this corruption of language could be shown to have transformed these sources into patterns and processes of thought akin to Nazi rhetoric, but in a voice recognisably *not* Steiner's own, but appropriate to the aged Hitler?

That Steiner did not do this may either suggest that his gifts as a fiction writer are of a strictly limited kind, or that he wished to let his audience know that he would take full responsibility for the *exact* identification he was making between *his own* critical interpretation of these issues and those of National Socialist rhetoric, and some chief trends in theological justification of the Holocaust toward which Steiner's theses lean.

If historical veracity or coherence are not at stake in the interpretation of this speech, then it is necessary to enquire whether implicit in Boyers's argument is the assumption that it is a *necessary* condition that Steiner's critical work be the object of the 'transvaluation'. Or might it be that as a literary device, this self-referentiality, is not merely confusing but indicative of the personal disposition of the author toward the *rational status* he attributes to his own theses, namely, that they are irrefutable.

Finally, Boyers's claim that the points made by the character A. H. flagrantly contradict 'the spirit and intent of Steiner's original utterances turning them to totally alien purposes'. If this is the basis of his interpretation, Boyers's argument collapses under the weight of evidence to the contrary: the critical theses espoused in the stage Hitler's final speech are precisely those found in Steiner's published work, specifically in his essay 'A Kind of Survivor' and *In Bluebeard's Castle*, and are acknowledged as such in the interview he granted the *Jewish Chronicle*. That these lines of thought can be found in Steiner's theoretical writing as early as 1965 gives little comfort to those critics who are anxious to distance Steiner from the views expressed by the fictive stage Hitler. Moreover, the published accounts of Steiner's views give those same critics small comfort in having themselves to face the evidence that Steiner's interpretation of Jewish fate is uncompromisingly theological in inference: the divine

election of the Jews will necessarily involve suffering, and that it is *precisely* these intimations of faith that the erstwhile Führer has coaxed from the depths of his being during the long years of his attentive solitude. (83)

The philosophical, moral and emotional impasse that these arguments point up in Steiner's position had not gone unnoticed by Hyam Maccoby, who, with due deference to Steiner's dismissal of the 'jejeune' theories of sociologists and economists seeking to 'explain' anti-Semitism, argued that the proper response to the Holocaust should be to 'look for the actual historical causes of the Holocaust and not hypostasise it into a metaphysical manifestation of an ineluctable fate' or 'dignify Hitler by elevating him into a metaphysical principle'. (84)

While Boyers appears to agree with such arguments, pointing out that the 'various alternative appropriations of the Holocaust by ostensibly "normal" persons in France, England, the Soviet Union and so on' in the international interludes of *The Portage* indicate that 'the fate of the Jews under Hitler was not the consequence of an ineluctable or otherwise divinely inspired plan' but

the work of human beings acting alone or in concert with others to deny or more aggressively subvert the fact of massive suffering and destruction to which their actions variously contributed... the aura of complicity is established as a fact that cannot be denied in *The Portage*, (85)

Boyers makes clear that the problem is precisely that of the relationship between the mundanely human and the ineffability of the events and that his position is far closer to that of Steiner than his acceptance of Maccoby's point at first suggests:

*The Portage* gestures vigorously at what can only be an absent cause, that is, at the totality of human motives and relations that made possible the holocaust but must remain permanently unavailable to the representational enterprise. Where *The Portage* differs from most other political novels is in its conviction that, though the cause is ever worth pursuing, and must ever be sought in the precincts of human motives, ideas and institutions, it is likely to be elsewhere, in a precinct unamenable to common sense or careful literary design. (86)

But the central questions remain: can such arguments be placed plausibly in the mouth of a stage representation of an aged Hitler, especially when they are couched in the published formulations and language of a well-known Jewish commentator on the Holocaust? Does not the view that the cause of the Holocaust 'is likely to be in a precinct unamenable to... careful literary design' preclude the *kind* of literary endeavour Steiner himself undertook in *The Portage*, and particularly in the final speech?

By pushing the arguments of Robert Boyers one step further, and by utilising a hermeneutic frame from Steiner's *After Babel. Aspects of Language and Translation*, (87) Ronald Sharp proposes in a recent essay (88) a thoroughly postmodern approach to Steiner's inter-textuality, and attempts to provide a justification for his textual practice and a rehabilitation of meaning within the fictional frame.

Steiner is well aware, Sharp argues, that essentialist understandings of genre which suggest that an easy distinction can be made between creative and critical writing have increasingly been viewed as unsustainable. Sharp acknowledges that Steiner 'does, finally want to preserve [this] distinction, but not without a deep sense both of the difficulty of drawing boundaries and the rich potential for serious play across those boundaries' (89):

For Steiner to foreground ideas in his fiction and his own style in his criticism is to invite a certain misunderstanding. But clearly he does so with full awareness, and one wonders if his critics on this point are not relying on unexamined formalistic assumptions that too simplistically distinguish the aesthetics from the intellectual or the imaginative from the theoretical, ignoring the crucial crossovers. (90)

From this point, Sharp is able to move with considerable ease into that most stale of postmodern clichés: Hitler 'is a text to be interpreted', and a particularly problematic text at that because Hitler is a master manipulator of language and meaning. (91) Accordingly, Steiner pursues a precise literary imitation of fascism without any ironic or critical commentary intended.

For Sharp, Hitler's journey through the Brazilian rain forest becomes 'a brilliant parable... The very structure of the novel can be seen as a network of variously congruent or discordant translations of Hitler into meaningful constructs that the various interpreters unknowingly revert to in order to comprehend what finally remains elusive.' (92) Sharp justifies this interpretation on the basis of Steiner's analysis of the hermeneutics of translation found in *After Babel*. (93) Such an argument is no advance upon Boyer's position and the interpretation he offered of the international interludes.

But Sharp saves his most adroit manoeuvres for his defence of the final speech, which he bases upon the third and fourth movements of Steiner's hermeneutic of translation:

It is in this context that we can best understand those attacks on *The Portage* that claim it lends Hitler something of Steiner's own authority. For Steiner certainly does, at one level, enlarge the stature of Hitler though it is important to emphasise that to do so is not to sanction or endorse Hitler - which has been a preposterous charge against Steiner and a complete misreading of *The Portage* - but rather to give Hitler his full due as an object of understanding.



But what I take to be central here is: by violating the spirit and intent of Steiner's original, Hitler has, as it were, rendered a bad translation of Steiner... In light of Lieber's earlier warning that Hitler will twist the truth, it seems much more plausible to take Hitler's use of the ideas and language of Steiner not as Steiner's attempt to vindicate Hitler, but rather as a wildly inaccurate translation of Steiner himself.

There may be grains of truth in what Hitler says... but the final result is an appallingly self-serving distortion on Hitler's part, a distortion that any careful reader of Steiner will recognise. (94)

A number of arguments can be raised against the validity of this interpretation of Steiner's literary intention. First, the accusation that Steiner is 'enlarging the stature' of Hitler is indicative of assumptions of an essentialist nature being made both about the historical figures concerned, Hitler and Steiner, and the process by which the reader and audience arrive at and respond to the 'composite character' - the inter-textual identity A. H./Steiner. The audience must first construe a historical understanding of *each* figure, before it is able to *conclude* that the character it 'receives' is an 'enlargement' - and which, moreover, carries with it the ethical inference that Steiner has succeeded in some shape or form to *enhance* what we know of the historical figure. Sharp would be bound to say that this is precisely analogous to Steiner's model of *translation* which he is applying to explain Steiner's literary intention and design in the final speech.

Rather than be impressed by the sophistication of such an ingenious playfulness, the reader or audience may feel that it is rationally indefensible upon philosophical, aesthetic and ethical grounds. It is philosophically suspect on all three essentialist understandings of time, space and the biological continuity of identity. (95) It is also questionable whether the points made by the fictive Hitler, sourced in Steiner's published views, do 'enlarge' Hitler's stature, merely serve to confirm beliefs already held about the historical Hitler, or, most dangerously, misinterpret and distort the historical figure because of the absurd proposition that a stage representation of Hitler has hijacked the published theses of his originator. The *aesthetic effect* of the portrayal is precisely that which carries both the sense of the intended literary purpose, according to Sharp, and the sense of the traditional meaning of the term by those opposed to such a reading: the *character* comes over as *counterfeit*.

Second, Sharp encourages acceptance of his view that Hitler is 'enlarged' by 'the use of some of the ideas and language from Steiner's own essays' and offers the assurance that this does not 'sanction or endorse Hitler'. The speech is not a vindication of Hitler's beliefs and actions as they may be discerned from the historical record, rather it is a 'vindication of Steiner's work, a 'bad translation'. The points cited in the final speech of *The Portage*, with the possible exception of Hitler's claim to

some dark messiahship, have been sourced in Steiner's own work and simply cannot be dismissed as 'distortions', 'violations' or 'wildly inaccurate translations'. When challenged by the media, and particularly the *Jewish Chronicle*, he has personally stood by the arguments advanced in the speech. They are hardly a 'grain of truth' or a 'partial' identification as Sharp would have it. The published sources represent the substantive part of the points which are made in the final speech, and Steiner has never publicly disavowed his own words.

Third, Sharp asks that the point of the final speech of A. H. be understood as violations, bad translations, as A. H. is the arch-manipulator of language. To arrive at this understanding reference must be made to the *context* of the final speech which in Sharp's view is constituted by the two long speeches that Lieber makes. These speeches are the counter-narratives to the final speech by A. H. and reveal the final speech in its true light. But Lieber's litanies of suffering and death can only *affirm* the interpretations made of Jewish history and fate in the final speech, rather than counter them. This is surely what Steiner intended: a hermeneutically sealed presentation of theses he is not sure can be answered.

## 7.6 Steiner's conception of Jewish fate

Steiner wrote *The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.* in Geneva in just three days in the winter of 1975/1976. Clearly it issues from his scholarly work and his personal reflections in this period both on the Holocaust and the State of Israel, and Steiner readily acknowledges that it was written in the midst of a personal crisis, a focus of which appears to have been his repugnance at chauvinistic nationalism, particularly Israel's. It is quite clear that Steiner has placed his own speculative arguments found in a number of his essays and lectures in the mouth of the fictive Hitler. The question remains: is this a defensible representation of Jewish history and fate?

Edith Wyschogrod does her best to find grounds to accommodate Steiner's position:

It is of course possible to interpret Lieber's words as a rebuttal of Hitler's arguments, but to do so is to grant those arguments a certain legitimacy, to presuppose conditions of debate in which all participants fall within the framework of recognisably moral discourse. Perhaps Steiner saw this when he [mentioned] that Milton's Satan and Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor proffer no 'real answers' because evil is imponderable. *Teku*, the name of one of the... characters and the Hebrew word for a query whose answer lies beyond human wisdom, suggests the imponderability of evil that haunts moral inquiry.

Still, Steiner appears to believe that we can, however obliquely, experience something of its imponderability when we give the position, however odious, its discursive space. (96)

Wyschogrod's own bluntly stated point of view of A. H.'s speech is that 'the parodic character of the words is obscured by their rhetorical force'. (97)

Once again, it is Robert Skloot who cogently draws together these themes in some perceptive remarks relating the issues of metaphysical categories of explanation, the all-pervasive presence of Steiner in the text, and Steiner's personal biography:

Always a rationalist, Steiner is searching to make sense of the most irrational chapter of modern history, and he resolves his confusion by proposing the idea that goodness and evil are mirror images of each other. Accepting the latter, he can, at the same time, validate the former.

*Portage* presents an artistic vision to protect against confusion and despair by establishing a *modus vivendi* between the eternal moral opposites. It is a vision that has deep roots and that contains a fearful admission, which helps to explain Steiner's quite irrelevant appeal to the spontaneous judgements of audiences: it is an admission of either defeat or exhaustion in his personal search for untainted images of humane possibility.

The structure of *Portage*, in fact, is like a miniature Nuremberg rally, i.e. the extraordinarily protracted and episodic theatrics leading to the appearance of the 'great man' himself, who has been concealed for so long, but who is finally revealed as being among us all the time... The quest... has a personal dimension, one that finds Steiner linking the murder of six million Jews to the discovery of his own Jewish identity. (98)

Apart from the featureless, impassive Israeli search party who finally stand in awe of A. H.'s authority, the litanies of the dead and the locations of their destruction incanted by Lieber across the air waves, *The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.* portrays Jewish fate in Europe, chiefly in terms of the theses Steiner places in the mouth of A. H., a dramatic figure whose identity is obscured both by a spurious discretion, and the historical continuities with Adolf Hitler.

The theses propounded by A. H. have been found to be entirely coherent with Steiner's published views over an extended period of time. The theses represent the most systematic statement of a theological interpretation of Jewish fate during the Holocaust by any of the authors and dramatists considered here. They represent Jewish fate during the Holocaust as the culmination of historical processes in an increasingly secularised Europe which ultimately led to the destruction of a race deemed to embody the divine imperative, an event of traceable but unfathomable evil, and are offered as a justification for the 'Final Solution' by a dramatic character who is most easily understood as a verisimilitudinous portrait of an aged Adolf Hitler, while the arguments and language he employs are recognisably George Steiner's.

In an interview given in July 1990, and published in 1994 Nicolas Tredell intervenes in his discussion with Steiner to press him on a specific point:

One particular anticipation... of your current quarrel with deconstruction in *Real Presences*, occurs in this passage from *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky*: 'The most stringent test of the aliveness of an imagined character - of its mysterious acquisition of a life of its own outside the book or play in which it has been created and far exceeding the mortality of its creator - is whether or not it can grow with time and preserve its coherent individuality in an altered setting.' (1980 edn, p. 104)... Now the objection that would be made today is that this continuity and coherence, even within a text, let alone between texts, is a retrospective simplification, a construction, a synthetic act of the imagination.

Steiner replied:

I don't accept that... The notion that Odysseus or Falstaff or Hamlet or Emma Bovary or Anna Karenina are only semantic markers is entirely coherent. It cannot be disproved. But I know it's rubbish... The survival of a fictional persona, the way it absorbs one's own life so that it is much more alive than you and I - these figures have life infinitely beyond your and mine, and a physical life strangely enough - all this entails a possible analogy, and I'm using analogy in a strict, almost theological sense, with the act of creation. (99)

Indeed in the preface to the 1980 edition of *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky* Steiner had commented: 'With each modish wave of structuralist-semiotic decomposition, the actual literary text recedes further from autonomy, from the truth of felt being and this because the semiotic anatomist is axiomatically more intelligent, more knowing, more important than the text on which he writes', (100) something which Steiner condemns as 'Narcissist arrogance'. (101)

Steiner does not hold Arthur Miller in particular regard, commenting in his essay 'The Retreat from the Word', that Miller 'has failed to hear behind Ibsen's realistic conventions the constant beat of poetry'. (102) This may be, but Steiner himself might have learnt a thing or two had he paid more attention to the preface of Arthur Miller's *Collected Plays*, first published in 1958. With particular reference to the creation of an autonomous text and genuinely autonomous characters, Miller comments:

A writer of any worth creates out of his total perception, the vaster part of which is subjective and *not within his intellectual control*. For myself, it has never been possible to generate the energy to write and complete a play if *I know in advance* everything it signifies and all it will contain. The very impulse to write, I think, springs from an inner chaos crying for order, for meaning, and *that meaning must be discovered in the process of writing or the work lies dead as it is finished*. To speak, therefore, of a play as though it were the objective work of a propagandist is an almost biological kind of nonsense, provided, of course, that it is a play, which is to say a work of art. [my italics] (103)

Steiner is quite aware that he is vulnerable to reflections such as these. In an interview he gave the weekend *before* the stage adaptation of *The Portage* opened at the Mermaid Theatre, Steiner remarked: 'I lack the innocent creativity of a real artist. My novel is ideas and argument.' (104) It is an observation he repeats, again and again whenever the subject of his imaginative writing is raised. (105)

The novel and the play lie dead on page and stage. No 'life infinitely beyond your and mine', as Steiner had described to Tredell the enduring nature of fictional persona, but rather A. H., no more than dead letters. At the risk of misappropriating the insight of Karl Kraus, a fitting epitaph might be: 'When I think of A. H. - nothing in particular comes to mind.'

## 8 THE ROYAL COURT THEATRE AND THE 'PERDITION AFFAIR'

### 8.1 Max Stafford-Clark and the Royal Court Theatre in the mid 1980s

In August 1979, after pulling the Royal Court Theatre back from the brink of financial disaster, Stuart Burge was given a six-month leave of absence to direct Trevor Griffith's television adaptation of D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. Max Stafford-Clark, one of two associate directors was asked to assume leadership of the Court until Burge's return. Stafford-Clark's contract covered the period Burge was expected to be away, but when difficulties with the television series made Burge's return impossible, he was, in March 1980, appointed as the Court's artistic director.

Stafford-Clark's career reflected a number of significant developments in post-war British theatre. After reading English Literature at University College Dublin, he first became an assistant script manager and, in 1968, the artistic director of the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh, subsequently establishing the Traverse Workshop Company. In the early 1970s he had directed at the Royal Court Theatre, and in 1974 he co-founded with David Hare and David Aukin the Joint Stock Theatre Group. With this company, perhaps the leading fringe company of the 1970s, and described by William Gaskill as 'the Royal Court in exile', (1) Stafford-Clark developed his particular method of rehearsal: a collaborative enterprise in which director, writer and actors were involved in improvisation, followed by rehearsed readings, rewriting, and finally an intensive period of rehearsal to arrive at a presentable performance text. Stafford-Clark's commitments were clearly in line with the chief traditions of the Royal Court: new writing and political engagement.

In an interview conducted in the summer of 1984, and published in *Theatre Quarterly* the following year, Stafford-Clark was asked whether he was concerned that the Royal Court had lost its pre-eminence as *the* theatre to which new writers naturally made their first approach. (2) Sanguine about the Royal Court's relationship with other theatres, such as The Bush and the RSC's Warehouse Theatre, both of which had been attracting new writers and producing new work for some years, Stafford-Clark replied: 'There was a period when the Court had a monopoly of new writing... I certainly wouldn't want to return to that position.' Rather, he considered the Court to be 'in the best possible sense of the word, in competition with a number of other theatres, for new writers' which in his view had the effect of making the Royal Court 'healthily aware of the kind of service' it offered to them, and the need 'to develop a consistency and commitment in our approach'. (3)

In fact, Stafford-Clark considered that the Court had several advantages over the competition:

The Court... has unique facilities to develop a writer's work through the Theatre Upstairs leading to a main-house production. No other theatre in the country has the facility to do that... it is specially positioned to add writers to [the existing] pool... and the Court is still the only large proscenium stage theatre committed to new writing and that too makes our position unique... The Royal Court is both an intimate and an epic theatre... It's a public stage where public statements can be made and heard all round the world. (4)

In 1982 Stafford-Clark initiated an innovative scheme whereby the Royal Court exchanged productions with Joseph Papp's Public Theatre in New York. He had begun the exchange out of financial necessity, and Papp had promised a grant of 50,000 dollars providing the Royal Court could match the grant from private donations received in Britain. The Court succeeded in matching the sum and he duly made the grant to the theatre. But The English Stage Company failed capitalise on the exchange, over and above Papp's grant, due to the enormous costs involved in making transatlantic transfers. However, Stafford-Clark was later able to stage both Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* and Michael Hastings's *Tom and Viv* for a second season, promoting them as 'Broadway hits', which raised the critical and public profile of the Court as well as achieving welcome commercial success.

When in the summer of 1984 Stafford-Clark was asked if he could identify precisely what characterised his play policy in the first years of his artistic directorship he replied:

Although most programming is passive, since we are a writers' theatre and respond to what writers present, there has been a movement towards instigating work on particular subjects. *Falkland Sound* [David Tinker] is perhaps a culmination of that side of our programming where we created a play based on responses to the Falkland's War because I felt the subject needed to be explored theatrically.

I would also point to Gordon Newman's two plays, *Operation Bad Apple* and *An Honourable Trade*, as examples of instigative commissioning. Gordon approached us with the idea for *Bad Apple*, and although he had never previously written a stage play we were keen to back work that investigated an area of such public interest. That, I would say, is new. (5)

When pressed to be more specific later in the interview Stafford-Clark confessed: 'I don't think when I started here I had a clear view of what the play policy might be. It's only in retrospect that I can see what that policy has become and see its value.' (6) He defined this policy in contrast to the mythology that had developed around the Court in earlier decades:

The Court of the sixties and seventies had social awareness, but possibly its prime concern was aesthetic. We're more conscious now of the 'progressive

conscience', [reflected in a repertoire which is] a combination of contemporary experience in works such as *Sugar and Spice*, *Not Quite Jerusalem*, *Borderline*... with 'historical' plays which give some critique of England's past.

But the real value of a theatre like the Court is its ability to reflect the complexity of the society we live in, and our determination to have a public voice. (7)

The Royal Court, Stafford-Clark maintained, 'still stands within the great liberal-radical tradition' but with a new emphasis, 'a more overt political awareness', (8) which is apparent from the programming in the first years of the new decade. (9) But the *new* political awareness also included productions of plays by the stalwarts of the oppositional left-wing theatre of the 1960s and 1970s, amongst which were Barrie Keeffe's *Sus* (1979), Howard Brenton's and Tony Howards's *A Short Sharp Shock* (1980), Trevor Griffiths's *Oi for England* (1982), Howard Barker's *No End of Blame* (1981) and *Victory* (1983), and Edward Bond's *Saved* and the *Pope's Wedding*, the latter two being revived in 1984 as Royal Court 'classics'.

No doubt the acute awareness of which Stafford-Clark spoke was precipitated by the lurch to the right that had taken place with Mrs Thatcher's victory of 1979, and increasingly in evidence in her second-term of office, the defining years of 'Thatcherism'. A critical response was needed to the privatisation of values, the increasing centralisation of power, and the military intervention in international affairs, and it was imperative that the Royal Court address these issues with an urgency that had been lacking in the drama of the mid-1970s.

Stafford-Clark's comments about the role of the Royal Court's Council clearly express his own assumptions about the oppositional role of the theatre in the prevailing political climate of the early 1980s:

They're in a difficult position, because part of the role of the Council is to provide support for the Court from the Establishment, whereas the Court has always tended to be a radical anti-Establishment organisation that sometimes, as in the case of *Saved* or more recently of *Operation Bad Apple*, runs into trouble with the Establishment and needs powerful advocacy. And it's difficult to think of a powerful left-wing banker or lawyer who would be able to have both an enthusiasm for and a commitment to the work we do, and still be in a position of power within the Establishment. So the Council is supposed to fill this awkward brief of being members of the establishment and enthusiasts. (10)

In the summer of 1985 the Royal Court Theatre received an unsolicited script from Jim Allen, whose television dramas *Spongers*, *Days of Hope*, *The Lump* and *The Big Flame* had all enjoyed critical acclaim and popular success. Chiefly concerned with the British working class, Allen's drama represents its experience as the struggle against



the oppressive nature of capitalism and its ruling class. Allen also addressed what he saw as the recurrent failure of working class leadership to achieve any effective change in the structures of power, and, moreover, that leadership's frequent betrayal of the very people they were ostensibly representing through their corruption by the power they set out to oppose. Allen's analysis of power relations owes a great deal to his far left political convictions, expressed in his involvement with various Marxist/Trotskyite groups, including the Worker's Revolutionary Party.

The script Allen sent to the Royal Court was his first stage play, and it was not concerned with British working class experience. Entitled *Perdition* it had been closely modelled on the 'Kasztner Trial' which took place in Israel in 1954. The trial and *Perdition* concerned one of the most controversial episodes in the history of the Second World War, and the Nazi genocide. At a time when the Allies were cognizant of the dimensions of the 'Final Solution', the German occupation of Hungary in March 1944 extended the Nazi policy of mass extermination to Hungary's Jews and those Jews from Poland, Slovakia and Romania, who had earlier sought shelter there. Between 14 May and 7 July 437,000 Jews were deported to Auschwitz from Hungary. However, Israel Kasztner, who was a Zionist member of the Rescue and Aid Committee operative in Budapest in 1943 and 1944, later stood trial in Israel accused of collaborating with the Nazis in the destruction of Hungary's Jews for the sake of ideological ends not dissimilar to those of Nazism.

## **8.2 The Kasztner Trial - Jerusalem 1954-55, Israel, and Jim Allen's *Perdition***

The trial opened on 1 January 1954 and was a libel suit brought by the Israeli government on behalf of one Israel Rudolf (Rezso) Kasztner who was a press spokesman for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in the Mapai (Labour) Government of Moshe Sharett (Shertook), against Malchiel Gruenwald, a frail seventy-two year old hotelier. Gruenwald regularly produced newsletters for a small circle of friends – café-philosophers and bar-room politicians - which often carried intemperate and libellous denunciations of figures who had been involved in the European catastrophe. In Newsletter no. 51 of August 1952 Gruenwald wrote:

For whose sake and at whose expense did you travel in 1946 - secretly like a thief in the night - to Nuremberg, in order to testify at the trial of the greatest war criminals in the history of the world, appearing as a defence witness for SS *Obersturmbannführer* Kurt Becher, murderer-thief who exploited our brothers in Hungary and sucked their blood?... Why did you save Becher from the hanging he deserved? He wanted to save himself, so that Becher would not reveal to the international court their deals and their joint acts of robbery... Where now is the money of the Jews of Hungary, millions for which no accounting was given?...

He saved no fewer than fifty-two of his relatives and hundreds of other Jews - most of whom had converted to Christianity - bought their rescue from Kasztner by paying millions! That's how Kasztner saved the members of Mapai... He saved people with connections and made a fortune in the process. But thousands of senior Zionists, members of the Mizrahi and the ultrareligious parties - these, Kasztner left in the valley of the shadow of death. (11)

The 1954 trial presented itself as a suitable model for adaptation by Allen because it was prosecuted for overtly ideological ends. Malchiel Gruenwald viewed the trial as a political crusade against the Mapai Government of Moshe Sharett, and to fight the suit Gruenwald engaged the services of a brilliant young advocate, Samuel M. Tamir, a founding member of the Herut Party (Right Wing).

Tom Segev (12) comments that District Court Judge Benjamin Halevy had not found it easy to summarise the accusations, but that he had placed them in four groups: '(1) collaboration with the Nazis; (2) "indirect murder", or "paving the way for murder" of Hungarian Jewry; (3) partnership with a Nazi War Criminal [Kurt Becher] in acts of thievery; (4) saving that war criminal from punishment after the war.' (13) Tamir achieved the politically damaging ends that were his object by repeatedly suggesting to the court that it was Kasztner as a representative of Mapai in Hungary who had collaborated with the Nazis by remaining silent and not informing Hungarian Jewry, even to the extent of failing to inform Jews in his hometown of Cluj (some of whom were called as witnesses by Tamir), of the impending disaster. Tamir suggested that Kasztner had helped SS *Obersturmbahnführer* Kurt Becher evade the death sentence at the Nuremberg Trials by testifying that Becher had assisted in the rescue of some Jews toward the end of the war. Tamir also claimed to have evidence that pointed to Mapai as the ultimate beneficiary of a substantial amount of unaccounted for wealth, looted from Hungary's Jews by Becher and channelled into Mapai party funds through Kasztner.

Tamir went further by suggesting that prominent members of Mapai (the Prime Minister Moshe Sharett was particularly in Tamir's sights) had, as representatives of the Jewish Agency in Palestine in 1944, suppressed reports about the Holocaust, and held back from taking effective action which they feared would have detrimental effects upon the favourable balance of power they were attempting to preserve with the British mandatory power. In short, that they had 'collaborated' with the Nazis in Hungary and the British in Palestine through the abandonment of their own people.

This was Tamir's justification for introducing to the court the episodes concerning Joel Brand, whom Eichmann allowed to leave Hungary to negotiate with the Allies for an exchange of war matériel for Jewish lives, and Hannah Szenses who was parachuted into the region ostensibly to give assistance to Allied airmen in hiding, but also to make contact with beleaguered Jewish communities. Segev comments:

Tamir presented his own version of a series of affairs, including Joel Brand's mission... Tamir brought up the story in order to smear Mapai. Moshe Sharett, who in January 1954 had replaced Ben-Gurion as prime minister, along with Ehud Avriel and Teddy Kollek, both close associates of Ben-Gurion, were depicted by Tamir as traitors who as executives of the Jewish Agency had deliberately sabotaged the mission that could have saved hundreds of thousands of Jews, perhaps even a million. They did so in the service of the British, Tamir argued - the British, after all, had not wanted, any more Jews in Palestine.

Tamir called Katarina Senesh, mother of the legendary paratrooper Hannah Senesh, to the witness stand. She told how Kastner ignored her all through her daughter's capture, torture and execution... Mapai according to the thesis, sent the paratroopers to Hungary in co-ordination with the British, and Kastner turned them in to the Nazis, so as not to endanger his position. Kastner sent Brand to Palestine in co-ordination with the Nazis, and Mapai turned him over to the British, so as not to endanger its position. By now the Kastner trial had become the trial of Mapai. (14)

The government attempted to counter this version of history by leaking to the press a secret report that the Prime Minister Moshe Sharett had submitted to members of the Jewish Agency executive in London in June 1944 which detailed the efforts that he, Ben-Gurion and other leaders of the Jewish Agency had made to effect substantive action, and their vain attempts to prevent the arrest of Joel Brand and his subsequent imprisonment in Cairo by the British. The publication of the report in *Maariv* was a clear violation of the sub judice rule but it achieved the desired effect of bringing an alternative perspective to the one presented by Tamir. Segev's judgement of Tamir's thesis is suitably economic:

[Tamir's] arguments were attractive but flawed. The Jews of Europe were murdered not because they were ignorant of what awaited them but because they were powerless to resist. The yishuv knew about the Holocaust as it was happening. No one suppressed or denied reports. Yet the yishuv continued to live its life, helpless and complacent... Tamir, part of this truth, had trouble living with it; [and] also had a political interest in distorting it. (15)

Judge Halevy who was sympathetic to the defendant's case but also to Mapai announced the verdict on 22 June 1955 and found that, of the four allegations in Gruenwald's original newsletter, three were justified and therefore not libellous. Kasztner was therefore guilty of collaboration with the Nazis, and guilty of misleading the leaders of Cluj by remaining silent about the destination of the transports and preventing them effecting their own escape to Romania. Halevy also ruled that the pressure placed upon the paratroopers to surrender themselves, and the abandonment of Hannah Szenes were also acts of collaboration, but that the mission of Joel Brand, explored at great length by Tamir, was not germane to the trial.

All that remained was Gruenwald's claim that Kastner had been in cahoots with Becher and took some of the valuables that the Nazis stole from the Jews of Hungary. This accusation had not been proven, Halevy ruled... But given Gruenwald's acquittal on the other, decisive accounts of libel, justice required imposing only a sympathetic fine. (16)

Segev says of the ruling in general that it was 'one of the most heartless in the history of Israel'. (17) Kasztner was assassinated before a higher court finally cleared his name some four years later.

Jim Allen adapted the trial through the invented characters Dr Miklos Yaron and Ruth Kaplan, modelled respectively on Kasztner and Malchiel Gruenwald, although Kasztner himself plays an important 'off-stage' role as a constant point of reference, in relation to the work of the Rescue Committee in Budapest, of which the fictitious Yaron is also a member in Allen's play.

He adopted this approach for two reasons, ideological and dramatic. His overriding desire was to make the issues contemporary. Allen intended his play to be a direct attack on Zionism and the policies of the state of Israel in the early 1980s: Zionism had been responsible for the catastrophe in Hungary, as it was also responsible for the current policies of the state of Israel. The considerations that had led to the abandonment of Hungarian Jewry in 1944 also led to the abandonment of common humanity toward the Palestinian Arabs. Kasztner was never a member of the Jewish Council (*Judenrat*) in Budapest, but in order to be able to make *all* his allegations against *one* composite character, Allen fictionalised Yaron so that the criticisms levelled at the Jewish Council and the Rescue Committee would find a focus in Yaron.

A specific stimulus to Allen's dealing with the subject of Zionism was Israel's invasion of Lebanon in June 1982. W. D. Rubinstein remarks that while 'strident anti-Zionism often indistinguishable from anti-Semitism' had become 'a trademark of the extreme left after 1967' in Britain, (18) left-wing hostility toward Israel

peaked during the controversial prime ministership of Menachem Begin (1977-83), reaching its absolute zenith during the Lebanon war of 1982, when the British media and the whole of the British left turned against Israel in a way which many Jews not given to hyperbole termed anti-Semitism. (19)

It was in the publications and statements of the extreme left that the phenomenon noted by Rubinstein was most apparent: criticism of Israel's policy and intervention in Lebanon blatantly expressed in anti-Semitic rhetoric. In his articles, 'Anti-Jewish themes and the British far left', first published in early 1984, (20) Michael Billig points out that the Labour Committee on Palestine (LCP) was formed in response to the

Israeli invasion of Lebanon and that its inaugural meeting was attended by the representatives of a number of extreme left organisations:

However much such revolutionary groups might disagree amongst themselves about other issues, they agree on the aim of eradicating the State of Israel: they would agree with the conclusion of the Socialist Worker's Party (SWP)... which unambiguously asserts in its booklet on Zionism, *Israel: A Racist State*: 'There will be no peace in the Middle East while the State of Israel continues to exist.'

This type of critique is not based upon opposition to particular actions of the Israeli government, nor from opposition to the concept of the national state itself; instead it is based upon opposition to Israel or to the very notion of a Jewish state. (21)

When Max Stafford-Clark and the literary manager of the Royal Court, Michael Hastings, received Allen's script in the summer of 1985 they were sufficiently unsure of *Perdition*'s historical basis to solicit expert opinion. They commissioned a report on Allen's script from the historian David Cesarani because they considered his assessment would present the strongest case *against* Allen's thesis, as, in their view, Cesarani was a 'Zionist historian'. The script was also sent to the Institute of Jewish Affairs for comment. Its director, Dr Stephen Roth, had been active in the Zionist resistance in Budapest in 1944, and had been arrested, tortured and deported to Auschwitz.

In November 1985 David Cesarani presented his report on *Perdition* which was scathing of Allen's abuse of historical sources, his highly selective and tendentious misinterpretations of documentation and events, and his polemical attack on Zionism. Cesarani considered Allen's play to be not simply anti-Zionist propaganda, but anti-Semitic.

Stafford-Clark was planning the production of Allen's play for the Theatre Upstairs at the Court, but as yet he had not settled upon a director. Allen was none too happy about the size of the auditorium, and as a result of his misgivings withdrew his script from the Court in the hope of being able to find a larger theatre space. Early in 1986 he began negotiations with the Library Theatre in Manchester, interested in a *joint* production with the Court. But, the Library Theatre also commissioned a report, from the historian Martin Gilbert, which was equally scathing of Allen's thesis. In May 1986 the Library Theatre withdrew from the proposed co-production. The following autumn, Max Stafford-Clark made the decision to proceed with a production of the play at The Royal Court, with the première set for 22 January 1987.

Despite Allen's later denials there had been a continuous process of adaptation of the text of *Perdition* between December 1985, and its publication in July 1987. (22) Ithaca Press, in collaboration with Jerusalem Peace Services, an anti-Israeli

organisation, appended to the published text a number of letters, short essays and extended notes, chiefly by supporters of Jim Allen's views but also from one of the play's chief critics, David Cesarani. He comments on the published text:

Any discussion of Jim Allen's *Perdition* and the controversy which it caused must begin with an important caveat. The text of the play printed here is a drastically revised version of the one that went into rehearsal and which was released to the press for pre-performance information. This text was itself a remodelled edition of the play that was first commented on by the historians Martin Gilbert and Dr David Cesarani. At each stage of rewriting significant alterations have been made. (23)

Cesarani does not draw attention to the amendments Allen made to the text in the week prior to the planned première, when criticism of the play began to surface in the press, and during which Max Stafford-Clark personally met two of the play's chief detractors, Dr Stephen Roth and Martin Gilbert. Nevertheless, it is clear that the detailed critical comments - Cesarani's own report, the errors Martin Gilbert claimed to have identified in his report for the Library Theatre Manchester, and the errors listed by Dr Stephen Roth from the Institute of Jewish Affairs were 'deflected in the editorial process', and Cesarani goes on to comment:

These changes... become an important dimension for any assessment of the play. This is the case for a number of reasons. First, Jim Allen and the plays director, Ken Loach, insisted on the complete accuracy and veracity of the text in January 1987. Yet now it has been radically amended. Secondly, the author dismissed the substantive points made by his critics, but he has subsequently incorporated into his text many corrections to accommodate the objections levelled against his version of history. (24)

In reference to the published text Cesarani comments that 'the extent of the... revision is such that it *renders a good deal of the commentary at the time of the Perdition affair almost irrelevant*'. [my italics] (25)

This assessment is not at all accurate. The chief issues which emerged during the controversy continue to be highly relevant to the published text for reasons that Cesarani himself acknowledges:

Above all, the [published] play remains a distortion of history based on a selective interpretation of the facts and the citation of actions and documents taken out of context. This could not be otherwise since the ideological assumptions on which the drama was based and its function as a piece of propaganda have been consistent from first to last. (26)

What follows is a summary of the text of the published version of *Perdition* and a discussion of the play which issues out of the public controversy which ensued when, at the eleventh hour Max Stafford-Clark, decided to withdraw *Perdition* from the stage of the Royal Court.

### 8.3 Jim Allen's *Perdition*

Ruth Kaplan, who has until recently worked at the National Jewish Library of Judaism as assistant to Dr Miklos Yaron, has published a pamphlet which alleges that Yaron collaborated with the SS in Hungary from May to July 1944. This collaboration enabled him to secure his own, his family's and chosen friends' escape to Switzerland on an especially 'commissioned' safe train, while hundreds of thousands of their co-religionists were deported to and perished in Auschwitz-Birkenau because of Yaron's and the Rescue Committee's silence about the final destination of the transports leaving Budapest, the significance of which, they were quite aware. Dr Yaron has brought a charge of libel against Ruth Kaplan for the publication of her allegations against him, and Scott and Green are defending her against Dr Yaron's lawsuit.

In making his case for the prosecution of Ruth Kaplan for gross misrepresentation, Lawson first calls upon Dr Yaron to take the witness stand. Yaron informs the court that, following the occupation of Hungary by German forces, representatives of the Jewish communities were summoned to the Majestic Hotel to meet Adolf Eichmann who instructed them to form a Jewish Council (*Judenrat*) which would have 'total jurisdiction' over Hungarian Jewry and 'carry out German instructions'. (*Pdn.* p. 8)

Despite his reservations, Dr Yaron became a member of the Council but did not confine his activities to serving them alone, but also joined a *Zionist* Rescue Committee which was active in resisting plans for deporting Hungary's Jews. Yaron estimates the number saved in excess of ten thousand and also points out that a further eighteen thousand were sent to labour camps in Austria, seventy per cent of whom survived the war. (*Pdn.* p. 9)

Rather than the publication of Ruth Kaplan's allegations against Dr Yaron, it is the latter's actions in Budapest which become the critical focus of the legal proceedings. Although Yaron himself was responsible for bringing the legal action (ostensibly to prevent defamation of his character and libellous allegations being further publicised), it is he who stands on trial, and against whom Scott vigorously pursues his case in defence of Ruth Kaplan, in order to show her allegations are *not* unfounded.

The chief point Scott, counsel for the defence, wishes to establish in the minds of the jury is that Dr Yaron, along with other prominent members of the Jewish community, Rudolph Kasztner amongst them, had access to privileged information

which they purposefully chose not to divulge to Hungary's provincial Jewish communities, a silence which Scott intends to establish as the chief reason for the lack of Jewish resistance to the deportation of Hungarian Jewry to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Pursuing this line of argument, Scott seeks to establish precisely when Dr Yaron and other prominent members of Budapest's Jewish community received reliable reports about Auschwitz. Scott successfully demonstrates that Yaron was aware of the precise purpose of the camp by 28 April 1944, and this gave him plenty of time to warn Hungarian Jews of the impending disaster.

By way of support for his case against Yaron, Scott refers the court to Ruth Kaplan's pamphlet, *I Accuse*, in which she had included a quotation taken from an interview which had appeared in the November/December 1960 issues of *Life* magazine. The articles, were based upon the transcript of an interview Adolf Eichmann had granted to a former member of the SS, Willem Sassen, in 1955. Reading the extract from Kaplan's pamphlet to the Court, Scott's purpose is to provide evidence for the claim from Eichmann's own post-war testimony that Kasztner had, 'agreed to help keep the Jews from resisting deportation and even keep order in the collection camps, if I would close my eyes and let a few hundred or a few thousand young Jews emigrate to Palestine. It was a good bargain... Kastner tendered us great service by helping to keep the deportation camps peaceful.' (*Pdn.* p. 17) Scott also goes to great pains to let the jury know of Kasztner's subsequent fate in post-war Israel.

Scott returns to the theme of the Jewish leadership's lack of active resistance, and when Yaron protests that the Jewish Council did resist, Scott angrily snatches up yet more documentary evidence to the contrary: 'Petition to Interior Minister Jaroszi: "We emphatically declare that we do not seek this audience to lodge complaints about the merits of the measures adopted, but merely ask that they be carried out in a humane spirit." This was your protest?' (*Pdn.* p. 18) And to the Jewish community the Council addressed a reciprocal plea, part of which Scott reads to the court:

Work and do not be downhearted. Let every Jewish co-religionist, whether rich or poor, consider it his duty to devote his entire energy to any task that he may be called upon to do. We emphasise the absolute necessity for every instruction, regulation, order or command emanating from the competent Authorities to be observed immediately and in full without any complaint or objection whatsoever. (*Pdn.* p. 20)

Scott goes on to point out that 'the act of collaboration did not happen all at once... Its roots lay in the pre-war efforts of some Zionists to effect an alliance with the Nazis.' (*Pdn.* p. 21) When challenged on this point by Lawson, the counsel for the plaintiff, Scott replies to him:



Our contention is that before the 'Final Solution' the Nazis wanted the Jews out of Europe and the Zionist leaders were only too happy to oblige - providing they went to Palestine. Thus, in form, if not in essence, the interests of Zionism and Nazism coincided. Once the extermination programme began, it then became a salvaging operation: the salvation of the 'best biological material'. The 'prominents', the pioneers and the Zionist youth who would help build the Jewish homeland in Palestine. The fact is, Doctor Yaron, your daily contacts with Eichmann and the SS, the step by step compliance and co-operation with the Germans and Hungarian fascists led ultimately to out-and-out collaboration. (Pdn. p. 21)

Lawson takes to his feet and promptly addresses the issue. Yaron is at pains to make clear that he and his colleagues clutched at the offer made by Eichmann, Jewish lives for war matériel, (the deal to be negotiated with the Allies by Joel Brand) as the means, however distasteful, of saving Jewish lives.

Laszlo Vandor, a colleague of Yaron's from Budapest's Jewish council, is called to the witness stand and, under questioning from Lawson, maintains that Yaron was a courageous individual who took great personal risks in his unstinting efforts to assist Hungarian Jews. Scott, on the other hand, concludes his questioning by eliciting the apparently damning admission from Vandor that he was amongst those on the train which left Budapest on 6 December for Switzerland, his passage having been arranged by Dr Yaron.

A second witness is called, Stanley Karpin, and Lawson's cross-examination is once again less than acute in support of his client, Dr Yaron, while Scott turns Karpin's allegations of *Allied* indifference to the fate of the Jews, into a suggestion of *Jewish* diffidence. Scott seizes the opportunity to accuse Rabbi Stephen Wise, the leader of the American Jewish Congress, of suppressing reports issued by the Zionist Congress in Switzerland as early as August 1942 about the ghettoization and annihilation of European Jewry:

On 24 November, 88 days after receiving the cable, the State Department released him from his promise to keep silent, and on 2 December, Wise wrote to President Roosevelt: 'Dear Boss, I have had cables and underground advice for some months telling of these things. I succeeded, together with the heads of other Jewish organisations, in keeping them out of the press.' (Pdn. p. 29)

Scott next turns his attention to Great Britain and again provides documentary evidence to support his contention that the Chairman of the British Rescue Committee, Rabbi Solomon Shonfeld (whom Karpin describes as a sincere man, though an anti-Zionist), viewed the British Government's willingness to help as *wholly* satisfactory,

but `that this readiness met with opposition from Zionist leaders who insisted on rescue to Palestine as the only acceptable form of help`. (*Pdn.* p. 30)

Karpin confesses that he disapproved of the line that was taken, but he also acknowledges that he took no public stand because at the time the `main priority was in building a Jewish homeland in Palestine`. (*Pdn.* p. 30) This admission provides Scott with the opportunity he has been waiting for: `Jewish people were dying horribly, and Zionist leaders preferred that it remain so rather than accept resettlement elsewhere.` (*Pdn.* p. 31)

For good measure, and to round off his case against Zionism, Scott brings up the subject of Kristallnacht and a speech made by Ben-Gurion, to the Zionist Executive on 17 December 1938, part of which Scott reads to the court:

If the Jews will have to choose between the refugees, saving Jews from concentration camps and assisting a national museum in Palestine, mercy will have the upperhand and the whole energy of the people will be channelled into saving Jews from various countries. Zionism will be struck off the agenda, not only in world public opinion, in Britain and the United States, but elsewhere in Jewish public opinion. If we allow a separation between the refugee problem and the Palestinian problem, we are risking the existence of Zionism. (*Pdn.* p. 32)

When Karpin protests that Scott is quoting the opinion of just one man, Scott's retort summarises the indictment toward which his invective throughout the first act has been building: `I am quoting David Ben-Gurion. The founding father of Israel.` (*Pdn.* p. 32)

The second act commences with Ruth Kaplan taking the stand and her questioning by her own counsel, Alec Scott who feeds her the appropriate question, in order that she can make the same case she had presented in her pamphlet, *I Accuse*. Scott adopts the role of the simpleton to whom everything must be explained in clear, easy steps.

He begins by asking the defendant how the suppression of information about the extermination of European Jewry would have helped the leading Zionists achieve the creation of the state of Israel. Kaplan explains `that the spilling of Jewish blood would strengthen their demand for a Jewish state after the war`, (*Pdn.* p. 34) and that what Yaron did `flowed logically from the Zionist policy of making deals with the Nazis both before and during World War Two, and...was justified in terms of building the Jewish Homeland`. (*Pdn.* p. 35)

In an attitude of rhetorical confusion on behalf of the jury, Scott requests Kaplan to explain, and she duly obliges: `Well... political Zionism teaches that it is futile to resist anti-Semitism. That wherever Jews live an exile existence outside Israel they will meet it. That the only way a Jew can combat anti-Semitism is by escaping from it. By building the Jewish Homeland.` (*Pdn.* pp. 35-36)

Scott plants the next question in mock accusatory style: 'You accuse Zionism of being racist, Miss Kaplan. Some people might see that as a grotesque conclusion. Can you explain to the court how you arrive at that?' (*Pdn.* p. 38) And in a passage which bears a remarkable resemblance to Scott's own views, expressed at the beginning of his questioning of Dr Yaron, Ruth Kaplan explains that,

all Jews are direct descendants of Hebrew tribes. That the uniqueness of the Jews means that they cannot be assimilated into Gentile society. That there is an unbroken historical link cemented with ties of kinship, religion, culture and destiny... only... a return to the Jewish Homeland, will end their persecution and humiliation and solve the Jewish question. (*Pdn.* p. 38)

By way of conclusion to his line of questioning, Scott furnishes Ruth Kaplan with the opportunity to present the thesis of modern Israel as a racist state.

Lawson's response is to attack Kaplan's character in the attempt to discredit her, suggesting that her pamphlet was published for the 'basest' of motives, profit and pro-Arab sentiment, and as a consequence of 'psychological difficulties'. He next homes in on the distinction between co-operation and collaboration which he feels is not adequately drawn in the pamphlet. Kaplan is successful in out-manoeuvring him and turning the example of the Brand mission to her own advantage, making the episode reinforce the points which she wants to make: Chaim Weizmann and the entire Zionist leadership in Palestine and the West suppressed public knowledge of the Brand mission, and made no *public* protest in the six weeks after the deportations had begun even though there had been a good deal of shuttle diplomacy between the Zionist leadership and the British government. In short the Zionists' passivity is damning.

His strategy in disarray, Lawson grubs around for a new line of attack which will reveal the fallacy of Ruth Kaplan's arguments and he alights upon the unprecedented nature of the situation as it had developed in Hungary in mid-summer of 1944. Kaplan's swift response is to point out that the *significant* element in the event was the Zionist leadership's failure to create the means for resistance, their energies instead being directed toward schemes which were designed to ensure the survival of their own families. With few options remaining, Lawson opts for a personal attack and the cultivation of prejudice.

Scott swiftly rises to his feet and seeks clarification on two points from his client: the degree to which the Jewish Council held influence over the general situation, and who she considered responsible for the choice of those included in the secure transports to Switzerland. To the first enquiry Kaplan repeats, almost verbatim, Hannah Arendt's view of the Jewish Councils: 'What made it possible was the presence of Jewish leaders who carried out the instructions of the Nazis.' (*Pdn.* p. 46)

And to the second, Kaplan maintains that the Rescue Committee had sole responsibility for the choice of those who were permitted to board the secure train and that they were invariably prominent metropolitan Jews, the provincial population simply being abandoned.

At this juncture another witness, Joseph Orzech, is called as an expert on Jewish Councils, and a participant in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Orzech asserts that the Jewish Council in Budapest was no different to the Councils throughout Europe, that they did the Nazis' bidding in return for more favourable treatment. But the point Scott desires to make clear is that, while the Warsaw uprising was mercilessly crushed, the symbolic significance of the resistance was not principally in relation to Nazi oppression, but the defiance shown to the Jewish Council!

Lawson enquires about the possible beneficial effects of a Warsaw-ghetto 'style' uprising in Budapest. Orzech appears to view the speculation favourably as the Germans were, in his view, on the verge of retreating. In conclusion Lawson asks about Orzech's opinions of Israel's current policies, questions which ultimately serve to denigrate *Lawson* because of his peremptory manner.

The last witness to be called is Miriam Moser, a member of the Jewish underground, who was deported to Auschwitz where she endured medical experimentation. Moser offers two examples of Dr Yaron's collaboration in support of Kaplan's allegations that the Council were more concerned about their own positions and safety than the welfare of the Jewish communities. The first example concerns Yaron's *disinterest* in Hannah Szenes who, as she was of Hungarian descent, was parachuted into Hungary as a British agent to assess the situation for the Allies and encourage Jewish resistance. She was captured and Yaron refused to become involved with attempts to prevent her execution, lest such efforts jeopardise the delicate negotiations he was conducting with the SS about the safe transport. The second example concerns the distribution of bogus greetings-cards ostensibly sent by families deported to Auschwitz assuring the addressees that they were safe and well, and that work was tolerable. Moser claims that members of the Jewish Council including Yaron distributed the cards to Jewish homes, knowing them to be misleading.

With the introduction of these entirely new allegations Lawson challenges Miriam Moser about her own response as a member of the underground. Moser bitterly relates that the families whom she attempted to warn refused to believe what she told them about Auschwitz, a response for which she considers the Jewish Council and Dr Yaron wholly responsible because of their failure to exercise due responsibility and give proper credence to confused reports and rumours.

Lawson immediately recalls Dr Yaron, to question him on the matter of the postcards. While denying the allegations that he distributed the cards, Yaron concedes

that it was possible that some members of the Council participated in their delivery. But Yaron seeks to distance himself from the whole episode by questioning Miriam Moser's mental stability and her recollections of their acquaintance.

For the court's benefit Scott rehearses the chief allegations against Dr Yaron (thereby defending the accuracy of Ruth Kaplan's pamphlet, *I Accuse*) by eliciting from Dr Yaron the minimal details of the secure train, that there were 1,684 people on board, including his own wife and children, many 'prominents' and Zionist functionaries, and contrasting this with the *daily* departure from Budapest of *twelve* trains for Auschwitz-Birkenau. (*Pdn.* p. 59)

Scott moves on to emphasize the indelible connection between Yaron and Kasztner, to imply guilt by association, which he once more seeks to ground firmly in documentary evidence. He begins by innocently enquiring about Kasztner's home town. But it quickly becomes apparent that his intention is to highlight the cruel absurdity of Kasztner travelling to Cluj in June 1944 at the height of the deportations to select 388 individuals for safe transport, many of whom were Zionists and members of his family, whereas there were some 20,000 Jews held in a ghetto awaiting deportation, guarded by just one SS man and 20 Hungarian police, with the Romanian border and safety just three miles away! 'Escape would have been easy', Scott observes, 'yet they chose to stay. Why? Was it not because Kasztner strolled amongst them, patting them on the back, smiling and reassuring them?' (*Pdn.* p. 61)

Yaron protests that he cannot be held responsible for Kasztner's actions, but Scott's point is that they shared a common outlook, of which he seeks to remind the court: that is, to sacrifice the many for the sake of the few, a long established ideological tenet of Zionism. To support his contention Scott quotes from the Israeli Government's appeal before the Supreme Court against the decision reached by the 1954 trial of Kasztner which had found against the plaintiff, and, for good measure, from an entirely different source, the response of Nathan Schwalb of the Jewish Agency in Switzerland to a plea for assistance in the rescue of Czech Jews. Scott asks Yaron to read aloud to the court Schwalb's reply:

If we do not bring sacrifices, with what will we achieve the right to sit at the table when they make the distribution of nations and territories after the war?... Only through blood will the land be ours... As to yourselves, members of the group, you will get out, and for this purpose we are providing you with funds by this courier. (*Pdn.* p. 63)

Scott returns to the neglect of Hannah Szenes and her two comrades parachuted into Hungary. Yaron discovers a clarity of memory that had previously evaded him and can distinctly recollect Miriam Moser coming to see him to intercede for Hannah Szenes,

and his sending Moser to see Kazstner. All the parachutists were considered a threat to the successful outcome of the 'rescue operation' and effectively abandoned to their fate, Hannah Szenes dying under interrogation in Hungary and the two resistance fighters in Auschwitz. Once again Yaron places responsibility on Israel Kasztner. Scott replies irritably: 'Always you reiterate the same old plea, Kastner... The verdict of the district court in Jerusalem indicts not just Kastner but every member of that Rescue Committee.' (*Pdn.* p. 64)

For Scott the evidence is unequivocal. As a member of the Rescue Committee, Yaron collaborated with the Nazis assisting in the orderly implementation of the deportations by remaining silent about the transport's destination and the certain fate which awaited the deportees. Scott eventually resorts to making reference to current events in Israel as a means of commenting upon Zionism: 'Would you not agree, Doctor Yaron, that the more earthly demands of Zionism are reduced to territorial ambition? After all, that is what the Six-Day war was all about, wasn't it? Expansion.' (*Pdn.* p. 65)

Scott contrasts Yaron's scriptural understanding of the modern state of Israel as the in-gathered people of God prophesied by Ezekiel with a thoroughly secular and cynical interpretation: 'a nation built on the pillar of Western guilt and subsidized American dollars' (*Pdn.* p. 66) which, because of its isolation, Scott predicts will be the agent of a nuclear holocaust. (*Pdn.* p. 67)

In his summing up Scott blames both murderous German oppression and calculated Jewish treachery for the extermination of Hungarian Jewry, remarking that the 'only' chosen people left in Budapest were the élite, the 'prominents', and he encourages the jury to reflect upon what generates the evil of anti-Semitism: 'If another major economic crisis occurs at some time in the future, can we with confidence assert that Fascism will not arise again?' (*Pdn.* p. 67)

The pitch which Lawson makes in his closing speech is a manipulative appeal to sentiment. He reminds the jury that Yaron is himself a Jew, that it is his own people, including members of his own family who have been victims of Nazi brutality, examples of which he graphically and stirringly describes. He continues by pointing out that Yaron and the Jewish Council found themselves in the unenviable position of being 'compelled to liase daily with Eichmann', caught in a dilemma not of their own making:

They knew that at that stage no rescue was possible, and that the Jews of Hungary were doomed. It was then that they were faced with the agonising dilemma: whether to save the few at the price of the many and keep quiet about the extermination camp at Auschwitz. This was the choice presented to them by Eichmann. 'Make your selection', he said. 'Prepare your lists.' What should they have done? The train was there, ready and waiting. (*Pdn.* p. 68)

The court goes into recess to await the jury's verdict, the counsel for the defence confident of their triumph. In the empty court room, Yaron, without warning, makes a confession to Ruth Kaplan that he had brought the action to precipitate a judicial examination of the events and to expose *his own role* to judicial scrutiny in a personal attempt to confront his past, for which he acknowledges that 'there is no absolution'. (*Pdn.* p. 69) Scott walking back into the centre of the court overhears part of the conversation and challenges Yaron about his reasons for bringing his action:

Yaron (*Harshly*): I needed a judgement, Mr Scott. The question remained: was it right to co-operate with the Nazis? With good faith we believed that we were contributing to a great mission.

Ruth: Palestine.

Yaron: A Jewish homeland where Jews might find shelter from the incendiary fires of anti-Semitism.

Scott: You utilized this court to reach a conclusion.

Yaron (*Decisively*): Yes. (*Throwing out his arms*) It was all here in this courtroom. Jury, judge, counsel. Files, records, testimony, Szamosi's diary. The material evidence, Mr Scott. And I fought you all the way.

Scott: And lost.

Yaron: I was wrong... Now we must cry out... warn... Scott was right about one thing, Ruth. If the well is polluted...

Ruth: Then we dig a new well. (*Pdn.* pp. 70-71)

The trial itself had been a conspiracy, which had been successfully thwarted.

#### **8.4 The 'Perdition Affair': the press and the withdrawal of *Perdition* from the stage of the Royal Court**

The press detected signs of a potential controversy in early January, *The Daily Telegraph* noting on the tenth that the 'innovative Royal Court Theatre in London is... bracing itself for an outcry from Jewish groups later this month over its forthcoming production *Perdition*'. In the same article Michael Hastings, in apparently buoyant mood, affirmed the theatre's confidence in the play, describing *Perdition* as 'a beautiful and powerful piece of writing' whilst also clearly anticipating resistance, commenting that 'the subject must be aired' and conceding that the play would cause 'upset'. (27)

'Upset' had *already* been caused, as Max Stafford-Clark discovered the following Tuesday, 13 January, when he met with Dr Stephen Roth from the Institute of Jewish Affairs. Roth, deported to Auschwitz for membership of the underground Zionist resistance in Budapest, was a recognised authority on the events in Hungary in 1944.

In Stafford-Clark's own account of the controversy, 'Why I Axed *Perdition*', he wrote:

For 20 minutes Simon Curtis [the Deputy Director of the Royal Court], Dr Roth and I discussed *Perdition* amicably enough. As I recall, Roth made three main criticisms: firstly, that the work of the Zionist Resistance Organisation wasn't mentioned; secondly that efforts of the Jewish leaders had saved not merely the 1,684 mentioned in the play but a further 18,000 who had been sent to work camps in Austria; and thirdly that the sheer nightmare and agonising confusion in Budapest in 1944 was not presented in the play. He didn't deny that terrible mistakes had been made. (28)

On this occasion Stafford-Clark conceded that these were significant omissions, which, had they been included, would moderate the perspective of the play. He told the play's director, Ken Loach, that 'the play would be more dramatically viable if the accused Dr Yaron mounted a more vigorous self-defence'. But ultimately Stafford-Clark felt that,

this was dangerously close to asking for balance, and besides, I couldn't present this as advice on aesthetics if it was really a political point. Ken warned me off: this would be asking for a different play and wasn't the one Jim wished to write. We talked further and agreed on the inclusion of the 18,000 and on some reference to the Zionist Resistance Movement but it was clear that further pressure [on Allen and Loach] would lead to a breakdown of trust between us. (29)

Stafford-Clark also mentions in his account a heated argument which developed between Dr Roth and Ken Loach after the latter's late arrival. Describing the altercation as 'the only occasion when a direct threat was made' to halt the production (30) Stafford-Clark notes that,

Dr Roth also indicated the powers he could use to remove the play. He could picket. He could contact 'the Royal Court's friends' in New York. He could influence bodies in London. On Ken's arrival exchanges between the two men became alarmingly heated. Loach was provocative and Dr Roth was intemperate and abusive. He brandished a sheet detailing, he said, 24 major errors. He declined to reveal them as he wished to discredit the play when it was produced. (31)

After the publication of Stafford-Clark's account, Roth immediately wrote to *The Guardian* to refute the allegations that he had made threats:

I did indeed say that there could be many ways of pressuring the theatre to drop the play. But far from making threats, I emphasised that all those in the Jewish community with whom I discussed this matter unanimously rejected exercising such pressure. I repeated this a second time when Ken Loach joined us later. (32)



Dr Roth's remonstrations about errors in Jim Allen's text should have come as no surprise to Stafford-Clark. He had had David Cesarani's report in his possession for over a year and also knew of Martin Gilbert's report for Manchester's Library Theatre.

On the day following Stafford-Clark's meeting with Dr Roth, 14 January, *The Guardian* printed an article by David Rose across a half-page of the arts section, entitled 'Rewriting the Holocaust'. (33) Rose's article was decisive for two reasons: it was the first public exposure of the inflammatory nature of the allegations in Allen's play, the errors upon which Rose considered Allen's thesis about the role of the Zionists in Hungary in 1944 to be built; Rose also identified two sources that he considered had been most significant in shaping Allen's perspective in *Perdition*. The first was the Kasztner Trial conducted in 1954, and the second was a recent critical work, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators*, published in 1983 and written by a Jewish Marxist historian, Lenni Brenner, (34) which Allen described to Rose as 'a goldmine source'. (35)

Rose began his article:

A new play about the Jewish holocaust which opens in London later this month claims that Jews, and specifically Zionist Jews, collaborated with the Nazis. They did so, the play argues, because they regarded the massacre of their co-religionists as a political necessity, which would strengthen their hand at negotiations after the war to achieve the realisation of the state of Israel, (36)

and goes on to point out that *Perdition*'s 'fictional trial is loosely derived from a real libel case in Israel'. (37) Rose further makes clear that,

the critics of *Perdition* do not dispute the validity of the issues posed by the Kastner case... Their concern centres on the use made of it and other material by Jim Allen. They allege that he has wilfully distorted both fact and interpretation, in order to draw conclusions not only about Kastner but about the entire Zionist movement and the nature of the Israeli state.

Allen himself makes no bones about the overriding purpose of the play... 'I don't want to sound pompous, but I see the play as a small contribution to rescuing the Jews from Zionism. It's a very pro-Jewish play.' (38)

In the subsequent controversy, Allen's appropriation of the Kasztner trial as a model does not receive *any* critical scrutiny in relation to the political bias inherent in the conduct of the 1954 trial and which Allen imported into the dynamics of his play.

Generally Allen was dismissive of the criticisms concerning historical accuracy which had already been levelled at the play by David Cesarani and Martin Gilbert, describing them as, 'pathetic, a reflection of how guilty and incapable the Zionists are in defending this dark chapter in Jewish history... Unable to contest any of the points

raised in the script, [anti-Semitism] will be their main line of attack and defence when the play goes out. I can't wait.' (39) Max Stafford-Clark was standing by the play, commenting, 'I don't think controversy is something the Court has ever avoided', (40) despite the fact that Mike Alfreds, who had been asked to consider directing the play before Ken Loach, had written to Stafford-Clark in December 1985 expressing his opinion of the text:

I don't think *Perdition* is really a play... The writing only catches fire when it is presenting anti-Zionist charges... the result is a lack of dramatic sensibility or honesty. Although the play tries to cover its tracks to avoid the indictment, its effect may well be anti-Semitic... it enforces too many stereotypes: cowardly Jews, Jews who buy their way out of trouble, Jewish terrorists. (41)

But perhaps the most remarkable feature of Allen's reaction to Rose's article is the difference he can seemingly detect in the following two statements. In the first he vehemently *denies* Rose's characterisation of the play's thesis as being that Zionists regard 'the massacre of the Jews as a political necessity'. 'Not true', says Allen. But a little later he asserts that *Perdition* is making the claim 'that throughout the Holocaust the overriding consideration of the Zionist leadership was the building of a Jewish homeland, and that all else - including the rescue of European Jews - became secondary'. (42) Given the circumstances of European Jewry the distinction which Allen draws here is merely academic. Establishing the state of Israel did not require the extermination of Europe's Jews, Allen appears to be arguing, but as that happened to be occurring it was not to impede Zionist aspirations for a homeland, and this Allen asserts, was undisputedly the stance adopted by 'Zionism'.

During the weekend of 17/18 January, Max Stafford-Clark had a sudden and decisive change of heart about staging *Perdition*:

I had begun to re-read the books myself and to read others. I became more and more uneasy as I realised the extent to which Jim Allen had selected the evidence for his case and for the first time it didn't seem so clear that a writer making accusations of this gravity led to the artistic licence a playwright could normally depend on.

It became harder and harder to have much enthusiasm about fighting on the side of a piece which was so selective and so certain about such a confused and uncertain period of history. For the first time I saw the possibility that *Perdition* was a dishonest piece of writing; both because it was so half-hearted in including any mitigating factors, and because its passionate conviction led it to a picture of these horrifying events that seemed less and less authentic. (43)

The Council of the Royal Court met to discuss *Perdition* on Tuesday 20 January. In his account of this meeting Stafford-Clark says that he found himself unable to give the

play the unqualified and passionate defence that the occasion demanded. No one on the Council considered the play to be anti-Semitic or suggested that it should be withdrawn, but given Stafford-Clark's reservations, they made four recommendations: (1) a two-day postponement of the previews; (2) that the question of libel should be assessed; (3) that a further opinion should be sought from a historian not involved in the controversy; (4) and that the Council members should have sufficient time to read the play and the reports, as they had not hitherto had access to the script, or been aware of the reports Stafford-Clark had commissioned. (44)

Martin Gilbert's account of this meeting differs in that he suggests that following the four hour meeting 'the Council of the Royal Court laid down several *conditions* for the play being performed' (45) which would imply that they were much closer to believing the play should be withdrawn than Stafford-Clark concedes in his account of the meeting. Gilbert also indicates that the Council had not been informed of the withdrawal of the Manchester Library Theatre from co-production with the Royal Court the previous May as a result of his report, and that they were also unaware of Mike Alfreds's letter to Stafford-Clark, in which he had expressed grave reservations about the play.

In Gilbert's view it was because 'the conditions proved unacceptable' to Max Stafford-Clark 'that the play was abandoned'. (46) Max Stafford-Clark's own conclusion was that: 'To defend a play which I now thought both distorted and distressingly incomplete was impossible. I had thought *Perdition* fell within a spectrum of work whose views I could support. I now found it did not.' (47)

After informing Matthew Evans, the Chairman of the Council, and Anthony Burton, the Vice-Chairman, of his decision to withdraw *Perdition*, Stafford-Clark was faced with the unenviable task of conveying this decision to the director and the cast. On Wednesday 21 January - the day before the play was due to open, Stafford-Clark met the cast at rehearsal. In a later article, 'Writers' rights and a kangaroo Court', Ken Loach described the scene:

After a successful technical run-through, and with the Dress Rehearsal about to start, we were all wound up for the first performance next day.

Stafford-Clark sat on stage and faced the cast. His announcement was heard in silence. Then the questions rained down: Why have you suddenly found you cannot support the play, just before we open? Who has been getting at you? Is the 'distress' you claim the play will cause genuine? What about the distress of the victims of the Holocaust? Since we, the cast, know the play better than anyone, will you at least take our judgement into account?

We asked that Jim Allen be able to argue the case. We asked for the opportunity to perform the play in private, for two or three performances, so that there should be some independent witness to the work we had done. Professional

colleagues, friends, even the Royal Court Council, should see the play before it was suppressed. No, it was not possible.

Jewish members of the cast feared the cancellation would create a backlash of anti-Semitism, because it would appear that powerful Zionists had used their influence to ban the play.

The only way we could answer the charges was to perform the play. (48)

On the same day, Max Stafford-Clark issued a statement to the press announcing the play's cancellation:

We have re-examined our position in the light of reports made to us *and we do not accept that there are factual inaccuracies* in Jim Allen's play or *that the play is in any way anti-Semitic*.

We have the highest regard for Jim Allen's integrity, but we do accept that going ahead would cause great distress to sections of the community which finally outweighs our determination to proceed with the production. [my italics] (49)

The following day all the leading dailies reported the cancellation. *The Daily Telegraph*, under the headline, 'Play cancelled after protests by Jews', explained:

A play which claims Zionists in Hungary collaborated with the Nazis during the 1939-45 War was cancelled yesterday after pressure from Jewish organisations which claim it is anti-Semitic and contained historical inaccuracies.

Pressure to stop the play had come from several Jewish groups and leading figures within the art world, including Lord Goodman, who approached members of the Council. (50)

Beneath the misleading headline, 'Theatre scraps Zionist play', *The Guardian's* Nicholas de Jongh wrote: 'The Royal Court theatre has bowed to pressure and cancelled the production of Jim Allen's controversial anti-Zionist new play, *Perdition*', (51) and also reported Allen's comments that 'only Jewish academics have seen [a text of] the play the public and the critics are denied'. In the same article Ken Loach made allegations about a conspiracy. (52)

In *The Daily Telegraph* article Allen was reported as complaining that, 'All the criticisms are general. If anyone would give me a list I would be happy to go through them one by one. It is not anti-Semitic', (53) describing the decision to withdraw *Perdition* as 'an absolutely disgraceful form of censorship', a result of the Royal Court capitulating to pressure. (54) On the same day, 22 January, an editorial in *The Daily Telegraph*, 'Abuse of History', immediately took up the question of censorship, commenting:

The issue here is not artistic freedom, but the right to travesty the past and to slander a nation... an attempt, based upon very dubious interpretations of documents and on anti-Zionist publicists, to show that Zionism was no less guilty of promoting genocide for its own purposes than National Socialism. (55)

The editor had no doubt taken his cue from a feature article by Martin Gilbert which appeared in the same issue entitled, 'Nazis and the Jews: A Travesty of the Facts'. Martin Gilbert pointed out that what stood at the heart of *Perdition* was:

the accusation that wartime Zionist and Jewish leaders in Hungary actively collaborated with the Nazis, not to save the mass of Hungarian Jews (more than 500,000), but to destroy them.

The audience were to have been told that this was ordered by the Zionist leaders in Jerusalem in order to win international support for a post-war Jewish state as a result of the shedding of Jewish blood. To this end, it is further stated that the Zionist leadership deliberately inhibited all serious rescue activities. (56)

Gilbert goes on to detail actions which were taken by the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, Istanbul and London in 1944 which refute Allen's allegations of silence and inaction. Allen, on the other hand, continued in his belligerent manner and, in an interview in *Time Out*, reiterated his view of events in Hungary, describing *Perdition* as:

the most lethal attack on Zionism ever written, because it touches at the heart of the most abiding myth of modern history, the Holocaust. Because it says quite plainly that privileged Jewish leaders collaborated in the extermination of their own kind in order to help bring about a Zionist state, Israel, a state which is itself racist. (57)

### **8.5 The 'Perdition Affair': the continuing controversy in the press**

The subsequent controversy revolved around two broad issues, Jim Allen's manipulation of historical sources, and Max Stafford-Clark's belated decision to withdraw *Perdition*. Within these discussions, numerous additional points were also raised: the provenance of Allen's views and the errors of historical detail frequently alluded to in the newspapers; whether a distinction could be drawn between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, and whether Allen's play was in fact anti-Semitic; the significance of the play's dramatic form; Stafford-Clark's handling of the play's withdrawal; the allegation that a conspiracy to censor *Perdition* existed; and the arguments for and against freedom of expression in a liberal democracy.

The issue of the play having been censored by a powerful Jewish lobby was addressed by Lord Goodman:

I am persuaded of the sincerity of the belief by the author, Jim Allen, that the play has been unjustly censored and that according to his conviction it constitutes a violation of artistic liberty and on that account there is a high duty to secure presentation.

May I respectfully suggest to readers of the *Standard* that not only is this great nonsense, but without impinging the honesty of this viewpoint, its achievement would be shameful. (58)

Goodman goes on to say that while he entertains no doubts that Allen is convinced of the historical accuracy and the merits of his play, he describes it as 'a total distortion of the truth and a brutal insult to the Jewish community the world over'. Jews had just cause to be concerned and to express 'disgust and indignation' because they 'have suffered over the centuries from the dissemination of historic lies which have, alas never, been caught up or dispelled by the truth'. (59)

He concludes by scotching rumours that the Arts Council had brought financial pressure to bear upon the Royal Court in order to prevent the play's production:

On Monday of last week I was asked on behalf of the Arts Council to advise what, if any, action should be taken by that body. I advised them, in accordance with the cardinal and hallowed principle of non-intervention, that they should do nothing.

No threat was made to the theatre, no suggestion of a withdrawal of the subsidy. The decision [to withdraw the play] was by no means brought about by the protests of Jewish members of the theatre's board. (60)

Goodman's was not the last word on the issue of censorship. Stafford-Clark's statement, 'We accept that going ahead would cause distress to sections of the community', (61) sounded like taking refuge behind the indefensible, and this was not the customary stance of the Royal Court. Irving Wardle described it as 'not an argument that has swayed the theatre's policy in the past', (62) and de Jongh, considered it to be 'a criterion which... invites further exploration because it is not always employed in that quarter'. (63)

It was however the first part of Stafford-Clark's statement 'we do not accept that there are factual inaccuracies', in relation to the second, 'we do accept that going ahead would cause great distress', (64) which was the chief target of Barbara Amiel's article in *The Times* on 24 January:

Opponents of the play... waited for an apology. What they got was Stafford-Clark's statement standing by the play's accuracy and giving implicit support to the idea in the next day's newspaper headlines that the Jewish lobby had 'banned' the play.

It is a natural instinct to be as false in the defence of a lie as in the original lie. It was not likely to occur to Mr Stafford-Clark at this late date that the fact that

some people on the Royal Court board who objected to the play were Jews was utterly beside the point. (65)

The provenance of Jim Allen's views, the apparent political and moral naïvety of Stafford-Clark in his stance toward the material contained in *Perdition*, and the issue of freedom of speech became the focus of two feature articles each by prominent newspaper commentators, who draw quite different conclusions about the desirability of the play being presented.

Under the bold headline, 'The Royal Court and Red propaganda', Paul Johnson contributed an article to *The Sunday Telegraph* on 25 January: .

The issues involved in the Royal Court's withdrawal of its anti-Zionist play *Perdition* are not artistic but political and must be seen against the background of Soviet propaganda.

During the 1960s, and still more in the 1970s and 1980s, the myth has been put forward in innumerable articles, broadcasts and cartoons in the Soviet media [that] the six million Jews who died in the death camps were 'considered useless for Israel's future'. All that Weizmann, 'the Nazi accomplice', was interested in were 'young people filled with the poison of fanatical nationalism'... Hence the Zionists themselves actually 'took part in the mass extermination of Jews' and 'sent the poor to their deaths'. (66)

Johnson goes on to point out that this kind of Soviet propaganda proliferated following the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon in 1982 and was specifically propagated in Arab countries in order to foment anti-Israeli sentiment and violent opposition to Israel's policy towards the Palestinian Arabs as the detritus that the 'Zionists' would next rid themselves of.

With regard to the British context Johnson explains that the 'myth of "Jewish Nazism" had been [in] various forms... regurgitated by the Worker's Revolutionary Party and other Trotskyite groups, and by such publications as the *Labour Herald*. Such writings, he suggested, 'have little general impact', but 'a play echoing the myth... presented at the Royal Court... which occupies a distinguished position in our modern theatrical history... would have given the myth a legitimacy and seriousness it had never before possessed in Britain'. He concluded with the sombre reminder that, 'the long history of anti-Semitism teaches one deadly lesson time and time again. Writings which portray Jews not just as repellent but as actually inhuman gradually create a climate of opinion in which they can be, and are, treated as inhuman.' (67)

This justifies the withdrawal of the play in Johnson's view. Allen countered the charges that much of his play was derived from Soviet anti-Semitic propaganda by including in the published version of *Perdition* a heavily ironic scene in which the

charge is dealt with summarily, the intention being to indicate the argument's worthlessness by virtue of its predictability from the Zionist lobby.

Bernard Levin drew the entirely opposite conclusion from Johnson. Levin was one amongst several journalists who had read a manuscript version of *Perdition*, and his contribution is significant because it is the first article which attempts to make a rational evaluation of Allen's thesis on broader criteria than the scrutiny of sources, by addressing *Perdition* as a work of the imagination. For Levin the tone underlines the play's message:

The peculiar vileness of the work is difficult to convey without impossibly extensive quotation... But the precise nature of its vileness is exceptionally interesting... *Perdition* is written in a state of what may be termed moral illiteracy.

A writer, not wholly untalented, takes a story which will continue to exercise the minds and feelings of men and women until, quite literally, the end of the world, and with it demonstrates that his mind is so limited, so confined, so worthless as an instrument of understanding, that every aspect and echo of that story escapes him entirely. Would you have thought that possible in any but the most ignorant, uneducated and brutish elements of our society?

Well, then how *is* it possible? It is possible, indeed it is inevitable, because the author... has a purpose which to him is plainly sufficient [and which ] fills his tiny horizon so completely that there is no room for anything else. And his purpose is to repeat the ancient rubric, *Delanda est Carthago*, in modern terms: Israel Must Go.

Mr Allen's ignorance, and implacable unwillingness to have his ignorance dispelled, have left his play littered throughout with inexcusable errors and horrible lies; there is no evidence that Mr Max Stafford-Clark, artistic director of the Royal Court Theatre, was disturbed by this and a good deal of evidence that he wasn't. (68)

Levin's analysis perceptively identifies the tone of Allen's imaginative work. There is an opacity in Allen's relentless pursuit of his central thesis which is so chilling in its sadism, and so corrosive of considered moral and rational evaluation through its wilful and affectless harangues placed in the mouths of the characters who advocate Allen's views, that it palls from the first.

Nevertheless, Levin was not in favour of a ban:

I reject suppression, however, on grounds other than the ones that have already been put forward; these are that if the play is never seen it will *increase* anti-Semitism rather than diminishing it, because, people will believe, or be persuaded, that a cabal of Jews extinguished it lest the wickedness of Israel should be exposed, and that it must have been an uncommonly fine and well written play to have provoked such wrath in its opponents, and that a playwright is not to be tested by the same criteria as a historian.



As I have said so often in other contexts, I believe that anything which may *lawfully* be said may *actually* be said... I have insisted that any legally permissible view, however repugnant, is less dangerous promulgated than banned, and I would defend its promulgation even if the opposite were true.

With heavy heart, I yet must say it: Let them have their play. (69)

Levin to a large extent gave expression to the logical corollary of the views Lord Goodman expressed in his article in the *Evening Standard*. London in 1987 cannot be compared to Berlin in 1938, but there does appear to be an oversight of history in Levin's quaint liberal trust in the protection of the law, and a surprising one given his knowledge of how fragile it proved to be in affording protection to Jews across Nazi occupied Europe. Those events lead to a natural expectation that Levin might justifiably treat the potency of law with respectful scepticism, whereas the view he expresses is that freedom of expression must be preserved even at great cost to other civil rights and civic virtues.

It is particularly ironic that Levin should make these remarks about lawfulness when the chief rhetorical device employed by *Perdition* is precisely that of the law court, and when *The Observer* related that the Court had 'received a report saying the play was libellous to at least eight people who were still alive'. (70)

The *New Statesman's* theatre critic, Victoria Radin, addressed the issue of the play's form and was amongst the first critics to identify Allen's abuse of an aesthetic form - the courtroom drama - as a most significant indicator of his prejudicial assault on the dilemma faced by Jews in Hungary in 1944, and to discuss the phenomenon Levin had characterised as its 'peculiar vileness', the play as a 'container' of Allen's sadistic impulses. In neither case is Radin's analysis specific and extensive enough to support fully her case, but both points provide a basis for understanding the play as an example of propaganda.

Radin gives broad indication of the issue of dramatic design in the first of her articles for the *New Statesman* on 6 February:

*Perdition* is cast in the form of a courtroom drama, an authoritarian and particularly manipulative genre... The momentum derives from the skill of the barristers/hunters in stalking their quarry and the audience's own urge to see justice done or vengeance.

A competent writer of the form will balance the two sides so that each genuinely has a case - otherwise there is no drama. He will also find it necessary to use sound logical principles and to write speeches which conceivably could be uttered in a courtroom. Jim Allen ignores these ground rules. (71)

It suited Allen's purposes perfectly for Scott to be defending Kaplan, that is to say, making the trial the prosecution of Yaron, rather than the defence of Kaplan and the

substance of the claims in her pamphlet *I Accuse*, just as the Kasztner Trial had become the prosecution of Kasztner and Mapai. Scott takes 'Kaplan's' unquestioned sources and quotes extensively from them (an undisguised authorial device for conveying a highly selective point of view), while the defence allowed Yaron is feeble. In short, the onus falls upon Yaron to prove his innocence, rather than on Kaplan to prove the veracity of her sources and the soundness of the arguments. Allen further loads the dice by beginning his play with the counsel for the prosecution questioning not Ruth Kaplan, but Yaron, his own client, in a gentle undemanding way, establishing little of significance either in defence of Yaron or in the determined prosecution of the case against Ruth Kaplan. Moreover, Scott is consistently portrayed as a polished and incisive advocate, while Lawson is ineffectual and obsequious.

In the second act Allen merely turns the tables for the same desired effect. Lawson is no longer shown as gentlemanly, but in the worst possible light, attacking Ruth Kaplan's personality and motives. Kaplan, on the other hand, under questioning from her own counsel, Alec Scott, is shown in the most favourable light. Allen quite deliberately chooses to employ the court of justice as a rhetorical device, as a conceit intended to imply the impartiality of legal procedure in a disinterested pursuit of truth, while presenting 'evidence' in the most selective and tendentious manner, using the *abuse* of legal procedure - the rhetoric and mendacity of legal advocacy on behalf of a client with the aim of winning the legal battle irrespective of justice and truth - as both a means of deception and of justification for the tactics he uses and the partiality of the case he presents.

*Perdition* presents Jews as agents and victims of their own persecution, both manufacturer and recipient of their own 'Zionist' propaganda, and the cynicism of this view as a general truth about Jewish fate in Hungary in 1944 places *Perdition* in a class of its own in modern British agit prop. Radin comments:

The subtext of *Perdition* builds shrilly to the suggestion that the Jews not only somehow deserved what they got from the Nazis ('Our Zionist (*sic*) tradition impels us to save the few out of the many') but that they even, in some analysable way, were responsible for the horror they suffered. The remorseless unveiling of unpalatable events unleashes a kind of rage in the reader, which would be stronger still in a spectator. One searches for an outlet and 'blame' is a word that Allen has continually attached not to the Nazis, but to the Jews/their Jewish leaders/Zionists. It is the venerable psychological mechanism by which the victim stands accused: the rape victim of soliciting violence. (72)

Radin's violent metaphor is not misplaced, and the evident sadism in the expression of these views suggest that Allen's strident dogmatism and hatred of 'Zionism' gain their animus from experiences far removed from passionate commitment to justice in the

Middle East. Radin concludes her article: '*Perdition* is a nasty play. The question to be asked is not why one man wrote it, or even why Stafford-Clark persisted with it against all historical advice and then performed his last minute *volte face*, but why he ever wanted to stage it at all.' (73)

Before the *New Statesman* could print Ken Loach's response to Radin's article *The Guardian* published an 'Open Letter to the Council of the Royal Court' on 18 February in which Loach reproached the Council for not exercising prerogatives which were theirs as the governing body of the Royal Court, failing to preserve those traditions most closely associated with the Royal Court Theatre since the mid 1960s: resistance to theatre censorship, championing theatrical freedom, political and social relevance, and the defence of new writing. Max Stafford-Clark's article, 'Why I axed *Perdition*', published some weeks later in *The Guardian* would be the response. (74)

The nadir of the controversy was reached, however, with Loach's reply to Victoria Radin's *New Statesman* article, in which endeavour he was assisted by the journalist Andrew Hornung. Describing Radin's article as 'an extraordinary mixture of distortion and misrepresentation' and claiming that the 'distinctions between anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic are of little interest to Ms Radin' Loach once again rehearses Allen's allegations. (75)

But what makes Loach's contribution exceptionable, is the unadorned and repeated allegation of a conspiracy in relation to 'the censorship' of *Perdition*. Loach repeats the allegation no less than six times in the space of a two thousand word article in which he outlines the different elements of 'the conspiracy' he considered had been orchestrated to prevent the production of the play. (76)

By way of conclusion Loach remarks: 'Part of the script deals with the rescue trains that took 1,600 Jews to safety from Budapest in 1944. The Zionist leaders prepared the list of who would be saved - the "rich", the "prominents", the "Functionaries"', (77) but he says nothing of the dire circumstances in which this Nazi 'gesture' had come to be made: the mass deportations, the failure of negotiations over possible rescue attempts, and Eichmann's toying with empty promises. Nevertheless Loach cannot resist anti-Semitic vilification of those Jews who protested the proposed production: 'Is it not fair to say that those who have campaigned against the presentation of *Perdition* are the contemporary equivalent of those who boarded the rescue trains and got out?' (78)

Bryan Cheyette, a well-known commentator on Anglo-Jewish literature, makes the necessary connection:

In other words, Hungary in 1944 is somehow equivalent to London in 1987. Jews - even though millions were massacred - are still, in the vocabulary of this stereotype, 'rich' and 'prominent' and, if Zionist, 'ideologically equivalent to

their murderers'. Evil conspiracies that are manipulated by powerful Jews; this is the stuff of *Perdition*... Should racist stereotypes be promoted by the Royal Court Theatre? I happen to think not. (79)

In the *New Statesman* of 27 February Victoria Radin responded to Loach's accusations of a conspiracy to censor. She takes each of the points raised by Loach in turn: 'The play was not "banned", "censored" or "suppressed"', asserts Radin, 'the Court's artistic director Max Stafford-Clark... cancelled its production at his theatre'. The copies 'of *Perdition* - which Loach and Hornung "can only assume" were "circulated" by "Zionist organisations" - were sent to journalists by the press office of the Royal Court itself - as is its custom with all its plays'. The Royal Court's advisory body, the Council, who 'number four Jewish members out of nineteen, did not put pressure on the theatre to withdraw the play... They immediately convened a meeting at which Stafford-Clark was present.' Radin also says that Max Stafford-Clark assured her that 'there were no threats from sponsors to withdraw backing' and that Matthew Evans, had also told her that 'at no stage did anyone suggest that *Perdition* be taken off. There were absolutely no threats.' (80) Loach had also alleged that a concerted campaign had been undertaken to prevent *Perdition* being staged elsewhere, upon which accusation Radin comments:

No theatre has taken *Perdition* so far, but not... for reasons of a 'censorship lobby', [or] a 'Zionist campaign'... Nicky Pallot, an artistic director of the Bush Theatre, [commented]: 'What worried me was that the author seemed to take a view without discussion or dialectic' and Pierre Audi, artistic director of the Almeida: [remarked]: 'They phoned me up and I said no'... Gary Sinott, who runs the Olympia Theatre in Dublin... told me: 'The fact that we decided not to put it on was based on a *legal* problem. Because the actors wanted to be free to make other commitments and also because of our scheduling, I had only two days to make my decision. What we had was a time pressure. This is not censorship.' (81)

'Why I axed *Perdition*' published in *The Guardian* on 13 March was Max Stafford-Clark's attempt to set the record straight in response to Ken Loach's open letter to the Council of the Royal Court. In his opening paragraph Stafford-Clark confronts Loach's chief accusation, that undue pressure had been brought to bear by a Zionist clique intent on preventing the play's performance:

Ken Loach's open letter... suggests undeclared Zionist pressure led to the 'banning' of the play *Perdition*. This is not the case. It should be made clear that as Artistic Director the constitution of the Royal Court entrusts me with responsibility for the selection of the theatre's programme. As Artistic Director, I lost confidence in the play's credibility. (82)

In so responding Stafford-Clark was conceding, that many of the criticisms Loach made of the Council were in fact mistakes of his own. Nevertheless, in relation to the specific issue of the pressure that Loach alleged had been applied, Stafford-Clark acknowledged that Joe Papp had been lobbied intensively, and, if Jim Allen's claims can be given any credence, that a number of London producers were contacted from New York and warned of detrimental consequences should they consider producing *Perdition*. But about his own experience on this point, Max Stafford-Clark is unequivocal:

It is ironic that throughout its history, the Royal Court has received generous help from a number of Jewish trusts and prominent Jewish families. In the course of this affair, none of them put any pressure on me. As for any other 'undeclared pressure', there was none. (83)

While the reason that Stafford-Clark gave for the withdrawal of *Perdition* in his statement to the press - that the play 'would cause great distress to sections of the community' - was regarded as dubious and an insufficient reason by Jim Allen, Ken Loach, the company of actors, and theatre critics alike, Stafford-Clark's concomitant stance on that occasion that 'we do not accept that there are factual inaccuracies... or that the play is in any way anti-Semitic' is shown by his article 'Why I Axed *Perdition*' to be the disingenuous response it was so widely perceived to be at the time. Stafford-Clark makes it clear his concern that distress would be caused to specific sections of the community was based entirely upon his conclusion that the 'artistic licence' that Allen had so generously allowed himself in 'making accusations of this gravity', could not be justified. *Perdition* was 'a dishonest piece of writing' because it manifestly failed to give any consideration to the 'mitigating factors', the result being 'a dramatic representation of these horrifying events that seemed less and less authentic'. (84) Not prepared to concede the text contained material inaccuracies, and dubious interpretations with specific intent, Stafford-Clark seeks refuge in claiming that the play's *omissions* made it less than acceptable for production.

It is the more remarkable then, that by his own account, both he and the Court's literary manager, Michael Hastings, had continued to consider *Perdition* worthy of production for a period of a little over eighteen months, the script having first been received in the summer of 1985. As Stafford-Clark points out to Loach, for a proportion of this time Allen had withdrawn the play from the Court in the hope of finding another, larger theatre. But Stafford-Clark was able to take up the option again not only because Allen had failed in his search, but precisely because Manchester's Library Theatre had rejected it on the grounds of the play's misconceived thesis.

In his response to Loach, Stafford-Clark is still able to describe Cesarani's report as 'hostile' and 'partial', Allen, 'a most straightforward and persuasive advocate who had 'convincingly rebutted some points while accepting others', and Gilbert's identification of errors, put to Stafford-Clark on 17 January from the report that he had written for the Library Theatre in Manchester, as merely 'Gilbert's own opinion about what the principal character might have said'. (85)

Stafford-Clark considered 'much of the pressure put on the play... unacceptable' but he does not specify what 'unacceptable pressure' had existed, and this appears to be a flat contradiction of the assurances he had earlier given to Victoria Radin, confirmed by Matthew Evans, that no threats had been made to prevent the production being staged. All of which points to the bafflement expressed by Radin in her first article on the controversy, but in *each* respect she mentions: 'why Stafford-Clark persisted with it against all historical advice', 'then performed his last minute *volte face*' and 'why he ever wanted to stage it at all'. (86) To which Stafford-Clark's only answer had been, 'In 99 cases out of 100... an Artistic Director must protect the work he has chosen. In the hundredth he must admit he has made a mistake.' (87)

## 8.6 *Perdition* and history

As the controversy continued on the letters pages of the *New Statesman* and *The Guardian*, the British/Israel Public Affairs Committee (BIPAC) took the unusual step of issuing an attractive twenty-page booklet entitled *To Stage or Not To Stage. The Case of Perdition* (88) which reprinted extracts from the diverse press coverage with the intention of presenting the case for and against the play, though it is quite apparent that the booklet was not designed to be scrupulously impartial. Appended were comments of Martin Gilbert which detailed just ten of the historical inaccuracies of more than sixty he had first identified in his report for the Library Theatre. Many of these ten points had appeared in *The Sunday Times* (89) but the BIPAC pamphlet represents the fullest published account of Gilbert's report.

But his and the editors' failure to examine critically the dramatic strategy employed by Allen with its purely rhetorical emphasis upon judicial examination and legal assessment, biased in favour of the particular view he wished to advance, leaves the impression that Gilbert's detailing of errors and inaccuracies simply does not address this factor. Moreover, the strident and sadistic tone which pervades much of Allen's polemic also remains without comment in Gilbert's assessment, a repeat of the misguided approach he had taken toward the staging of Christopher Hampton's dramatisation of George Steiner's novel *The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.* (90)

Even accepting Gilbert's strategy of detailing errors, inaccuracies and difficulties of interpretation, it is extremely puzzling that the BIPAC pamphlet fails to address the details which are most pertinent to the chief events, the allegations and innuendoes, upon which the misrepresentations in *Perdition* depend. Kasztner himself receives a single reference and details about the secure train permitted to leave Hungary allegedly organised by Kasztner to the detriment of the whole of Hungarian Jewry is simply not mentioned in the published list of errors - details central to Allen's play which stand in need of critical challenge. (91) The impression received is that a gulf remains between the misrepresentation *Perdition* purveys, and the citation of quite specific details to correct particular errors which are mostly not those of prime concern.

Allen's distortions were material to his argument about Zionism and his interpretation of events in Hungary. These events have recently been examined in detail by Yehuda Bauer (92) and the conclusions he draws, upon which the following clarifications are chiefly based, entirely justify Max Stafford-Clark's belated loss of faith in Allen's script.

The Zionist presence in Budapest, and particularly the centre-left Zionist group, Ihud, of which Kasztner was a member, was relatively weak, and this made him something of an outsider to the political scene in Budapest and not, as Allen portrays Yaron, as the best known central figure in Budapest with omniscient powers.

On 21 March 1944 the Germans forced the Jewish communities to establish a Jewish Council (*Judenrat*) for Budapest but Kasztner was at no time a member of the Council. Allen deliberately conflated the Council and the Rescue Committee in order to make his point about Zionism's indifference to the fate of the large proportion of Hungary's Jews. When pressed on this point by David Rose, Allen confessed that he *was aware* that Kasztner had not been a member of the *Judenrat*, and went on to comment somewhat disingenuously: 'I accept the criticism that the roles of the Jewish Council and the rescue committee are not clearly enough defined in the play.' (93)

The Rescue and Aid Committee, *Va'adat Ezrah Vehatzalah* (Vaada), on the other hand had become firmly established by early 1943 amongst whose number were representatives of various shades of Zionism, liberal, religious and left wing, including Kasztner as a representative of the Ihud. Bauer maintains that the Committee did attempt,

to warn the provincial communities that were being ghettoized of the mortal danger they were in... in all cases without exception, the message was rejected by local leadership. Calls to resist or flee went unheeded... In most communities, calls for resistance or flight were, it must be admitted, impossible to obey... To the question that was asked in 1954 of Kasztner - why did you not warn the Jews? the first answer was that most of them already had the information, and the second answer should have been - yes, a serious attempt was made, and it

failed. People did not want to listen. But Kasztner, unaccountably, did not say this in 1954. (94)

The accusation which is reiterated throughout *Perdition* is that the information about events in Poland and particularly about Auschwitz was not passed to the vast majority of the population, Yaron frequently blaming Kasztner, and Scott intent on indicting the entire *Judenrat* due to Allen's conflation of the Rescue Committee and Council. Bauer points out:

Kasztner was not the only one who had that information - most Hungarian Jews had it, too, but they did not believe it, or refused to act on it, or did not see any way to act on it. Kasztner... [had] no way of transmitting whatever information he had to the Jews of Hungary, but even had he been able to pass it on, his warnings would hardly have been heeded: he had no authority in Hungary. (95)

In this regard the example of Kasztner's home town, Cluj (to which Scott refers with the glee of a school boy believing he has found incontrovertible proof of his thesis), is illustrative. In *Perdition* Allen represents Kasztner as callously misleading the people of his home town which is just ten miles from the Romanian border. But Bauer comments, 'when Rabbi Moshe Weinberger (Gefen) tried to organise a group of like-minded individuals in Cluj and explained to the local leaders that they were facing death and should run for their lives, he was overwhelmingly rejected. Only about 150 people joined him.' (96)

Before his departure to Istanbul on his mission to attempt to gain a hearing for the SS proposal to exchange Jewish lives for war matériel, Joel Brand had made an earlier suggestion to Eichmann: permission for 600 people with Palestine certificates to leave Hungary by train for the Black Sea port of Constanza and thence to Palestine - for a price. In late May, after Brand's departure, Kasztner met with Eichmann and reminded him of this idea. On 22 May Eichmann agreed to the emigration of 600-750 individuals and, on 3 June agreed to increase that number. Kasztner wanted to include people from the provinces and some from his place of birth, Cluj. The SS allowed Kasztner to travel to Cluj but on 10 June he returned to Budapest with only 388 people (members of his own family, some friends and others). Given the gross distortions contained in Allen's play about this train Yehuda Bauer's comments will be quoted at length, as they show Kasztner's actions in an entirely different light:

What was the purpose of the train in Kasztner's own mind? We have to take the date into account: Brand had left and had not returned and Kasztner was seeking a way to reopen contact with the SS so that as many people could be saved as possible. An idea germinated: a train that would leave for Spain - that was Eichmann's dictum - would be a first breach in the policy of total murder. It



could signal a change in German policy; other attempts at rescue had failed, in any case. Mainly, Kasztner hoped that the first train would be followed by a second and a third; once a pattern was established, perhaps an attempt could be made to stop the murder machine.

On the other hand, the Nazi agreement to have the train leave Budapest could be another trick; the passengers could debark at Auschwitz, just as all the others had. The gamble was a tremendous one, and to convince others that it was worth the try, Kasztner put his own family in the train. (97)

Nor was Kasztner alone in making the selection of the passengers for the train. A small committee was formed which included Komoly, the Chairman of Vaada, Hansi Brand and Zsigmond Leb, a former president of the Orthodox group in Cluj. The train had, finally, 1,684 passengers, which had required a figure in the region of SFR 7 million, paid in foreign currency, in Hungarian pengö and in gold and jewellery. Bauer's comments about the financial arrangements and the composition of the group of passengers are crucial. He remarks:

The vast majority of the people on the train did not have the necessary money. Rich people would have to pay for the others. A special committee handled all these money matters; it was composed of Komoly, Szilagyi, an engineer by the name of Reichart, Hansi Brand, and Offenbach. *Kasztner was not included...*

Representatives of all communities, trends, opinions, ages and origins were included in the train. There were the extreme anti-Zionist Hasidic Rabbi of Szatmar, Joel Teitelbaum, and his whole court - rescued by the Zionist Kasztner - leader of the Orthodox and Neologue communities, Zionists of all hues, members of Zionist youth movements, Polish and Slovak refugees, and ordinary Hungarian Jews who had managed to corner Kasztner or some other member of the Committee and make their case. A group of Orthodox leaders had been included by Freudiger, who bribed Wisliceny for that purpose. Some people who did not belong to any of these categories jumped on the train or sneaked onto it and became part of the ark. (98)

The train departed from Budapest on 30 June and was not directed to Spain as the Allied landings of 6 June 1944 had made this impossible, but to Bergen-Belsen where it arrived on 8 July. Ultimately, the passengers were to be released to Switzerland. Yehuda Bauer comments by way of conclusion on the episode:

The train was organised in June, when the deportations were in full swing. All contact had been broken off between Budapest and the provincial ghettos, except by the courageous emissaries of the youth movements, who tried to warn the ghettos but were... rejected everywhere they went... The idea, moreover, of Kasztner going around the ghettos in June - illegally, we must presume - is too absurd even to consider, but door-to-door visits would have been the only way to do what he was told ten years after the event that he should have done. Lastly, and in connection with these considerations, Eichmann hardly needed the silence

of an unknown leader of a minority group within the Jewish community, who could not get to the provinces. (99)

The train, like the Brand mission, was a rescue initiative of last resort, and as such is entirely other than the impression conveyed by Allen: that it was an initiative by Kasztner to save a select few ideological compatriots, while allowing the majority to be deported to a fate known to him, but unknown to the deportees.

In this respect Allen also uses the letter sent from Nathan Schwalb, the *Hechalutz* representative in Switzerland, to Rabbi Dov-Ber Weissmandel, assisting with the rescue of Slovak Jews in Bratislava (Pressburg), to imply that it is a tenet of Zionism that the 'many' may be sacrificed for the sake of the 'few'. In the context it is given in the published text of *Perdition* the force gained by the letter through Allen's sleight of hand, leads easily to the mistaken assumption that reference is being made to the situation in Hungary in the Spring and Summer of 1944 or to central Europe in 1943. But the letter dated from 1942 and it is probable that Schwalb was commiserating in a clumsy way with those who were suffering because of the news that had reached him about the events in Poland - organised violence against Jews, but not the phenomenon it was recognised to be by 1944.

Jim Allen, again following the 1954 trial of Kasztner closely, also claims that Hannah Szenes, Franz (Peretz) Goldstein and Joel Nussbacher (Palgi) - whose tasks were to assist Allied air men shot down over occupied territory and to organise resistance among the Jews - were effectively made scapegoats to enable Kasztner to safeguard his attempt at limited rescue by means of the secure train, accusations which, in Allen's play, are clearly suggested in the cross examination of Miriam Moser by Scott, and in Scott's final questioning of Yaron.

All three parachutists were either discovered or betrayed. Szenes was imprisoned in Budapest, but Goldstein and Palgi managed to make their escape, and being Hungarian Zionists, they sought refuge with Kasztner. There was little the two men could do at that late stage to organise armed resistance, and Kasztner unsure as to the best course of action, advised them that they must decide whether or not they were going to give themselves up. After some hesitation they surrendered themselves to the SS. Both were deported. Palgi managed to jump from the train probably taking him to Mauthausen, but did not return to Kasztner, and survived. Goldstein died most probably at Mauthausen. Hannah Szenes died under interrogation and torture in a Budapest prison. Bauer poses the pressing questions about this episode: 'Should Kasztner have hidden them? Did he tell the Germans that they had contacted him before they gave themselves up?', and concludes: 'The death of Goldstein, combined with the accusation that Kasztner did not do enough to save Hanna Szenes, or perhaps

simply abandoned her to her fate in order to save his policy of negotiations, was weighty and serious. The indictments may have been justified.' (100)

At the time of the Kasztner trial in 1954 the view that the chief figures of the Jewish Agency, Ben Gurion, Moshe Shertok and Yitzhak Gruenbaum had soft pedalled their response to the urgent situation in Hungary and in particular had placed obstacles in the way of the successful pursuit of the Brand mission, became widely accepted. Bauer points out that:

Brand himself was the originator of the story, apparently because he cut a much more heroic figure if he had been bent on going back to Budapest. In his book, which was published after the trial, he repeated the story. The theme was picked up not only by Tamir, the lawyer facing Kasztner, but also the popular author, Amos Elon, whose best-selling novel on the subject repeated the false version. (101)

That Jim Allen publicly claimed that his sources included the transcripts of the Kasztner trial, books by Amos Elon and Joel Brand's *Desperate Mission* (102) it is hardly surprising that these views are once more unquestioningly repeated

The role of the Jewish Agency is one of the few subjects that is also mentioned in the list of errors identified by Martin Gilbert published in the booklet *To Stage or Not To Stage. The Case of Perdition*. Gilbert details some of the actions the prominent members of the Jewish Agency took: On 6 April 1944 Ben-Gurion warned the Allies of the impending disaster; in early May shortly before the deportations began Yitzhak Grunbaum telegraphed the British Government urging them to take action to prevent the deportations; after considerable delay because the British mandatory authorities withheld permission, Moshe Shertok was allowed on 11 June to visit Joel Brand in Aleppo, Syria, where Brand confirmed the details of the offer he bore from Eichmann and described the dire situation in Hungary; Shertok and Weizman subsequently flew to London on the 17 June to plead with Eden to take actions long overdue to halt the deportations either by direct military action or by *appearing* to co-operate with, in some shape or form, Eichmann's proposals in order to forestall further deportations. (103) The barely explicable feature of the free world's response to Nazi extermination is not, as Jim Allen would have it, the alleged reticence of the Jewish Agency to make public declarations, but the failure of the Allies to take decisive action at least in the attempt to prevent or impede the annihilation of Hungary's Jews.

### **8.7 Allen's anti-Semitism and Jewish fate in Hungary, 1944**

On 30 January 1987 a quite extraordinary letter from Michael Hastings, the Literary manager of the Royal Court Theatre, was published by the *Jewish Chronicle* in which

he at first asserted his faith in the play: 'As for *Perdition*, I believe it remains a sturdy polemic, its factual material is substantially correct, and although the object of the play is to discredit Zionism, it is not anti-Semitic.' (104) No one was in any doubt that the play was anti-Zionist polemic. Jim Allen had freely acknowledged the fact in the interview he had granted to *Time Out*, describing *Perdition* as:

The most lethal attack on Zionism ever written, because it touches at the heart of the most abiding myth of modern history, the Holocaust. Because it says quite plainly that privileged Jewish leaders collaborated in the extermination of their own kind in order to help bring about a Zionist state, Israel, a state which is itself racist. (105)

That Allen's personal views about Zionism predominate in the fictional frame had been noted by Dr Stephen Roth in the *Jewish Chronicle*:

The real accused is not Yaron or Kastner; it is Zionism... Its meaning is defined only by Ruth Kaplan, a self-confessed hater of Zionism who says that, for the sake of creating the Jewish Homeland, Zionists 'were prepared if necessary to sacrifice the Jews of the diaspora', that 'blood and land' is the Zionists' 'racialist slogan'... that there existed a 'Zionist doctrine (sic) of collaboration with the Nazis both before and during World War Two'.

One would expect at least an attempt at a rebuttal from the Zionist Yaron. But there is none. On the contrary, he only adds to the distortion of Zionism.

He justifies what he is reproached for - rescue of a few at the expense of a betrayal of the rest... by saying that 'our Zionist tradition demanded' the sacrifice of Hungarian Jewry. (106)

Hastings's remarks about *Perdition*'s assault on Zionism are just one example of a pervasive attitude that held that an attack on Zionism as a political ideology was not simply acceptable in dramatic terms but that the arguments made were rationally defensible. But David Cesarani pointed out in several articles (107) that even the criticisms levelled at Zionism were not sound, that Allen's statement in *Time Out* and the elucidation these views received through his fictional characters, Ruth Kaplan and Dr Miklos Yaron, were themselves based upon erroneous assumptions about the existence of the modern state of Israel. Cesarani comments that Allen's statement in his interview with *Time Out*,

locates the play squarely in the category of anti-Zionist propaganda which regards the accepted history of the Holocaust essentially as an ideological prop for Israel's survival. In such polemics, Israel and Zionism are thought to derive their strength and legitimacy from the torment of the Jews in 1933-45 and from Western guilt that the massacres continued unhindered. Anti-Zionists bent on undermining this supposed prop do not deny that the Holocaust occurred... they

utilize certain historical events like the Kastner case to argue that the Jews were accomplices in their own destruction. (108)

Allen's assumption is that a monolithic Zionism justifies Israel's existence by a crude appeal to Jewish suffering during the Holocaust and also to Western guilt over the Allied failure to intervene, and that this can be 'dealt with' by attributing complicity and blame both to Zionist ideology, and craven actions of ideologically motivated self-interest in Hungary during 1944.

It is difficult to comprehend how Michael Hastings could continue to view *Perdition* as a 'sturdy polemic' which is 'substantially correct'. But the aspect of Hastings's letter which is most extraordinary is his claim that *Perdition* is 'not anti-Semitic':

In the week before the play was due to open, I attended a run-through, albeit hastily put together, and although I could live with the rigid interpretation of Zionism... I found in production a relentless resonance.

There is a subtext here which cannot be found in the words themselves, call it an unconscious force behind the typewriter perhaps, but there is a sense here that the target is Jews - Jews living within their own community and responding as Jews to a unique and appalling pogrom of annihilation.

This subtext seems to target on Jews to the exclusion of all other peoples. And in this sense alone I realised *Perdition* could be looked upon as an anti-Jewish play.

Such implications in a play cannot necessarily be found from just a reading; it has to be seen in some form in its full theatrical force. (109)

The Editor appends a note to Hastings letter: 'Mr Hastings is an award-winning playwright poet and author', who, as the Royal Court's *literary* manager, failed for some eighteen months to perceive anything amiss in the text of Allen's play, until a run-through a week before the play's opening, whereas Bernard Levin and Victoria Radin, to name but two critics, simply by reading the text immediately detected the rank nature of the material, the 'relentless resonance' of which Hastings writes.

David Cesarani outlines the most basic features of *Perdition* which clearly identify Allen's play as anti-Semitic. (110) Cesarani notes first that '*Perdition* is singular for the range of anti-Jewish imagery and for the Jewish conspiracy theory which lies at its heart'. (111) The examples of conspiracies within the play that Cesarani cites include: Dr Yaron's deliberate concealment of his knowledge of the realities of the camps, and the consequent deception of the provincial Jewish communities to save his own skin; the conspiracy between Zionists and the Nazis to bring about the foundation of mutually exclusive racial states; and the conspiracy of silence between Jews in the Free World, the US, Great Britain and Palestine, against those bereft of hope in Hungary.

Second, Cesarani points out that `as the play progresses, the act of *betrayal* becomes the black centre of the conspiracy and cover-up` which `resonates with the story of Judas. This is reinforced by ascriptions of *Jewish cruelty*, callousness, expediency and ruthlessness` characterised in the play as `the cruel criteria of Zionism`. (112)

Third, Cesarani points out that Allen portrays Zionists as `invariably driven by the desire for personal gain` and, more ominously, as people who are `willing to justify any means, no matter how terrible, to achieve their goal of Jewish statehood. They are characterised as heartless traffickers in human lives: Israel was coined in the blood and tears of Hungarian Jewry`. (113) It is only the rich Jews who were able to escape because they could buy their places on the safe train. Finally, Cesarani notes that there are a `plethora of Christological references in the last twenty pages of the play`, (114) many of which have been excised in the published text of *Perdition*:

Yaron mentions Pontius Pilate and Golgatha; he describes the trial, which it turns out was of his devising, as a `confessional` in which he was hoping for `absolution`. There are also several metaphors relating to the crucifixion. The junior counsel for the defence gleefully exclaims to Scott: `You crucified him.` Yaron congratulates Ruth on her pamphlet with its `words hard as nails`. He approves of Scott too: `I like him. Merciless. I felt that he was ramming spears into my body.`

*Perdition* virtually ends with references to `polluted wells` and once again to crucifixion - both major themes in traditional Christian anti-Semitism. (115)

Many of these references have been changed in the published text. For example, `You crucified him` has become `You destroyed him` (*Pdn.* p. 68) and Yaron's compliment to Scott, `I felt that he was ramming spears into my body`, has become, `Scott was good. Sharp as a razor.` (*Pdn.* p. 69) In part this justifies several scholars later reticence to hand Allen detailed lists of their objections, because despite his repeated denials, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that Allen continuously adapted his text to eradicate the crudest and most obvious anti-Semitic language, while retaining the argument in more `palatable` imagery and idiomatic expression. The *less* hygienic language of the version made available to the press and the published version is amongst the most telling indications of Allen's undeclared purpose and disingenuousness. Cesarani concludes:

If Allen's play had been simply another piece of anti-Zionist propaganda it would have been painful but unexceptional. However, Allen went further and slid into anti-Semitism.

*Perdition* incorporates the myth of the Jewish conspiracy, the myth of Jewish power as well as numerous anti-Jewish stereotypes that have to do with betrayal, cruelty, double-dealing and a host of emblems resonating with imagery from the death of Christ. (116)

In Allen's *Perdition* Nazi policies of persecution, deportation and death all but disappear and Jewish fate during the Holocaust is primarily presented in terms of Jews being the callous executors of their own fate, Jews being the victims of *Jewish* persecution, a case advanced chiefly through themes found in anti-Semitic discourse.

A 'condensed version' of *Perdition* was given a public reading at the Royal Lyceum Studio in Edinburgh on 17 August 1987. Incredibly Michael Billington found it 'vehemently anti-Zionist without being anti-Semitic' but nevertheless considered that 'it failed as drama because it is an indictment masquerading as an impartial courtroom debate', Yaron making 'a tame defence of his actions' and ultimately emerging as 'a self-flagellating figure craving judgement', (117) evidence once again of the perplexing inability of the literary establishment to recognise anti-Semitic stereotypes.

A revised version of the text used for the public reading in Edinburgh formed the basis for a production of *Perdition* which opened on 4 May 1988, for just seven performances at the Conway Hall, London, and while Michael Billington welcomed the play's production, as he had done its public reading in Edinburgh, as an expression of the right to free speech, the production confirmed his opinion that the 'lack of challenge, debate and forensic zeal... undermines the play', concluding that the writing lacks, 'the intellectual rigour and emotional empathy to measure up to the profound questions it raises. Its very partiality means that its case goes unproven.' (118)

## 9 JOSHUA SOBOL'S *GHETTO* AT THE ROYAL NATIONAL THEATRE

### 9.1 The Royal National Theatre

The West End had wrested the title 'Musical Capital of the world' from Broadway thanks chiefly to the efforts of Andrew Lloyd-Webber and Cameron Mackintosh. But it was primarily the success of *Amadeus* and *Guys and Dolls* which established not merely the acceptability but the desirability of musical productions on the stages of the National Theatre. They embodied the production values of London's West End and were the epitome of Kenneth Tynan's early view of the National as 'show business' and as a showcase for 'the best of everything'. (1) The undisguised popularity of the musicals (in many parts of the affluent West) signalled a marked shift in public perceptions: 'theatre' increasingly denoted 'Show', and shows, due to the immense investment required and the colossal fortunes being made, were increasingly understood as a significant part of the 'entertainment industry', a change in perception consistent with the entire cast of Thatcherism.

The musicals posed little or no challenge to their audiences, despite the fact that their subjects frequently concerned the most demanding of circumstances, political revolution, dictatorship, and war, the overwhelming impression rather being the evasion of the issues buried beneath 'the spectacle', their disconcerting removal from serious treatment. Members of the Olivier generation - Olivier amongst them - had been appalled at what productions like *Amadeus*, and later *Guys and Dolls*, conveyed about the *National* Theatre. The productions were populist and, in keeping with the exciting entrepreneurial spirit of the Thatcher revolution, expressed both the glitz and glamour which the free market had brought to a limited number of people prepared to take financial risks. (2)

The appointments of Richard Eyre as Artistic Director and David Aukin as Chief Executive of the National Theatre were announced in January 1987. (3) *The Sunday Times* critic, John Peter, was forthright about the legacy which Eyre would be inheriting indicating the marked contrast between the realities of the subsidised theatre under Thatcher and the potential personal fortunes to be made through the blockbuster musical:

Eyre's problem is that he's taking over just when the NT is seen to be under a cloud of disapproval. The way I read the situation is that Hall is thought to have gone too far. Not only has his integrity been called into question, but he has stood on coffee tables and accused the Government of not caring for the arts; and he's done it once too often. Word has therefore gone out that something is



not quite right in the state of the subsidised theatre in general and the NT in particular. (4)

While considering the National to have 'become an overproductive assembly line whose hospitable diversity... has outstayed its time', *The Observer* preferred not to dwell on the past but instead outlined the organisational structure the National would be adopting under the new joint directorship: 'Eyre and Aukin hope to run the National like a super repertory theatre, establishing a National Theatre Company (the first, effectively, since the move from the Old Vic 10 years ago) to perform a complementary rep. of new and classic plays'. These productions would be seen on the Olivier and Cottesloe stages while the Lyttleton would take 'visiting productions from the regions and abroad together with special NT projects designed to tour'. (5)

Reflecting upon Eyre's earlier career at the Nottingham Playhouse and as a resident director at the National, *The Observer* also speculated about the tenor of the theatre's play policy in the future:

Even at Nottingham Eyre was giving notice that the old theatre of social realism was already discredited as imposed and restricting, and that to survive in the world of cinema and television, theatre was going to have to offer superior entertainment and striking metaphors of everyday existence... Any theatre run by Richard Eyre will be an exuberantly visual theatre in which what you see will illuminate and enrich what you hear.

Pleasure, energy and fun come high on the list. No one has proved more decisively than Eyre that the major subsidised companies should perform the popular masterpieces of musical theatre... All the best musical revivals of recent years have been produced in the subsidised theatre... Eyre's National *Guys and Dolls* lit the fuse. (6)

At a press conference on 2 June 1988 changes to the structural organisation of the National Theatre were confirmed, along with the announcement of the repertoire planned for 1988-1989. (7) Eyre also announced a group of new associate directors, some with long-established connections with the National, amongst them, Ian McKellen, Michael Bryant, Bill Bryden and David Hare, the new associates including, Declan Donnellan, Deborah Warner and Nicholas Hytner, who would join Howard Davies and Peter Gill already working with Richard Eyre.

When asked by Michael Billington how the Eyre National was going to differ from Hall's National, the new Director commented:

Peter's championship of new [British] writers is beyond criticism. What you come down to is the classics both in choice and execution. I would say one has to trawl wider because so many of the great landmarks have been explored (by a

slip of the tongue he first said 'obscured'). The choice is more eclectic and my attitude less neutral than Peter's. By that I don't mean that one asks of any play what it says about Thatcherism or whether it tells us of Armageddon.

What I am saying is that timelessness is important; and that you have to create on stage a world whose co-ordinates are recognisable to a modern audience. I also want to remove the pejorative element from the word 'theatrical' and exploit the medium to the maximum.

I want to help create a theatre where the language and the visual imagery have a comparable expressive power. (8)

Eyre also reiterated his well known scepticism of artistic manifestos, appealing to his policy to be discerned from the plays produced on stage. Attacked by a theatre critic for his reluctance in this respect, Eyre wrote an article, 'What's the National Theatre For?', the nearest he had come, he claimed, 'to a public statement of intent for the National Theatre'. (9) Eyre's statement bears the scars of Peter Hall's battles both with the Arts Council and the third administration of Margaret Thatcher, and it is a defence of the principle of government subsidy:

The National Theatre exists to do work that either by content or by execution or both, could not be performed or would not be initiated by the commercial sector. It provides continuity of 'investment', of employment, and of theatrical tradition, and this requires a subsidy to supplement the income from the box office...

The case for the existence of subsidised theatres is made on their stages and the only questions worth asking are, 'Is what I see on the stage any good?' and, 'What does it mean to me?'

The policy of the National Theatre has been diverse and pluralistic and will remain so. At heart I'm a populist, but I don't mean by this that all standards are reduced to the common denominator of 'popular' culture, where the only criterion of success is measured in numbers; I mean that art can and should be popular and accessible even if its content is complex and disturbing... The commercial theatre is defined by its need to make a profit; the subsidised theatre is defined by its need to be good. (10)

Avoiding the shibboleths of élitism and nationalism, and the broader critical implications art might have for the conduct of government and the tenor of life in society, Eyre's reflection, while outlining the case for government responsibility to the arts, does not stress the public accountability of that provision which Hall had ignored to his cost, the difficulty of being 'populist' in a pluralistic society, or the vigilance required to preserve independence of thought and action against pressures to conform to a populist nationalism or an anodyne common-sense that might be implicit in the provision of financial resources offered either by government or commercial sponsorship. These were the challenges that Eyre had to confront as the Artistic Director of the National Theatre.

Shortly after the formal announcement of his appointment Eyre had sent Nicholas Hytner the text of a play by an Israeli playwright, *Ghetto* by Joshua Sobol, in a version by David Lan. (11) Considered to be amongst the most outstanding directors of his generation, the son of a Manchester based QC and from a solidly upper-middle class Jewish background, Nicholas Hytner had read English at Cambridge, worked in the regional theatre in Exeter and Leeds, and had come to public attention through his productions of *The Turn of the Screw* and *King Priam* with Kent Opera.

His production of Handel's *Xerxes* with the ENO in 1985 received critical acclaim and in the same year he became an associate director of the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester. In November 1987 he had directed *Measure for Measure*, his first production for the RSC at Stratford, followed in 1988 by *The Tempest*. In June 1988 Eyre had named him as one of the associate directors new to the National Theatre. Amongst the first productions of Richard Eyre's Royal National Theatre (as it had become on its twenty-fifth anniversary in October 1988), *Ghetto* was the first play Hytner directed at the theatre.

In writing about the Royal National's production of *Ghetto* in July 1989, Ned Chaillet commented:

Something very like an artistic policy is beginning to materialise at the National Theatre... Until now, the chief effect of the Richard Eyre /David Aukin regime has been a kind of rationalisation of the use of the three theatre spaces.

Potentially commercial plays have been most visible at the boxy Lyttelton stage and plays most probably of minority interest have appeared at the Cottesloe. With the arrival of Joshua Sobol's *Ghetto* at the Olivier, a new coherence is visible, and a new sort of theatrical ambition.

Whatever the critical reaction to the production, and whatever the public response, the play was clearly chosen for its importance - and having been chosen, the National gave it the fullest commitment it has accorded a new foreign play in years. (12)

Since the Six Day War of 1967, Joshua Sobol had been one of two dominant figures, the other being Hanoch Levin, amongst a small group of playwrights who were at the forefront of Israeli theatre and which included Hillel Mitelpunkt, Josef Mundy, Yosef Bar-Yosef, Nissim Aloni, A. B. Yehoshua and Danny Horowitz.

Sobol was not afraid to challenge the mythologising of Jewish and Israeli history and to tackle head-on the issues of self-understanding and national aspiration in such plays as *The Night of the Twentieth* (1976) and *Jewish Soul. The Last Night of Otto Weininger* (1982).

When *Ghetto* premiered at the Haifa Municipal Theatre in May 1984 Sobol took a calculated risk. He was the first Israeli playwright to approach the darkest episode in Jewish history by situating his drama not merely in the period of the European

catastrophe but in the midst of a ghetto, in Vilna. *Ghetto* stirred an intense controversy in Israel and marked an entire sea change in the way the Holocaust could thereafter be approached by Israeli dramatists.

Before the year was out *Ghetto* had received its European première on the stage of the Freie Volksbühne in Berlin directed by Peter Zadek, but it would be another two years before *Ghetto* received its English language première in an adaptation by Jack Viertel, at the Mark Taper Forum Los Angeles in October 1986. By odd coincidence the London production of *Ghetto* began previewing on the first day of Passover, 20 April, opening on the 27 April 1989, the last day of the festival.

## 9.2 *Ghetto*

Wrapped in a dressing gown and arbourd in a high-backed armchair in his clinically well ordered Tel Aviv apartment, an elderly man, with the assertion that failing memory and frailty demand, grasps at impressions and details to answer the enquiries of an unseen questioner. The old man recalls only tickets sold out weeks in advance, full houses with barely a space to stand, fine clothes and the sense of anticipation on opening nights. It is 1983 but the theatre of which he speaks had existed, for a few months in 1942-1943, in the Vilna ghetto.

As the artistic director of the theatre he had organised a competition for new plays about life in the ghetto. There had also been cabaret and satirical reviews, one of which had been entitled, *Di Yogenesh in Fas*, a Yiddish expression meaning 'chasing around in a barrel', and intended as a humorous allusion to the name of the cynic philosopher Diogenes. Rising from his armchair he makes to find the manuscript in his library, but 'moving is an effort for him. Suddenly he bounds forward and passes through the wall. The walls of the apartment vanish. The stage is empty all the way to the wings.' (Gh. p. 2)

A huge pile of soiled clothes is sorted by a group of exhausted, intimidated figures working silently and methodically in a dimly lit forecourt. Kittel, a German officer, known for his love of jazz and summary executions, oversees the operation with an indifference bred of absolute power, and the easy dispensability of those in his charge, amongst them, Srulik, the narrator of the opening scene.

Caught smuggling food Hayyah hands Kittel a bag. In a moment of taut silence, as those standing around wait to see what form retribution will take, he upturns the bag and beans bounce and skitter across the floor, the staccato rain plucking at the onlookers nerves. Kittel notices from the label that it is a one kilogram bag. He questions Hayyah about her contacts on the black market and as she remains silent he draws the 'only' possible conclusion: the beans have been stolen from the army. Kittel

orders her against a wall but Srulik with a ventriloquist's dummy (played by an actor) cradled in his arms, rushes forward and improvises a comic routine to avert Kittel's attention from her.

Srulik has been a distant admirer of Hayyah's for many years, and Kittel, amused by the risks he takes and with Srulik's ventriloquist's dummy squeaking, 'Kittel hates arse lickers', (*Gh.* p. 6) Kittel orders all those sorting clothes to pick up every single bean in just one minute. Weary from their forced march into the ghetto, they scramble about on the floor and in fear of their lives ensure that every single bean is recovered and returned to the bag.

Kittel weighs it and finds that the bag is sixty grams short: 940 grams instead of the full one kilogram. Hayyah knows not to protest that the bag was less than full when Kittel discovered it, lest in so doing she imply she had dared to *eat* stolen food. But she now stands in Kittel's debt for her life and the 60 grams of missing beans. Out of the goodness of his heart Kittel offers her an opportunity to settle her debt by demanding a song from her, and she sings a lament of God's abandonment, *Unter daine Vaisee Shteren*.

Kittel considers the song worth just ten grams of beans, and so she remains in his debt. He will take every opportunity to redeem what is 'owed' to him, but in a moment of magnanimous cynicism he grants the artists amongst the ghetto's inhabitants the use of the building in front of which they stand: 'This will be your theatre. I'll order the ghetto council. I'm giving you a chance to prove art is worth fifty grams of beans. But I warn you, I'm a connoisseur.' (*Gh.* p. 7) The Jewish Council orders the founding of a theatre and Gens, chief of the Jewish police, arrives to give Srulik the good news.

Srulik discovers that some of the leading figures of Vilna's pre-war cultural life are amongst the group, but it is left to Gens to remind them that the chief experience they have in common is not the possession of great talent but the lack of appropriate papers. To form a theatre company may be a solution and Gens implores Srulik: 'Do a play, any play, find parts for them. Give them a job! If they're employed I can get them work permits. And bread. Some butter. Potatoes. Soap.' (*Gh.* p. 13) But Gens is not merely a materialist, but a man with a soul:

There's the moral aspect too. We live in dark times. Shouldn't Jewish actors, Jewish musicians use their skills to shed some light? Look at who's next to you. Look at yourselves. You're dejected, depressed. You've lost all will to live. We've forgotten that we're human beings with a language, a culture, a great heritage. Your task is: remind us what we are. (*Gh.* p. 13)

Kruk, the ghetto librarian and diarist, provides a commentary on much that takes place in the ghetto, and in response to receiving an invitation to the first performance of the

theatre on 17 January 1942, he writes in his diary: 'No theatre in a graveyard.' (*Gh.* p. 15) Just three weeks before, 50,000 Jews had been marched a few miles away to Ponar and executed. The Bundists, to whom Kruk belongs, react similarly and cover the walls of the ghetto with posters proclaiming: 'No theatre in a graveyard' and 'Don't dance on our graves.' (*Gh.* p. 15) Kruk outlines his objection to Gens:

In other ghettos perhaps it's still possible to have fun. If there's a chance to do something artistic, meaningful, why not? Go ahead. But in this one? Gens, at Ponar, five miles up the road, there's a pit overflowing with bodies. For God's sake! There were seventy-six thousand Jews in Vilna. How many are left? Fifteen. (*Gh.* p. 16)

The actors are rehearsing a mournful lament, *Vei zu di teg*, when Weiskopf bursts in, full of himself. Chiding their defeatist attitude he tells them they should learn from his example. Before the war he was a miserable textile worker, now he is the manager of 150 workers! Weiskopf waxes lyrical about his prospects: 'Each day it's getting bigger. The sun rises, my income rises too... If more of us did what I do and stop that whining and complaining, this ghetto would be productive. The Germans would need us! We'd be an asset. Could they get by without us? No! That way we'd survive!' (*Gh.* p. 18)

Kittel applauds Weiskopf's little speech and cynically reminds the artists that they should celebrate their own fortitude and ingenuity: 'You've run out of luxuries. What do you do? Shred beetroot, call it caviar. The champagne's exhausted? Don't fret. Try a glass of sauerkraut brine. I love it! Your resilience!' (*Gh.* p. 20) In future they should ensure for the sake of their own souls, that their performances are characterised by such virtues and not by their satirical sense of humour.

Once Weiskopf has left, Srulik organises the actors into an informal group in which they dramatise the chief dilemma faced by Gens – who should live and who should die – through improvising a scene in which Dr Weiner, whose patients are diabetic, but who can be grouped into broad categories according to the amount of insulin each group needs, is faced with a similar dilemma. There is a limited supply of insulin and no possibility of obtaining more. The doctor poses the dilemma. 'My question is: do I have the moral right to stop treating the seriously ill, to let them die so that others will have a better chance to pull through?' (*Gh.* p. 26)

The judge and the rabbi have no satisfactory answer. Dr Weiner reads out information about each of his patients inviting a decision be made about their survival on the basis of one of a number of rational categories: marital status, age or profession. While the actors struggle with the dilemma, Kittel appears on the stage and in a parody of moral seriousness appeals to Gens to join and assist him 'with a problem of logic':

the Führer has forbidden any increase in the Jewish race, and Gens is coerced into 'selecting' the third child for 'deportation' when there are more than two children in a family. The sound of Gens's selection and the screams of men, women and children are taken up into a song by the company, *Shtiler, Shtiler*. Against the background of the selection Kruk is heard recording in his diary Gens's struggle to place the 'condemned' children with families which possess just one child, and the frequent accusation that Gens assisted in murder.

Exhausted and disconsolate, Gens returns to the theatre and, meeting Ooma, encourages her to escape. She admits to a lack of courage but also to an incapacity to see the issues clearly: 'Make a decision? On what grounds? In fact I made a decision, we all did: wait and see.' (*Gh.* p. 30) She in turn encourages Gens to join the underground. But Gens responds soberly:

You asked me a question. 'Why don't I go to the forest?' I'll tell you. The Germans want to destroy us. Physically yes, but worse than that, spiritually.

They want to cut out our souls. Can we resist? They've conquered all Europe. Can we fight them? Only on the spiritual level. 'Neither by might, nor by power, but by our spirit, saith the Lord!' Do you hear?

Will our grandchildren understand why we did it? Will they justify us in their songs, in their plays? Who cares! We must save what we can. So I won't go to the forest. My work is here. I want theatre. And lectures. Education. Intellectual activities. I must save as many Jews as I can! (*He drinks.*) There's no future in the ghetto. (*He drinks.*) None at all. (*Gh.* pp. 30 and 31)

The second act begins with the discovery by Gens of a group of black marketeers smuggling goods in an 'empty' coffin. He fines them 5,000 roubles to be paid by 9 a.m. the next morning, and takes one of the group, Luba, as a hostage. After Gens's departure they wait for Weiskopf to turn up for the smuggled merchandise. Once he has paid up they will be able to extricate Luba from prison. Elia one of the group begins to sing a song about the necessity of 'arranging' for survival.

Expecting Weiskopf to appear at any moment they mistake a Hassid for his emissary, and when he attempts to read Elia's palm and charge him thirty roubles for the trouble, Elia gratuitously stabs the Hassid to death. Going through his pockets, Elia comes up with the 5000 roubles they need to free Luba. With one problem solved they are still faced with the problem of disposing of the Hassid's body and so they decide to empty the coffin, but when they lift the lid:

*A figure wrapped in shrouds sits up, then stands. The three men are terrified. They run off. The dead man gets out of the coffin and starts removing his shrouds...*

*When the dead man removes the last of his shrouds he is revealed to be Kittel. He takes a few thick books from the coffin, puts glasses on his nose and becomes Dr Paul, a professor of Judaica. (Gh. pp. 34-35)*

Dr Ernst Paul from the Rosenberg Institute has sought out Kruk in the hope that he will assist him 'to analyse and document the spiritual and intellectual components of the Jewish cultural experience... before all bearers of this complex heritage are, hélas, taken from us.' (Gh. p. 35)

The Eichmannesque Dr Paul is not only fascinated by the Jewish rabbinical traditions but also by Kruk's *past* affiliation to the Communist party. Kruk denies that Stalin's purges, the murder of millions and the slave labour camps were the cause of his disillusion but rather attributes his break with the party to the Jews. 'They were so quick with criticism, no, worse, contempt for their own people's culture, literature, philosophy. They mocked their father's language, their father's beliefs', (Gh. p. 37) scorn which Kruk sees even more clearly in the ghetto:

Jacob Gens, a Jew, carries out the orders of the Germans, rules this ghetto. Dessler, a Jew is the local agent of the Gestapo. Levas, a Jew, guards the main ghetto gate, keeps us imprisoned. I could write you a list. All Jews. The Jewish Council, charged with administering our day to day lives, their office - it's a pit, debauchery, corruption...Why do we hate ourselves? Why? Oppression, two thousand years. It does great damage. I see that now. Thanks to you. (Gh. p. 37)

Dr Paul is sceptical of the alternative Kruk has chosen in response to his people's contempt for their cultural heritage and their self-hatred: faith in the emergence of a socialist state in Europe in which Jews will be granted freedom and equality. While Kruk defends Gens to the extent that his actions are determined by the Nazis, Paul is contemptuous of Jewish collaborators, accuses them of merely aping the power of their masters, and making themselves little more than 'repulsive fairground caricatures' of their oppressors. (Gh. p. 38) Kruk on the other hand is, in Paul's estimation, a man of principle, and he offers Kruk the opportunity to take over Gens's office. It is not power that is of prime importance to Kruk however, but culture. 'Betray your culture, in your own home you're an exile. Then it's one step from humanism to nationalism. One more? Bestiality.' Kruk is content to stay as he is, but Paul cannot understand his attitude: 'So you'll stay in the diaspora powerless and leave Zion, leave Palestine to the likes of Gens who'll grab it with both brutish hands? You're just like the Jews you despise. You too hate yourself.' (Gh. p. 38)

Disgusted with Kruk, Paul prepares to leave, and punitively hands Kruk a list of manuscripts required by his institute in Frankfurt and which he demands Kruk should have ready for safe transportation by the following morning.



In recognition of his dedication and efficiency, Kittel appoints Gens sole ruler of the ghetto, assisted by a Mr Fried, and a Mr Dessler who is given Gens's former position as the chief of police. Gens announces that there will be a celebration, 'a ball' (*Gh.* p. 40) to which all the officials and dignitaries, both Jewish and German, will be invited. Kittel makes his own attendance conditional on Gens providing music and a cabaret.

While Hayyah sings of her lost love, the celebration quickly descends into an orgy watched sardonically by the Germans. When Hayyah finishes singing and the applause dies down, Kittel gestures for complete silence. He kisses Hayyah's hand and bidding her to close her eyes, places a string of pearls around her neck. When she opens her eyes, Hayyah is appalled, and attempts to rip the necklace off, but Kittel restrains her: 'You wear their shoes, why not their pearls?', and cynically adds: 'That song – ten grams. You still owe fifteen.' (*Gh.* p. 42)

Gens is once more coerced into participating in a selection and Kruk records in his diary the selection of 410 old and sick Jews. Drunk, after the selection has been made, Gens addresses an unseen audience:

More than a few of you consider me a traitor. And you're wondering how it is that I'm still here among you with your innocent, unsullied souls. I, Jacob Gens, who gives orders to blow up the hideouts you prepare. The same Jacob Gens who puzzles out way after way to save the lives of Jews.

I calculate in Jewish blood not Jewish dignity. The Germans want a thousand Jews. I hand them over. If I don't, they'll come here and take them by force. And then they won't take a thousand. They'll take thousands. And thousands.

You with your morality. There's dirt, there's filth, you look away. If you survive you'll show your hands - clean. Whereas I, Jacob Gens, will be, if I am anything, drenched in blood, dripping with slime.

For the sake of your clean conscience I plunged into filth. I couldn't afford a clean conscience. Could I? (*Gh.* pp. 47-48)

Gens also suggests that the actors' efforts would be better directed toward inspiring genuine national feeling through the recitation of Hebrew poetry, singing Hebrew songs and staging Hebrew plays. Gens warns the actors that anyone 'who rejects the national line' will be thrown out of the company. Kruk observes sardonically to Gens: 'You're learning fast. Nationalism breeds nationalism.' (*Gh.* p. 54)

Hayyah comes to tell Srulik of her decision to join the partisans in the forest. She asks him to go with her, but he replies with irony through the dummy, and all their thoughts are expressed by Ooma: 'We cannot shape our life/ Let's shape our death.' (*Gh.* p. 55)

Having drawn the conclusion that the theatre serves no useful purpose and poses a threat to the orderly pursuit of his duties, Gens considers the building could be put to

more productive use if it were turned over to Weiskopf as a second workshop. But Weiskopf is unwilling to co-operate with Gens.

Kittel, makes an appearance just as they risk coming to blows. Detecting a disagreement between the two, Kittel inquires after the plan that had been the subject of the dispute (which Weiskopf had already taken to Kittel for his consideration). Weiskopf hesitantly reveals that Gens has torn it up. Kittel appears to be entirely satisfied with Gens explanation for his precipitate action: that the scheme was unworkable and designed only to benefit Weiskopf. Kittel demands Gens remove Weiskopf, and Gens orders Dessler to deal with him.

Kittel had been fully aware of the benefits and feasibility of Weiskopf's plan and he was merely interested to see which of the two men would prove to have the stronger will. Kittel cannot understand why Gens, having won his trial of strength with Weiskopf, is not more enthusiastic over his triumph: 'Come on, Gens, don't disappoint me. I've taught you all I know', remarks Kittel. (*Gh.* p. 62) Not dwelling on the matter, Kittel demands to see the actors:

*Light comes up on stage. Empty Nazi Uniforms rise out of the pile of clothes. They are bullet-ridden and stained with blood. They assemble as though at a Nazi mass meeting to listen to the Führer who is represented by a Uniform of the kind Hitler wore when addressing a military parade. This Uniform is worn by Srulik. The faces and limbs of all the actors are concealed. Only the face of the Dummy, manipulated by Srulik, is visible among all the empty Uniforms. It wears the same costume as before. (Gh. p. 62)*

With Srulik dressed as Hitler, the ventriloquist's dummy in his arms representing the Jews, and with the remainder of the company in German uniforms, the sketch presented to Kittel is a satire on the German conception and treatment of the Jews. In this parody, the ventriloquist's dummy is examined for evidence of his humanity but fails each test, however hard he tries to establish some reasonable ground. The final test is to see whether he dies, for death would be conclusive proof of his humanity. As he takes his final breaths the company chorus parodistically the Nazi desired reversal, the confirmation not of life, but death: 'We are finally free of the Jew!' and follow with a rendition of Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*. (*Gh.* p. 65)

Kittel drily congratulates the cast on their satire and asks to see the actors. The dummy denies that there have been any actors, only empty uniforms. With growing menace Kittel demands to see them, and they hesitantly emerge from the uniforms. One uniform remains apparently empty, and when Kittel looks inside, to his astonishment he discovers that it is in fact quite empty. Hayyah is missing and Srulik had ventriloquised her voice.

The actors are ordered to face the wall. Kittel shouts orders for the positioning and loading of a machine-gun, and then for the company's about-turn. As the company turn they are confronted not with the barrel of a gun but with more fresh white bread and jam than they have seen in months. With a sweep of the arm Kittel magnanimously invites them to eat their fill. After some hesitation, the actors fall on the food and as they ravenously consume as much as they can, the dummy sings, *Pak Zich Ain*. Then,

*after a while, Kittel moves away from the actors. He watches them, then lifts his Schmeisser and guns them all down, including Gens, in one long round. Only Srulik remains still wearing his uniform, facing Kittel like a mirror image. The Dummy frees itself from Srulik's hold; it advances towards Kittel as an independent person and for the first time sings in its own voice impudently to Kittel's face...*

*Kittel shoots the Dummy. The Dummy sinks slowly to the ground. Srulik's arm is bullet ridden and torn to shreds. He struggles over the bodies of the dead actors and becomes the old Narrator from Scene One. (Gh. p. 67)*

The play ends as it had begun with the questioning of memory by the Narrator: 'Our last performance? Our last performance... Wait a moment...' (Gh. p. 67)

### 9.3 The critics' response to *Ghetto*

With the possible exception of C. P. Taylor's *Good*, the Royal National Theatre's production of *Ghetto* differs markedly from all the other productions considered thus far in respect of the near universal warmth and critical acclaim with which it was greeted. A musical drama about a Jewish ghetto in the midst of the 'Final Solution' had been a high-risk dramatic subject for Joshua Sobol when his play premiered at the Haifa Municipal Theatre in 1984, and in choosing to produce it in the main auditorium of the Royal National Theatre in the early months of his directorship Richard Eyre was also taking something of a risk.

*The Listener* described the production as 'a unique event, performed with passion and... a complete lack of ostentation', while *The Guardian* called it 'a richly expressive production that combines moral seriousness with theatrical exuberance'. *The Observer* found Hytner's production 'moving, magnificent and unsentimental', *The Independent* considered it 'compelling and dignified', *The Sunday Times* 'alive and polished'. *The Evening Standard* described the production as 'riveting'. (13)

Most reviewers drew attention to the historical veracity of the events around which Sobol had constructed *Ghetto*, sketching the salient features of the Vilna ghetto's short existence. Irving Wardle is typical:

Its events and leading characters are historically authentic. Kittel, the local SS commandant, did prowl the ghetto with a machine-gun in one hand and a saxophone in the other. Gens, the Jewish police chief, did save Jewish lives while obeying Nazi orders. Before his execution, Kruk the Communist librarian, did bury his account of the events in a tin box. (14)

Several critics note that the action of *Ghetto* takes place between January 1942 and September 1943. Of the 60,000 Jewish inhabitants of Vilna approximately 19,000 remained in January 1942. (15) On the 23 - 24 September 1943 the Vilna ghetto was liquidated, the men and women able to work were selected and sent to concentration camps. These numbered between 11 and 12 thousand. Between 4,500 and 5,000 elderly women and children were sent to Sobibor extermination camps. Of the deported workers approximately 600 survived until 1945. (16)

Most reviewers assumed that Sobol had been chiefly concerned to dramatise the dilemmas of collaboration. *The Daily Telegraph* commented: 'The most important [issue] is Jewish collaboration with the Nazis. What kind of morality can survive in such hellish circumstances? The question is embodied in the historical figure of Jacob Gens, the leader of the ghetto.' (17)

And while Shulman also considered the chief question explored in Sobol's play to be: 'What should a Jew have done who was ordered to collaborate with the Nazis in a ghetto or a concentration camp?', he also remarks that this is 'a dilemma that has not often been discussed', (18) a view from which several critics dissented.

The prominence of the issues of accommodation and collaboration suggested to several critics an affinity between Sobol's *Ghetto* and Jim Allen's *Perdition*. Some weeks after the opening of Sobol's play Bernard Levin wrote:

The drama itself turns on a crux that will be debated until the end of history; it is the very theme that Jim Allen debauched and defiled in *Perdition*. It is summed up in the character of Jacob Gens, chief of the Jewish police in the ghetto, a man driven by an insoluble yet inescapable dilemma. The Jewish Councils, to which the Nazis delegated internal power in the ghettos, did the work the Nazis wanted done, they supplied labour, they kept the victims docile, they even drew up tidy lists for the transports bound for the gas chambers. (19)

Michael Coveney also drew attention to the similarity of theme between the two plays, but concluded: 'There is nothing contentious here (as there was in Jim Allen's *Perdition*, about the Hungarian Jewish collaboration with the Nazis).' (20) It was left to Michael Billington to identify the difference in approach, which he did both in relation to *Perdition* and Arthur Miller's, *Playing for Time*:

Sobol is not the first dramatist to debate the ethics of accommodation. Arthur Miller's moving TV film, *Playing for Time*, dealt with the women's orchestra forced to play in Auschwitz. Jim Allen's *Perdition* used a pseudo-forensic approach to discuss the complicity of Hungarian Zionists in extermination policies.

But Sobol's achievement is that (like Miller) he does not use hindsight to adopt a comfortable moral stance but recreates the dilemma faced by people like Gens at the time... Rather than judge Gens, Sobol empathises with him and makes us comprehend his motives.

In the end, Sobol shows that, whether you negotiate with tyranny or adopt a policy of armed resistance, you cannot counter its arbitrary cruelty: for all Gens's accommodation, the Vilna ghetto was liquidated in 1943. (21)

A number of critics referred to Sobol's sympathetic treatment of Gens. Coveney describes him as 'a troubled hero', Levin as a figure who was 'not entirely ignoble', and Paul Taylor as a man of 'ruthless self-honesty' with a 'courageous willingness to be vilified.' Charles Spencer also notes that 'Sobol portrays him as a tragic hero', but he is alone to acknowledge that 'Gens is seen by many as a traitor'. (22) Although many critics sought to situate *Ghetto* firmly in the historical context of the German occupation of Lithuania, none challenges in any substantive fashion Sobol's representation of Gens or even indicates that Gens remains a controversial figure.

The action of *Ghetto* is predicated upon Sobol's portrayal of Gens. With the adoption of a more critical stance toward his role, Sobol would have been forced into an entirely different treatment of the issues he was most intent on exploring. These considerations were raised by Graham Hassell:

It's a situation not dissimilar, though differently presented, to that posed by Jim Allen's *Perdition*, effectively banned by pressure groups two years ago. The upset here was over the suggestion that a Jewish leader of a ghetto in occupied Hungary chose to save Zionists, whereas in *Ghetto* Gens aids simply the young and healthy. Yet both men were impossibly placed, and both acted in what they considered the best interests of Jewish posterity. It seems curious, if not suspect, that *Perdition*, hardly seen, became a pariah for saying little more than this praised production of *Ghetto*, and with a lot less song and dance. Perhaps it's this aspect of *Ghetto* - the vivacity, energy and exuberance of Yiddish theatre - which makes it the more affecting and therefore acceptable play. (23)

The dilemmas posed by Jewish collaboration could not fail to be at the forefront of Sobol's mind in writing *Ghetto*, but he was more concerned to explore the topos of the *relationship of art to atrocity*, first in the lives of the ghetto's inhabitants struggling for survival but with the means of producing art, but also in the post-war world in the relationship between representation and the Holocaust. In short, though the dilemmas of co-operation under duress are the undeniable reality around which *Ghetto* revolves,

Sobol's main purpose was to dramatise Jewish *defiance* rather than Jewish passivity, to register that other choices were possible and that in rare instances these choices were taken, albeit in the knowledge that such actions were fraught with danger and held little hope. Sobol wanted at the very least to broaden perceptions of Jewish fate so that the noble exceptions referred to by George Steiner would find their appropriate place in memory.

The peculiar power of Sobol's dramatic representation of the Holocaust is conveyed by Spencer:

Sobol's play... and Nicholas Hytner's thrillingly staged production, offer much more than sober documentary and statistics. This is a blazingly theatrical piece, in style as well as subject matter, in which the members of the Vilna Theatre Company, the actors, singers and musicians, a ventriloquist and his dummy, are constantly caught up in scenes depicting the wider life of the community and the appalling dilemmas it faced. (24)

A number of the critics identified theatrical art as the multivalent reality with which Sobol was preoccupied. Billington wrote, 'theatre is the abiding metaphor of the play' (25) and Wardle 'art is the governing theme of the action'. (26) *The Times Literary Supplement* maintained, 'Sobol's virtuoso exploitation of the full panoply of theatrical device and techniques in dealing with a "difficult" subject continually invites us to celebrate theatre itself, as a life-affirming and life-enhancing bearer of culture triumphant over barbarism, evil and death.' (27)

Sobol employed a huge variety of theatrical techniques and traditions. Critics commented upon different scenes to illustrate the way in which he had employed a particular device or had made a particular allusion through which he could represent something of the reality of the dilemma of survival through art in the ghetto theatre, explore the nature of the relationship between atrocity and art and the dilemma of representation and the Holocaust in contemporary theatre practice.

The critics quite frequently disagreed about whether theatrical art could be claimed to be redemptive or life enhancing, or whether they were empty of any such promise of transformation. They also disagreed about whether the final effect of *Ghetto* is the restoration of faith in the resilience of the human spirit and the place of art in the fight against barbarity, or whether Sobol's play illustrates precisely the opposite, the ineffectiveness of art to counter arbitrary cruelty and mass extermination.

The instances of Sobol's theatrical ingenuity in *Ghetto* are numerous and the following examples are restricted to those which drew comments from critics in the press night notices and which were occasionally the subject of critical disagreement.

### *The narrator*

Paul Taylor was one of the few critics to draw attention to the theatrical framing of the entire play 'as the streaming sometimes wayward memories of a survivor', (28) suggesting that *Ghetto* is shaped both by memory and considerations of presentation imposed by the unseen questioner/audience.

### *The figure of Kittel: Culture and cruelty or 'Jackboots and the Beans talk'*

Wardle noted that art, as the governing theme of the dramatic action, 'begins with Kittel's discovery that a girl singer, Hayyah... is concealing a few ounces of stolen beans. Instead of killing her, he announces she has to pay back their value in performances which he, a connoisseur, will judge.' (29) Hayyah's performances become the means of her survival but in so far as her art is elicited under extreme duress it can hardly be described as an expression of 'inner' freedom, meaningful opposition, or the maintenance of a cultural tradition. Wardle also sees problems with Kittel's connoisseurship: he 'appreciates the company's work... only as a transient pleasure before extermination... The gap in the play... is that culture has performed no such [humanising] service for the SS men.' (30) For Taylor, Kittel's sometimes sentimental, sometimes affectless response allows a glimpse of 'how a heightened critical faculty can happily co-exist with moral atrophy'. (31) Beans, the ubiquitous commodity of European folk tales become, not the source of a magic solution but the excuse for capricious oppression.

### *The company of actors and musicians: Performance within a performance*

In *Ghetto* the theatre troupe is formed on the arbitrary whim of Kittel, who, possessing some musical talent himself, is amused at the possibility of entertainment in a ghetto. Gens sees the formation of the troupe as the opportunity to create employment for forty families and the possibility of their survival for a short while longer. Billington comments on Sobol's use of this interpretative frame: 'Sobol has seized on and intelligently used this historical fact that the troupe put on plays and revues even as Jews were deported... his point is that art, and specifically theatre, can simultaneously provide spiritual comfort, symbolic and communal solidarity.' (32) It is this device of 'the theatre within the theatre' which allows Sobol to introduce a variety of theatrical techniques and allusions which mediate the dilemmas of art in the midst of atrocity, and Jewish participation in the work of their oppressors.

### *Song*

Spencer describes the songs as 'haunting, heart wrenching numbers, sometimes sad, sometimes expressing a fierce pride and joy in Jewish culture. They seem still

more poignant when one remembers that they were actually written by the real life inhabitants of the Vilna ghetto'. (33) It is Hayyah's redemption-by-performance which symbolises the predicament of the ghetto and the fantasy of survival through production, an illusion the Nazi rulers were happy to encourage the Jews in.

Kittel embodies this cynical stance through the sadistic and sardonic attitude he manifests toward Hayyah's art, viewing her performances as his due. The question is posed whether art transcends the exploitative and utilitarian purpose to which it is put, whether it convicts the corrupt and ennoble the suffering? Song also expresses the vagaries of ghetto existence and the moods of consolation and defiance and as such represent a significant factor in the momentum given to the dramatic action.

### *Ventriloquism*

The ventriloquist's dummy in the hands of the troupe's artistic director who is 'telling' the story to the unseen listener expresses all that is forbidden to the Jews: animated life, love, criticism of and resistance to the Nazis, humour, art, and, of course, survival. In a highly illuminating comment Peter Sherwood indicates that this is one dramatic device which Sobol uses 'to keep emotional triggers out of reach', (34) suggesting that Sobol purposefully tempers audience aspiration or susceptibility to sentimentalise life, love, humour and creativity in such life threatening circumstances, by their animated representation at one remove in the ventriloquised/mimeticised antics of a dummy.

Several critics picked up on Sobol's intention in respect of different elements of the defence against forbidden desires: Hassell and Coveney both recognised the symbolism of the dilemma of each and every Jewish member of the ghetto, Hassell commenting, 'Jonathan Cullen and Linda Kerr Scott as ventriloquist and audacious white-faced dummy beautifully symbolise the blank, kow-towing face of acceptance and the combative indignation within every helpless and pathetic victim'; (35) Sherwood comments that 'a perfunctory love interest is mediated by a life-size ventriloquist's dummy (Linda Kerr Scott is able to steal the show precisely because the dummy is more alive than many of the other characters)'; (36) and Ned Chaillet remarks that it is solely 'because of the art of the ventriloquist Srulik that some of the only criticism of the Nazis to their faces is permitted'. (37) Wardle views the ventriloquist and his doll as the symbols for the transformative power of art, describing the dummy as 'a flapping tatterdemalion who turns starvation and the threat of imminent death into irrepressible clown routines. There at least is an image of cultural survival.' (38)

The ventriloquist's dummy is Srulik's defence against specific emotions and aspirations, by their projection through the voice and mimicry of the dummy. This protects Srulik from the dangers of expressing openly his feelings and expectations,



protects him from the rejection and assaults of both lovers and enemies - they must relate to the dummy - but also allows him the liberty to be conventional in ways that the ghetto have made abnormal and life threatening, to fall in love with the 'wrong' kind of person, and to be critical of the oppressor, albeit in a playful fashion. The dummy has a similar inhibiting and liberating effect on audience response.

Sobol's use of this device is situated within a much older tradition in the Yiddish theatre of Vilna (one of the leading avant-garde theatres of Eastern Europe between the wars) by Clive Sinclair who points out that one of the most renowned productions of the Vilna Troupe was Anski's *The Dybbuk* (first performed in 1920):

Sobol's play contains no dybbuks, but it does feature a ventriloquist's dummy. There is a connection: for the latter is the former literally turned inside out. The mischievous spirit is externalised, given form, but its *raison d'être* remains the same as it always was; the devolution of responsibility from the actual speaker. Blame it on the dybbuk, blame it on the dummy!

In the end, when the Nazis gun down all the actors they shoot the dummy rather than the ventriloquist, saving his life but destroying his art. By reviving this art - in a way that will both horrify and exhilarate an audience - Sobol has sought to restore self-respect to Srulik and all those others whose survival helped to save a culture. (39)

### *The play within the play within the play*

The ethical dilemmas imposed by the process of selection due to a strictly limited supply of insulin, is improvised by the theatre troupe in a 'court' where the highest ethical authorities are called upon to pronounce judgement on the probity of such action. A doctor, a judge and a rabbi fail to resolve the dilemmas. For any judgement at which they might arrive suggests that rational grounds exist upon which the decision to take an innocent person's life may justifiably rest, a justification which is described as no different from Nazi medicine. The improvisation of the 'trial' of diabetic cases is juxtaposed with the dramatisation of Nazi selection for deportation in the main narrative of the play. In Sherwood's view Sobol exceeded the limits of effective resort to theatrical device in the improvised courtroom. He commented: 'the brilliance of the theatre topos ... succeeded too well and kept not just emotionality but often even emotion at a safe distance. For example, the scene in which actors from the troupe, dressed as rabbi, judge and doctor, present the ethical dilemma posed by the ghetto hospital's limited stock of insulin is technically flawless, but it alienates at the emotional level through its format and its ridiculing of both rabbi and judge.' (40) Perhaps the exhaustion of any human authority (and thus the numbing of audience response) in such a situation was precisely the point Sobol wished to make.

### *Shadow Play*

Kittel has ordered a selection of children and Gens is given the task of counting the children off, and where there is a third or fourth child, separating them from their families. Where possible, Gens takes the prohibited third child and thrusts them into the arms of a family with only one child reproving them for 'forgetting' to take both 'their' children. Sobol treated the selection of the children with the utmost discretion and Taylor remarks of its dramatic impact: 'One of the most stunning sequences in this production is one which delegates most to the imagination, when a procession of stricken families, rounded-up for every third child to be seized and exterminated, is presented in heart-breaking shadow-play behind a huge illustrated white sheet.' (41) The furious contempt for human inadequacy and fallibility represented through the improvised trial scene is qualified by the fleeting shadows of 'real' lives.

### *Doubling*

Billington remarks that 'Kittel is hypnotised not only by the troupe's lead singer but by the vivacity and energy of Jewish culture. It is as if he is seduced by what he is bound to destroy', (42) an impression confirmed by Spencer when he describes Alex Jennings's performance as Kittel as the finest of the evening: 'Youthful, cultured, smiling and sentimental, Jennings brings real evil and a sense of danger to the stage. His outbursts of calculated anger and his cat-and-mouse games with his Jewish victims are horribly plausible, his quite genuine tears at a sad song, obscene. Above all he makes wickedness seem sexy and one watches in appalled fascination, unable to avert the gaze.' (43)

The transformation of Kittel into Dr Paul, 'a Nazi versed in Jewish culture and the Talmud', is an ironic commentary upon Kittel's role in the ghetto. (44) Paul, as a good Aryan, has helped to destroy a culture he is attempting to preserve through the cataloguing of documents and artefacts. Kittel himself is preserving 'specimens' he is also intent on destroying. The doubling of Kittel/Paul is intended to ironise the living museum of the ghetto. The irony is most graphically symbolised through the 'magical realism' of Dr Paul's arrival in the ghetto. The personification of Nazi *Kultur*, Dr Paul, swathed in the bandages of mummification, 'petrified' and 'putrid', steps from a coffin. The living dead have found their appropriate resting place, a graveyard of their own making, the ghetto, where their curiosity about a 'dead' culture can be indulged to the full as they participate in its demise. The traditional preoccupations of German Romanticism, eroticism and death, find their most kitsch expression in Kittel/Dr Paul.

### *The Dream play/The Folk Tale Ball*

The party to celebrate Gens's appointment as sole ruler of the ghetto is referred to as 'a ball'. (*Gh.* p. 40) Sobol may have intended the party to be a parody of the ball which occurs in numerous European folk traditions, usually a grand affair attended by thwarted lovers who, belonging to different social classes, are able to meet and, momentarily at least, experience that love which is otherwise denied to them. Their love confirmed, subsequent events conspire to bring them together again and they live happily ever after. A ball in the Vilna ghetto turns out to be an altogether different affair.

Taylor considered that one of the chief strengths of the production was in conveying the distaste the Jews felt when performing for Kittel. This is no more 'graphically' conveyed than in 'the luxurious but listlessly un festive party they throw for their oppressors when, among other horrors (directed in a slow, dreamlike way by Hytner), we see the Nazi guests making home-movies of copulating Jews'. (45) In these home-movies, Jim Hiley observes, 'the ghetto habitants will appear to have a whale of a time, though off stage one of them is raped and beaten. The camera - and art, by implication - lies.' Hiley draws the conclusion that in 'this most scrupulous of dramas, play-acting itself is indicted', (46) a view which finds some support in Chaillet's opinion that 'the pornographic sequence is perhaps the most precisely choreographed and most alienating. The metaphor of art as salvation, of performance as liberation, is stretched to limits which again make the audience question its own response to Sobol's play.' (47)

The ball of folk tradition is an occasion of high drama and dreams fulfilled; in the ghetto the ball is a charade endured in trance-like indifference and anxiety, victims caught in the amber light of the swimmingly vindictive gaze of their persecutors. The slurred images of party confusion caught momentarily on film is an apt symbol for joy under duress. Hayyah (the princess) is saved from the noble wicked suitor (Kittel) only by the intervention of the poor man who cannot admit his love (Srulik/dummy). The exploitative lens of the SS is indicted, as is voyeurism of the atrocious, a device through which Sobol intends to create a contrast with art as an ennobling endeavour.

### *Allusion/Inter-textuality*

There are a number of allusions to other plays throughout *Ghetto*. The sharing of carrots between Hayyah and Srulik in the second scene alludes to Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*; when Kittel exhorts Gens to be happy at the ball he sings sardonically to Gens, 'I want to be happy but I can't be happy till I make you happy too', (*Gh.* p. 45) and 'both men acknowledge the allusion to *No, No, Nanette* - Kittel with a skip and a grin, Gens with a nervous smirk'. (48) The most transparent allusion is however to

'Shylock's litany of Jewish characteristics' (49) which the theatre troupe parody, Nazi fashion, in an attempt to establish 'the humanity' of the ventriloquist's dummy.

### *Cabaret*

Many of these elements are brought together in the final scene which Bernard Levin found to be 'one of the most dramatic and memorable scenes of the entire work. The Vilna Jews have staged a black, bitter cabaret, the central figure of which is the Führer himself. As the scene reaches its outrageous and sickening apogee, the tempo changes and the whole company launches fortissimo, into the *Ode to Joy* from the Ninth Symphony, *while giving, throughout, the Nazi salute.*' (50) Apparently impressed, Kittel congratulates the troupe on their 'satirical cabaret' (*Gh.* p. 65) which concludes with the ventriloquist's dummy's 'flight across the stage in wild parody of the Dying Swan'. (51) Hayyah's absence from the troupe confirms Kittel's suspicions that there is a haemorrhage of Jews from the ghetto who are escaping to join the partisans. Worse, Hayyah still owed Kittel fifteen grams of beans. Following an apparently conciliatory gesture, Kittel personally murders the entire troupe apart from Srulik, who is saved by his dummy. In the last moments it asserts its right to life by approaching Kittel and singing defiantly, only to be 'shot down' by him, leaving Srulik to tell the tale.

The Royal National Theatre production, in Sherwood's view, received an 'unexpected injection of pure schmaltz into a finale quite altered from David Lan's English text' which 'merely serves to point up the emotional insecurity of a play that is perhaps too easy to admire'. (52) The 'schmaltz' follows the callous murder of the company. 'The theatrical troupe promptly resurrect in order to sing a song about how they will survive. This kind of phoney uplift is bad enough in *Chorus Line*', comments Taylor, 'but it is intolerable here, where it is so flatly and tragically contradicted by the facts'. (53) Hiley agreed with Taylor's verdict, commenting: 'After three hours of hideous reality, this seems a discordantly contrived attempt at solace.' (54)

In view of such a theatrically self-conscious approach to the dramatisation of the Vilna ghetto, the issue of Jewish collaboration and the role of the theatre in ghetto life, and the broad critical acclaim the production enjoyed, the critics surprisingly drew quite different conclusions about Sobol's views of the relationship between art, atrocity and Jewish fate. Was Sobol indicting the inanity of art when faced with cruelty and extermination? Was he pointing up the ambiguity of art when confronted by the kind of dilemmas the Nazis engineered? Or was Sobol celebrating the power and durability of art, and specifically of the theatre, in the face of tyranny, and the possibility of defiance rather than passivity of which *Ghetto* itself was now a part ?

Billington and Sherwood are both persuaded of Sobol's spirited advocacy of the theatre as the exemplar and apologist of the tenacity of the human spirit, Sherwood commenting that in *Ghetto* Sobol 'continually invites us to celebrate theatre itself, as a life-affirming and life-enhancing bearer of culture triumphant over barbarism, evil and death' while not necessarily holding that *Ghetto* itself is a flawless example of such a lofty ideal. (55) Billington too considered 'Sobol's real point' to be 'that there is a life of the spirit - here embodied by members of the Vilna Troupe - that is less easily crushed' than the final liquidation of the Ghetto suggests. Sobol's purpose, argues Billington, is to show 'that art, and specifically theatre, can simultaneously provide spiritual comfort, symbolic defiance and communal solidarity' (56) and he was left in no doubt that Sobol had achieved this in *Ghetto*. Sinclair suggested that 'Sobol has sought to restore self-respect to... all those... whose survival helped to save a culture' and this because 'the man who founded the theatre group that entertained the inmates of the Vilna ghetto lived his subsequent life in silent shame... It was a silence Sobol became determined to break.' (57) These themes were drawn together by Bernard Levin in a paean of praise for the courage of the Vilna theatre troupe and Sobol's play:

Many plays include, but very few are, a prolonged hymn to the inextinguishable human spirit, and its eternal striving towards the light. This one is... The test is obvious and inescapable: do you leave the National Theatre bowed down by the horror, twisted in vicarious agony, burning with rage against man's inhumanity to man? No, you do not; you leave it - though the horror, the agony and the rage are no less present and potent - uplifted and enhanced, admiring even more highly the capacity of the human race to distinguish what does matter from what only seems to matter.

In Vilna, what did matter was the future they would never see, and what only seemed to matter was the present of hunger, humiliation and death. And death shall have no dominion. (58)

Spencer considered the Vilna ghetto theatre troupe to have been 'a living symbol of civilisation, resistance and the resilience of the human spirit' (59) and *The Spectator* conceded that 'a sense of the celebration of a spirit of resistance' is what prevailed in Hytner's production of *Ghetto*. (60) But both critics felt there was a danger that 'its sheer theatricality, its sense of artifice and spectacle... overwhelmed the human and the individual', (61) that 'at times the spectacle and music seem diverting for their own sake, and anything that diverts attention away from the underlying horror of the experience cannot help but seem questionable'. (62)

Sharing these reservations Hiley and Taylor drew quite different conclusions to those critics, such as Billington and Sherwood, who had enthusiastically endorsed the view that Sobol was intending to celebrate the power of art, and in particular the

potency of theatre. Hiley drew attention to the contrasting approaches adopted by the chief protagonists in *Ghetto*: Gens's 'desperate pragmatism, and that of the troupe, are opposed by Kruk... a socialist librarian who hoists placards reading, "No theatre in a graveyard." Gens's other adversary is the entrepreneur Weiskopf... who proves more loyal to profit than to his own kind.' But Hiley concludes of Sobol himself: 'The author avoids endorsing any of their views, for their quarrels should never be necessary. None of them is "right". Genocide is wrong. For us, what's salient is... the devouring terror of the Holocaust.' (63)

While Hiley may be strictly correct to claim that Sobol avoids explicitly endorsing any of the three views it is quite clear from the play that his sympathies lie with Gens and the impossible dilemma he chose to engage with rather than attempt to escape from. Sobol considers Kruk and the Bundists to have adopted an unhelpfully strict ideological line toward the theatre, which many of the ghetto's population were unwilling to follow, demonstrating the fact by their defiant attendance of the theatre; and it is clear that Sobol considers indefensible Weiskopf's opportunism and greed. That each of the protagonists are portrayed with the kind of reservation which implies a moral complexity requiring both caution and generosity is to Sobol's credit. While Hiley may be correct to point out that none of them is 'right' in an absolute sense, it does not alter the fact that, in *Ghetto*, Gens is portrayed as the least immoral because of his concern for survival and the preservation of cultural life, and his willingness to engage with *both the Jewish population and the Nazi oppressors* in his attempt to preserve life in the widest sense in a Nazi ghetto. For Sobol the ambiguity of Gens's engagement is preferable to the passivity assumed to be present by the overwhelming majority of commentators who unquestioningly followed the line of Hannah Arendt.

Paul Taylor's reservations about *Ghetto* echo those of Christopher Edwards and Irving Wardle in so far as Taylor considers that the Jews in *Ghetto* 'retain a sense of humanity and tradition through theatre and song', while Kittel's demeanour demonstrates that 'a heightened critical faculty can happily co-exist with moral atrophy'. Indeed, Taylor explicitly remarks that it is the Holocaust that has 'notoriously put paid to the idea that artistic sensibility and virtue have any necessary link', and concludes: 'It is to the credit of this production that... you find yourself moved less by the theatrical representation than by what it prompts you to try, however feebly, to imagine of the reality.' (64)

Taylor was not unaware of the fine line that should under no circumstances be crossed, commenting, 'obviously it would only take the smallest lapse of taste in any production to turn the proceedings into some nightmare *Fiddler in the Gas-Chamber*'. (65) He, like the vast majority of critics, felt Hytner's production had steered well clear of this, and presented 'the triumph' about which Bernard Levin had been so effusive.

That this dividing line was so terribly fine, and also dependent upon the critics' own sensibilities is best illustrated by a lone dissenting voice. Michael Arditti considered that both Sobol and Hytner had wallowed in cheap theatrical effects and had invited the audience to do the same. In his execratory notice, he wrote:

[Sobol] tosses about subsidiary themes and ideas with considerable profligacy and lack of depth, most of which have in any case already been dramatised far more incisively elsewhere: the doctor's dilemma by Bernard Shaw, the Holocaust humour by Peter Barnes, the Zionist debate by Jim Allen and even the unchosen destiny of the chosen people by Joseph Stein in *Fiddler on the Roof*. Indeed, the comparison with *Fiddler* is the most telling, for *Ghetto's* most effective moments are predominantly musical - Mr Sobol's motto seems to be when in doubt, sing out, but unlike his Broadway counterparts he does not even seem to have thechutzpah of his convictions... The potency of cheap music is here being exploited for blatantly cheap effect.

Even Nicholas Hytner is unable to wrest much coherence out of such a confused and inchoate piece... the evening degenerates in increasingly desperate theatrical shock tactics - a pornographic party thrown for the Nazis at which the only uninvited guest appears to be Charlotte Rampling, a goose-stepping Hitler parody which edges dangerously close to Mel Brooks and the fatally misjudged final hymn to survival which sounds more like an out-of-town reject from *Follies*. The latter exemplifies the besetting sin of the evening, as what is intended as an act of defiance, produces only embarrassment. (66)

The final song of the evening does appear to have been a complete miscalculation, and Sobol and Hytner may have been well advised to consider other dramatic means in order to give the last burst to the vitality of art rather than to the barrel of a gun. Without some *effective* dramatic metaphor to the *contrary*, atrocity would appear always to have the last 'word'. This was not Hytner's intention as Sobol himself explained to Gwyn Morgan:

Nick is interpreting the play in a special way. I don't think it was ever done in the way he's doing it here. He brought into rehearsals a kind of freedom, enthusiasm and clarity. He is putting a strong accent on the fact that we're dealing with a very vital phenomenon. His production will make it clear that it is this enormous vitality which is the value of what these people were doing in the ghetto. These people were murdered but their creativity survived. This kind of creativity must survive. It is stronger even than the brutal force which put an end to their lives. (67)

For a minority of critics the songs in *Ghetto*, and particularly the final reprise which is *not* indicated in David Lan's version, failed in this purpose. Sobol's use of song is predicated on rabbinical tradition, and the belief that when the worst of human dilemmas are faced, scepticism about the power of language alone is an impetus to

finding the most efficacious means of expressing the inexpressible. Sobol also remarked to Gwyn Morgan that the use of music

imposed itself as a form when I started to write the play... The Yiddish theatre started with a bizarre mixture; they used a stage to sing a song, crack a joke and then to open up a moral debate. I go even further backwards. It has to do with the tradition of the rabbi sitting with his hassids (religious students)... and someone asks a theological question. The rabbi answers by telling a story and when he reaches the heart of the question he breaks into a song. And all the hassids start singing with him as though to say the reasoning is only a step: when the argument becomes impotent, we need another means of expression, a more immediate contact with the problem. (68)

Whereas music was indicative of a psychic defence against reality, the evasion and repression of moral complexity for Halder in C. P. Taylor's *Good*, in *Ghetto* Sobol suggests the means through which moral dilemmas seemingly impervious to resolution through rational argument may best be approached, is song.

The overwhelming critical and popular acclaim Sobol's play received is indicated by the Olivier Award to *Ghetto* as the best foreign play of 1990 and the response of the first night audience, in Sobol's words 'the most emotional reaction the play got':

It was almost frightening. The audience applauded for a quarter of an hour, standing and shouting and calling for the actors something like 30 times to return to the stage. I felt it was a frank reaction, not a fake one, not just to do with feelings of guilt. It went beyond that. (69)

#### 9.4 Critical perspectives: the Israeli context

Prior to the publication of *Theatre in Israel* (1996) (70) the substantial English language publications readily available to the interested reader and offering a general survey of Hebrew theatre and drama numbered just two: Mendel Kohansky's *The Hebrew Theatre: Its First Fifty Years* (1969) and Glenda Abramson's *Modern Hebrew Drama* (1979). (71) Most of the post-production critical analysis of *Ghetto* in the English language has been made by Israeli scholars and critics, many associated with the Theatre Department of Tel Aviv University, others being resident scholars of universities in the US.

Joshua Sobol's *Ghetto* stands not solely in a highly complex national and cultural context, but also a quite specific, theatrical tradition of which it is most unlikely British audiences would have been aware, but which Glenda Abramson had devoted some considerable attention to in *Modern Hebrew Drama*:



Surprisingly few dramas have been written about the Nazi persecutions, the memory of which will always hang oppressively over Israeli consciousness. Those that finally dared to tackle this subject are with few exceptions excellent, being far removed in form and theme from the customary social melodramas. *Characteristic of them all is that they do not directly touch on the Second World War but discuss its influence, after it has ended, on people who are not necessarily direct victims*, both in Israel and the diaspora. However, the central figure or proposition in these dramas is the Holocaust itself; it is this which determines the behaviour and ultimate fate of the play's characters. [my italics] (72)

Abramson mentions six Hebrew language plays which are generally considered to constitute the Israeli dramatic context of *Ghetto: A New Reckoning (Hesbon Hadas)* by Nathan Shaham (The Cameri Theatre, 24 April 1954); *Lady of the Castle (Ba'alat ha'armon)* by Leah Goldberg (The Cameri Theatre, 19 September 1955); *Hannah Szenes* by Aharon Megged (The Habima National Theatre, 31 May 1958); *Children of the Shadow (Yalde hassel)* by Ben-Zion Tomer (The Habima National Theatre, 28 November 1962); *The Heir (Hayorres)* by Moshe Shamir (The Haifa Municipal Theatre, 19 November 1963); and *The Burning Season (Ha-ona Habbo'eret)* by Aharon Megged (The Habima National Theatre, 18 January 1967). (73)

Ilan Avisar indicates that these earlier plays hold four characteristics in common. To begin with, Avisar considers the plays share 'a palpable insensitivity to the historical tragedy'. (74) There appears to be a most visceral misapprehension of the scope and the systematic nature of the 'Final Solution', a gulf between event and comprehension as conveyed by the plays. This may be indicative of both the slow psychological process of integration of the event into Israeli consciousness, and the pace at which developed historical perspectives emerged, knowledge in public discourse tending to constellate around the two key trials of the period, the Kasztner trial of 1954 and the Eichmann trial of 1961.

A second characteristic common to these plays is that they approach the subject of the Holocaust, through and in relation to the contemporary situation in Israel at the time of the play's composition, though Avisar concedes that having 'set the action by contrasting the Holocaust with Israel, the playwrights do acknowledge that the conflict is not a clash between mutually exclusive and contradictory forces'. (75) The binary opposites Avisar has in mind include amongst others, Jew/Israeli; Poverty/Wealth; Passivity/Action; Assimilation/Visibility; Diaspora/State.

Avisar's third point is that 'the Israeli plays also demonstrate harsh criticism of the victims behaviour. They project the image of the European Jews killed like slaughtered sheep... The incident of collaboration is often mentioned... Survivors command little respect or compassion.' (76) The issue of collaboration is perhaps the most prominent, and suspicion about how survival was possible when so many others perished

permeates the plays. The question of collaboration was central to the Kasztner trial and, as a result chiefly of Hannah Arendt's book, to perceptions of the Eichmann trial.

Last, Avisar points out that the bridge between the European world of the Jews and the emergent state of Israel is made through 'the presence of a pathetic young woman who shares the values of both worlds and is torn in the middle during the unfolding of the dramatic crisis'. (77) This is true of Lena in Goldberg's *Lady of the Castle*.

In conclusion Avisar draws attention to a quite distinctive difference between the plays written in the 1950s and those which appeared in the 1960s. Of the earlier works he comments:

The Holocaust is conceived of as being a bad dream or a terrible experience which ought to evaporate or be exorcised in the new entity of Israel... All these plays express the belief that the horrors of the Holocaust may be overcome in the new existence in Israel through a transformation of spirit and values. Clearly, that is a symptom of the great sense of exaltation in the early years of the state, when the realisation of a two thousand-year-old dream ignited a belief in the visionary mission of the reborn Jewish homeland. (78)

Or in Gad Kaynar's words, what took place was a 'repudiation of the Holocaust by glorifying the Sabra reality convention of the young Israeli state' which fortified 'the defence mechanisms of the native-born Israelis in that period against any identification with the experience of the Holocaust, let alone any attempt to comprehend it'. (79)

In Avisar's opinion, the plays produced in the 1960s criticise the excesses of the previous decade. Rather than a reality that is barely acknowledged, the generation of the 1960s sought to make connections with the past from which the earlier generation had averted their gaze. They attempt to forge a mode of co-existence with the events of the Holocaust as the contours of the catastrophe become clearer, and this makes understanding more, rather than less complex.

Avisar considers that 'the plays of the 1960s undermine the nationalistic assurance of the preceding works... they find the concept of national identity itself to be confusing and problematic'. (80) With the loss of the impetus experienced by the 1948 generation, the state approaching its twentieth anniversary, and with greater historical distance from the Holocaust, Israel faced an entirely new situation in defining its identity. The Six Day War of 1967 would, however, redefine Israeli national identity both in relation to the Holocaust and the new 'threat of annihilation' (as Arab intentions were widely perceived to be, as Tom Segev has pointed out), in terms of the remythologisation of Israel as a formidable military power. (81)

The subject of the Holocaust was not entirely absent from the Israeli stage during the 1970s. The Habima National Theatre produced Ada Amichael-Yeivin's *Impure*

*Until Evening* in 1974 and Maria Foldes's (Maria Poldash) *The Journey* in 1979, both of which concern a survivor's return to Europe, (82) a dramatic focus which may signify the emerging desire of Israeli playwrights to acknowledge European Jewish roots and the exploration of identity *within* the context of the European catastrophe. The Jerusalem Khan Theatre staged Danny Horowitz's *Cherli Ka Cherli* in 1978, an oratorio for speaking voices and chorus and a parody on the *Massechet* (a unique Israeli theatrical form developed in the kibbutzim consisting of a mosaic of readings around a unitary theme at the celebration of a religious festival), which sought to explore Jewish identity drawing on *both* the Holocaust and the experiences of the sabra. (83) However, the next decisive phase representing a shift in the perceptions of Hebrew drama on the Holocaust is signalled by Sobol's *Ghetto* (The Haifa Municipal Theatre, 7 April 1984) and Motti Lerner's *Kasztner* (The Cameri Theatre, 11 July 1985). (84)

*Ghetto* was the first part of a triptych of plays on the Vilna ghetto examining its life and the dilemmas faced by its inhabitants from different but necessarily overlapping perspectives. The second part of the triptych, *Adam* received its première at The Habima National Theatre on 29 July 1989, shortly after the British première of *Ghetto*. To date the final part of the triptych, *Underground*, has not been produced in Israel but received an English language première in the US at the Yale Repertory Theatre in 1991. (85) Neither *Adam* nor *Underground* have been produced in Britain.

The first factor which Avisar suggested the earlier plays held in common reveals how pivotal Sobol's play was in the development of Holocaust drama in Israel: what is the attitude to the Holocaust implicit in *Ghetto*? Yael Feldman indicates the significant break with earlier plays:

*Ghetto* was... the first Israeli play to set its plot in the time and place of the Holocaust itself. As is well known, most earlier Israeli 'Holocaust plays' were set in *post*-World War II Europe or Israel, focusing on the relationship between survivors and 'natives'. As such, they dramatised a typical Israeli dilemma, namely, the conflict between 'Jew' and 'Israeli'... Sobol's was the first attempt to present on the stage the trauma itself...

I cannot think of another Israeli play in which the desire to debunk the myth of the ghetto partisans is so palpable. Here the object of admiration is not the heroism of the partisans (Abba Kovner and his followers in the case of the Vilna ghetto) but rather the vitality of the 'defenceless', 'the weak and the beaten', - in short, that Jew with whom the typical Israeli could not come to terms for such a long time.

From a psychological perspective, *Ghetto* exemplifies a change of paradigm in the Israeli attitude to the Holocaust victim - from an external 'other', one evoking shame and guilt and therefore defended against, to a subject in his own right, one whose experience can be internalised and even identified with. (86)

However, as Feldman points out, this leaves some unresolved questions: 'Why does Sobol confront the myth of the Vilna uprising head on, de-emphasising the underground activity and re-examining the tensions among the different survival policies operating "above" the ground? What in particular draws his attention to the story of the ghetto theatre? to the conflict between Gens and Kruk?' (87) The answers to these questions are intimately connected with issues in Israeli society in the mid 1980s, and to Avisar's second characteristic, the contemporary factors which shaped the representation of the Holocaust in *Ghetto*.

Freddie Rokem points out that by dating the triptych of *Ghetto, Adam and Underground* '1983-1988', 'Sobol has emphasised that it is also situated in the middle of the 1980s, between the war in Lebanon and the Intifada', and he considers that the triptych as a whole contains clear hints pointing at various analogies between the ghetto and the Israel of the day not least 'that the Jews have in different ways perpetuated some of the principles intended for their own destruction'. (88) That Sobol quite definitely intended the association to be made is evidenced, Rokem argues, not merely through the author's consciously chosen and particular dating of the triptych, but also through his employment of the narrative flashback technique which necessarily 'reinforces the idea of an historical continuum'. (89)

It is the figure of the narrator in the opening moments of the play which situates *Ghetto* most forcefully in the contemporary world. No longer is the survivor an individual for whom Israel represents a wilderness to be conquered: he is now a solitary raconteur attempting to grasp the swell and shrivel of memory, to recall with clarity the events which have receded with time. It is precisely 'the deepening awareness that in the near future there will be fewer and fewer people who actually remember the Holocaust, who have survived it and can tell about it' (90) represented by the narrator, that places *Ghetto* in the Israel of the 1980s. Gedalia Besser, the director of the Israeli première excluded this dramatic framing device from his production in 1984, while it was retained in The Royal National Theatre production. In their different national contexts both production decisions encouraged more exclusive focus on historical factors than contemporary issues. But other, equally significant omissions were made in both the Israeli and British premières.

Rokem explains (91) that stage directions in the first Hebrew version of *Ghetto* indicate that there is a large grey cloth concealing a shrine for the scrolls of the Torah and that this tent can accommodate all the members of the theatre group. Moreover, when the walls of Srulik's Tel Aviv apartment collapse, the first dramatic action observed is not the arrival of Kittel but the arrival of an unidentified man in torn underwear. He approaches the heap of clothes, and Rokem remarks, the stage

directions indicate that he 'picks up the uniform of a German officer... gets dressed and is transformed in front of the eyes of the audience, into the German officer, Kittel'. (92)

Rokem also points out that the stage directions make it quite clear that it was Sobol's initial conception that the Torah shrine should remain on stage throughout the performance and, in the last scene, become the hiding place for the actors just before they are executed:

The Torah is clearly a potential *deus ex machina*. It is also a direct reference to the visual language of the first act of the famous Vakhtangov production of *The Dybbuk* where the Torah shrine signifies divine presence actively influencing the lives of humans. In *Ghetto*, however, this divine 'place' has been deserted and become powerless: the power is now embodied in the figure of Kittel. But, as far as I know, the Torah shrine and the dressing of Kittel, taking the clothes from the heap have never been realised on stage in any of the many productions of *Ghetto*.

By letting Kittel put on his uniform in front of the spectators, thus perceiving him at least partly as one of the actors in the theatre group rather than only a Nazi officer, at the same time as he is perceived as a divine figure, is an ambiguity which, if it had been realised on stage... would have made it impossible to fix his identity unambiguously within the framework of the documentary sections describing the theatre in the ghetto... When he wrote his play, in 1984, however, Sobol probably wanted to show that anybody, including a Jew, can put on a uniform and become a Nazi. (93)

Arguably, these omissions were made for the sake of dramatic clarity and coherence but they also indicate Sobol's engagement with contemporary issues in his original conception as evidenced by the first published Israeli text, and possibly a drawing back from these issues when it came to the production. The net effect is clear. Excluding the dramatic device of the narrator consigns the events on stage to history distancing the experience from contemporary Israel and the memory of an individual survivor who is present in contemporary society. Excluding the scene where a Jewish actor takes the uniform of a German officer clearly separates historical reality from representation, German from Jewish identity and finally through the omission of any traditional symbol of divine presence or any suggestion of divine agency in the figure of Kittel, Sobol eschews any theological connotation of divine presence/absence in relation both to Jews and Germans, and to the Holocaust.

Despite reservations, (94) Feldman formulates Sobol's achievement in *Ghetto* in relation to the contemporary scene in Israel in the mid 1980s in the following fashion:

What [*Ghetto*]... brings home is the extent to which Israeli psychology is incomplete today without an empathic attitude to the experience of the Holocaust ... It attests to the fact that somewhat belatedly, but nevertheless in a tangible way, the illusion of a separate Hebraic-Israeli identity does not seem

tenable any more. Paradoxically, for the younger generation, it was not the immediate impact of the Holocaust that brought about this change, but rather the psychological readjustment to the traumatic events that began with the eve of the 1967 War and have not yet abated. (95)

This is precisely the point that Sobol was attempting to make through representing Gens as a 'type' of Israel. Gens and Israel have followed a similar trajectory: beginning with concern for the preservation of a spiritual and cultural heritage, the pressures of commercial interest, internal political division, political oppression and the development of nationalistic sentiment have led to a neglect of these founding principles in contemporary Israel. Survival remains on the political agenda for Israel and Sobol is warning that Israel must not find itself in the position where choices are made which involve sacrificing the values and the lives of countless individuals for the sake of national interest narrowly defined.

The third characteristic identified by Avisar through which *Ghetto's* radical departure can be better appreciated is the attitudes implicit in the play towards the victims of the Holocaust. A further effect of the new political and psychological constellation in which Israelis have recently found themselves, claims Feldman, was an enhancement of the 'deferred action (*nachtraglich*, in Freud's terminology)' of 'empathy toward the victim', 'in short, to the "Jew" within the "Israeli" of which Sobol's *Ghetto* and Motti Lerner's *Kasztner* give evidence'. (96) More specifically, remarks Rokem, 'the consciousness Sobol brings to the fore is an aspect of the Holocaust which has so far not been brought out so forcefully (at least not in public discourse in Israel)' which is that,

Jewish leaders to a limited extent became integrated into the Nazi system and even co-operated with it in order to survive. The point which Sobol emphasises, however, is that at the same time the Jewish leaders were trying to subvert this system in order to survive; they were combining their seeming 'co-operation' with sophisticated methods of deception. (97)

More surprising still is that these plays, according to Gad Kaynar,

do not merely try to understand but virtually vindicate the tragic figures of collaborators like Gens... and of Dr Rudolf Kasztner, the self-proclaimed leader of the Hungarian - Jewish community... These two individuals are presented as brave community leaders, who, by acceding to the wishes of their German masters, managed to save lives and impede the extermination process. (98)

Arguably one myth, the cowardly collaborator, could be said to be traded for a more recent myth, the daring undercover operators of the Israeli security forces and

intelligence services, as in the Entebbe rescue. In this sense people like Gens embody the 'smart Jew', a mythological figure who represents an entirely different interpretation of Jewish fate than had been presented on the London stage hitherto. Given the place of both the Kasztner and the Eichmann trials in Israeli perceptions of the Holocaust survivor, Sobol's emphases are thrown into much sharper relief.

This led to perhaps the most startling reversal in Lerner's *Kasztner* and Sobol's *Ghetto*:

They do not attempt to tone down the individual, three-dimensional, and humanising characterisation of the Nazi figures... This Nazi is an unbearable provocation to the rigid notions associated in the empirical and aesthetic reality convention of the Israeli with the impersonal and inhuman stock type of a storm trooper officer. The stereotype has been so ingrained in the collective consciousness that the potential shock is not alleviated by the recognition that this defamiliarization device renders Kittel more, rather than less, beastly. (99)

Finding the 'Jew' in the 'Israeli' and the 'Nazi' in the 'Jew', also went along with finding the ordinary individual in the Nazi monster, and the covert subversive (the 'smart' Jew) in the apparent collaborator which rendered the representation of the Holocaust in this generation of plays more complex, and which leads Kaynar to conclude that 'the main victim of the Holocaust as manifested in *Ghetto* is the addressed Israeli spectator', (100) a consequence consistent with the dramatic intentions behind the earlier British plays by Shaw, Barnes and Taylor.

Finally, Avisar drew attention to the particular role of a central character who is invariably a young woman in the plays of the 1950s and 1960s. Shosh Avigal (101) presents a broad summary of the role of women characters in Israeli plays in the period prior to the 1967 Six Day War:

Most women in Israeli plays are little more than figureheads. In the plays of the Palmach period, in the 1940s, the individual still served the values of the collective; even in these works, however, the individual thus subsumed was 'he'. When the plays concerned female figures, they tended to be historical Joan of Arc-like heroes such as Hanna Senesh or biblical figures... women who gave their lives on the battlefield of a male war [or are]... depicted... as virginal victims personified by the stage rendering of... Lena, the young Holocaust survivor in Lea Goldberg's *Lady of the Castle*. (102)

Moreover the greater prominence of women in plays of the late 1950s and 1960s is a change that Avigal views as merely cosmetic, since, in these plays too, the women characters 'tend to be primordial, disembodied forces of nature, symbols or allegories of power and dominance, like goddesses of revenge, prophetesses of doom, or abstract stereotypical Cassandras'. (103)

The changes which took place in the Israeli theatre in the 1980s also brought 'a change in the status of women in Israeli theater both as characters and as thematic motifs in dramas' (104) and while noting that Joshua Sobol's *The Palestinian Woman* was initially considered as illustrative of this trend, Avigal points out that 'for a liberated woman to function as an active protagonist in an Israeli play, she had to be a Palestinian, and she had to be created by a male playwright'. (105)

In Avigal's opinion Sobol's play did not represent a particularly significant break with the past because the chief protagonist of *The Palestinian Woman*, Samira, is 'less a fully developed character, [than] she is... a cipher for male desires, an oppressed man in disguise, used, as so often with female figures as a symbol of liberation - not the liberation of women but, rather, of the society, usually gendered male'. (106) Avigal summarises the role of Samira in the following terms: 'An independent, intelligent woman... placed in the center of the dramatic conflict. She takes full responsibility for her actions, which are the shaping actions of the plot. She is also a storyteller, and thus in charge of the play's point of view.' (107) But these descriptions of Samira could equally describe Hayyah in *Ghetto*.

Hayyah is the young woman of folk tales who, at the beginning of the narrative, occupies the lowest station in life. She is the 'despised' Jewish victim: a sheep being led to the slaughter - wrapped in a ragged blanket, her hair dishevelled, her bare feet filthy from wading through the mud. (*Gh.* p. 3) Hayyah tells the story of ghetto life both through the songs she sings and the circumstances in which they are sung, shaping the tension of the narrative through the precariousness of her fate at the hands of the 'wicked ruler', the capricious Kittel. However, by the end of the play she is transformed into the 'princess' who has found her resolve to lead the life she desires, which is, in terms of Holocaust drama, as a hero of the underground who defies the Nazis by deceiving Kittel and by 'disappearing' from the theatre troupe through the 'magical' intervention of Srulik. Ultimately she avoids the common fate of those who remain in the ghetto by her escape via the sewers. (*Gh.* p. 55)

In retaliation the 'wicked ruler' visits his wrath upon her friends to punish them for her wrongdoing, but by a stroke of pluck (*chutzpah*) her lover, her jester, her dybbuk survives to tell the tale of the survival of art.

Freddie Rokem has commented that:

It is possible to distinguish a mixture of at least three different genres or modes of representation in performances about the Holocaust appearing in the early 80s. The first-person testimony of the survivor is the rhetorical kernel on which these performances are based; documentary drama, either presenting a situation from the period of the Second World War, *in media res*, or showing the lot of the survivors in the present, with the more objective tools of theatrical realism,



and by dramatic and theatrical devices, which on the basis of the generic and structural distinctions made by Tzvetan Todorov could be termed 'fantastic'.

These fantastic elements are probed as a means to address and confront the issue of the incomprehensibility and the incommunicability of the Holocaust. One of the aims of these performances is to show, that what may seem too fantastic to be true has in fact taken place. This indirectly also shows that, paradoxically, some kind of aestheticisation of the narrative is necessary in order to tell what has really happened.

Testimonies of survival from the Holocaust, as they have been represented on stage and screen, communicate the sense that the victims in the ghettos and in the camps were living in a world controlled by laws unknown or incomprehensible to them. This in turn implies that their testimonies must also be viewed as expressions of the fantastic, a position which these performances in different ways also attempt to reproduce in their relationship to the spectator-participants. (108)

In so far as the conventional tropes of the folk-tale may be deemed to form part of Todorov's genre of the fantastic, *Ghetto* may accurately be described as a fairytale, as it manifests not only the testimonial and documentary modes of representation mentioned by Rokem but also that of the fantastic. It is these conventional tropes and mode of representation which give *Ghetto* its 'magical quality', its pantomime-like frisson which Rokem describes as the 'aestheticisation of the narrative', the probity of which was questioned by some British critics.

Like many childhood experiences of pantomime, the residue of horror and wonder created by the performance, in Rokem's words, what 'seems to be too fantastic to be true but has taken place' and of which, Hayyah is at the centre as the fairytale princess, is an ironic *romanticisation* of unimaginable horror: life and death suspended between the real and the imaginary. In both genre (the fantastic) and in its dramatic focus, the mythical survival of Hayyah, may be said to be, following Rokem and Avigal, predicated upon a predominantly male fantasy of the elusive 'fairytale' woman. Her 'magical' disappearance to the forest, to survive and fight injustice, is a fairytale ending, and while the liquidation of the theatre troupe, and later the ghetto, considerably reduces its potential for being a defining metaphor of Jewish fate, it nevertheless represents an entirely new departure in figuring Jewish fate during the Holocaust in plays seen hitherto on the London stage.

## 9.5 History and theatre, the Holocaust and humanity

In his introduction to The Royal National Theatre's programme to *Ghetto* Joshua Sobol wrote:

It all started one day, when a friend proposed that I write a short scenario about the activity of the Jewish youth-movements in Europe during the Second World War. I set out to read a few books dealing with the subject, and I was ready to dismiss the whole topic as 'over-exposed' when, all of a sudden, I found that slogan launched in the Vilna ghetto 'No theatre in a graveyard'. So there must have been a functioning theatre in the Vilna ghetto. A theatre that did, as the slogan testifies, what theatres should always do: defy reality, affront conventional taste, challenge hypocrisy. (109)

Above all Sobol wished to explore the potential of theatre as a means of articulating and embodying 'humane possibilities' as the Vilna ghetto faced the threat of liquidation. Sobol has achieved this in a fashion which resonates with classical theory, religious liturgical practice, and Marxist and Freudian insight: to remember through the repetitious danger of re-enactment; to learn of the power of theatre by doing theatre, an emphasis which many of the British critics recognised as central to Sobol's purposes. Indeed, he told *The Daily Telegraph* that he had principally sought 'to explore the importance of theatre in situations where everything is failing, where other institutions are bankrupt; where religion, law, political power and professional ethics don't hold any more and can't cope with the reality', adding after further reflection, 'theatre has a much nobler and more meaningful role than it is currently given in Western civilisation'. (110)

These reflections were echoed by Nicholas Hytner: 'More than any other phenomenon of this century, the Holocaust has shaped our consciousness of who we are, of what we are capable of doing and being; and the theatre deals in examining man's image of himself.' (111) Sobol's achievement rests upon his courage in engaging with the particularities of Nazi oppression and extermination in Lithuania during the Holocaust - the worst of what human beings are 'capable of being and doing'. In confronting that reality with perspectives on Jewish fate different from those represented in earlier Israeli plays, and from those previously seen on the London stage he renders the grain of resistance, however meagre, and also the practice of theatre, as *affirmations* of what humanity is 'capable of doing and being' in the face of overwhelming evil.

## 10 CONCLUSION

### 10.1 The rhetoric of dramatic representation and the Holocaust

James E. Young is undoubtedly correct to maintain that, 'to remove the Holocaust from the realm of the imagination... to place it off-limits' would be to 'risk excluding it altogether from public consciousness', a possible consequence that would be 'too high a price to pay for saving it from those who would abuse its memory in inequitable metaphor'. (1) But as Young himself acknowledges, the critical imperative remains not to leave the abuse of memory unchallenged, particularly when this abuse resorts to the readily recognisable strategies and tropes of anti-Semitism.

Theodor Adorno famously remarked in 'Cultural Criticism and Society' that criticism found itself confronted by 'the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric', (2) a view he neither withdrew from nor substantially modified. He did clarify the nature and consequences of this dialectic in a later essay entitled 'Commitment':

I do not want to soften my statement that it is barbaric to continue to write poetry after Auschwitz... But Hans Magnus Enzensberger's rejoinder also remains true, namely that literature must resist precisely this verdict, that is, be such that it does not surrender to cynicism merely by existing after Auschwitz. It is the situation of literature itself and not simply one's relation to it that is paradoxical. The abundance of real suffering permits no forgetting... But that suffering... also demands the continued existence of the very art it forbids.

Adorno also indicates the clear dangers:

The so-called artistic rendering of the naked physical pain of those who were beaten down with rifle butts contains, however distantly, the possibility that pleasure can be squeezed from it. The morality that forbids art to forget this for a second slides off into the abyss of its opposite... By this alone an injustice is done the victims, yet no act that avoided the victims could stand up to the demands of justice. (3)

The suffering experienced during the Third Reich, the implementation of 'the Final Solution of the Jewish question', and the suffering consequent upon these events do not allow the absence of memory. And yet the art demanded by the refusal to capitulate to the silence willed by the Nazis and their cynical and systematic murder of millions, involves precisely those risks: silence and incomprehension in face of the sheer dimensions of the catastrophe; of pleasure, even sadistic pleasure in the shaping of the representation of suffering, and the erasure of the victims themselves. It would

appear from the evidence of this thesis that these risks are the greater, when dramatic representations are authored by those who cannot be described as survivors of the Holocaust, which is the case with each of the authors and adaptors discussed here.

In attempting to meet the demands of their chosen subject a number of characteristics shared by the London productions considered here can be identified, and which constitute a response to those risks outlined by Adorno. Discussing a number of recent publications concerned with the Holocaust Omer Bartov makes an observation which provides a gloss upon at least one aspect of Adorno's dictum:

It is, in the true sense, a tale that signifies nothing. Indeed, it is precisely the meaninglessness of the event, made all the clearer now with the benefit of hindsight, the utter uselessness of it all, the total and complete emptiness in which this hell on earth unfolded, that leaves us breathless, bereft of the power of thought and imagination. And what is especially frightening is the impossibility of learning anything from the Holocaust, of drawing any lessons, of putting facts to any use. (4)

To counter the silence and the gratuitous aestheticisation of suffering, and to engage with the demands of justice, the productions considered here sought in some way to 'tell a tale' and 'to put the facts to use', intended, that is, to signify some meaning, to draw some 'lesson' from the Holocaust. That cynicism, caprice and unprecedented atrocity serve only to evoke the repeated resort to conventions and rhetorical tropes which, to a greater or lesser degree, are held in common by the productions discussed, is a significant indication of the failure of these dramatic representations to make any sense of the 'total and complete emptiness in which this hell on earth unfolded'.

The dramatic conventions, and the rhetorical use of tropes, where a trope is understood as 'the figurative mode of analogizing', that is, 'the displacing and distorting in language of an experience by means of comparison or assimilation to other experience', (5) and common to all these productions, include at least the following points:

First, the almost exclusive resort to some kind of stage realism. In *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank*, *Incident at Vichy* and Christopher Hampton's dramatic adaptation of George Steiner's novel, it is the rhetoric of melodramatic realism, derived from its eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European precursors. While melodrama privileges the existential *situation* of threat, predicament, and confinement, moving toward resolution and audience catharsis, the 'rhetoric of fact' in documentary drama privileges the *source* of that fact, bestowing authority upon the production through its reliance upon apparently dependable facts from 'indisputable' sources. Where elements of other traditions exist, music hall in *Laughter!*, symbolism in *Good*,

documentary and the fantastic in *Ghetto*, the dramatic devices are marginal to the prevailing stage aesthetic of realism.

Totally absent from the productions considered here are the well-established dramatic strategies frequently identified with the theatrical avant-garde. The reluctance to theatrical experimentation may indicate heightened consciousness of the risk of aestheticisation and the desire to preserve a relationship between dramatic representation and historical fact which is considered best served by stage realism. However, realism diminishes the catastrophe of the Holocaust by appearing to supply readily accessible meanings through recognisable conventions, namely, realistic stage design, mimetic language patterns, the narrative development of the 'well-made play' and deferment to hereditary and environmental factors for causal explanations.

No aesthetic approach can fail to diminish the Holocaust but choices can be made about aesthetic assumptions which complicate audience perceptions of dramatic reality and which the productions considered here largely failed to do, *The Man in the Glass Booth* and *Ghetto* merely hinting at the possibilities. 'The fantastic' is at the opposite end to 'documentary' on the continuum of stage realism, and the suggestion of 'fantastic' elements found in *The Man in the Glass Booth* (the play of mysterious forces, the manic identity of the protagonist, the macabre opulence of Goldman's office) and in *Laughter!* (the vaudeville duo in the gas chamber) are brought to the fore solely in Joshua Sobol's *Ghetto* through the numerous dramatic motifs which relate to the European folk tale tradition. C. Fred Alford has commented that the significant factor about fairytales is that they 'do *not* say that everything turns out okay' but rather give 'narrative form to an inchoate dread'. (6) Through the dramatic conventions of the 'fantastic' the unnameable horror of which Bartov writes, may be more effectively represented, imagined and contained than in the attempt at its mundane representation in stage realism of the melodramatic, documentary or naturalistic kind, and might be argued to be the more appropriate dramatic strategy.

Numerous dramatic narrative forms possess the potential to articulate and contain 'the unimaginable' but the plays considered in this thesis conspicuously fail to employ the dramatic strategies of the avant-garde, the absurdist, the ridiculous and many other theatrical traditions both to convey and contain the inchoate dread implicit in the Holocaust. While the Holocaust may be impervious to any attempt to construct meaning from the events, what is required from a dramatic production is that sense of overwhelming oppressiveness and loss that pulsates, for example, from the paintings of Rothko or Wiktor Tolkin's monument at Majdanek extermination camp, or the dramatised perspective of a Tadeusz Borowski or Jerzy Kosinski, through which the incongruent conveys the unreality of the unprecedented and the incomprehensible. Stage realism is insufficiently disturbing.

A second characteristic held in common by most productions discussed here is a far more explicit dramatic device exploited to give meaning to the suffering of the victims of the Holocaust. With the exceptions of *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank* and C. P. Taylor's *Good*, the ubiquitous trope of the courtroom trial makes an appearance in each of the plays. The representation of court procedure is central to *The Investigation*, *The Man in the Glass Booth* and *Perdition*. However, the questions of justice and judgement are present in *The Representative* through the *mise en scène* of the Pope's audience with Riccardo in a small throne room in the Papal Palace itself, enclosed as it is by the grey edifice of the gas chamber's walls, indicating that this dual location is the occasion of the divine judgement of man. In *Incident at Vichy* the hastily improvised detention centre is the locus of judgement of the detainees' Jewishness. *Laughter!* is predicated upon assumed knowledge of the Eichmann trial, of Hannah Arendt's 'banality of evil', the fastidiousness of desk murderers, and is a 'trial of strength' between rival departments in their competitive efforts to sustain their own conception of the 'Final Solution'.

Furthermore, the slow decline of the search party as they snake their way through the Brazilian jungle leads inexorably to the improvised tribunal before which A. H. mounts his defence, in *George Steiner's The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H. Ghetto* may be viewed in its entirety as the trial of the ghetto theatre troupe, in which numerous dramatic symbols and episodes suggest judicial categories of thought and procedure, the chief examples being the repayment of the 'stolen' beans and the several improvisations of trial scenes.

The rhetoric of this dramatic trope resides in the suggestion that justice in these circumstances is achievable, that it is being pursued, and that the audience is either witnessing or participating in a due process, when *not one* of these claims stand critical scrutiny. Moreover, the rhetoric resides in the suggestion that the drama is something other than the pursuit of the dramatist's preconceived object lesson, that it is 'a fair trial'.

Once again *Ghetto* is, in this respect, closest to a radical approach to the trope, by presenting parodies of judicial procedure which effectively highlight the shortcomings of the device. As Robert Skloot comments:

In the post-Shoah world, other means must be found to account for the loss of the victims and the triumph of their tormentors than the simple appeal to simple justice. Plays that turn the trope on its ear in order to show the folly of the form may be the way to do this. (7)

Whether explicitly set in a courtroom or not, judicial overtones are pre-eminent. Hochhuth indicts the Pope, perhaps more pertinently God, in the *inhuman* court of

Auschwitz-Birkenau; Weiss indicts market economics and consumer society, and Miller the propensity to evasion, denial and a misplaced trust in the conventional continuities of European civilisation, namely, decency, honour, thought and romantic love. Shaw indicts the hypocrisy of groups who view themselves differently, morally superior to the rest of humanity; Barnes the presumed efficacy of laughter and the audience's malleability; and, Taylor, human foible and strident ambition, and the corrosive tyranny of both. Allen indicts those he deems to have collaborated with the Nazis in occupied Hungary, the ideology of Zionism and Israeli policy toward the Palestinians in the early 1980s, as does Joshua Sobol in respect of the latter, along with Israeli attitudes to Holocaust survivors who could claim no honourable participation in rebellion or resistance, and who had been made to feel only shame for their survival. Steiner indicts history and humanity for a refusal to recognise the thrice repeated divine imperative to justice and righteousness, suggesting the inevitable consequent judgement of the *Angel of Hell*.

All those indicted are considered in some way to be implicated in the murderous events of the Holocaust. But in this respect the simple equation innocent victim/guilty perpetrator is fissured by the proposition of, on the one hand, the 'guilty' victim, the (the Jew as Nazi), and on the other, the 'innocent' agent, the Auschwitz guard, or even Hitler as a man of his unfortunate generation (the Nazi as Jew). The innocent victim/guilty perpetrator dichotomy is obliterated by the propositions of *universal* guilt, murderous complicity, evasive laughter, and, ultimately, divine agency within catastrophic evil.

While Hampton's adaptation of Steiner's novel is the specific target of Skloot's comments, they are relevant to all the plays considered here:

The form of the plays and their presentation are intended to comment on the issue of justice, its nature and its possibility. But the images they convey vary widely from one to another, and the conclusions they reach... require profound reassessments of our understanding of history, law and the theatre.

Older concerns with agency and responsibility which can be adjusted to ideologies of liberal humanism, neo-classicism or traditional political conservatism are unavailing here... Because the crime is without precedent, the language without conviction and the destruction without repair, remedies like 'simple justice' are as useless as the traditional theatre, though that may be the only place remaining to advance - with decreasing credibility or efficacy - images and explanations for events that leave only the irreparable and the opaque as their legacy. (8)

Skloot's final remarks about the impermeability of the Holocaust echo Bartov's observations. While the trope of the trial may have been a favoured dramatic solution to the difficulties in approaching the opacity of the Holocaust, to provide a frame in

which the most pressing questions could be formulated, the evidence presented here suggests that both the idea of 'simple justice' and the procedural mechanism to establish it, have been undermined by competing conceptions of innocence and guilt and doubts about the competence of any court of law to establish justice in institutional practice. The promise of the trope of the trial, of incisive forensic analysis, of the pursuit of truth, of the accumulation of evidence and of equitable judgement - that is, at the very least, of presenting legal meaning through establishing criminal culpability and guilt or innocence of crimes - proves illusory.

If the attempt to establish guilt has become problematic, the question of gaining justice is the more so. If guilt is universally shared and if these are the indictments as read, to whom can the appeal for justice be made?

A third characteristic common to most of the plays discussed is the trope of substitutionary mediation. Anne Frank is the betrayed Christ-figure, who at the end of Goodrich and Hackett's adaptation speaks from beyond the grave about her unwavering faith in the goodness of humankind. Riccardo (and not the Pope) enters inside the vicious heart of the concentrationary universe as the faithful representative of Christ bearing his yellow badge in order to do battle with the Nazis and with God. Like the Protestant Gerstein, he is unsuccessful, and the reality of Auschwitz is ultimately left as an imponderable evil, though Riccardo's sacrifice can easily be mistaken for a highly sentimental dramatic atonement for the sins of the *Pope*.

In Peter Weiss's play, neither the unrecoverable Auschwitz nor the historical Auschwitz Trial but rather an invented dramatic reality is predicated upon Christian poetics, allegory and dramatic convention: Dante's *Divine Comedy* and the medieval station dramas. In his counter-dramatic narrative Weiss presents not a person but an ideology in a redemptive role, an ideological mediation which reveals hidden meanings as 'sure' as any religious claim to revealed truth. Von Berg, the Catholic liberal aristocrat, sacrifices himself for the sake of Leduc in Arthur Miller's play, and Goldman, in a self-conscious adoption of redemptive identification, attempts mediation between the German and Jewish race in Robert Shaw's. In Cecil Taylor's *Good, Maurice*, the pale ineffectual Jew, is the sacrificial victim on the altar of Halder's ambitions, and he enables Halder finally to hear the music of the heavens: the camp orchestra at Auschwitz.

In *Perdition* Jim Allen's anti-Semitic rhetoric makes Dr Yaron, a Zionist, the scapegoat/betrayer whose conspiracy of self-loathing/self-sacrifice issues in the occasion of his own trial, the means through which he hopes to come to terms with his own past and expose the 'facts' about the events in Hungary in the summer of 1944. Under cross-examination, Yaron, as chief witness to those events, reveals the 'truth' by which he is also condemned. His self-incrimination is, nevertheless, a conspiracy of



'love' for the Jewish people, who were most 'callously betrayed' by Yaron's own people, the Zionists.

In Sobol's *Ghetto* the mediator is none other than a ventriloquist's dummy, who, as agent and victim, redeems both Hayyah and Srulik, so that the story of redemption through art/theatre may continue to be told. Perhaps most audacious is George Steiner's suggestion that A. H. is the counter-Messiah whose dark words of destruction signify an absence with which the whole of humanity must now contend in the work of redemption, the implication being that the Holocaust and the deeds of A. H. are the 'happy fault' which make redemption possible.

Such schemes depend upon the demonisation of one group, the persecutors, the Nazis, but following the point made earlier, now enlarged to include other agencies such as the Roman Catholic Church, capitalism, Zionism or indeed the whole of humanity, and the characterisation of the other group, as the 'lost souls', 'the victims', conventionally, but no longer solely identified with the Jews. In traditional Christian theology the work of redemption is wrought through the figure of Christ, who combining divine and human nature in his own person makes participation in the divine life possible through the mediation of his own efficacious suffering, in life and death.

The chief failing of the plays discussed here is the impossibility of presenting either sound arguments, or cogent dramatic action and metaphor for the analogies they attempt to draw, specifically the efficacy of the designated representative's mediation on behalf of the victims, which must have, not merely particular effect, but resonate with the necessity of universal efficacy. However, the inescapable and unfortunate implications are that the innocent, whoever they may be, are themselves represented as equally guilty, and the guilty as equally innocent by virtue of the levelling universalisation of moral culpability. The mediator is represented as the effective agent of change in the victims' predicament, when in fact such a claim is emptied of any promise and its potential efficacy deflected when it is no longer clear to whom the description 'victim' may justly be ascribed.

The plays cannot sustain any coherent meaning under the strain of their impossible claims. How does Anne Frank's belief in the goodness of human nature rehabilitate her own life, the lives of six million Jews, and the lives lost by countless other nations who have had to suffer at one time or another? How might Marxist ideology mediate meaning to the death of nearly two hundred and fifty million victims of the Great Patriotic War, even if it were accepted they were all victims of fascism? What can be made of the melodramatic sentiments of gratitude and relief implicit in Arthur Miller's drama, and of the emotional succour offered in the representation of one life for a life when 'the odds' are so uneven in respect of the total number of victims? To reduce the crime to arithmetic is in itself a demeaning exercise.

Shaw provides a glimpse of 'unaccommodated man', helpless in his endeavour at mediation, as the final vision of *The Man in the Glass Booth*. But the closing scene of the play rather than a profound dramatic metaphor of the opacity of the Holocaust (Goldman is encased in the glass booth) is indicative of the dramatic conceit at the heart of the play, the inequity and implausibility of the metaphor as dramatic device. How could Goldman's action be efficacious? To encourage Germans to recognise 'the Jew' in themselves, and the Jews to recognise 'the Nazi' in themselves? In relation to Jim Allen's *Perdition*, in what sense can Dr Yaron's self-inflicted defeat in the witness box represent justice and new life, the redemption of history and of the murdered hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jewry?

Srulik's dummy intercedes on behalf of Hayyah and the theatre troupe and is an appealing symbol for the mediating power of (theatrical) art, but in what sense can art and culture be claimed to be redemptive, and redemptive of the lives lost in the Holocaust when the fate of the Vilna ghetto indicated an entirely different conclusion? However resonant the appeal to efficacious substitution may at first appear, (overlooking for a moment the equation of victim with the *guilty* 'lost soul') the trope is empty of any significance over and above its apparent rhetorical force, and leaves the dramatic representations bereft of any significant achievement in finding appropriate metaphors in which the shadow of meaning may be glimpsed in the meaningless chaos of the Nazi genocide.

## 10.2 The failure to dramatise the particularity of Jewish fate

Adorno observes that 'no art that avoided the victims could stand up to the demands of justice', (9) but the central argument of this thesis has been that the plays seen in production on the London stage hold a significant feature in common; they all obscure or erase the cardinal fact that Jews were the chief victims of Nazi racial policy and that, the Nazi genocide was, in the terminology of its perpetrators, the pursuit of 'the Final Solution of the *Jewish* question in Europe'. Rather than acknowledge this reality the productions seen on the London stage actively seek to avoid such an identification of the victims.

The shape given in the productions to the memory of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust includes an anodyne Anne Frank universalised into an all-American adolescent, full of optimism about the irreducible goodness of human nature, but who, as Sander Gilman points out, bears no semantic marker by which her Jewish identity may be perceived, subsumed as it is by stage English and a Hollywood style of stage realism. (10) It was earlier suggested that the most significant casualty of Rolf Hochhuth's play *The Representative* was the reputation of Pope Pius XII. Rather than

acknowledge the failure of the institutional response of the Roman Catholic Church, including that of Pius himself, Cardinal Montini on the very afternoon of his election as Pope Paul VI spoke not in penitential terms about the Church's vacillation, but in remonstrance at the tarnishing of Pius XII's reputation in Hochhuth's play, which suggests that defending the personal piety of the Pope was more important than concern to establish the truth about events which had caused *untold* millions to suffer. In London, the absence of the question of Jewish fate was reinforced in Hochhuth's play by the excision of scenes which specifically represented the predicament of Italian Jewish families, substituting their stage presence with newsreel images familiar to British audiences.

James E. Young notes that Weiss's play is entirely *judenfrei*, and the victims of the Holocaust are principally those decent Germans who, caught up in the unfortunate times in which they lived, found themselves as SS guards at Auschwitz-Birkenau, and those Soviet soldiers who, as victims of fascism, found themselves exploited by their capitalist masters.

The detainees in Arthur Miller's *Incident at Vichy* are, through finely calibrated dramatic revelations, shown to be unambiguously Jewish; yet, the characters' identities are more closely associated with the stilted identification of particular points of view which Miller is seeking one by one to demolish. This strategy is not 'the Jew as metaphor' for which there might be justification, but rather 'metaphor as Jew'. The emphasis falls upon the metaphoric force of each character's expression of the fundamental universal human propensity of denial and evasion through trust in outmoded concepts, such as honour and love, rather than on the historical particularities of Vichy's collaborative policy in the implementation of the 'Final Solution' in France. A staggering aversion of Miller's dramatic gaze from the subject of 'free France' and the Holocaust, it is an inscription of the very denial and evasion of which *Incident at Vichy* is ostensibly about. Moreover, the 'honoured' victim of the play is the Catholic liberal aristocrat Von Berg, who hands his pass to freedom to the Jew Leduc.

Shaw's *The Man in the Glass Booth* introduces the topos of the Jew as Nazi complete with references to Israeli policy and the racialist state of South Africa, the identities of victim and perpetrator being elided in the merged identity of Arthur Goldman/Adolf Karl Dorff. In the dénouement, Dorff/Goldman confesses to acts of atrocity, and in so doing identifies himself with the 'humanity' of his persecutors. The identification at the centre of Shaw's dramatic conceit of mediation through identification, blurs and fails to address in any meaningful way the central reality of the Holocaust: 'Germans (and others) killed millions of Jews (and others) *and not the other way round.*' (11)

In Peter Barnes's *Laughter!* the absence of the Jews is the unremitting assumption upon which the dramatic action is predicated and Barnes's skill is to have rendered Jewish presence both through the abstract and oblique reference of Nazi bureaucracy and through the biting anti-Semitic insults of the Ernst Röhm look-alike, Gottleb, in a parodistically excessive rendition of each discourse.

Nevertheless it is difficult for Barnes to escape entirely the charge that the chief victims are the bureaucrats, despite the representation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, and the comic rendition of the vaudeville duo in the gas chamber. That Barnes's play also assumes knowledge of the topos of 'the banality of evil' makes some remarks of Robert Skloot on the effect of the Eichmann trial apposite in this context:

With the world as the audience, the drama proceeded to a final curtain but with the twist that provided Arendt's neo-classical text with its ironic sting: the trial presented not Aeschylus' *Orestes* defending his right and obligation to murder on behalf of the threatened *polis*, but Euripides' *Orestes*, weak and craven, simultaneously self-obsessed and distracted with a fate too big for him, like an oversized shabby coat. In this view, Eichmann was the protagonist as antihero... the Nazi as victim. The character representing victimised evil is... startling because it comes to us contradicting historically validated positions of power and authority. These stage Nazis become yet more provocative and outrageous when, in the hands of postmodern playwrights or historical revisionists, the import of their heinous careers is detached from moral assessment and the meaning of their murderous actions is advanced as negotiable. (12)

Cranach's department as the antiheroes of Barnes's play become the 'victims' of Gottleb's 'anti-Semitism' as he is intent on facing these lily-livered bureaucrats with the very realities they refuse to acknowledge in the bureaucratese they use, and to which they resort in their own defence. Consistent with his Brechtian dramaturgy, Barnes reinforces his message of the banal everyman as antihero by making the audience over in Eichmann's image: the lily-livered who prefer laughter rather than face the realities of persecution and extermination.

Barnes's dramatic strategy is not solely confined to presenting the Nazi as victim, but is broadened to present the audience as a collective 'Nazi as victim'. (13) Jewish fate is represented through Gottleb's extended description of the process of extermination, in the scenes representing the work of the *Sonderkommando*, and through the vaudeville duo Bimko and Bieberstein. Each representation challenges the contours of audience identification with the *Nazi* as victim, and confronts the audience unambiguously with Jewish fate. However, critical complaint about the unadorned character of these representations could be indicative of reluctance to face the harsh realities of that fate, and also imply the audience is victim of the dramatic devices employed by Barnes. Likewise, Barnes's remark, 'On the good nights no one laughed',

indicates that in his view audience enjoyment was the sure sign of 'the banality of evil': the audience as Nazi. The evasion of reality, and not the *subversion* of authority's desire for bureaucratic perfection is Barnes's target, but the danger of his strategy is that the audience become absorbed by their own sense of having been cast as the 'Nazi victim' intent on evading, rather than soberly addressing, the realities of Jewish fate.

In the following four plays, the historical fate of Jews during the Holocaust is explicitly acknowledged. In Cecil Taylor's *Good*, representing as it does a chronological time span of some nine years, the Nazi measures taken, first in discrimination of, and later for the extermination of the Jews, are reflected in Halder's steady progress through the party echelons, and his increasing alienation from his Jewish psychiatrist friend, Maurice, and through the latter's inexorable and increasingly desperate marginalisation, leading to his isolation and elimination. In Hampton's adaptation, Jewish fate is chiefly represented in the litanies of remembrance intoned across the airwaves by Emmanuel Lieber, but also in the speech of A. H. In *Perdition*, the circumstances surrounding the deportation of Hungarian Jewry between 14 May and 7 July 1944 provide the historical basis for the presentation of a highly tendentious and anti-Semitic interpretation of those events. Finally, Sobol's *Ghetto* explicitly concerns the Vilna ghetto and the brief existence of its theatre troupe.

However, in each of these plays the harsh realities of Jewish fate is attenuated by the dramatic strategies and chosen emphases of each playwright. The dangers inherent in Cecil Taylor's treatment of the commonly posed question, 'How did apparently ordinary decent Germans become Nazi monsters?', and Hannah Arendt's answer, that they were monstrous in their ordinariness, are addressed by Bernard F. Dukore when he writes of the relationship between Halder and Maurice through which Taylor expresses the contrasting fortunes of the (not-so) 'ordinary' German and the (not-so) 'ordinary' Jew:

Halder calls Maurice 'my closest friend' and tells the audience, 'My only friend'. Chiefly because Maurice agrees, one takes Halder's word for the friendship. Consequently, what emerges is its deterioration as Halder undergoes pressures to write, lecture and act against Jews. Such pressures generate sympathy for Halder's faltering friendship. (14)

This leads Dukore to the general conclusion that, 'in portraying the dilemma of a man with whom he would have audiences identify, a person like themselves, Taylor makes him so sympathetic that he is forgiven and the audience absolved.' (15) In short, Halder is the chief example of the Nazi victim. He is a victim not solely due the untimeliness of his birth and the political realities of the Hitler years, he is a victim by *virtue* of his own

good nature, his own idealism. It is Halder's desire to do well, and to please, which is his undoing, and which justifies Taylor's full title of his play: *Good. A Tragedy*.

Dukore's judgement can hardly be gainsaid and the fact that Taylor's rendering of Halder was considered a 'success' is perhaps best indicated by the almost total absence of critical comment on the character of Maurice. The not so ordinary good German usurps the Jewish victim Maurice from critical imagination, and in this sense Taylor's play may stand as the most complete aestheticisation of the Nazi extermination of the Jews in the productions considered here. Maurice slips from mind, like smoke from a chimney, and the fact that the character of Halder was considered a highly effective dramatic achievement is an indication of the dramatic success which Dukore, amongst others, considers to be dangerous, as it fails to provide the audience opportunity for critical reflection.

On the other hand, it must be said that Taylor's portrait ironises Halder's meteoric rise through the party ranks and that there is little basis to the claim that his progress is seen as other than a descent into the abyss. Nevertheless, Halder's psychic refuge in melody and Maurice's humour combine to diffuse the reality of Jewish suffering to the extent that Maurice's fate could be overlooked by the majority of critics.

Similar objections were made to Sobol's *Ghetto*, the first Hebrew play concerned with the subject of the Holocaust to situate the dramatic action during the period of the 'Final Solution'. Sobol had quite specific objectives. He wanted to challenge the received wisdom /prejudice in Israeli society about survivors who, unable to claim participation in uprisings or partisan opposition, were frequently assumed to have collaborated to some degree, forcing such individuals to conceal the 'shame' of their survival. Sobol also wished to challenge the broadly held view of Gens as a collaborator, to vivify the impossible moral dilemmas he faced, and to challenge nationalist sentiment by way of a critique of Israeli policy toward the Palestinians in the early 1980s, using the analogy of prevailing conditions in the Vilna ghetto and the position of the collaborator. Finally, Sobol also sought to challenge the recurrent characterisation of Jewish fate as the 'inevitable' inclination to passivity and victimhood through the representation of a courageous example of Jewish defiance, and the affirmation of the vital culture by which Jews live and thrive.

Through his dextrous use of a great variety of dramatic devices, Sobol challenges the efficacy of a number of the conventions and tropes discussed earlier, principally stage realism and the courtroom trial. But in framing his representation in the recognisable tropes of the folk tale, he runs the risk of aestheticising Jewish fate through the dream-like quality which these tropes impart to the production. These highly effective dramatic strategies and devices are in danger of reducing the horror of the ghetto to manageable proportion with the objective that the last word should go to

the survival of theatrical art rather than to atrocity. Sobol wished chiefly to establish the continuity and durability of art contra the cultural pessimists and the perpetrators of atrocity, that meaning ultimately conquers the meaningless chaos of the Holocaust. But little is conveyed of the slow death by attrition, of deprivation and disease through hunger, of the control of the bread supply, of the need for permits, and the identification of those 'surplus to requirements'.

Nevertheless, in attempting to represent on stage something of the oppression, violence, and the constant threat of death within the Vilna ghetto, Sobol had little choice but to discover the dramatic strategies by which this could be achieved. Most critics agreed that he had succeeded with exceptional skill and to magnificent, charming effect, precisely the danger to which a number of critics drew attention. Through the necessary aestheticisation of atrocity Sobol diminishes Jewish fate, most discordantly represented when, after their liquidation, a revived cast leap to their feet to sing the final 'number' of the 'show' to represent the defiance of atrocity, such is the redemptive power of art!

Christopher Hampton's adaptation, *George Steiner's The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.*, and Jim Allen's *Perdition* hold one surprising factor in common: both plays depend upon anti-Semitism for their rhetorical impact, and for this reason both plays caused considerable public controversy.

The difference between the two plays is that Hampton's anti-Semitic rhetoric stems entirely from Steiner's theoretical writings and is placed in the mouth of the unrepentant Hitler in his defence of his career as Führer of the Third Reich, and his meta-historical justification of his role in history. Allen's rhetoric is altogether different in tone. *Perdition* targets the ideology of Zionism and the policies of Israel towards the Palestinians in the early 1980s, projected with callous disregard for historical accuracy and with breathtaking condescension into his interpretation of the Nazi deportation of Hungarian Jewry in the summer of 1944.

While Allen persistently claimed that *Perdition* was an attack on Zionism and not anti-Semitic, both the earlier versions and the published play provide evidence to the contrary. In its first versions the text was laced with stock-in-trade anti-Semitic caricatures, images and metaphors, many of which remain in the published text, and have clear associations with the assumptions and language of Christian anti-Semitic discourse. But above all, Allen's text conveys such an indelible resonance of sadism that the play can be justly described as a dramatic example of 'blaming the victim', its force the *exact opposite* of the author's stated intent: to write a pro-Jewish play.

Allen's studied neglect of the cardinal feature of the Nazi occupation of Hungary, the alacrity with which Eichmann and others implemented the policy of deportation with the collaboration of the Hungarian militia, and his exclusive focus on specific

historical episodes concerning Israel Kasztner, grossly misrepresented through his uncritical appropriation of the party-political dynamics of Kasztner's post-war trial in Israel, provide the perspectives through which Allen indicts Zionism.

Steiner's rhetoric lacks Allen's sadism because of personal scruple. Nevertheless, it may be described justly as anti-Semitic because in his attempt to offer metaphysical reflections and historical interpretation to justify his role in history, A. H. appropriates and arrogates to his own person, ontological claims, theological interpretations and historical precedents which are conventionally associated with Jewish tradition and history. A. H. seeks to usurp entirely the Jews from history, thus completing the task he had begun in Europe 1933-1945, while simultaneously effacing his own role in that total erasure of the Jews from historical memory, just as he had attempted to do earlier in relation to his role in the implementation of the 'Final Solution'.

Because of the revisionism and anti-Semitic intent of A. H.'s speech critics continue to attempt to distance Steiner from his fictional creation. But as has been argued at length, A. H.'s theses are firmly based in Steiner's own speculative reasoning. No postmodern strategy which claims A. H. as a text to be interpreted variously can successfully disassociate Steiner's published views from those he has granted A. H. in the final speech of the play. They represent the most sustained rhetorical attempt in English dramatic literature to probe the meaning of the Holocaust, to go beyond the discourse of the rational disciplines to present a level of reasoning which, in Steiner's view at least, engages with the event of the Holocaust in terms appropriate to its nature, which is to say, an event which transcends the range of meanings possible within the rational disciplines of political science, economic theory, sociology, psychology and historiography, to name but the most obvious fields of analysis.

In this sense the fate of the Jews appears to be displaced from the traditions of the faithful and appropriated in a counter-narrative of the arch murderer and which represents Steiner's speculative engagement with the spiritual and cultural forces which are the dark shadows cast by divine absence. As such they represent Steiner's attempt to interpret the fate of European Jewry within the compass of Being, rather than removed from within that reality by murderous human agency.

Steiner's attempt to rehabilitate mythological and metaphysical categories of speculative thought to a public, dramatic context such as had existed in Athens, and to provoke a rigorous engagement with the insoluble difficulties in approaching an understanding of Jewish fate during the Holocaust, fail largely because his challenge is insufficiently dissolved in the autonomous dramatic action of the play. Steiner himself becomes the focus both of the play and the ensuing controversy, and his disingenuous claim that A. H.'s speech has no textual refutation to allow the audience optimum



freedom of response, looks like a disguised excuse for dramatic failures which serve to place Steiner himself at centre stage (moving his characters like pieces on the chessboard), and allowing himself the final say. In this sense the very object of Steiner's efforts, an engagement with the meaning of the fate of European Jewry, is obscured, by the controlling persona of Steiner himself, in a drama that mimics the aesthetic assumptions and dynamics of a Nuremberg rally. (16) The play is less about the fate of the Jews than an expression of the faith of Steiner in his own views of the historico-theological explanation of the Holocaust, an interpretation which many find deeply unacceptable precisely because it relies upon a style of mythologising upon which anti-Semitism is itself predicated.

### 10.3 Sadism and the dramatic positioning of the audience

Complex patterns of interaction exist between text and reader, and between the performance text and the audience, and a basic feature of these dynamics in each of the productions considered here is quite clearly sadism. C. Fred Alford comments:

In recent years... some analysts have been applying the term 'sadism' to the pleasure obtained from hurting others, regardless of whether sexual excitement occurs. What distinguishes sadism from aggression is not the sexualisation of domination and destruction but the sadists intense identification with his victim. *Sadism is the form that aggression takes when it is fleeing its doom, a formulation that fits Freud's account of the origins of sadism in the *Todestrieb*.*

Sadism is the joy of avoiding victimhood, though that puts it too passively. Sadism is the joy of having taken control of the experience of victimhood by inflicting it upon another. (17)

Alford clarifies the concept by pointing out that the *significant* psychological component is the intense identification experienced, so that the more accurate description is indeed sado-masochism. Alford explains that this implies that sado-masochism is a 'compromise between merging and separation', (18) that it involves both

fusion, and confusion: identification with the victim's suffering so profound that the victim must be destroyed in order to protect the sadist's separate existence.

A violent separation is [therefore] necessary... damaging the other so as to know who really had the power, who really contains the doom, and who's in charge. The other's suffering is evidence of that, the position of victimiser the only position in which one's separateness can be known.

In the sadistic act, the sadist seals his dread in the body of the victim, the victim becomes coffin, the victim's suffering the sadist's testament to his will to survive his pain. (19)

The dramatist's preoccupation with oppression and atrocity, capricious and calculated sadism, callous and cynical disregard for basic human values and the overwhelming reality of the routine extermination of millions precipitates anxiety about his own finitude and potential victimisation, but more significantly places the dramatist in a position analogous to the persecutor: viewing the suffering and fate of others dispassionately. While not the literal persecutor of the victims, the playwright risks the recapitulation of the dynamics between persecutor and victim, the merging and separation, fusion and confusion, of which Alford writes in his analysis of sado-masochism. Each of the plays considered here provides evidence to some degree of the narrative expression of this dynamic. That is to say that the chief ways in which Jewish suffering has either been significantly attenuated or completely erased (as detailed in the previous section) is the literary expression, the analogy of the sadistic elimination of the Jews, the final solution of the Jewish question in the dramatic narrative and theatrical production. In short, the playwright desires to 'relieve' Jewish victims of their suffering, not in the sense of easing pain, but of robbing them of the reality, and subsequent generations of the memory, of the historical events, a denial of another's experience, which is an expression of the desire not to engage with, but to be rid of, Jewish suffering.

However, the audiences are also implicated in the sado-masochistic dynamic in a fashion consistent with the broad aesthetic commitment of the production and the positioning of the audience implicit within each production's basic aesthetic.

The productions were described earlier as varieties of stage realism, some closer to the aesthetic of nineteenth-century naturalism than others. Through the melodramatic elements in the production of *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank* and *Incident at Vichy* the audience, on the one hand, vicariously shares in the 'on stage' terror of confinement and intimidation, but is, on the other hand secure in the knowledge that the sado-masochistic impulse is, to a greater rather than a lesser degree, contained on stage through the conventions of realism. The audience is privy to 'a slice of life' yet, separate from it.

The audience also identifies with the victims as metaphors of human goodness as in the case of the idealisation of Anne Frank or the human propensity to evasion and denial as in the case of *Incident at Vichy*, but the same dynamics of merging/separation, fusion/confusion exist. In melodrama the author is inviting his audience to share in the mildly sadistic frisson of the conventional dramatic 'type' and the 'inevitable' dramatic dénouement, both of which frequently follow well worn dramatic conventions.

The psychological dynamics of this naturalistic aesthetic is complicated when the playwright makes them explicit by embodying them in one or more of the plays

characters. The ambivalence between identification and separation is clearly present in *The Man in the Glass Booth* where the character 'Arthur Goldman/Adolf Karl Dorff' does not possess a settled identity, appears to represent victim and persecutor, and is later subject to role reversal once again. The same may also be true of Gens in *Ghetto*, where, as a Jewish collaborator, his identity is not easily defined as victim or persecutor.

Indeed in the Israeli and US productions of *Ghetto* Gens is linked with the 'identification-with-the-aggressor' syndrome in a speech by Dr. Paul (omitted from David Lan's version), presumably suggesting that Gens has a sado-masochistic relationship to his fellow Jewish victims. This interpretation is supported by his ambiguous role in the ghetto, first as the chief of police, and subsequently as sole leader of the ghetto, in which respects *Ghetto* follows the historical record.

Rejecting the tenets of nineteenth-century naturalism, documentary realism and Brechtian dramaturgy on the other hand, through the epiphany they manufacture, seek to position the audience in direct participatory relationship in the events represented. In these aesthetic theories the playwright's sadism is not contained safely on stage but is projected into the audience through the audience's incorporation into the dramatic action of the play. It is in evidence in courtroom dramas where the audience themselves constitutes the 'off-stage' jury, or when, as in *The Man in the Glass Booth*, a member of the cast participates in the dramatic action from a position in the audience; or again when the theatrical forms employed, such as musical hall or other popular genres, imply a less formal division between performer and spectator. In fact any theatrical device which includes the audience as an integral part of the events on stage represents a modification of the aesthetic basis of naturalism.

In this sense the sado-masochism of the playwright is no longer safely 'contained' by the 'fourth wall'. The audience may become the object of the playwright's sadism (merging and separation, fusion and confusion) and the production becomes more open to the expression of audience sado-masochistic response, that might express itself by deep involvement and/or sharp rejection of the dramatic world created in which *the audience is included in spite of itself*. While such dramaturgical practice might be described as a 'mixed economy' of dramatic means, propagandist productions, religious and political forms, are particularly susceptible to following a more extreme pattern: the rhetorical and ideological flooding of the production with sado-masochistic impulses which is so complete that the only possible dynamics is the author's total separation from the production by the projection of the production/object at the audience, which leads to an audience experience succinctly conveyed in the idiomatic expression, 'It was being shoved down our throats'.

Both Hampton's adaptation of George Steiner's novel and Allen's *Perdition* express 'murderous' sadism toward their audiences, and thus the audience becomes both the container (the 'coffin') of the object of the playwright's sadism, and the victim from which he must separate in order to live.

#### 10.4 Memory of the victims, and the victims' memory

Toward the end of the 1980s Charles S. Maier wrote:

Jews' insistence on their own victimhood, their unwillingness to be silent, has often been deemed awkward and obsessive. Still muted in America and Britain while the Final Solution was under way, Jewish insistence later helped force re-examination of what had taken place in Nazi Germany, occupied France and elsewhere. The foundation of a Jewish national state, confirmed two decades later by the victories of the Six Day War, also sanctioned a more aggressive rethinking of a history that earlier had seemed trapped in a fatal passivity. (It also sanctioned an Israeli *Realpolitik* and could eventually legitimate an ugly 'anti-Zionism' abroad). The Six Day War in effect moved the Holocaust higher on the agenda of memory, but reconsideration sometimes meant a more aggressive exploitation of the dead, a more exclusive property right in suffering.

To be sure, post-war Jewish identity depends on the Holocaust. (20)

Maier's final words are a statement of the state of affairs rather than what is desirable, and since the publication of his book, over ten years ago, the dangers and undesirability of the Holocaust as the chief or sole lens through which Jewish identity should be constructed and understood has met with increasingly broad affirmation.

This thesis has not been intent on re-inscribing the topos of the 'Jew as victim', nor to affirm or encourage representations in which, as Isobel Wollaston remarks, 'Jews are depicted solely as victims: the focus... upon how Jews died, rather than the values by which they lived'. (21) Rather the objective has been to engage with those dramatic representations which seek to dilute or evade the Nazis' particular targeting of Jews. Maier warns of a danger for historians, equally pertinent to dramatists, that if the particularity of Jewish experience is ignored, 'the Final Solution will become a specimen of Social-Darwinist eugenics gone wild, capitalist crisis, twentieth-century inhumanity, a sea of complicity in which everyone founders, everything but a crime committed by some Germans against many Jews'. (22)

Given the trajectory of the two trends identified by Maier, the 'exclusive property right in suffering' amongst Jews and the evasion of responsibility for the particular targeting of Jews variously motivated by the 'historicisation' of the Third Reich by revisionist historians, Maier argues that the obligations of memory have differently shaded force in these different contexts:

The obligations of memory... remain asymmetrical... For Jews: to remember that although they seek legitimation of a public sorrow, their suffering was not exclusive. For Germans: to specify that the Holocaust was the Final Solution of the Jewish problem as its architects understood it. The appropriateness of each proposition depends upon who utters it. (23)

Omer Bartov suggests that the opposing tendencies identified by Maier continue to be marked:

The Holocaust... is being pulled apart by two contending camps, either as a core event of the twentieth century, if not indeed of Western civilisation or even humanity as a whole, with the tragic Jewish fate as its centrepiece;... or as a block that distorts and obscures our view of the past and our hopes, plans and dreams of the future, that relegates all other barbarities and achievements to a secondary place, that overemphasises the Jewish experience... and which therefore must absolutely be removed.

Removed where? To forgetfulness. Not to be repressed, but instead to be consciously, rationally put into its proper context and perspective, with the appropriate scholarly tools ensuring us of good judgement, minimising the weight of emotion and sensation, giving everyone their just historical due. (24)

Bartov's chief purpose is to challenge the summons to forgetfulness. In his view there are only a tiny number of communities where historical and personal memory continue to feature so prominently that memory constitutes an excessive challenge to the minds, consciences and emotions of their members, and where a softening of the obligation to remember may be appropriate. For the most part, Bartov considers that the admonition to temper memory or to consign memory to forgetfulness is addressed 'to some general audience that does not remember what it is being asked to forget'. (25) Bartov challenges the suggestion that the current population of any country is sufficiently well informed about the Holocaust that it may with reasonable justification heed the admonition 'to lay the whole business to rest'.

The currents of opinion and critical practice identified by Maier and Bartov are discussed chiefly but not exclusively in relation to the developments in the historiography of the Holocaust, the debates between German, Jewish, American and, to a lesser degree, British historians. And yet, as has been shown here, these same issues have quite clearly been reflected in theatre productions on the London stage throughout the Cold War period, giving these questions much broader public currency than the debates and publications of professional historians have done hitherto.

Geoffrey Hartmann is undoubtedly correct to point out that artistic representation is marked by a 'characteristic distancing', that 'art can and does move away from historical reference', (26) but narrative in both history writing and artistic literature has reflected increasing scepticism toward the idea of a singular interpretation which is

'faithful to history' and writers are rather understood, in Omer Bartov's expression, 'to be fighting a war of liberation against the tyranny of a totalizing discourse (in complicity with the authoritarian elements of society)', the implications being that the Holocaust may be 'emplotted in innumerable ways' and that 'no one emplotment is better or, rather, more truthful than another'. (27) While acknowledging that 'we can never achieve true objectivity, nor... hope to discover true objective reality in the past' as 'the past was, and is, made of numerous truths and realities', (28) Bartov nevertheless considers that historians have a crucial critical perspective to offer which challenges the kind of relativism which shows scant regard for historical truth and morality, and which seeks to deprive individuals of the obligation and capacity to make a critical choice between interpretations. In short, Bartov concludes, the issue 'is not one of the limits of representation, but the limits of truth' and that intellectuals should not 'doubt their role as critics of society, as representatives of a moral view, as persons seeking the truth and exposing lies'. (29)

Critical qualification of abused memory, a situation James E. Young considered preferable to placing the Holocaust off-limits to artistic representation, implies the existence of critical discourses which can bring the necessary perspectives, checks and balances, to 'abused memory'. While there is no doubt that such discourses exist, the Holocaust being an event which has provoked an immense volume of critical commentary from a variety of disciplines, this thesis has shown that in relation to dramatic representations of the Holocaust on the London stage, there has been minimal critical engagement with the issues by British critics, and hardly sufficient critical reflection to speak meaningfully of a critical discourse amongst British theatre theorists and practitioners about dramatic representation of the Holocaust.

On the assumption that the critics of the national dailies, political weeklies and theatre monthlies, whatever their position on the political spectrum, are likely to be of a broadly liberal persuasion, the press night criticism of the productions considered here remains amongst the most significant popular cultural indicators in the Cold War era of liberal Britain's changing perceptions of the Holocaust and Jewish fate.

The consistent impression conveyed by the critics is the *unstated assumption* that the Jews were the chief victims of the Holocaust and that this is the central and unalterable truth. But the very manner in which this is held to be self-evident involves the risk that discrete unstated assumptions can be mistaken for reluctance in relation to challenging misrepresentations of Jewish fate. Whereas Charles Maier has pointed out that Jews have often been accused of an 'awkward and obsessive insistence on their own victimhood', an insensitive conclusion drawn from unsuccessful attempts to register Jewish experience in the minds of a largely indifferent world, especially in Britain, liberal critical opinion might fairly be characterised by its scepticism, caution

and moderation, which sees in the plea for candid acknowledgement of Jewish fate only 'awkward and obsessive insistence'.

While, in relation to the plays considered here, 'polite' reticence to identify unambiguously Jewish victims as the dramatic focus may be the general impression conveyed by the press night notices, it cannot be claimed, on the other hand, that the critics pulled their punches. When the productions demanded too much (suspension of disbelief), or too little of their audiences, the critics were not slow in saying so, and on the occasions when genuine misinterpretation occurred - the character of Von Berg in Miller's *Incident at Vichy*, the chief dramatic intention of Barnes in *Laughter!* or Shaw in *The Man in the Glass Booth*, for example - the confusion was frequently acknowledged and attributed to playwright or director, the implication being that *the critics had some conception of what they were looking for*.

It was frequently a minority of critics who explicitly identified the complete omission or distortion of the cardinal fact that innocent Jews were subject to an ideology which determined that they should die on the sole and sufficient ground of race as defined by their persecutors.

Harold Hobson and Milton Shulman were alone in identifying racial persecution as the significant factor in the Franks' predicament, a feature other critics appeared to be reluctant to recognise. Hobson and W. A. Darlington identified the absence of Jewish characters in *The Representative*, and the removal of the representation of their suffering to an entirely different medium. Milton Shulman and Hugh Leonard were the sole British critics to identify the dangers of Arthur Miller's universalism.

The evidence suggests that, following the publication of Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and the gradual dissemination of some of her more controversial claims about the *Judenrat* and the fate of the Jews, the London theatre critics were generally less than fully aware of the dramatists' reticence to identify the Nazi persecution of the Jews, and their eagerness to indict the 'Jew as Nazi', a circumstance not unrelated to the increase in anti-Israeli sentiment, particularly in left-wing opinion, after the Six Day War.

Shaw's *The Man in the Glass Booth* and Barnes's *Laughter!* were not generally taken as indictments of the persecuted Jew and *audience* culpability. Consequently while a critical consensus existed which held that Shaw's pseudo-profundity was indicative of his inability to engage with the issues, the critics were slow to grasp and to challenge the conception of Jewish fate implicit in Shaw's play, and were utterly confused by Barnes's *Laughter!* Predicated on the ironised absence of the Jews, Barnes's play made the bureaucrat the chief victim of his own humourless bureaucracy, and the Jews the victims of his own humour-filled demise, interpretations the critics failed to make and therefore to challenge.

The critics were most concerned with the manifest appeal of Halder in C. P. Taylor's *Good* and while Irving Wardle considered the suggestion that Halder's almost accidental, affable ruminatory stumble into the arms of the Nazi party made murderous complicity appear too casual, no critic explicitly drew attention to the implication that the Nazi genocide of the Jews was the unfortunate consequence of spineless domesticity being fashioned into dutiful obedience through a mistaken sense of idealism. With the almost total critical oversight of the only Jewish character in the play, Maurice, psychiatrist, friend and subject of Halder's increasing disinclination, critical concern over the representation of Jewish fate in the press night notices was almost non-existent.

Following Taylor's play and for the remainder of the 1980s there is clearly greater awareness of the issues amongst the critics and greater willingness to challenge the representation of Jewish suffering offered by the plays and productions. This circumstance is perhaps best illustrated by the execration of Hampton's adaptation of George Steiner's *The Portage* and the response to Jim Allen's *Perdition*. In the case of *Ghetto*, critics sought to remind readers of the historical fate of the Vilna ghetto in light of the finale given to the London production which some critics considered an unfortunate misjudgement in an otherwise engaging play.

Little comfort can be gained from the temptation to believe that liberal critical opinion had finally recognised the particularity of Jewish fate and summoned the courage to challenge dramatic misrepresentations of Jewish experience. Rather, the critics increasingly vociferous about misrepresentation of this kind were frequently, but not exclusively, Jewish themselves, and while in some measure influenced by the changed climate of the 1980s in which ethnicity could more easily be embraced, the change also reflects the increasing prominence of the Holocaust as an event to which serious attention was due, a trend which would gather momentum in the early 1990s as the fiftieth anniversaries of D-Day, the liberation of the camps, and VE day approached.

Alford attempts to draw a number of these themes together. He suggests that the Holocaust is best approached through the attempt to understand the nature of the dynamics which exists between persecutor and victim, and that it is the experience of victimhood which narrative representation must ultimately confront and transform:

The bars of the iron cage are made of power and victimhood - the perception that these are the only choices... The iron cage is made more confining still by the failure of cultural memory, which makes of meaningful victimhood an oxymoron.

The problem is not the failure of memory *per se*. It is the failure of the culture to preserve those categories of experience which make victimhood meaningful, so that the meaning might be available to make memory meaningful... What the culture has lost is not just a narrative unity that makes



sense of values. It has lost the narrative resources to make sense of the experience of victimhood... It has, in other words, lost the sense of tragedy. (30)

The productions considered here which attempt to make sense of Jewish fate during the Holocaust have for the broad reasons summarised in this conclusion failed to discover and elucidate dramatically 'categories of experience which make victimhood meaningful', and thus have failed to revivify cultural memory. While critical reflection in the press might notices more often than not drew attention to this failure, a sustained critical engagement with the problems of dramatic representation and the Holocaust is largely absent in specifically British critical tradition. The task of dramatic endeavour and critical reflection is above all to elaborate new generic and dramatic means to meet the challenges and demands presented by the Holocaust. The evidence provided by the productions considered here, and the lack of critical discussion suggest that, in this regard, the theatre and British critics have not yet succeeded in finding the necessary resources.

Despite Alford's intimation that the contrary were true, the Holocaust above all else has complicated ideas about meaningful choice under such circumstances, and has also placed belief in the possibility and efficacy of a cultivated sense of the tragic as *the* narrative resource through which sense may be made of victimhood, as untenable - an irreparable and truncated narrative tradition, as Lawrence Langer has so eloquently argued.

In *Holocaust Testimonies. The Ruins of Memory* (1991), Langer analyses survivor testimony recorded for the Fortunoff Video Archives for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University in his attempt to pattern the nature of Holocaust memory. In the chapter entitled 'Tainted Memory', he writes:

In the absence of new cultural or psychological myths drawing on the reality of the camp universe we - together with surviving victims - continue to equate that loss of innocence with its scriptural, Edenic, or Miltonic sources.

In fact, there is no confluence between the loss of innocence reported in the myths and legends of Western tradition and the rupture from those traditions introduced by the stories in these testimonies... As former victims revisit the physical and mental terrain of their losses, they find that neither time nor memory furnishes them with a principle of rationalisation. Nothing exists to redeem the moment they recall, and to their dismay, nothing exists to redeem them as they recall it. (31)

Quoting Maurice Blanchot's *The Writing of the Disaster* (1986) Geoffrey Hartman echoes and broadens Langer's despairing conclusion, to include critical reflection also:

The passage of time has eroded redemptive as well as merely rationalising meanings faster than they can be replaced. We become, in Maurice Blanchot's words, 'guardians of an absent meaning'... questioning under the impact of this corrosive event our cultural achievements in criticism, literature and historiography. (32)

## APPENDICES

### Appendix a: Documents in Defence

**i) The text of Cardinal Montini's (Pope Paul VI) letter appeared in both the standard programme and a special supplement for the RSC's production of Rolf Hochhuth's *The Representative* at the Aldwych Theatre:**

The Lord Chamberlain has requested the Royal Shakespeare to print in all the Aldwych programmes an authoritative Catholic opinion. The letter that follows is reprinted by permission of *The Tablet* in which it appeared on June 29. It reached *The Tablet* an hour after the author had been elected to the Papacy.

#### A LETTER FROM CARDINAL MONTINI NOW POPE PAUL VI

DEAR SIR, - It gave me much pleasure to read the article entitled 'Pius XII and the Jews,' which appeared in your excellent periodical on May 11, 1963: it was a most welcome defence not only of Pope Pius XII, of venerated memory, and of the Holy See, but also of historical truth and sound logic, not to speak of common-sense.

It was not my intention here to examine the question raised by the author and the Berlin producer, Rolf Hochhuth and Erwin Piscator respectively, of the play *Der Stellvertreter* (*The Representative*): namely, whether it was Pius XII's duty to condemn in some public and spectacular way the massacres of the Jews during the last war. Much, to be sure, might still be said on this point; for the thesis of Herr Hochhuth's play - that, to quote Mr. George Steiner's review in *The Sunday Times* of May 5, 'We are all accomplices to that which leaves us indifferent' - bears no relation whatever to the personality or the work of Pope Pius XII...

For my part I conceive it my duty to contribute to the task of clarifying and purifying men's judgement on the historical reality in question - so distorted in the representational pseudo-reality of Hochhuth's play - by pointing out that the character given to Pius XII in this play (to judge from the reviews in the Press) does not represent the man as he really was: in fact, it entirely misrepresents him. I am in a position to assert this because it was my good fortune to be drawn into close contact with Pius XII during his pontificate, serving him day by day, from 1937, when he was still Secretary of State, to 1954: throughout, that is the whole period of the world war.

It was true that the precise scope of my duties did not include foreign affairs ('extraordinary' affairs, as they are called in the language of the Roman Curia); but Pius XII's goodness towards me personally, and the nature itself of my work as 'Sostituto' in the Secretariate of State, gave me access to the mind and, I would add, to the heart of this great Pope. The image of Pius XII which Hochhuth presents or is said to present, is a false one. For example, it is utterly false to tax Pius with cowardice: both his natural temperament and the consciousness that he had of the authority and the mission entrusted to him speak clearly against such an accusation. I could cite a host of particular facts to drive this point home, facts that would prove that the frail and gentle exterior of Pius XII, and the sustained refinement and

moderation of his language, concealed - if they did not, rather, reveal - a noble and virile character capable of taking very firm decisions and of adopting, fearlessly, positions that entailed considerable risk.

Nor is it true that he was a heartless solitary. On the contrary, he was a man of exquisite sensibility and the most delicate human sympathies. True, he did love solitude: his richly cultivated mind, his unusual capacity for thought and study led him to avoid all useless distractions, every unnecessary relaxation; but he was quite the reverse of a man shut away from life and indifferent to people and events around him. Rather, it was his constant desire to be informed of everything. He wished to enter fully into the history of his own afflicted time: with a deep sense that he himself was a part of that history, he wished to participate fully in it, to share its suffering in his own heart and soul. Let me cite, in this connection, the words of a well-qualified witness, Sir D'Arcy Osborne, the British Minister to the Holy See who, when the Germans occupied Rome, was obliged to live confined in the Vatican City. Writing to *The Times* on May 20 Sir D'Arcy said: 'Pius XII was the most warmly, humane, kindly, generous, sympathetic (and, incidentally, saintly) character that it has been my privilege to meet in the course of a long life.'

Again, it is not true to say that Pope Pius XII's conduct was inspired by a calculating political opportunism. It was to be just as true - and as slanderous - to assert that his government of the Church was motivated by considerations of material advantage.

As for his omitting to take up a position of violent opposition to Hitler in order to save the lives of those millions of Jews slaughtered by the Nazis, this will be readily understood by anyone who avoids Hochhuth's mistake of trying to assess what could have been effectively and responsibly done then, in those appalling conditions of war and Nazis oppression, by the standard of what would be feasible in normal conditions - or in some hypothetical conditions arbitrarily invented by a young playwright's imagination. An attitude of protest and condemnation such as this young man blames the Pope for not having adopted would have been not only futile but harmful: that is the long and the short of the matter. The thesis of *Der Stellvertreter* betrays an inadequate grasp of psychological, political and historical realities. But then the author was concerned above all to write an interesting play.

Let us suppose that Pius XII had done what Hochhuth blames him for not doing. His action would have led to such reprisals and devastations that Hochhuth himself, the war being over and he now possessed of a better historical, political and moral judgement, would have been able to write another play, far more realistic and far more interesting than the one that he has in fact so cleverly but also ineptly put together: a play, that is, about the *Stellvertreter* who, through political exhibitionism or psychological myopia, would have been guilty of unleashing on the already tormented world still greater calamities involving innumerable innocent victims, let alone himself.

It would be as well if the creative imagination of playwrights insufficiently endowed with historical discernment (and possibly, though please God it is not so, with ordinary human integrity) would forebear from trifling with subjects of this kind and with historical personages whom some of us have known. In the present case the real drama, and tragedy, is not what the playwright imagines it to be: it is the tragedy of one who tries to impute to a Pope who was acutely aware both of his own moral obligations and of historical reality - and was moreover a very loyal as well as impartial friend to the people of Germany - the horrible crimes of German Nazism.

Let some men say what they will, Pius XII's reputation as a true Vicar of Christ, as one who tried, so far as he could, fully and courageously to carry out the mission entrusted to him, will not be affected. But what is the gain to art and culture when the theatre lends itself to injustice of this sort?

With my sincere respects, devotedly yours,

G. B. CARDINAL MONTINI

*Archbishop of Milan.*

ii) The following is a brief extract from 'The House of Justice', the opening chapter of Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. This passage proved to be a catalyst to the imagination of more than one dramatist, and almost certainly to Robert Shaw, in its identification of the courtroom at Eichmann's trial in 1961 as a theatrical spectacle:

There is no doubt from the very beginning that it is Judge Landau who sets the tone, and that he is doing his best, his very best, to prevent this trial from becoming a show trial under the influence of the prosecutor's love of showmanship. Among the reasons he cannot always succeed is the simple fact that the proceedings happen on a stage before an audience, with the usher's marvellous shout at the beginning of each session producing the effect of the rising curtain. Whoever planned this auditorium in the newly built *Beth Ha'am*, the House of the People (now surrounded by high fences, guarded from roof to cellar by heavily armed police, and with a row of wooden barracks in the front courtyard in which all comers are expertly frisked), had a theater in mind, complete with orchestra and gallery, with proscenium and stage, and with side doors for the actors' entrance. Clearly, this courtroom is not a bad place for the show trial David Ben-Gurion, Prime Minister of Israel, had in mind when he decided to have Eichmann kidnapped in Argentina and brought to the District Court of Jerusalem to stand trial for his role in the 'final solution of the Jewish question.' And Ben-Gurion, rightly called the 'architect of the state,' remains the invisible stage manager of the proceedings. Not once does he attend a session; in the courtroom he speaks with the voice of Gideon Hausner, the Attorney General, who, representing the government, does his best, his very best, to obey his master. And if, fortunately, his best often turns out not to be good enough, the reason is that the trial is presided over by someone who serves Justice as faithfully as Mr. Hausner serves the State of Israel. Justice demands that the accused be prosecuted, defended, and judged, and that all the other questions of seemingly greater import - of 'How could it happen?' and 'Why did it happen?', of 'Why the Jews?' and 'Why the Germans?', of 'What was the role of other nations?' and 'What was the extent of co-responsibility on the side of the Allies?', of 'How could the Jews through their own leaders co-operate in their own destruction?' and 'Why did they go to their death like lambs to the slaughter?' - be left in abeyance. Justice insists on the importance of Adolf Eichmann, son of Karl Adolf Eichmann, the man in the glass booth built for his protection: medium-sized, slender, middle-aged, with receding hair, ill-fitting teeth, and nearsighted eyes, who throughout the trial keeps craning his scraggy neck toward the bench (not once does he face the audience),

and who desperately and for the most part successfully maintains his self-control despite the nervous tic to which his mouth must have become subject long before this trial started. On trial are his deeds, not the sufferings of the Jews, not the German people or mankind, not even anti-Semitism and racism.

(Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report On the Banality of Evil*. (Rev.ed.) Harmondsworth, 1977, pp. 4-5.)

iii) In an interview George Steiner granted David Nathan, the theatre critic of the *Jewish Chronicle*, Steiner acknowledged and defended as theses of his own, each of the points made by A. H. in the final speech of *The Portage*. Steiner made publication of this interview conditional upon the simultaneous publication by the *Jewish Chronicle* of the following statement:

I am *exactly* the same George Steiner to whom the *Jewish Chronicle* gave its literary award for his writings on the Holocaust.

I am *exactly* the same George Steiner to whom an international jury of Holocaust survivors awarded the *Prix du souvenir* for his writings on Jewish suffering and the modern condition of Judaism.

Insinuations of 'anti-Semitism,' of 'pro-Hitlerism,' attempts to smear Jewish backers of the Mermaid Theatre's current production of *The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.* are an obscenity.

This play, and the short novel from which it is adapted, are a theological-political fable. As Spinoza (a Jew reviled by his philistine and pharisaic community) teaches us: the Jewish truth is always one in which theology and politics are inextricably inwoven. This fable addresses itself to the most difficult issues in the tragic destiny of Judaism in our age. It asks about the mystery of ultimately *self-destructive* hatred, about the madness of *intimate* hatred, which bound Hitler to his Jewish victims. It asks about the 'present absence' of God within the Holocaust. It raises the profoundly *painful* but necessary question of whether certain aspects of the nationalist, beleaguered condition of Israel are not a reflection of the birth of the secular state out of the Holocaust.

There is not one allegory of fictive speculation in the novel and the play which does not have deep roots in the antinomian questionings of the Talmud or the Cabala. The paradox of the extreme resemblance of the false to the true Messiah, the conjecture that God is Himself in a diaspora, the possibility that the Jew will be 'the principle of unrest' among men till the end of time - these, and many other 'scandalous' points made or alluded to in *The Portage*, are ingrained in the history of Jewish theological-political thought.

The novel, the play, are *difficult* texts. They seek to honour the reader-spectator by presuming that he/she will want to do some serious thinking about the experience they offer, will want to 'do a little homework' before pronouncing on them.

Little trace of any such thought or preparation have marked the trivial response of the *Jewish Chronicle*. Has its drama critic\* even bothered to learn what the name 'Teku' (the forest-Indian crucial to the symbolic and structural design of the play) might signify?

I have agreed (reluctantly) to this interview in order to help clear up some of the misrepresentations which have been voiced in the JC\*\*. How ironic it is that a great

majority of the 'non-Jewish' press and media have handled this same material with fairness and informed insight. G. S.

\* David Nathan. \*\* Presumably the article by historian Martin Gilbert.

(See the *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 March 1982, pp. 26 and 36.)

iv) After Max Stafford-Clark's withdrawal of Jim Allen's play *Perdition* from the stage of the Royal Court Theatre, Michael Hastings, the Literary Manager continued to defend the play on the letters' page of the *Jewish Chronicle*. While acknowledging the play's anti-Zionist stance, and the violence implicit in its misrepresentations, Hastings attempts simultaneously to deny that *Perdition* is both a distortion of history and anti-Semitic:

Sir, - After the outrageous misquotes in *The Guardian*, it is a relief to come back to the *Chronicle*'s stern calm over the play, *Perdition*, by Jim Allen.

I do not know how the sentence 'I find the State of Israel deeply offensive in its present role as an extension of the American arms machine' can be reduced to 'I find the State of Israel deeply offensive.' I did not get an apology from *The Guardian*, but they did print my rebuke.

As for *Perdition*, I believe it remains a sturdy polemic, its factual material is substantially correct, and although the object of the play is to discredit Zionism, it is not anti-Semitic. But many of the facts here are open to interpretation. And the historians are hopelessly divided.

David Cesarani and Walter Laqueur are divided over such references in the play as to how much Kastner knew about the Holocaust by December, 1941. Martin Gilbert and Isaiah Trunk take quite opposite views over the reference to the so-called 'SS and Jewish Council party' in Skalat, Galicia. However, there does remain a problem with this play which cannot be simply detected from a reading.

In the week before the play was due to open, I attended a run-through, albeit hastily put together, and although I could live with the rigid interpretation of Zionism (virtually pre-Martin Buber's tergiversation), I found in production a relentless resonance.

There is a subtext here which cannot be found in the words themselves, call it an unconscious force behind the typewriter perhaps, but there is a sense here that the target is Jews - Jews living within their own community and responding as Jews to a unique and appalling pogrom of annihilation.

This subtext seems to target on Jews to the exclusion of all other peoples. And in this sense alone I realised *Perdition* could be looked upon as an anti-Jewish play, no matter how unintentional this was in the writing, and no matter how much I agreed with the polemic.

Such implications in a play cannot necessarily be found from just a reading; it has to be seen in some form in its full theatrical force. I believe the script of a play is akin to an architect's drawing.

I did then go back to the text and, further to that, I took some legal advice.

Shortly after, in my personal and very limited capacity at the Royal Court Theatre, I withdrew my support for the play.

**Michael Hastings,**

2 Helix Gardens,  
London, SW2.

(Mr Hastings is an award-winning playwright, poet and author. - Ed. 'JC'.)

(*The Jewish Chronicle*, 30 January 1987, p. 22.)



## Appendix b:

### Performance Chronologies

(i) Performances in the Free World pre July 1945 of German language plays and their English language translations which give clear indications of the treatment of Jews in Nazi Germany and occupied Europe.

#### SWITZERLAND

Title	Author	Venue	City	Premiere
<i>Die Rassen</i>	Ferdinand Bruckner	Zürich Schauspielhaus	Zürich	30 November 1933
<i>Professor Mannheim* Ein Schauspiel aus dem Deutschland von heute</i>	Freidrich Wolf	Zürich Schauspielhaus	Zürich	8 November 1934
<i>Die Mutter</i>	Bertolt Brecht	Zürich Volkhaus	Zürich	1 May 1941
<i>Jacobowsky und der Oberst</i>	Franz Werfel	Basel Stadttheater	Basel	17 October 1944
<i>Jacobowsky und der Oberst</i>	Franz Werfel	Zürich Schauspielhaus	Zürich	11 November 1944
<i>Nun singen sie wieder: versuch eines Requiems</i>	Max Frisch	Zürich Schauspielhaus	Zürich	29 March 1945

\* The early title of Wolf's play, later entitled *Professor Mamlock*

**UNITED STATES**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Premiere</b>
<i>Races</i>	Ferdinand Bruckner	Chestnut Street Opera House (New York Theatre Guild)	Philadelphia	19 March 1934
<i>Races</i>	Ferdinand Bruckner	Heckscher Theatre Inc. (Forum Theater Inc.)	New York	1934
<i>The Eternal Road</i>	Franz Werfel	Manhattan Opera House	New York	7 January 1937
<i>Professor Mamlock</i>	Friedrich Wolf	Daly's Theater	New York	13 April 1937
<i>Races</i>	Ferdinand Bruckner	Studio Theater. New School for Social Research	New York	7 February 1942
<i>Jacobowsky and the Colonel</i>	Franz Werfel	Martin Beck Theatre	New York	14 March 1944
<i>The Private Life of the Master Race (17 scenes)</i>	Bertolt Brecht	UCLA	Berkley	7 June 1945
<i>The Private Life of the Master Race (17 scenes)</i>	Bertolt Brecht	Pauline Edwards Theatre. City College	New York	12 June 1945

## GREAT BRITAIN

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Premiere</b>
<i>Scandal (Trouble) in Assyria</i>	Walter Hasenclever	Globe Theatre (International Theatre Club)	London	30 April 1939
<i>Professor Mamlock</i>	FreidrichWolf	Stein Hall	London	17 March 1942
<i>Jacobowsky and the Colonel</i>	Franz Werfel	Piccadilly Theatre	London	6 June 1945

**(ii) British Drama of the Holocaust**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Premier</b>
<i>The Man in the Glass Booth</i>	Robert Shaw	St Martins Theatre	London	27 July 1967
<i>An Die Musik</i>	Pip Simmons Group	Institute of Contemporary Arts	London	1 July 1975
<i>Laughter!</i>	Peter Barnes	Royal Court Theatre	London	24 January 1978
<i>Bent</i>	Martin Sherman	Royal Court Theatre	London	3 May 1978
<i>Good. A Tragedy</i>	Cecil Taylor	RSC. The Warehouse	London	2 September 1981
<i>George Steiner's The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.</i>	(Adpt.) Christopher Hampton	Mermaid Theatre	London	17 February 1982
<i>In Kanada</i>	David Clough	Old Red Lion (Theatre Pub)	London	18 March 1982
<i>Perdition</i>	Jim Allen	Royal Court Theatre	London	withdrawn
<i>Theresa</i>	Julia Pascal	Gulbenkian Studio	Newcastle	24 April 1990
<i>A Dead Woman on Holiday</i>	Julia Pascal	Holborn Centre for Performing Arts	London	30 September 1991

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Premiere</b>
<i>The Dybbuk (after S. Anski)</i>	Julia Pascal	New End Theatre	London	25 June 1992
<i>Kindertransport</i>	Diane Samuels	Cockpit Theatre	London	13 April 1993
<i>In Quest of Conscience</i>	(Adpt.)Robert David McDonald	Citizens Theatre	Glasgow	6 April 1994
<i>Year Zero</i>	Julia Pascal	The Junction	Cambridge	19 July 1994
<i>Born Guilty</i>	(Adpt.)Rainer Lau/7:84	Citizens Theatre	Glasgow	27 April 1995
<i>The Strange Passenger</i>	Sonja Lyndon	Plymouth Drum Theatre	Plymouth	26 September 1995
<i>Badenheim 1939</i>	(Adpt.)Second Stride	Newcastle Playhouse	Newcastle	2 November1995
<i>The Holocaust Trilogy</i>	Julia Pascal	New End Theatre	London	14 November 1995
<i>Nuremberg. War Crimes Trial</i>	Richard Norton-Taylor	Tricycle Theatre	London	3 May 1996
<i>The Flight into Egypt</i>	Julian Garner	Hampstead Theatre	London	5 September1996
<i>The Handyman</i>	Ronald Harwood	Minerva Theatre	Chichester	19 September1996
<i>Ashes to Ashes</i>	Harold Pinter	Royal Court Theatre Upstairs (at the Ambassadors Theatre)	London	19 September 1996

**(iii) American Drama of the Holocaust**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Premiere</b>
<i>We will Never Die</i>	Ben Hecht	Madison Square Garden	New York	9 March 1943
<i>The Diary of Anne Frank</i>	Frances Goodrich Albert Hackett	Cort Theater	New York	5 October 1955
<i>The Wall</i>	Millard Lampell	Billy Rose Theater	New York	11 October 1960
<i>Incident at Vichy</i>	Arthur Miller	Washington Square Theater (ANTA)	New York	3 December 1964
<i>Ergo</i>	Jakov Lind	New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater	New York	20 February 1968
<i>The Cannibals</i>	Georg Tabori	American Place Theater	New York	17 October 1968
<i>The Interview</i>	Peter Swet	Mercers Arts Center	New York	May 1973
<i>How We Danced While we Burned</i>	Kenneth Bernard	Antioch College Workshop Theater	New York	3 December 1973

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Premiere</b>
<i>The Cathedral of Ice</i>	James Schevill	Lederer Theater Upstairs (Trinity Square Rep.Co.)	Providence. Rhode Island	14 October 1975
<i>Throne of Straw</i>	Harold Lieberman Edith Lieberman	St Clements Theater	New York	12 November 1977
<i>Black Angel</i>	Michael Cristofer	Mark Taper Forum Circle Rep	Los Angeles	18 May 1978
<i>Bent</i>	Martin Sherman	New Apollo	New York	2 December 1979
<i>Before She Is Even Born</i>	Leah Friedman	Theater for the New City	New York	19 September 1982
<i>Black Angel</i>	Michael Cristofer	Circle Repertory Theater	New York	19 December 1982
<i>I love you, I love you not</i>	Wendy Kesselman	The Ensemble Studio Theater	New York	31 May 1983
<i>Hannah Senesh</i>	David Schecter	The Writers' Theater	New York	1 August 1984
<i>Annulla: An Autobiography</i>	Emily Mann	The Rep. Theater	St Louis	20 March 1985
<i>A Shayna Maidel</i>	Barbara LeBow	Academy Theater	Atlanta	18 April 1985

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Premiere</b>
<i>Playing for Time</i>	Arthur Miller	Act Theatre	San Francisco	6 October 1985
<i>A Shayna Maidel</i>	Barbara LeBow	Academy Theater	Atlanta	9 April 1986
<i>A Shayna Maidel</i>	Barbara LeBow	West Side Arts Theater	New York	29 October 1987
<i>Annulla: An Autobiography</i>	Emily Mann	The New Theater of Brooklyn	New York	27 October 1988
<i>The Substance of Fire</i>	Jon Robin Baitz	Long Wharf Theater (Workshop production)	New Haven	6 May 1990
<i>The Substance of Fire</i>	Jon Robin Baitz	Playwrights Horizons Inc.	New York	17 March 1991
<i>Born Guilty</i>	Ari Roth	American Jewish Theater	New York	24 January 1993
<i>Broken Glass</i>	Arthur Miller	Long Wharf Theater	New Haven	9 March 1994
<i>Broken Glass</i>	Arthur Miller	Booth Theater	New York	24 April 1994



**Appendix c: References for the Critical Reviews of British drama of the Holocaust to 1995 and select US productions**

**(By chronological order of Première)**

**Title:** *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank*  
**Author:** Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett  
**Director:** Garson Kanin  
**Venue:** Cort Theater, New York  
**Première:** 5 October 1955

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Atkinson, Brooks	<i>New York Times</i>	6 October 1955, p. 24
Ballif, Algene	<i>Commentary</i>	November 1955, pp. 464-467
Bentley, Eric	<i>New Republic</i>	2 January 1956, p. 36
Cooke, Richard P.	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	7 October 1955, p. 6
Hawkins, William	<i>New York World Telegram and Sun</i>	6 October 1955, (no page ref)
Hayes, Richard	<i>Commonweal</i>	28 October 1955, pp. 91-92
Hift	<i>Variety</i>	12 October 1955, p. 72
Kerr, Walter	<i>New York Herald Tribune</i>	23 October 1955, sec 4 pp. 1 and 3
	<i>Life</i>	17 October 1955, pp. 162-163
	<i>New Yorker</i>	15 October 1955, pp. 71-72
	<i>Newsweek</i>	17 October 1955, p. 103
	<i>Time</i>	17 October 1955, p. 51
Watts, Richard	<i>New York Post</i>	6 October 1955, p. 42

**Title:** *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank*  
**Author:** Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett  
**Director:** Frith Banbury  
**Company:** H. M. Tennent Ltd.  
**Venue:** Phoenix Theatre, London  
**Première:** 29 November 1956

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Brahms, Caryl	<i>Plays and Players</i>	29 January 1957, pp. 10-11
Cookman, A. V.	<i>Times</i>	30 November 1956, p. 5
Darlington, W. A.	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	30 November 1956, p. 10
Hobson, Harold	<i>Sunday Times</i>	2 December 1956, p. 13
Hope-Wallace, Philip	<i>Manchester Guardian</i>	30 November 1956, p. 5
Keown, Eric	<i>Punch</i>	5 December 1956, p. 692
Martin, Kingsley	<i>Newstatesman and Nation</i>	8 December 1956, pp. 742-743
Shulman, Milton	<i>Evening Standard</i>	30 November 1956, p. 6
Trewin, J. C.	<i>Illustrated London News</i>	15 December 1956, p. 1050
Tynan, Kenneth	<i>Observer</i>	2 December 1956, p. 11
Watt, David	<i>Spectator</i>	7 December 1956, p. 834
Wilson, Cecil	<i>Daily Mail</i>	30 November 1956, p. 12
Landstone, Charles	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	7 December 1956, p. 26

**Title:** *The Representative*  
**Author:** Rolf Hochhuth  
**Director:** Clifford Williams  
**Company:** The Royal Shakespeare Company  
**Venue:** The Aldwych Theatre  
**Première:** 25 September 1963

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Bryden, Ronald	<i>New Statesman</i>	4 October 1963, pp. 460-461
Darlington, W. A.	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	26 September 1963, p. 16
Forster, Peter	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	29 September 1963, p. 12
Fyvel, T. R.	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	4 October 1963, pp. 7 and 38
Gascoigne, Bamber	<i>Observer</i>	29 September 1963, p. 26
Hobson, Harold	<i>Sunday Times</i>	29 September 1963, p. 33
Hope-Wallace, Philip	<i>Guardian</i>	26 September 1963, p. 9
Landstone, Charles	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	27 September 1963, p. 42
Leonard, Hugh	<i>Plays and Players</i>	December 1963, pp. 38-40
Levin, Bernard	<i>Daily Mail</i>	26 September 1963, p. 3
Marowitz, Charles	<i>Plays and Players</i>	December 1963, pp. 38-40
Rutherford, Malcolm	<i>Spectator</i>	4 October 1963, p. 417
Shulman, Milton	<i>Evening Standard</i>	26 September 1963, p. 4
Trewin, J. C.	<i>Illustrated London News</i>	19 October 1963, p. 652
Wardle, Irving	<i>Times</i>	26 September 1963, p. 8
Worsley, T. C.	<i>Financial Times</i>	26 September 1963, p. 26
Young, B. A.	<i>Punch</i>	2 October 1963, pp. 502-503

**Title:** *After the Fall*  
**Author:** Arthur Miller  
**Director:** Elia Kazan  
**Company:** Lincoln Center Repertory Company  
**Venue:** Washington Square Theater (ANTA)  
**Première:** 23 January 1964

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Brustein, Robert	<i>New Republic</i>	8 February 1964, pp. 26-28, 30
Cooke, Richard P.	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	27 January 1964, p. 10
Esterow, Milton	<i>New York Times</i>	31 January 1964, p. 14
Gilman, Richard	<i>Commonweal</i>	14 February 1964, pp. 600-601
Kerr, Walter	<i>New York Herald Tribune</i>	24 January 1964, pp. 1 and 11
Hewes, Henry	<i>Saturday Review</i>	15 February 1964, p. 35
Hobe	<i>Variety</i>	29 January 1964, p. 68
McCarten John	<i>New Yorker</i>	1 February 1964, p. 59
	<i>Newsweek</i>	3 February 1964, pp. 41-44
Miller, Arthur	<i>Life</i>	7 February 1964, p. 64A
Smith, Michael	<i>Village Voice</i>	30 January 1964, pp. 9-10
Taubman, Howard	<i>New York Times</i>	24 January 1964, p. 18
Taubman, Howard	<i>New York Times</i>	2 February 1964, Sec. 2 p. 1
	<i>Time Magazine</i>	31 January 1964, p. 54

**Title:** *Incident at Vichy*  
**Author:** Arthur Miller  
**Director:** Harold Clurman  
**Company:** Lincoln Center Repertory Company  
**Venue:** Washington Square Theater (ANTA)  
**Première:** 3 December 1964

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Brustein, Robert	<i>New Republic</i>	26 December 1964, pp. 26-27
Cooke, Richard P.	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	7 December 1964, p. 14
Gelb, Barbara	<i>New York Times</i>	29 November 1964, pp. 1 and 3
Gottfried, Martin	<i>Women's Wear Daily</i>	4 December 1964, p. 33
Hewes, Henry	<i>Saturday Review</i>	19 December 1964, p. 24
Kerr, Walter	<i>New York Herald Tribune</i>	4 December 1964, p. 12
Kerr, Walter	<i>New York Herald Tribune</i>	20 December 1964, Sec. 2 p. 25
McCarten, John	<i>New Yorker</i>	12 December 1964, pp. 152-153
	<i>News Week</i>	14 December 1964, p. 86
Rahv, Philip	<i>New York Review</i>	14 January 1965, pp. 3 and 4
Taubman, Howard	<i>New York Times</i>	4 December 1964, p. 44
Taubman, Howard	<i>New York Times</i>	20 December 1964, Sec. 2 p. 3
	<i>Time</i>	11 December 1964, p. 73
Hobe	<i>Variety</i>	9 December 1964, p. 62
Smith, Michael	<i>Village Voice</i>	10 December 1964, p. 9
Watts Jr., Richard	<i>New York Post</i>	4 December 1964, p. 58

**Title:** *The Investigation*  
**Author:** Peter Weiss  
**Director:** Peter Brooke  
**Company:** The Royal Shakespeare Company  
**Venue:** The Aldwych Theatre  
**Première:** 19 December 1965

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Brien, Alan	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	31 October 1965, p. 10
Bryden, Ronald	<i>New Statesman</i>	29 October 1965, p. 666
Coleman, Terry	<i>Guardian</i>	21 October 1965, p. 9
Gilliat, Penelope	<i>Observer</i>	24 October 1965, p. 24
Lambert, J.W.	<i>Sunday Times</i>	24 October 1965, p. 43
Wardle, Irving	<i>Times</i>	21 October 1965, p. 16

**Title:** *Incident at Vichy*  
**Author:** Arthur Miller  
**Director:** Peter Wood  
**Company:** H. M. Tennent Ltd.  
**Venue:** The Theatre Royal, Brighton.  
The Phoenix Theatre, London.  
**Première:** 10 January 1966 (Brighton); 26 January 1966  
(London)

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

*Brighton*

*Brighton Evening Argos* 11 January 1966

*London*

Brien, Alan	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	30 January 1966, p. 14
Bryden, Ronald	<i>New Statesman</i>	4 February 1966, p. 170
Darlington, W. A.	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	27 January 1966, p. 19
Gilliat, Penelope	<i>Observer</i>	30 January 1966, p. 25
Hobson, Harold	<i>Sunday Times</i>	30 January 1966, p. 45
Hope-Wallace, Philip	<i>Guardian</i>	27 January 1966, p. 9
Landstone, Charles	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	28 January 1966, p. 30
Kingston, Jeremy	<i>Punch</i>	2 February 1966, p. 173
Leonard, Hugh	<i>Plays and Players</i>	January 1966, pp. 22-23
Levin, Bernard	<i>Daily Mail</i>	27 January 1966, p. 14
Shulman, Milton	<i>Evening Standard</i>	27 January 1966, p. 4
Spurling, Hilary	<i>Spectator</i>	4 February 1966, pp. 137 and 139
Trewin, J. C.	<i>Illustrated London News</i>	5 February 1966, p. 42
Wardle, Irving	<i>Times</i>	27 January 1966, p. 9
Young, B. A.	<i>Financial Times</i>	27 January 1966, p. 24

**Title:** *The Man in the Glass Booth*  
**Author:** Robert Shaw  
**Director:** Harold Pinter  
**Company:** Glasshouse Productions  
**Venue:** The Nottingham Playhouse; St Martin's Theatre, London  
**Première:** 11 July 1967 (Nottingham); 27 July 1967 (London)

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

*Nottingham*

Bryson, Emrys	<i>Nottingham Evening Post</i>	12 July 1967
Coggan, John	<i>Guardian Journal</i>	12 July 1967

*London*

Brien, Alan	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	30 July 1967, p. 10
Bryden, Ronald	<i>Observer</i>	30 July 1967, p. 20
Darlington, W. A.	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	28 July 1967, p. 17
Hobson, Harold	<i>Sunday Times</i>	30 July 1967, p. 39
Holland, Mary	<i>Queen</i>	16 August 1967, pp. 9-10
Hope-Wallace, Philip	<i>Guardian</i>	28 July 1967, p. 6
Kingston, Jeremy	<i>Punch</i>	2 August 1967, p. 179
Landstone, Charles	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	4 August 1967, p. 27
Lewis, Peter	<i>Daily Mail</i>	28 July 1967, p. 10
Mortimer, John	<i>New Statesman</i>	4 August 1967, pp.153-154
Spurling, Hilary	<i>Spectator</i>	4 August 1967, pp. 139-140
Taylor, John Russell	<i>Plays and Players</i>	October 1967, pp. 18-19
Trewin, J. C.	<i>Illustrated London News</i>	5 August 1967, p. 36
Wardle, Irving	<i>Times</i>	28 July 1967, p. 6
Young, B. A.	<i>Financial Times</i>	28 July 1967, p. 24



**Title:** *After the Fall*  
**Author:** Arthur Miller  
**Director:** Leonard Schach  
**Company:**  
**Venue:** Belgrade Theatre, Coventry  
**Première:** 31 October 1967

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Brien, Alan	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	5 November 1967, p. 12
French, Philip	<i>New Statesman</i>	10 November 1967, p. 651
Lambert, J. W.	<i>Sunday Times</i>	5 November 1967, p. 53
Landstone, Charles	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	3 November 1967, p. 33
Lloyd-Evans, Gareth	<i>Guardian</i>	1 November 1967, p. 7
Norman, Barry	<i>Daily Mail</i>	1 November 1967, p. 14
Shorter, Eric	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	1 November 1967, p. 19
Trewin, J. C.	<i>Illustrated London News</i>	11 November 1967, pp. 32-33
Wardle, Irving	<i>Times</i>	1 November 1967, p. 7
Young, B. A.	<i>Financial Times</i>	1 November 1967, p. 26

**Title:** *The Man in the Glass Booth*  
**Author:** Robert Shaw  
**Director:** Harold Pinter  
**Company:** Glasshouse Productions  
**Venue:** The Royale Theater, New York  
**Première:** 26 September 1968

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Burke, Tom	<i>New York Times</i>	10 November 1968, Sec. 2. p. 7
Barnes, Clive	<i>New York Times</i>	27 September 1968, p. 41
Chapman, John	<i>Daily News</i>	27 September 1968, p. 76
Cooke, Richard P.	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	1 October 1968, p. 16
Gill, Brendan	<i>New Yorker</i>	5 October 1968, p. 95
Gilman, Richard	<i>New Republic</i>	19 October 1968, p. 37
Gottfried, Martin	<i>Women's Wear Daily</i>	30 September 1968, p. 32
Hewes, Henry	<i>Saturday Review</i>	12 October 1968, pp. 52-53
Hobe	<i>Variety</i>	2 October 1968, p. 64
Kerr, Walter	<i>New York Times</i>	6 October 1968, sec. 2 p. 5
Kroll, Jack	<i>Newsweek</i>	7 October 1968, p. 40
Novick, Julius	<i>Village Voice</i>	3 October 1968, p. 40
Richardson, Jack	<i>Commentary</i>	February 1969, pp. 25-26
	<i>Time</i>	4 October 1968, p. 37
Watts Jr., Richard	<i>New York Post</i>	27 September 1968, p. 59
Weales, Gerald	<i>Commonweal</i>	15 November 1968, p. 253

**Title:** *An Die Musik*  
**Author:** Pip Simmons Theatre Group  
**Director:** Pip Simmons  
**Company:** Pip Simmons Theatre Group  
**Venue:** Institute of Contemporary Arts, London  
**Première:** 1 July 1975

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Coveney, Michael	<i>Financial Times</i>	2 July 1975, p. 3
Cushman, Robert	<i>Observer</i>	6 July 1975, p. 23
Elsom, John	<i>Listener</i>	10 July 1975, p. 57
Ford, John	<i>Plays and Players</i>	August 1975, pp. 26-27
Hobson, Harold	<i>Sunday Times</i>	6 July 1975, p. 37
Khan, Naseem	<i>Evening Standard</i>	2 July 1975, p. 16
Lewsen, Charles	<i>Times</i>	3 July 1975, p. 11
Marcus, Frank	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	6 July 1975, p. 12
Nathan, David	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	4 July 1975, p. 10
Nightingale, Benedict	<i>New Statesman</i>	11 July 1975, p. 62
Sutcliffe, Tom	<i>Guardian</i>	2 July 1975, p. 10

**Title:** *Laughter!*  
**Author:** Peter Barnes  
**Director:** Charles Marowitz  
**Company:** The English Stage Company  
**Venue:** The Royal Court Theatre  
**Première:** 24 January 1978

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Billington, Michael	<i>Guardian</i>	25 January 1978, p. 10
Cushman, Robert	<i>Observer</i>	29 January 1978, p. 28
Elsom, John	<i>Listener</i>	2 February 1978, p. 153
Lahr, John	<i>Plays and Players</i>	March 1978, pp. 26-27
Levin, Bernard	<i>Sunday Times</i>	5 February 1978, p. 35
Marcus, Frank	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	5 February 1978, p. 16
Morley, Sheridan	<i>Punch</i>	1 February 1978, p. 202
Nathan, David	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	27 January 1978, p. 12
Nightingale, Benedict	<i>New Statesman</i>	3 February 1978, pp. 160-161
Shorter, Eric	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	25 January 1978, p. 15
Shulman, Milton	<i>Evening Standard</i>	25 January 1978, p. 20
Tinker, Jack	<i>Daily Mail (1st ed.)</i>	27 January 1978, p.22
Wardle, Irving	<i>Times</i>	25 January 1978, p. 13
Whitehead, Ted	<i>Spectator</i>	4 February 1978, pp. 26-27
Young, B. A.	<i>Financial Times</i>	25 January 1978, p. 15

**Title:** *Bent*  
**Author:** Martin Sherman  
**Director:** Robert Chetwyn  
**Company:** The English Stage Company  
**Venue:** The Royal Court Theatre  
**Première:** 3 May 1979

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Barber, John	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	4 May 1979, p. 9
Billington, Michael	<i>Guardian</i>	4 May 1979, p. 10
Chaillet, Ned	<i>Plays and Players</i>	June 1979, pp. 23-24
Cushman, Robert	<i>Observer</i>	6 May 1979, p. 14
Elsom, John	<i>Listener</i>	17 May 1979, p. 689
Jenkins, Peter	<i>Spectator</i>	12 May 1979, p. 25
King, Francis	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	6 May 1979, p. 14
Morley, Sheridan	<i>Punch</i>	23 May 1979, p. 908
Nathan, David	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	11 May 1979, p. 15
Nightingale, Benedict	<i>New Statesman</i>	11 May 1979, p. 692
Shulman, Milton	<i>Evening Standard</i>	4 May 1979, p. 15
Young, B. A.	<i>Financial Times</i>	4 May 1979, p. 21

**Title:** *Good. A Tragedy*  
**Author:** C. P. Taylor  
**Director:** Howard Davies  
**Company:** Royal Shakespeare Company  
**Venue:** The Warehouse, London  
**Première:** 9 September 1981

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Amory, Mark	<i>Spectator</i>	19 September 1981, pp. 24-25
Barber, John	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	10 September 1981, p. 15
Billington, Michael	<i>Guardian</i>	11 September 1981, p. 8
Coveney, Michael	<i>Financial Times</i>	10 September 1981, p. 21
Cushman, Robert	<i>Observer</i>	13 September 1981, p. 27
de Jongh, Nicholas	<i>Plays and Players</i>	November 1981, pp. 53-54
Elsom, John	<i>Listener</i>	10 September 1981, p. 285
Fenton, James	<i>Sunday Times</i>	13 September 1981, p. 39
Jenkins, Alan	<i>Times Literary Supplement</i>	9 October 1981, p. 1163
King, Francis	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	13 September 1981, p. 16
Morley, Sheridan	<i>Punch</i>	23 September 1981, p. 527
Nathan, David	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	18 September 1981, p. 16
Nightingale, Benedict	<i>New Statesman</i>	25 September 1981, p. 35
Shulman, Milton	<i>Evening Standard</i>	10 September 1981, p. 27
Taylor, John Russell	<i>Drama</i>	Autumn 1982, pp. 26-27
Wardle, Irving	<i>Times</i>	10 September 1981, p. 12

**London Theatre Record:**

**Volume/Date:** Vol. I, No. 18, 27 August - 9 September 1981  
**Pages:** 458-461

**Title:** *George Steiner's The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.*  
**Author:** George Steiner Adpt. Christopher Hampton  
**Director:** John Dexter  
**Company:** Mermaid Theatre Trust  
**Venue:** Mermaid Theatre  
**Première:** 17 February 1982

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Ackroyd, Peter	<i>Times Literary Supplement</i>	26 February 1982, p. 217
Amory, Mark	<i>Spectator</i>	27 February 1982, p. 29
Barber, John	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	18 February 1982, p. 13
Billington, Michael	<i>Guardian</i>	18 February 1982, p. 10
Coveney, Michael	<i>Financial Times</i>	18 February 1982, p. 21
de Jongh, Nicholas	<i>Plays and Players</i>	April 1982, pp. 18-19
Fenton, James	<i>Sunday Times</i>	21 February 1982, p. 40
King, Francis	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	21 February 1982, p. 14
Lichtenstein, Leonie	<i>Times Higher Educational Supplement</i>	30 April 1982, p. 11
Nightingale, Benedict	<i>New Statesman</i>	26 February 1982, pp. 30-31
Radin, Victoria	<i>Observer Review</i>	21 February 1982, p. 29
Shulman, Milton	<i>Evening Standard</i>	18 February 1982, p. 25
Taylor, John Russell	<i>Drama</i>	Autumn 1982, pp. 26-27
Tinker, Jack	<i>Daily Mail</i>	18 February 1982, p. 3
Took, Barry	<i>Punch</i>	3 March 1982, p. 358
Trewin, J. C.	<i>Illustrated London News</i>	April 1982, p. 8
Wardle, Irving	<i>Times</i>	18 February 1982, p. 11

**London Theatre Record:**

**Volume/Date:** Vol. II, No.4, 11 - 24 February 1982  
**Pages:** 83-90

## **The Steiner/Gilbert/Wesker Controversy**

### **Newspaper/Magazine articles:**

(By chronological order of article's appearance)

'Devil's Advocate for Hitler'. (Stephen Fay interviews George Steiner.)

*Sunday Times*, 14 February 1982, p. 16

'Steiner on Stage'. (Three hour seminar with cast) *Times*, 19 February 1982, p. 10

'Controversial scholar in theatre/ Steiner play'. *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 February 1982, p. 17

'Steiner's Hitler: a travesty'. Martin Gilbert. *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 February 1982, p. 20

'Leaflets attack Hitler play'. *Times*, 26 February 1982, p. 2

'Who do you think you are kidding, Mr Hitler?' Martin Gilbert. *Times*, (Saturday Review) 6 March 1982, p. 9

'Who do you think you are kidding, Dr Gilbert?' George Steiner. *Times*, 11 March 1982, p. 12

'My Shylock and His Hitler'. Arnold Wesker. *Times*, 20 March 1982, p. 6

'The *Jewish Chronicle*, interview with George Steiner'. David Nathan. *Jewish Chronicle* 26 March 1982, pp. 26 and 36

'Foundation in hatred'. (Letter from George Steiner in response to Arnold Wesker.) *Times*, 27 March 1982, p. 9



**Title:** *In Kanada*  
**Author:** David Clough  
**Director:** Phil Young  
**Company:** Public Property Theatre Company  
**Venue:** Old Red Lion (Theatre Pub), London  
**Première:** 18 March 1982

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Carne, Rosalind	<i>Financial Times</i>	22 March 1982, p. 19
Edwards, Christopher	<i>Guardian</i>	19 March 1982, p. 10
Jacobs, Gerald	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	26 March 1982, p. 18
Shorter, Eric	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	29 March 1982, p. 13

**London Theatre Record:**

**Volume/Date:** Vol. II, No.6, 11 - 22 March 1982  
**Pages:** 143-144

**Title:** *Good. A Tragedy*  
**Author:** C. P. Taylor  
**Director:** Howard Davies  
**Company:** Royal Shakespeare Company  
**Venue:** Booth Theater, New York  
**Première:** 13 October 1982

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Brustein, Robert	<i>New Republic</i>	15 November 1982, pp. 23-25
Gill, Brendan	<i>New Yorker</i>	25 October 1982, pp. 160-161
Humm	<i>Variety</i>	20 October 1982, pp. 331-332
Kalem, T. E.	<i>Time</i>	25 October 1982, p. 56
Kerr, Walter	<i>New York Times</i>	24 October 1982, Sec. 8H pp. 3 and 8
Munk, Erika	<i>Village Voice</i>	26 October 1982, p. 100
Rich, Frank	<i>New York Times</i>	14 October 1982, p. C17
Rich, Frank	<i>New York Times</i>	11 November 1982, p. C21

**See also:**

Heller Anderson, Susan	'The Holocaust is a New Challenge for a Shakespearian Star'.  <i>New York Times</i>	10 October 1982, Sec. 2 p. 1
Kakutani, Michiko	'40 years After, Artists still struggle with the Holocaust.'  <i>New York Times</i>	5 December 1982, Sec. 2 pp. 1 and 16
Shepard, Richard F.	'Director of "Good" Tells Story Behind the Drama'.  <i>New York Times</i>	15 October 1982, Sec.C p. 4

**Title:** *George Steiner's The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.*  
**Author:** George Steiner Adpt. Christopher Hampton  
**Director:** Mark Lamos  
**Company:** Hartford Stage Company  
**Venue:** Hartford Stage, Hartford Conn  
**Première:** 31 December 1982

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Gussow, Mel                      *New York Times*                      7 January 1983, p. C5

**Title:** *Playing for Time*  
**Author:** Arthur Miller  
**Director:** Simon Levy  
**Company:** One Act Theater Company  
**Venue:** One-Act Theater Mainstage, San Francisco  
**Première:** 6 October 1985

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Brousse, Charles	<i>Pacific Sun</i>	25 October 1985
Winn, Steven	<i>San Francisco Chronicle</i>	15 October 1985

## The *'Perdition Affair'*

The controversy surrounding the withdrawal of the production of *Perdition* by Jim Allen which was to premiere on 27 January 1987 at the Royal Court Theatre, London.

### Newspaper/Magazine Articles and Letters:

(In chronological order of appearance in the press)

#### *January*

	'Courting Protest'.	<i>Time Out</i>	7-14 January 1987, p. 8
	'Condemnation?'	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	10 January 1987, p. 15
Rose, David	'Rewriting the Holocaust'.	<i>Guardian</i>	14 January 1987, p. 7
Allen, Jim	'Holocaust Questions Answered on Stage'.	<i>Guardian</i> (letter)	17 January 1987, p. 14
Jenkins, Lin Stinger, Robin	'Play Cancelled after Protests by Jews'.	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	22 January 1987, pp. 1 and 40
Editorial	'Abuse of History'.	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	22 January 1987, p. 12
Gilbert, Martin	'Nazis and the Jews: a Travesty of the Facts'.	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	22 January 1987, p. 10
de Jongh, Nicholas	'Theatre Scraps Zionist Play'.	<i>Guardian</i>	22 January 1987, p. 1
	'Holocaust Play Called off After Protests'.	<i>Times</i>	22 January 1987, p. 5
Spackman, Anne	'Royal Court Cancels "anti-Semitic" play'.	<i>Independent</i>	22 January 1987, p. 1

### Newspaper/Magazine Articles and Letters (cont.)

Games, Stephen	'The Dramatic trial that Never got to the Royal Court'.	<i>Independent</i>	22 January 1987, p. 15
Grant, Steve	'Trial and Tribulations'.	<i>Time Out</i>	21-28 January 1987, pp. 20-21
Roth, Stephen	'Libel!'	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	23 January 1987, p. 25
Allen, Jim	'A Playwright's Path to Perdition'.	<i>Guardian</i>	23 January 1987, p. 17
Editorial	'Paths to <i>Perdition</i> '.	<i>Guardian</i>	23 January 1987, p. 10
Lord Goodman	'This Brutal Insult has No Place in Art'.	<i>London Evening Standard</i>	23 January 1987, p. 7
Wardle, Irving	'Why we Should Rue <i>Perdition</i> Cast Out'.	<i>Times</i>	23 January 1987, p. 20
Amiel, Barbara	' <i>Perdition</i> : Killed By its Blatant Lie'.	<i>Times</i>	24 January 1987, p. 16
Toomey, Christine	'A Curtain Call for Courting <i>Perdition</i> '.	<i>Sunday Times</i>	25 January 1987, p. 32
Johnson, Paul	'The Royal Court and Red Propaganda'.	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	25 January 1987, p. 22
Hillmore, Peter	'The Royal Court is Caught Napping'.	<i>Observer</i>	25 January 1987, p. 20

## Newspaper/Magazine Articles and Letters (cont.)

Bell, Andrew	'Court Cop Out'.	<i>Time Out</i>	28 January - 4 February 1987, p. 7
Hastings, Michael	Letter.	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	30 January 1987, p. 22
	<i>February</i>		
Stafford-Clark, Max	Letter.	<i>Guardian</i>	2 February 1987, p. 14
Levin, Bernard	'Waking the Dead to Revile the Living'.	<i>Times</i>	2 February 1987, p. 16
Gilbert, Martin	'Playwrights Defence'. (Letter)	<i>Times</i>	4 February 1987, p. 13
Radin, Victoria	'Playing Dirty'. (Letter)	<i>New Statesman</i>	6 February 1987, pp. 25-26
Allen, Jim; Cesarani) David; Rose, John)	Letters	<i>Guardian</i>	7 February 1987, p. 14
Loach, Ken	'Writer's Rights and a Kangaroo Court'.	<i>Guardian</i>	18 February 1987, p. 28
Loach, Ken and Andrew Hornung	'Censorship and <i>Perdition</i> : a reply to Victoria Radin'.	<i>New Statesman</i>	20 February 1987, pp. 19-20
Radin, Victoria	'Totalitarian Rabbit Hole'.	<i>New Statesman</i>	27 February 1987, p. 19

## Newspaper/Magazine Articles and Letters (cont.)

### March

- |                                      |                                    |                          |                          |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Stafford-Clark,<br>Max               | 'Why I Axed<br><i>Perdition</i> '. | <i>Guardian</i>          | 13 March 1987, p. 19     |
| Cesarani, David)<br>Cheyette, Bryan) | Letters                            | <i>New<br/>Statesman</i> | 13 March 1987, pp. 31-32 |
| Roth, Stephen<br>Loach, Ken          | Letters                            | <i>Guardian</i>          | 19 March 1987, p. 14     |

### April

- |                   |                                     |                                                    |                     |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Raphael, Frederic | 'Sinister Cabals and<br>Drama-doc'. | <i>Listener</i>                                    | 2 April 1987, p. 20 |
| Cesarani, David   | 'Israel on Trial'.                  | <i>Times Higher<br/>Educational<br/>Supplement</i> | 3 April 1987. p. 11 |

### See Also

- |                     |                                                                                                                               |                 |                      |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Billington, Michael | ' <i>Perdition</i> : Case<br>Not proven'.<br>(Public reading of<br><i>Perdition</i> at Royal<br>Lyceum Studio,<br>Edinburgh.) | <i>Guardian</i> | 19 August 1987, p. 9 |
| Billington, Michael | 'Court Napping'.<br>( <i>Perdition</i> at the<br>Conway Hall)                                                                 | <i>Guardian</i> | 7 May 1988, p. 16    |
| Lustig, Robin       | 'Tirade Fades'.<br>( <i>Perdition</i> at the<br>Conway Hall)                                                                  | <i>Observer</i> | 8 May 1988, p. 44    |



**Title:** *Ghetto*  
**Author:** Joshua Sobol  
**Director:** Nicholas Hytner  
**Company:** The Royal National Theatre Company  
**Venue:** The Royal National Theatre (Olivier)  
**Première:** 27 April 1989

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Arditti, Michael	<i>Punch</i>	12 May 1989, p. 46
Billington, Michael	<i>Guardian</i>	29 April 1989, p. 21
Chaillet, Ned	<i>Plays International</i>	Vol. 4 no.12 (July 1989): 20-22
Coveney, Michael	<i>Financial Times</i>	28 April 1989, p. 27
Edwards, Christopher	<i>Spectator</i>	6 May 1989, pp. 37-38
Gross, John	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	30 April 1989, p. 19
Hassell, Graham	<i>Plays and Players</i>	July 1989, p. 24
Hiley, Jim	<i>Listener</i>	11 May 1989, p. 30
Levin, Bernard	<i>Times</i>	7 August 1989, p. 12
Nathan, David	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	5 May 1989, p. 12
Peter, John	<i>Sunday Times</i>	30 April 1989, p. C8
Ratcliffe, Michael	<i>Observer</i>	30 April 1989, p. 45
Sherwood, Peter	<i>Times Literary Supplement</i>	12-18 May 1989, p. 514
Shulman, Milton	<i>Evening Standard</i>	28 April 1989, p. 35
Sinclair, Clive	<i>Sunday Times Magazine</i>	23 April 1989, p. L5
Spencer, Charles	<i>Weekend Telegraph</i>	29 April 1989, p. XII
Taylor, Paul	<i>Independent</i>	29 April 1989, Arts p. 32
Tinker, Jack	<i>Daily Mail</i>	28 April 1989, p. 3
Wardle, Irving	<i>Times</i>	28 April 1989, p. 20

**London Theatre Record:**

**Volume/Date:** Vol. IX, No.9, 23 April - 6 May 1989  
**Pages:** 549-556

**Title:** *Kindertransport*  
**Author:** Diane Samuels  
**Director:** Abigail Morris  
**Company:** Soho Theatre Company  
**Venue:** The Cockpit Theatre  
**Première:** 13 April 1993

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

de Jongh, Nicholas	<i>Evening Standard</i>	16 April 1993, p. 48
Gardner, Lyn	<i>Guardian</i>	19 April 1993, Arts p. 6
Kingston, Jeremy	<i>Times</i>	20 April 1993, p. 42
Nathan, David	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	23 April 1993, p. 21
Taylor, Paul	<i>Independent</i>	17 April 1993, <i>Weekend</i> p.30
Wardle, Irving	<i>Independent on Sunday</i>	18 April 1993 p. 19

**London Theatre Record:**

**Volume/Date:** Vol. XIII, No.8, 9 - 22 April 1993  
**Pages:** 418-420

For reviews of *Kindertransport*'s West End production at the Vaudeville Theatre from 9 September 1996 see also:

**London Theatre Record:**

**Volume/Date:** Vol. XVI, No.19, 14 October 1996  
**Pages:** 1147-1151

**Title:** *Broken Glass*  
**Author:** Arthur Miller  
**Director:** John Tillinger  
**Company:**  
**Venue:** Long Wharf Theater, New Haven; Booth Theater, New York  
**Première:** 9 March 1994; 24 April 1994

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

*New Haven*

Klein, Alvin                      *New York Times*                      3 April 1994, Sec. XIII  
Connecticut p. 10

*New York*

Brustein, Robert                *New Republic*                      30 May 1994, pp. 29-30  
Canby, Vincent                 *New York Times*                      1 May 1994, Sec. II p. 5  
Gerard, Jeremy                 *Variety*                                25 April - 1 May 1994,  
p.38  
Henry, William A.               *Time*                                    23 May 1994, p. 72  
Lahr, John                         *New Yorker*                            9 May 1994, pp. 94-96  
Richards, David                 *New York Times*                      25 April 1994, p. C11 and  
C13

**Title:** *Broken Glass*  
**Author:** Arthur Miller  
**Director:** David Thacker  
**Company:** The Royal National Theatre Company  
**Venue:** The Royal National Theatre (Olivier)  
**Première:** 4 August 1994

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Billington, Michael	<i>Guardian</i>	6 August 1994, p. 26
Coveney, Michael	<i>Observer</i>	7 August 1994, p. 11
de Jongh, Nicholas	<i>Evening Standard</i>	5 August 1994, p. 7
Esslin, Martin	<i>Plays International</i>	Vol.10 no.2 (September 1994): 15-16
Green, Laurence	<i>Plays and Players</i>	September/October 1994, p. 17
Gross, John	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	7 August 1994, Arts Review p. 7
Hopkinson, Amanda	<i>New Statesman and Society</i>	5 August 1994, pp. 31-32
Koenig, Rhoda	<i>Independent</i>	6 August 1994, Arts p. 28
Macaulay, Alastair	<i>Weekend Financial Times</i>	6/7th August 1994, p. XV
Morley, Sheridan	<i>Spectator</i>	13 August 1994, p. 31
Nathan, David	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	12 August 1994, p. 26
Nightingale, Benedict	<i>Times</i>	6 August 1994, p. 5
Peter, John	<i>Sunday Times</i>	14 August 1994, Sec. 10 pp. 20-21
Spencer, Charles	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	8 August 1994, p. 15
Tinker, Jack	<i>Daily Mail</i>	5 August 1994, p. 11
Wardle, Irving	<i>Independent on Sunday</i>	7 August 1994, p. 22
Wolf, Matt	<i>Times Literary Supplement</i>	19 August 1994, p. 18

**London Theatre Record:**

**Volume/Date:** Vol. XIV, No.16, 29 August 1994  
**Pages:** 974-980

**Title:** *The Strange Passenger*  
**Author:** Sonja Lyndon  
**Director:** Penny Ciniewicz  
**Company:** Paines Plough  
**Venue:** Plymouth Drum Theatre; Battersea Arts Centre, London  
**Première:** 26 September 1995; 7 November 1995

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

*London*

Bassett, Kate	<i>Times</i>	14 November 1995, p. 37
Curtis, Nick	<i>Evening Standard</i>	14 November 1995, p. 50
Nathan, David	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	17 November 1995, p. 40
Shuttleworth, Ian	<i>Financial Times</i>	13 November 1995, p. 19

**London Theatre Record:**

**Volume/Date:** Vol. XV, No. 23, 11 December 1995  
**Pages:** 1552-1553

**Title:** *The Holocaust Trilogy: Theresa; A Dead Woman on Holiday; The Dybbuk* (Adpt. Julia Pascal)

**Author:** Julia Pascal

**Director:** Julia Pascal; Jon Harris; Julia Pascal

**Company:** Pascal Theatre Company Ltd.

**Venue:** New End Theatre, London

**Première:** 21 November 1995

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Arditti, Michael	<i>Independent</i>	22 November 1995, Sec.2 pp. 10-11
Bayley, Clare	<i>Independent</i>	23 November 1995, Sec.2 p. 12
Cheyette, Bryan	<i>Times Literary Supplement</i>	8 December 1995, p. 18
Cook, Mark	<i>Ham and High</i>	17 November 1995, p. 48
Curtis, Nick	<i>Evening Standard</i>	30 November 1995, p. 48
Gardner, Lyn	<i>Guardian</i>	6 December 1995, Tab.p. 9
Hewison, Robert	<i>Sunday Times</i>	26 November 1995, Sec.10 p. 16
Kingston, Jeremy	<i>Times</i>	24 November 1995, p. 35
Nathan, David	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	24 November 1995, p. 38
Reade, Simon	<i>Financial Times</i>	24 November 1995, p. 19
Stagg-Elliott, Victoria	<i>New Moon</i>	November 1995, pp. 32-33

**London Theatre Record:**

**Volume/Date:** Vol. XV, No.24, 28 December 1995

**Pages:** 1610-1612

For reviews of the premières of the individual productions of *Theresa, A Dead Woman on Holiday*, and *The Dybbuk* see also:

**London Theatre Record:**

*Theresa:* Vol. X, No.24, 19 Nov - 2 Dec 1990: 1600-1601

*A Dead Woman on Holiday:* Vol. XI, No. 21, 8-21 Oct 1991: 1267-126

*The Dybbuk:* Vol. XII, No.13, 17-30 June 1992: 769-770

**Title:** *Nuremberg. War Crimes Trial*  
**Author:** Richard Norton-Taylor  
**Director:** Nicholas Kent  
**Company:**  
**Venue:** Tricycle Theatre, London  
**Première:** 3 May 1996

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Billington, Michael	<i>Guardian</i>	11 May 1996, p. 26
Butler, Robert	<i>Independent on Sunday</i>	12 May 1996, <i>Real Life</i> p. 12
Coveney, Michael	<i>Observer</i>	12 May 1996, <i>The Review</i> p. 11
Curtis, Nick	<i>Evening Standard</i>	9 May 1996, p. 45
Gross, John	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	12 May 1996, <i>Review</i> p. 8
Morley, Sheridan	<i>Spectator</i>	18 May 1996, pp. 48-49
Nathan, David	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	17 May 1996, p. 37
Newey, Glen	<i>Times Literary Supplement</i>	31 May 1996, p. 20
Nightingale, Benedict	<i>Times</i>	10 May 1996, p. 30
Peter, John	<i>Sunday Times</i>	12 May 1996, Sec. 10 p. 20
Shuttleworth, Ian	<i>Financial Times</i>	10 May 1996, p. 19
Spencer, Charles	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	11 May 1996, p. 18
Taylor, Paul	<i>Independent</i>	10 May 1996, Sec. 2 p. 6
Usher, Shaun	<i>Daily Mail</i>	17 May 1996, p. 53

**London Theatre Record:**

**Volume/Date:** Vol. XVI, No. 10, 10 June 1996  
**Pages:** 599 - 603

**Title:** *The Flight Into Egypt*  
**Author:** Julian Garner  
**Director:** John Dove  
**Company:**  
**Venue:** Hampstead Theatre, London  
**Première:** 5 September 1996

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Billington, Michael	<i>Guardian</i>	11 September 1996, p. 13
Butler, Robert	<i>Independent on Sunday</i>	15 September 1996, p. 15
Coveney, Michael	<i>Observer</i>	15 September 1996, p. 11
Curtis, Nick	<i>Evening Standard</i>	11 September 1996, p. 48
Gross, John	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	15 September 1996, <i>Review</i> p.11
Kingston, Jeremy	<i>Times</i>	12 September 1996, p. 33
Morley, Sheridan	<i>Spectator</i>	21 September 1996, p. 65
Nathan, David	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	13 September 1996, p. 58
Peter, John	<i>Sunday Times</i>	15 September 1996, Sec. 10 p.15
Spencer, Charles	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	12 September 1996, p. 18
Taylor, Paul	<i>Independent</i>	12 September 1996, Sec. 2 p. 10

**London Theatre Record:**

**Volume/Date:** Vol. XVI, No.19, 14 October 1996  
**Pages:** 1152 - 1155



**Title:** *The Handyman*  
**Author:** Ronald Harwood  
**Director:** Christopher Morahan  
**Company:**  
**Venue:** Minerva Theatre, Chichester  
**Première:** 19 September 1996

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Billington, Michael	<i>Guardian</i>	25 September 1996, p. 2
Butler, Robert	<i>Independent on Sunday</i>	29 September 1996, <i>Real Life</i> p. 11
Curtis, Nick	<i>Evening Standard</i>	24 September 1996, p. 48
Morley, Sheridan	<i>Spectator</i>	5 October 1996, p. 64
Nathan, David	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i> [Book Review]	27 September 1996, p. 28
Nightingale, Benedict	<i>Times</i>	25 September 1996, p. 35
Peter, John	<i>Sunday Times</i>	29 September 1996, Sec. 10 pp.14-15
Reade, Simon	<i>Financial Times</i>	25 September 1996, p. 25
Robson, Christopher	<i>Plays and Players</i>	November/December 1996, p. 19
Spencer, Charles	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	25 September 1996, p. 12
Taylor, Paul	<i>Independent</i>	25 September 1996, Sec. 2 p. 9
Tinker, Jack	<i>Daily Mail</i>	27 September 1996, p. 46
Wardle, Irving	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	29 September 1996, <i>Review</i> p. 7

**London Theatre Record:**

**Volume/Date:** Vol. XVI, No.20, 28 October 1996  
**Pages:** 1268-1270 and 1273

**Title:** *Ashes to Ashes*  
**Author:** Harold Pinter  
**Director:** Harold Pinter  
**Company:** English Stage Company  
**Venue:** The Royal Court Theatre Upstairs (at the Ambassadors)  
**Première:** 19 September 1996

**Newspaper/Magazine Reviews:**

Billington, Michael	<i>Guardian</i>	21 September 1996, p. 7
Butler, Robert	<i>Independent on Sunday</i>	22 September 1996, p. 11
Bywater, Michael	<i>New Statesman</i>	27 September 1996, p. 52
Coveney, Michael	<i>Observer</i>	22 September 1996, p. 11
de Jongh, Nicholas	<i>Evening Standard</i>	20 September 1996, p. 20
Esslin, Martin	<i>Plays International</i>	Vol. 12 no. 4 (November 1996): 20-21
Gross, John	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	22 September 1996, <i>Arts Review</i> p. 11
Macaulay, Alastair	<i>Weekend Financial Times</i>	21/22 September 1996, Sec. 3 p. xv
Morley, Sheridan	<i>Spectator</i>	28 September 1996, p. 66
Nathan, David	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>	27 September 1996, p. 33
Nightingale, Benedict	<i>Times</i>	25 September 1996, p. 5
Peter, John	<i>Sunday Times</i>	29 September 1996, Sec. 10 p. 15
Spencer, Charles	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	20 September 1996, p. 8
Tanitch, Robert	<i>Plays and Players</i>	October 1996, p. 20
Taylor, Paul	<i>Independent</i>	21 September 1996, <i>Weekend</i> p. 4
Tinker, Jack	<i>Daily Mail</i>	20 September 1996, p. 7

**London Theatre Record:**

**Volume/Date:** Vol. XVI, No. 19, 14 October 1996  
**Pages:** 1183 - 1188 and 1214

## REFERENCES

### 1 Introduction

1. George Steiner in Brook, Stephen. *The Club. The Jews of Modern Britain*. London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1996, p. 421.

Throughout this study I have chosen to use the expression 'the Holocaust' rather than 'the Shoah' to refer to the persecution and industrialised mass extermination principally of Europe's Jews from 1933 to 1945. The Hebrew expression *Shoah* has not found broad critical favour or widespread popular acceptance in the United Kingdom as is currently evidenced by the regular usage of 'the Holocaust' by the media, and by the titles of academic works such as Tony Kushner's. (See notes 5 and 7 below and bibliography.) In contemporary British society *Shoah* is more readily and consequently mistakenly in some instances, associated with Claude Lanzmann's documentary film of that name, an example of one artistic representation providing a total impression of a much more diverse and complex phenomenon than conveyed even by Lanzmann's epic documentary. (See Filmography for details). I am not convinced by scholarly attempts, too numerous to cite, to privilege other alternative expressions, such as 'the Event', to eschew the terms 'the Holocaust' and 'the Shoah' in order to avoid their associative meanings.

The majority of the population are entirely unaware of the scriptural meanings in Greek and Hebrew and the constellation of theological meanings that attach to each expression, and therefore of those intimations of divine punishment and sacrifice which scholars seek not to evoke in their chosen vocabulary. I have chosen to use 'the Holocaust' throughout this study as I consider the phenomenon of the extermination of European Jewry to be *sui generis*, and by virtue of the expression's more frequent critical and popular usage in Britain. 'The Holocaust' has a resonance far greater than 'the Shoah' for me personally, the more so as a result of this attempt to discover the historical specificity of some of the events in this catastrophic period of history, the necessity of living with the absence of apparent meaning and the endeavour to critically assess what has been made of these cardinal facts - its occurrence and its lack of meaning - by dramatic representation.

2. See Noakes, J., and Pridham, G. (eds.). *Nazism 1919-1945. A Documentary Reader Vol. 3. Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1988, pp. 1125-1136.
3. Frederic Raphael in Brook, Stephen, 1996, p. 421.

4. See bibliography for a select list of Kushner's publications on these topics.
5. Kushner, Tony. 'The Impact of the Holocaust on British Society and Culture'. *Contemporary Record* Vol. 5 no.2 (Autumn 1991): 349-375. p. 349.
6. See Chapter Seven 'Liberal Culture and the Post-War Confrontation with the Holocaust'. In Kushner, Tony. *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination. A Social and Cultural History*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994, pp. 205-269.
7. Kushner, Tony, 1994, p. 277.
8. Ibid., p. 256.
9. Kushner's oversight is repeated in another recent publication. In the first book of its kind by a British author, *A War Against Memory: The Future of Holocaust Remembrance* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1996) Isabel Wollaston addressed the issue of memory and the Holocaust with a bias toward popular culture and the representation of the Holocaust. In the main she confines her discussion of popular memory to such touch-stones of Holocaust representation as the film adaptation of William Styron's novel *Sophie's Choice*, the US television series *Holocaust*, Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, and Stephen Spielberg's film adaptation of *Schindler's List*. Save for a brief mention of Peter Weiss's *The Investigation* drama of the Holocaust is completely neglected and no attempt is made to engage with different national responses to the examples of popular culture she has chosen, or to set these particular cultural expressions firmly in a British context consistent with the apparent intention of her book, to discern their consequences for memory of the Holocaust with particular reference to British society. Wollaston's priorities appear to be very much determined both by the hegemony of US cultural production, and, when it comes to issues of representation and the Holocaust, the hegemony of US academic critical commentary.
10. Skloot, Robert. *The Darkness We Carry. The Drama of the Holocaust*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988. Edith Brown Naveh's *Dramaturgical Problems in Plays With the Theme of the Nazi Holocaust*, (Ph. D thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1977), represents something of a pioneering study devoted as it is to the exclusive consideration of dramatic texts and productions of a number of plays on the Holocaust and post-Holocaust experience. Naveh's purpose is to test her assumption that attempts to dramatise aspects of the Holocaust must have provoked novel dramaturgical strategies due to the *sui generis* nature of the event, but her research 'reveals that Holocaust dramatists do not view the event as unique, and thus do not develop new techniques to present the event on stage. Holocaust playwrights

almost invariably place the event in greater perspective (that is, as part of a pattern of all of human history) than do novelists'. (p. 17).

Gary Heisserer's *The Historical Drama of the Holocaust: Assessing the Transformation from Reality to Record*, (Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1987), is differently and more specifically focused. Heisserer's chief concern is the nature of the relationship between event and the attempt to shape historical experience through, in the first instance, writing formal history and later in the study dramatic representation. In his discussion of these issues Heisserer draws upon the work of a number of prominent historiographers and philosophers of history, Herbert Butterfield, Michael Oakeshott and Hayden White amongst them, and comments on the ubiquity of the propensity to mythologise, and the ineluctable partial nature of knowledge of ultimately irrecoverable events. He relates his discussion of these issues to conventional interpretations of the genre of historical drama, to the specific problems provoked by treating dramas of the Holocaust as a sub-group of this genre, and finally illustrates the indissoluble link between historical categories of interpretation and aesthetic strategies while allowing for differences of approach and mode, by reference to three contrasting dramatic treatments of the historical figure of Janusz Korczak. Heisserer's discussion of dramatic representation and the Holocaust is necessarily influenced by the US scholars mentioned in this introduction, Lawrence Langer, Alvin H. Rosenfeld, James E. Young, and his tutor for this study at Wisconsin University, Robert Skloot.

11. Skloot, Robert (ed.). *The Theatre of the Holocaust*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1982. (The plays included in the anthology are *Resort 76* Shimon Wincelberg; *Throne of Straw* Harold and Edith Lieberman; *The Cannibals* George Tabori; *Who Will Carry the Word?* Charlotte Delbo.)
12. Skloot, Robert, 1988, p. xiv.
13. *Ibid.*, p. xv.
14. See Langer, Lawrence L., 1982, Chapter 2, 'The Death of Choice'. pp. 67-129.
15. Skloot, Robert, 1988, p. 26.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 44,45,46.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 72,73.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
21. Ezrahi, Sidra DeKoven. *By Words Alone. The Holocaust in Literature*. London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.

22. See for example Langer, Lawrence. *The Age of Atrocity Death in Modern Literature*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978; Boyers, Robert. *Atrocity and Amnesia. The Political Novel since 1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
23. Langer, Lawrence. *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination*. London: Yale University Press, 1975; Rosenfeld, Alvin H. *A Double Dying. Reflections on Holocaust Literature*. London: Indiana University Press, 1980; Langer, Lawrence. *Versions of Survival. The Holocaust and the Human Spirit*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982; Young, James E. *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust. Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.
24. See Chapter Four, 'Documentary Theater, Ideology, and the Rhetoric of Fact'. In Young, James E., 1988, pp. 64-80.
25. Pavis, Patrice. *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*. Trans. Loren Kruger. London: Routledge, 1992. p. 33.
26. Ibid., p. 28.
27. Quoted in Pavis, Patrice, 1992, p. 40.
28. Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *The Semiotics of Theater*. (Abridg.) Trans. Gaines, Jeremy and Doris L. Jones. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992, p. 213.
29. Ibid., p. 213.
30. Ibid., p. 211.
31. Pavis, Patrice, 1992, p. 31.
32. Worthen, W. B. *Modern Drama and the Rhetoric of Theater*. Oxford: University of California Press, 1992, pp. 4-5.
33. Ibid., p. 5.
34. Ibid., p. 1.
35. Skloot, Robert, (ed.), 1982, p. 14.
36. See note 11 for a list of the plays included in the anthology edited by Skloot.
37. Skloot, Robert, 1988, p. 10.
38. Quoted in Skloot, Robert, 1988, p. 10. See Schiff, Ellen. *From Stereotype to Metaphor. The Jew in Contemporary Drama*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982, p. 210.
39. Skloot, Robert, (ed.), 1982, p. 14.
40. Ozick, Cynthia. 'A Liberal's Auschwitz'. Quoted in Young, James E., 1990, p. 84.
41. Young, James E., 1990, p. 84.
42. Ibid., p. 90.

43. See Bridgeman, John. *The End of the Holocaust. The Liberation of the Camps*. London: Batsford, 1990, pp. 35-49.
44. Dimbleby, Jonathan. *Richard Dimbleby. A Biography*. London: Hodder, 1975, pp. 193-194.
45. Text taken from: *Remember. Richard Dimbleby at Belsen*. Fiftieth Anniversary Production. Presented by Jonathan Dimbleby. Produced by Carol Sennet. BBC MCMXCV.
46. See Crossman, Richard. *Palestine Mission: A Personal Record*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1947 p. 22; also Seaton, Jean. 'The BBC and the Holocaust'. *European Journal of Communication* Vol. 2, 1987, p. 55, where she refers to both Crossman's and Sir Hugh Greene's utter astonishment on encountering Buchenwald and Dachau respectively.
47. See Bridgeman, John, 1990, p. 53.
48. Young, James E., 1990, p. 91.
49. For example Steiner, George. 'The Long Life of Metaphor: An Approach to the Shoah'. In *Writing and the Holocaust* Lang, Berel, (ed.): 154-171. London: Holmes and Meier, 1988; Rosenfeld, Alvin H. *A Double Dying. Reflections on Holocaust Literature*. London: Indiana University Press, 1980.
50. Young, James E., 1990, p. 93.
51. Ibid., p. 94.
52. Ibid., p. 94.
53. Ibid., pp. 97 and 98.
54. Ibid., pp. 97 and 98.

## 2 **Goodrich and Hackett's *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank***

1. Levin, Meyer. *The New York Times Book Review*, 15 June 1952, p. 1 and 22; *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*. Trans. B. M. Mooyart-Doubleday. New York: Doubleday, 1952; *The Diary of Anne Frank*. U.S. Dir. George Stevens. Written, Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett. Produced, George Stevens. Twentieth Century Fox Corp., 1959.
2. Huggett, Richard. *Binkie Beaumont. Eminence Grise of the West End Theatre 1933 -1973*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989, p. 323.
3. See the diary entry for 11 July 1942 for Anne's reference to the annexe as 'a very peculiar boarding house'. All subsequent references to the text of *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank* are to the Heinemann Educational edition, London 1991.
4. For a fuller perspective see Graver, Lawrence. *An Obsession with Anne Frank*.

*Meyer Levin and the Diary*. London: University of California Press, 1995. The quotations appear on pp. 88-90.

5. See Kushner, Tony. "I Want to go on Living after my Death": The memory of Anne Frank'. In *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*. Evans, Martin, and Ken Lunn (eds.): 3-25. Oxford: Berg, 1997, especially p. 9.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
7. Huggett, Richard, 1989, p. 323.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 345 and 346.
9. Beaumont's perspicacity was to recognise that the Finance Act of 1916 allowed for specific circumstances in which the tax would not be levied: 'If the entertainment on offer was wholly educational, and if it was either partly educational or partly scientific, and offered by a society, institution, or committee which was not established to make profit'. (Huggett, Richard, 1989, p. 290). New legislation had been enacted in 1934 intended to clarify what kinds of production might fairly be described as of educational value, cultural benefit or scientific worth, and therefore which could enjoy exemption from tax, with the additional intention of encouraging, or at least not discouraging productions of Shakespeare and the European classics.

In early 1942, having been managing director of H. M. Tennents Ltd. for a little over six months Beaumont realised, and he was the first to do so, that it was

the company which had to be educational and not necessarily the plays... once the company had been formed there was no limit to the number of plays it could present simultaneously and get a management fee from everyone. This was an entirely legal payment taken by the manager and it covered simple running expenses such as heat, light, telephone, stationary, wages for office staff and part of the rent. At £25 a week per play it quickly added up to a sizeable sum. (Huggett, Richard. 1989, p. 290)

The Finance Act of 1934 obliged the managers to invest the profits in the company and not to distribute it as dividends either to the board or other financial backers. Beaumont was quite content to meet this legal obligation and established Tennent Plays Ltd. to operate as the non-profit distributing company of H. M. Tennent Ltd. Both companies shared the same board of directors, office accommodation and staff, but legally were distinct companies. There were however far greater financial benefits to be gained through the establishment of Tennent Plays Ltd, and the regulations governing exemption



from the Entertainments Tax for companies with a partly educational policy than simply £25 per week for each production.

With the formation of Tennent Plays Ltd. Beaumont was in a position to consider producing plays which hitherto would have been considered a commercial risk but which, according to the letter of the 1934 law, could be claimed to have some educational value. Following the intended purpose of the law this would undoubtedly cover the Shakespearian canon and that of the European classics but also more recent plays which were considered to have less appeal to popular taste. Beaumont was aware that he could use the 'star' performers already contracted to H. M. Tennent Ltd. in the tax exempt 'educational' productions of Tennent Plays Ltd. creating huge box office demand for which he would not be liable for tax. The profits could then be transferred within the company to H. M. Tennent Ltd. or other associated business concerns in need of an injection of cash. Previously profits from popular and commercially safe plays had funded the occasional risky, less popular play, but the tax exemption regulations reversed this cash flow: 'risky' plays populated with stars proved to be the formula through which Beaumont could make a vast fortune through the productions' tax exempt status, rather than hugely successful popular shows upon which he was liable to pay 33.3 percent in Entertainments Tax. This, along with the successes of the war years, was the chief reason for Beaumont's boundless optimism in June 1945.

The following year a difficulty with the Inland Revenue, and the publication of some criticism of the financial circumstances which prevailed in the West End momentarily clouded the horizon. The Inland Revenue quite unexpectedly informed Tennent Plays Ltd. that the company was liable for payments of tax retrospectively since the establishment of the company. This covered some fifteen productions and involved a sum of over £15,000. Beaumont was mystified by the sudden demand and not a little fearful of the prospect of bankruptcy.

The tax demand had been caused by a small but significant slip in documents provided by Tennent Plays Ltd. for the Inland Revenue:

Mr. F. A. S. Gwatkin, chairman of both the Tennent Companies and a greatly respected theatrical solicitor, had been responsible for drawing up the memorandum of Tennent Plays Ltd. and carefully included every sort of entertainment which Binkie might want to present. One of those specified was dance halls. This turned out to be a rather unfortunate mistake... The Commissioners pounced on this and even Binkie couldn't claim that a dance hall had any cultural or educational value. He hadn't run any dance halls so far but the mere fact that he could if he chose

effectively disqualified Tennent Plays Ltd. from being regarded as a charity. (Huggett, Richard, 1989, pp. 358-359.)

In order to settle things with a minimum amount of fuss Beaumont dissolved Tennent Plays Ltd. in May 1947 and immediately formed a new tax exemption company, Tennent Productions Ltd., which undertook to pay off the tax liability of the former company. This exceeded slightly the current assets of the newly formed company which balanced on the edge of solvency until the tax exempt receipts began to roll in and its precarious financial position was resolved as the accounts moved decisively into the black.

10. Huggett, Richard, 1989, p. 422.
11. T. C. Worsley in the *New Statesman and Nation*, 8 January 1949, p. 30.
12. Findlater, Richard. *The Unholy Trade*. London: Gollancz, 1952, p. 15. Indeed, in 1947 J. B. Priestley the popular novelist, playwright and war-time broadcaster whom the Conservative Party held to have contributed considerably to the Labour election victory of 1945 published a book on the contemporary theatre. Entitled *Theatre Outlook* it was highly critical of the prevailing conditions in the management and ownership of theatre buildings and production in London's West End:

Theatre at present is not controlled by dramatists, actors, producers or managers, but chiefly by theatre owners, men of property who may or may not have a taste for the drama. The owners... take too much out of the Theatre ... It is not that the owners are purely 'commercial', but that they cannot help satisfying their own particular tastes... What I condemn is the property system that allows public amenities and a communal art to be controlled by persons who happen to be rich enough to acquire playhouses. (Priestley, J.B. *Theatre Outlook*. London: Nicholson and Watson, 1947, p. 6.)

Priestley maintained and extended his criticisms of the situation in a Fabian Society lecture, published as *The Arts Under Socialism* (London: Turnstile Press, 1947) in which he called for what amounted to the nationalisation of the theatre under a National Theatre Authority (an idea first mooted in *Theatre Outlook*) and the creation of three National companies.

These views were once again advanced at a conference convened at the Caxton Hall in London in February 1948. Priestley chaired the conference which in its final sessions passed unanimously the following resolution: 'All existing theatre buildings shall be brought under the control of a public authority for the purpose of: (a) ensuring their continued use as theatres, and (b) of controlling their rents under a Rent Restriction Act.' (Quoted in Davies,

Andrew. *Other Theatres. The Development of Alternative and Experimental Theatre in Britain*. Totowa: Barnes and Noble Books, 1987, p. 148.)

Sir Stafford Cripps, the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the new Labour administration was present on the final day of the conference to hear these demands for a public authority; Beaumont and the other theatre managements of the West End including those of 'the Group' had declined invitations to attend, and attempts were made to smear the conference on the grounds that the organising secretaries, Ossia Trilling and Ted Willis of the Unity Theatre, were Communists.

13. Elsom, John. *Cold War Theatre*. London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 31 and 32.
14. John Osborne is quoted by Duff, Charles. *The Lost Summer. The Heyday of the West End Theatre*. London: Nick Hern Books, 1995, p. 107.
15. Kenneth Tynan. 'West End Apathy'. In Tynan, Kenneth. *A View of the English Stage 1944 - 1965*. London: Methuen, 1984, pp. 147-149.
16. Lionel Hale. 'Our Theatres Have Gone West'. *Everybody's*, 2 July 1955, p. 33.
17. Huggett, Richard, 1989, p. 457.
18. Kushner, Tony, in Evans, Martin and Ken Lunn (eds.), 1997, p. 14.
19. Kenneth Tynan. 'Talk with Tynan'. An interview with Charles Marowitz. In *New Theatre Voices of the Fifties and Sixties. Selections from Encore Magazine 1956-1963*. Marowitz, Charles, Tom Milne, and Owen Hale (eds.), London: Eyre Methuen, 1981, p. 276.
20. Quoted in Kushner, Tony, 1994, p. 246.
21. *The Times*, 13 July 1956, p. 13.
22. Duff, Charles, 1995, p. 195.
23. *The New York Times*, 6 October 1955, p. 24, quoted in Graver, Lawrence, 1995, p. 94. (See Atkinson's later more tempered comments in his *The Lively Years 1920-1973*. New York: Association Press, 1973, pp. 238-241.)
24. *The New York Post*, 6 October 1955, p. 42.
25. *Variety*, 12 October 1955, p. 72.
26. *The New York World Telegram and The Sun*, 6 October 1955. (No page reference on source.)
27. *The New Yorker*, 15 October 1955, pp. 71-72.
28. Graver, Lawrence, 1995, p. 95.
29. *Commentary*, November 1955, pp. 446-467.
30. *The Commonwealth*, 28 October 1955, pp. 91-92.
31. *The New Republic*, 2 January 1956, p. 36.
32. See Graver, Lawrence, 1995, pp. 94-96.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

34. Levin, Meyer. *The New York Times Book Review*, 15 June 1952, p. 1.
35. Kushner, Tony in Evans, Martin and Ken Lunn (eds.), Oxford: Berg, 1997, p. 8.
36. Milton Shulman. *Evening Standard*, 30 November 1956, p. 6.
37. *Ibid.*, p.6
38. *The Times*, 29 November 1956, p. 5.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
40. *The Illustrated London News*, 15 December 1956, p. 6.
41. In a recent book, *Foregone Conclusions. Against Apocalyptic History* (London: University of California Press, 1994), an American critic, Michael André Bernstein, claims to engage with this precise problem and to present new insights toward their solution. The solution includes drawing a distinction between the ideas of `sideshadowing` which preserves the possibility of several alternative courses of action, and several distinctly different futures, as opposed to `foreshadowing` which determines the style or character of a future event if not its particularity, and `backshadowing` which is the identification of factors, which while they remained unrecognised at the time can now with hindsight be seen to be precisely those factors which made the present set of circumstances an inevitability.

Gertrude Himmelfarb`s review of the book is apposite:

As an argument against determinism this schema is unexceptionable... The novelty of the terms obscures the familiarity of the argument as presented more than half a century ago by Herbert Butterfield... and [more recently] by Michael Oakeshott.

Certainly it is useful to be reminded that the Holocaust was not inevitable; that the victims of the Holocaust cannot be faulted for not knowing what was at the time unknowable and even unthinkable; that `victimisation` is not a permanent or necessary attribute of Jewish history (or for that matter any ethnic history) and not a legitimate rationale for current policies; `that apocalyptic history` dominated by the shadow of the Holocaust does justice neither to the past nor to the present because as Mr Bernstein says, it `renders individual human creativity and freedom irrelevant` and `removes any significance from imagining alternative paths`. (*The New York Times Book Review*, Vol. 99, 30 October 1994, p. 40.)

42. *The Illustrated London News*, 15 December 1956, p. 6.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
44. *The Manchester Guardian*, 30 November 1956, p. 5; *The Daily Telegraph*, 30 November 1956, p. 10. See Graver, Lawrence, 1995, pp. 1-103.
45. *The Spectator*, 7 December 1956, p. 834.

46. *The Observer*, 2 December 1956, p. 11. The impossibility of gaining insight into Jewish experience during the Holocaust through the conventional/critical assumptions and dramatic practice implicit in the tragic genre has been a subject which has elicited a great deal of commentary from literary critics, chief amongst them the American critic, Lawrence Langer:

Whether we speak of Oedipus or of Christian men, secular insight or redemption, human agency is imperative: the sufferer is partially responsible for this own condition. In choosing an attitude toward his fate, he is partly governed by the discovery in his present condition of traces of his own earlier decisions - or indecisiveness... Both dramatic tragedy and religious martyrdom are based on the premise that the individual is free to risk certain choices with full knowledge that the consequences may lead to extreme suffering or death. These choices, whether Hamlet's decision to duel with Laertes, Oedipus's to pursue the truth of his identity despite Jocasta's pleas, or Sir Thomas More's to adhere to his Christian principles are necessary to the individual's vision of himself as a human being.

Although Langer has experience inside a concentration camp chiefly in mind, the argument holds true before the confines of a camp are actually reached. Langer argues that while

such motives of choice survived for a time... the consequences were quickly removed from the control of the individual, and made so unpredictable that it was virtually impossible to associate one's vision of oneself as a human being with the various modes of punishment and extermination in the surrounding environment. Certainly 'suffering' was inadequate to describe them.

These victims... were plunged into a crisis of what we might call 'choiceless choice', where crucial decisions did not reflect options between life and death, but between one form of abnormal response and another, both imposed by a situation that was in no way of the victim's own choosing. (Langer, Lawrence L., 1982, pp. 21 and 72.)

The Polish critic Andrzej Wirth, writing about the short stories of the writer Tadeusz Borowski makes clear the nature of the environment which deprived human beings of choice:

Attempts to apply the traditional design of tragedy to describe the critical experience of our century, which the planned extermination of people has become, have not only proved fruitless but somehow, because of their inadequacy, have discredited the subject, which could not be shown as the struggle with fate of an outstanding individual.

The wholesale character of the tragedy made the individualistic, exemplary presentation impossible. Death in the oven was tragic irrespective of whether a genius or the average man was being burnt. It was not possible to extract tragedy either from the uniqueness of the hero or the uniqueness of the situation, because the situation within the framework of a crime-producing machine was always the same, subject to a pattern. The de-individualisation of the hero was accompanied by a de-individualisation of the situation.

The relationship between the criminal and his victim had become blurred... not only because there is no longer an 'outstanding' criminal or an 'outstanding' victim as understood by classical tragedy, but also because the relation between the murderer and the victim is now an anonymous one. The Nazi term 'criminal system' gives semantic expression to this and shows the difficulty of defining the phenomenon in individual terms. There is the anonymity of the criminal, there is the anonymity of the victim, the anonymity of the depersonalisation of the killing system itself. Ultimately, murder is committed by machines: and it is led up to by countless limited decisions taken by countless people as if in the void, without any emotional or even intellectual link with the objects of crime. (Wirth, Andrzej. 'A Discovery of Tragedy. (The Incomplete Account of Tadeusz Borowski)'. In *The Polish Review* Vol. 12, part 3, 1967, p. 46.)

(Some short stories by Tadeusz Borowski are available in English translation. See, Borowski, Tadeusz. *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*. Trans. Barbara Vedder. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976.)

47. *The Daily Telegraph*, 30 November 1956, p. 10.
48. *The Observer*, 2 December 1956, p. 11.
49. *New Statesman and Nation*, 8 December 1956, p. 742.
50. Bauman, Zygmunt. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. London: Polity, 1991, p. 94.
51. Ibid. See Chapter Four, 'The Uniqueness and Normality of the Holocaust'. pp. 83-116.
52. *Punch*, 5 December 1956, p. 692.
53. *The Daily Telegraph*, 30 November 1956, p. 10.
54. *New Statesman and Nation*, 8 December 1956, p. 742.
55. *The Manchester Guardian*, 30 November 1956, p. 5.
56. Ibid., p. 5.
57. *The Sunday Times*, 2 December 1956, p. 13.
58. *The Observer*, 2 December 1956, p. 11.
59. *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 December 1956, p. 26.
60. Ibid., p. 26.
61. Ibid., p. 26.
62. Ibid., p. 26.

63. See for example the minimal mention the play receives in recent publications Kushner, Tony, 1995, pp. 245-246; *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*. Wyman, David S. (ed.), London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 622, where the *Diary* is described by David Cesarani as anodyne and the play receives no mention. The files pertaining to H. M. Tennent Ltd. productions kept by the Theatre Museum London are registered as 92/141, and additional archival material donated at a later date as 95/23/63. (The administrative and Press files for *The Play of the Diary of Anne Frank* are not amongst them and are presumed lost.)
64. In *The New York Times Book Review* Levin asserted that 'Anne Frank's voice becomes the voice of six million vanished Jewish souls' (15 June 1952 p. 1), and in the Jewish periodical, *Congress Weekly*, his article begins with an expression of relief that the waiting is over: 'At last the voice of the six million may be heard in America'. ('A Classic Human Document', 16 June 1952.) But it is in the *National Jewish Post* that he is most explicit about his view of the *Diary* as 'the representative document' of European Jewish experience during the Holocaust. Levin claims that the *Diary* is, 'The book that makes us live with all the Jews who disappeared in Europe. It is the book with which we can identify... the purest record we possess of the lives of those who were exterminated... the very pulse, the frightened but courageous pulse of the six million Jews.' ('At Long Last We Have a Real Story of Jews under Nazism', 20 June 1952). See Rosenfeld, Alvin. 'Popularisation and Memory: The Case of Anne Frank'. In *Lessons and Legacies. The Meaning of the Holocaust in a Changing World*. Hayes, Peter (ed.), Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1991, p. 273, from which these quotations are taken.

Levin appears not to have recognised that the *Diary* itself could not sustain such a claim, that the experiences of one family in hiding in Amsterdam could not be generalised to the extent that these experiences could be taken as normative for all Jews who had lived under Nazi oppression in diverse parts of Europe.

Moreover, Levin eroticises and romanticises the *Diary* in his review, transforming it into a cosy middle American family gathering. Anne's adolescence is ideal, filled with 'amusement, love, discovery'; the relationships between the families are perfectly rounded involving 'tensions and satisfactions' and, he concludes, that the *Diary* conveys 'overwhelmingly the universalities of human nature'. (p. 1) What Levin achieves is a universalised representation of the themes of the *Diary* for the purpose of making it more attractive to a non-Jewish readership.

65. Miller, Arthur. 'The Shadows of the Gods'. In *American Playwrights on Drama*. Frenz, Horst, (ed.): 134-153. New York: Hill and Wang, 1965. (Originally published in *Harper's*, August 1958, pp. 35-43.) The speech was delivered before a meeting of the New Dramatists' Committee in the spring of 1958.
66. Bettelheim, Bruno. 'The Ignored Lesson of Anne Frank'. In Bettelheim, Bruno. *Surviving the Holocaust*. London: Fontana Collins, 1986, pp. 120-132. (Originally published in *Harper's*, November 1960, pp. 45-50.)
67. Langer, Lawrence. *Versions of Survival. The Holocaust and the Human Spirit*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982, p. 34.
68. Bettelheim, Bruno. 'The Ignored Lesson of Anne Frank'. In Bettelheim, Bruno, 1986, p. 121.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
70. *Ibid.*, pp. 124 and 125.
71. Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*. (Rev. ed.) Harmondsworth, 1965. See pp. 117-125 for Arendt's comments about the passivity she alleges.
72. Langer, Lawrence, 1982, p. 44.
73. Langer, Lawrence. 'The Americanisation of the Holocaust on Stage and Screen'. In Blacher Cohen, Sarah, (ed.): 213-230. *From Hester Street to Hollywood. The Jewish American Stage and Screen*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983, p. 215.
74. Gilman, Sander. *Jewish Self-Hatred. Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews*. London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, p. 349.
75. Levin, Meyer. *The New York Times Book Review*, 15 June 1952, p. 1.
76. Doneson, Judith E. *The Holocaust in American Film*. New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1987, p. 65.
77. Gilman, Sander, 1986, pp. 349-350.
78. Letter from Goodrich and Hackett to Otto Frank, 3 July 1956. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, Goodrich - Hackett File. Quoted in Doneson, Judith E., 1987, p. 70.
79. Letter from Otto Frank to Goodrich and Hackett, 9 November 1955. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, Goodrich - Hackett File. Quoted in Doneson, Judith E., 1987, p. 71.
80. Doneson, Judith E., 1987, p. 71.
81. Letter from Otto Frank to Goodrich and Hackett, 14 June 1954. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, Goodrich - Hackett File. Quoted in Doneson, Judith E., 1987, p. 69.



82. Gilman, Sander, 1986, p. 346.

83. Ibid., p. 350.

**3 The RSC and German Documentary Drama: Hochhuth's *The Representative* and Weiss's *The Investigation***

1. Sinfield, Alan. *Political Shakespeare*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 159.
2. Elsom, John and Nicholas Tomalin. *The History of the National Theatre*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1978, p. 120.
3. Bauman, Sally. *The Royal Shakespeare Company. A History of Ten Decades*. London. Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. 240-241.
4. Ibid., p. 246.
5. Ibid., p. 272.
6. Ibid., p. 275.
7. Weiss, Peter. *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade*. Trans. Geoffrey Skelton and Marian Mitchell. London: Marion Boyers Ltd., 1965.
8. Bauman, Sally, 1982, p. 277.
9. Ibid., p. 280.
10. Ibid., p. 284.
11. See for example Castein, Hanne. 'German Social drama in the 1960s'. In *Drama and Society*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 195-207; Patterson, Michael. *German Theatre Today*. London: Pitman Publishing Ltd., 1976, 'The Theatre of Fact'. pp. 75-87.
12. Zipes, Jack D. 'The Aesthetic Dimensions of the German Documentary Drama'. *German Life and Letters* Vol. XXIV (1970-1971): 346-359. p. 346.
13. Paget, Derek. *True Stores? Documentary Drama on Radio, Screen and Stage*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990, p. 74.
14. Zipes, Jack D. 'Documentary Drama in Germany: Mending the circuit'. *The Germanic Review* Vol. XLII no. 1 (January 1967): 49-62. p. 61.
15. Ibid., p. 60.
16. Favorini, Attilio. 'Representation and Reality: The Case of Documentary Theatre'. *Theatre Survey* Vol. 35 no.2 (November 1994): 31-42. p. 32.
17. Zipes, Jack D., 1967, p. 50.

18. Young, James E. *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust. Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, pp. 67 and 68.
19. Paget, Derek, 1990, p. 17.
20. Ibid., pp. 39-40.
21. Subiotto, A.V. *German Documentary Theatre*. University of Birmingham: 1972, p. 5.
22. Rolf Hochhuth in *The Representative*. Trans. Robert David MacDonald. London: Methuen and Co.Ltd., 1963, p. 269.
23. See Weiss, Peter. 'The Material and the Models. Notes Towards a Definition of Documentary Theatre'. Trans. Heinz Bernard. *Theatre Quarterly* Vol. 1 no.1 (Jan/March 1971): 41-43.
24. Hochhuth, Rolf. *Soldiers: An Obituary for Geneva*. Trans. Robert David MacDonald. London: Methuen and Co.Ltd., 1968. The play alleged that Churchill had been involved in a covert operation to assassinate General Sikorski, the leader of the Polish Government-in-exile in London.
25. Perry, R. C. 'Historical Authenticity and Dramatic Form: Hochhuth's "Der Stellvertreter" and Weiss's "Die Ermittlung"'. *The Modern Language Review* Vol. 64. (1969): 828-839. pp. 829, 828.
26. Parham, Sidney F. 'Editing Hochhuth for the Stage: A Look at the Major Productions of The Deputy'. *Educational Theatre Journal* Vol. 28 no. 3 (October 1976): 347-353. p. 348. See this article and Zipes, Jack D., 1967, for a detailed analysis of the scenes.
27. Perry, R. C., 1969, p. 830.
28. Rolf Hochhuth quoted in Zipes, Jack D., 1967, p. 51.
29. Perry, R. C., 1969, p. 832.
30. Zipes, Jack D., 1967, p. 53.
31. Parham, Sidney F., 1976, p. 347.
32. Sources: Hochhuth, Rolf, *The Representative* Trans. Robert David MacDonald; Parham, Sidney F., 'Editing Hochhuth for the Stage: A Look at the Major Productions of The Deputy'. *Educational Theatre Journal* Vol. 28 no. 3 (October 1976): 347-353; RSC *Programme Supplement to The Representative*; Files on *The Representative*, The Shakespeare Centre, Stratford-upon-Avon; Mr. Roger Howells. Assistant Stage Manager for the RSC production.
33. Michael Kustow's editorial in the RSC *Programme Supplement* to Rolf Hochhuth's *The Representative* at the Aldwych.

34. Ralph Koltai in the RSC *Programme Supplement* to Rolf Hochhuth's *The Representative* at the Aldwych.
35. *New Statesman*, 4 October 1963, p. 460.
36. *The Financial Times*, 26 September 1963, p. 26.
37. *New Statesman*, 4 October 1963, p. 460.
38. *The Guardian*, 26 September 1963, p. 9.
39. *The Spectator*, 4 October 1963, p. 417.
40. *The Sunday Times*, 29 September 1963, p. 33.
41. *The Times*, 26 September 1963, p. 8.
42. Rolf Hochhuth quoted in *The Illustrated London News*, 19 October 1963, p. 652.
43. *New Statesman*, 4 October 1963, p. 460.
44. *The Illustrated London News*, 19 October 1963, p. 652; *Daily Mail*, 26 September 1963, p. 3; *The Times*, 26 September 1963, p. 8.
45. *The Sunday Times*, 29 September 1963, p. 33.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
47. *The Spectator*, 4 October 1963, p. 417.
48. *The Illustrated London News*, 19 October 1963, p. 652.
49. *The Financial Times*, 26 September 1963, p. 26.
50. *The Guardian*, 26 September 1963, p. 9.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 9. *Night and Fog* directed by Alain Resnais is a mélange of unattributed documentary footage with sonorous commentary spoken by Michel Bouquet and a sound track by Hans Eisler, and made to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. See Insdorf, Annette. *Indelible Shadows. Film and the Holocaust*. (Sec. ed.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 39-40.
52. *New Statesman*, 4 October 1963, p. 461.
53. *The Financial Times*, 26 September 1963, p. 26.
54. *The Sunday Times*, 29 September 1963, p. 33.
55. *The Daily Telegraph*, 26 September 1963, p. 16.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 16; Charles Marowitz in *Plays and Players* (December 1963), p. 39, respectively.
57. *Daily Mail*, 26 September 1963, p. 3; *Evening Standard*, 26 September 1963, p. 4; *New Statesman*, 4 October 1963, p. 461.
58. Steiner, George. 'Papal Policy and Mass Murder'. *The Sunday Times*, 5 May 1963, p. 33.
59. A recent BBC television documentary including interviews with many surviving members of Pope Pius XII's Vatican administration leaves little doubt as to the

- substantive fact of the Pope's silence for which as the programme suggests, he later considered himself morally culpable. *Reputations: Pope Pius XII*. Written and produced, Jonathan Lewis. (A BBC/Arts and Entertainment Networks Co-production. BBC MCMXCV).
60. Roubiczek, Hjordis. 'Der Stellvertreter and its Critics'. *German Life and Letters* Vol. XVII (1963-1964): 193-199. p. 197.
  61. Ibid., p. 163.
  62. See Schwarz, Egon. 'Rolf Hochhuth's *The Representative*'. *The Germanic Review* Vol. XXXIX no. 1 (January 1964): 211-230, particularly p. 12 note 2.
  63. Parham, Sidney F., 1976, p. 351.
  64. Bentley, Eric. (ed.) *The Storm over the Deputy*. New York: Grove Press Inc., 1964. p. 7.
  65. Cardinal Montini's (Pope Paul VI) letter first appeared in the British Roman Catholic periodical *The Tablet* on 21 June 1963. The letter was reproduced in full in the RSC *Programme Supplement* to Rolf Hochhuth's *The Representative* at the Aldwych and in the theatre programme for the play. See Appendix a 'Documents in Defence' (i) for the full text of Cardinal Montini's letter, as it appeared in programme and supplement.
  66. Ibid.
  67. Weiss, Peter. *The Investigation*. In a version by Alexander Gross. London: Marion Boyars, 1982, p. 10. All subsequent references to the text of *The Investigation* are to this edition.
  68. Trewin, J. C. *Peter Brook. A Biography*. London: Macdonald and Co. Publishers Ltd., 1971, p. 150.
  69. Quoted in Ibid., p. 149.
  70. *Daily Mail*, 20 October 1965, p. 7; *The Observer*, 24 October 1965, p. 24; *The Times*, 21 October 1965, p. 16.
  71. *The Observer*, 24 October 1965, p. 24.
  72. *The Time Literary Supplement*, 24 April 1969, p. 446.
  73. *The Financial Times*, 28 October 1965, p. 24.
  74. *New Statesman*, 29 October 1965, p. 666.
  75. Ibid., p. 666.
  76. Peter Weiss in the 'Remarks' prefacing *The Investigation*. In a version by Alexander Gross. London: Marion Boyars, 1982, p. 10.
  77. Ibid., p. 10.
  78. Ibid., p. 10. (Bernd Naumann's reports upon the proceedings against a number of former Auschwitz personnel in a trial held in Frankfurt between 20 December 1963 and 20 August 1965, generally referred to as the 'Auschwitz

- Trial', which first appeared in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and the official record of the court proceedings themselves, which Weiss himself had attended over a number of weeks, provided the basic material from which he fashioned what he styled 'an Oratorio in 11 cantos'. An English translation of Naumann's reports was published as: *Auschwitz. A Report on the Proceedings Against Robert Karl Ludwig Mulka and Others Before the Court at Frankfurt*. Naumann, Bernard. Trans Jean Steinberg. With an Introduction by Hannah Arendt. London: Pall Mall Press, 1966.)
79. Salloch, Erika. 'The *Divina Commedia* as Model and Anti-Model for *The Investigation* by Peter Weiss'. *Modern Drama* Vol. XIV no. 1 (May 1971): 1-12. p.1.
  80. Ibid., p. 7.
  81. Ibid., p. 7.
  82. Peter Weiss quoted in Erika Salloch, (May 1971), p. 5.
  83. Salloch, Erika, (May 1971), p. 2.
  84. Ibid., p. 4.
  85. Schlünk, Jurgen E. 'Auschwitz and its Function in Peter Weiss's Search for Identity'. *German Studies Review* Vol. 10 no. 1 (1987): 11-30. p. 27.
  86. Best, Otto F. *Peter Weiss*. Trans. Ursule Molinara. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1976, p. 91.
  87. Weiss, Peter. 'Antwort auf eine Kritik Zur Stockholmer Aufführung der Ermittlung'. *Rapporte* 2, p. 47. Quoted in Castein, Hanne. 'German Social Drama in the 1960s'. In *Drama and Society*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1979: 195-207. p. 203.
  88. Canaris, Volker, (ed.). *Über Peter Weiss*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970, p.82. Quoted in Castein, Hanne, 1979, p .203.
  89. Schlünk, Jurgen E., 1987, p. 24.
  90. Rosenfeld, Alvin H. *A Double Dying. Reflections on Holocaust Literature*. London: Indiana University Press, 1980, p. 157.
  91. Georg Tabori's *The Cannibals* can be found in *The Theatre of the Holocaust. Four Plays*. Skloot, Robert, (ed.): 197-265. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1982.
  92. The literature is extensive. See for example, Borkin, Joseph. *The Crime and Punishment of I. G. Farben*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1979; Turner, Henry A. *German Big Business and the Rise of Hitler*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985; Higham, Charles. *Trading with the Enemy*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1983. More recently: Le Bor, Adam. *Hitler's Secret Bankers*. London: Simon and Schuster Ltd., 1997.

93. Smith Jr., Arthur L. *Hitler's Gold. The Story of the Nazi War Loot*. Oxford: Berg, 1996; and Le Bor, Adam. *Hitler's Secret Bankers*. London: Simon and Schuster Ltd, 1997.
94. Schlünk, Jurgen E., 1987, p. 22.
95. Young, James. E. *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust. Narrative and the consequences of Interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, pp. 78-79.
96. Published in English as: *Leavetaking and Vanishing Point. Two Autobiographical Novels*. Trans. Christopher Levenson. London: Calder and Boyars, 1966.
97. Schlünk, Jurgen E., 1987, p. 26.
98. Weiss, Peter. 'My Place'. Trans. Christopher Middleton. *Encounter* Vol. XXV no. 6 (December 1965): 3-7.
99. *Ibid.*, pp. 1,4,7.
100. Schlünk, Jurgen E., 1987, p. 26 note 41.
101. Peter Weiss quoted in Rosenfeld, Alvin H., 1980, p. 158.
102. Young, James E., 1990, p. 72.
103. Peter Brook is quoted in the *Evening Standard*, 20 October 1965, p. 6.
104. Albert Hunt in *US (The Book of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre Production of US/Vietnam/US Experiment.)* Playscript 9. London: Calders and Boyars, 1968, p. 25.

**4 Holocaust Drama in the West End: Miller's *Incident at Vichy* and Shaw's *The Man in the Glass Booth***

1. See Miller, Arthur. *Timebends. A Life*. London: Methuen, 1987, pp. 529-531, 536-538.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 531-533.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 524 and 526.
4. See Miller, Arthur, 1987, p. 526 and Arendt, Hannah, 1965. The controversy surrounding Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was conducted chiefly, but not exclusively, in the *Partisan Review*. See particularly: Abel, Lionel. 'The Aesthetics of Evil'. *Partisan Review* Vol. XXX no. 2 (Summer 1963): 211-230; McCarthy, Mary. 'The Hue and Cry'. *Partisan Review*. Vol. XXXI no. 1 (Winter 1963): 82-94; Lionel, Abel. 'Arguments More on Eichmann'. (Various contributions) *Partisan Review* Vol. XXXI no. 2 (Spring 1964): 253-283.

This by no means marked the end of the immediate controversy over *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Soon thereafter, Jacob Robinson's book, *And the*

*Crooked shall be made straight. The Eichmann Trial, the Jewish Catastrophe and Hannah Arendt's Narrative* (London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1965.) was published in London and New York as a refutation of Arendt's thesis in general, and in its detail. Robinson's book was itself the subject of a not altogether laudatory review by Walter Laqueur. ('Footnotes to the Holocaust', *The New York Review of Books*, 11 November 1965. Reprinted in *Hannah Arendt. The Jew as Pariah. Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*. Feldman, Ron H., (ed.). New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1978: 242-259.) This review in turn became the target of a stinging attack by Arendt herself. ('The Formidable Dr Robinson': A Reply by Hannah Arendt'. *The New York Review of Books*, 20 January 1966, pp. 26-30. Reprinted in Feldham, Ron H. (ed.), 1978, pp. 260-276.)

The chief prosecutor Gideon Hausner wrote his own account of the trial entitled *Justice in Jerusalem* which was published both in the US and in Britain in 1966 and 1967 respectively. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1967). The role of the Jewish Councils in the Nazi created ghettos of Eastern Europe were the subject of Isaiah Trunk's magisterial work of scholarship, *Judenrat*, (first published in 1972, reprinted by University of Nebraska Press, 1996) and which remains the most authoritative single account to date of the Nazi organisation of the ghettos, and the dilemmas the Councils faced.

5. Miller's play *After the Fall* is included in Arthur Miller's *Collected Plays Volume II*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1981, pp. 125-242. For the chief US reviews of *After the Fall* see: *The New Republic*, 8 February 1964, pp. 26-28 and 30; *The Wall Street Journal*, 27 January 1964, p. 10; *The New York Times*, 31 January 1964, p. 14; *The Commonwealth*, 14 February 1964, pp. 600-601; *The New York Herald Tribune*, 24 January 1964, pp. 1 and 11; *The Saturday Review*, 15 February 1964, p. 35; *Variety*, 29 January 1964, p. 68; *The New Yorker*, 1 February 1964, p. 59; *Newsweek*, 3 February 1964, pp. 41-44; *Village Voice*, 30 January 1964, pp. 9-10; *The New York Times*, 24 January 1964, p. 18; *The New York Times*, 2 February 1964, Sec. 2 p. 1; *Time*, 31 January 1964, p. 54.
6. *After the Fall* would not be produced in Britain until October 1967, and then by a largely South African Company at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry rather than London. The production did not subsequently transfer; *Incident at Vichy* can be found in *Arthur Miller's Collected Plays. Vol. II*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1981, pp. 243-291. It is to this edition which all subsequent references are made. On the British press reaction see section 4.3, especially Irving Wardle's comments in *The Times*, 27 January 1966, p. 9.

7. Miller was so stung by the extremely negative reaction to *After the Fall* that he responded with a defence of his play and Monroe. See 'With Respect for Her Agony - but with Love'. *Life* 56 (7 February 1964), p. 66.
8. 'Arthur Miller: How the Nazi Trials Search the Hearts of All Germans'. *The New York Herald Tribune*, 15 March 1964, Sec.1 p. 24; 'Auschwitz.'. Arthur Miller. *The Daily Express*, 16 March 1964, p. 12, respectively. See also Feldman, Robert Lee. 'Arthur Miller's Neglected Article on the Nazi War Criminals' Trials: A Vision of Evil'. *Resources for American Literary Study* Vol. XV no. 2 (Autumn 1985): 187-196.
9. Miller, Arthur, 1987, p. 538.
10. Arthur Miller in *The Playwrights Speak*. Wager, Walter, (ed.): 1-19. London: Longmans, 1969, p. 11.
11. Miller, Arthur, 1987, pp. 538 and 539.
12. Arthur Miller in Wager, Walter (ed.), 1969, pp. 10-11.
13. Barker, Clive. 'The State of the British Theatre'. *Views* No. 5 (Summer 1964): 93-99. p. 93.
14. Wardle, Irving. 'London's Subsidized Companies'. *Tulane Drama Review* Vol. II no. 2 (T34) (Winter 1966): 105-119. pp. 105,106, 107.
15. Barker, Clive, 1964, pp. 97, 98.
16. Huggett, Richard. *Binkie Beaumont. Eminence Grise of the West End Theatre 1933-1973*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989, pp. 512-513.
17. Guinness, Alec. *My Name Escapes Me. The Diary of a Retiring Actor*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996, p.121.
18. *Daily Mail*, 14 and 18 December 1965, pp. 8 and 6, respectively.
19. Arthur Miller in an interview with Penelope Gilliatt. *The Observer*, 23 January 1966, p. 23
20. References for the US critical notices of the inaugural production of *After the Fall* on 23 January 1964 at the Washington Square Theatre can be found at Note 7 above. The following are the references for the chief US reviews of *Incident at Vichy*: *The New York Times*, 4 December 1964, p.44; *The New York Times*, 20 December 1964, Sec. II p. 3; *Newsweek*, 14 December 1964, p. 86; *Variety*, 9 December 1964, p. 62; *Time*, 11 December 1964, p. 73; *The New Republic*, 26 December 1964, p. 26; *The New York Herald Tribune*, 4 December 1964, p. 12; *Women's Wear Daily*, 4 December 1964, p. 33; *The New York Herald Tribune*, 20 December 1964, Sec. II p. 25; *The New York Review*, 14 January 1965, pp. 3 and 4.
21. MacIvor, Sheila. 'Return of the Knight Errant'. *The Weekend Telegraph*, 21 January 1966, p. 7



22. *The Times*, 27 January 1966, p. 9.
23. *New Statesman* 4 February 1966, p. 170.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
25. Peter Wood the director of the British production of *Incident at Vichy* quoted in MacIvor, Sheila. 'Return of the Knight Errant'. *The Weekend Telegraph*, 21 January 1966, p. 7.
26. *The Guardian*, 27 January 1966, p. 9.
27. *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 January 1966, p. 24.
28. *The Financial Times*, 27 January 1966, p. 24.
29. *The Spectator*, 4 February 1966, p. 137.
30. *New Statesman*, 4 February 1966, p. 170.
31. *The Times*, 27 January 1966, p. 9
32. See Note 20 above for the controversy over *Eichmann in Jerusalem* in the US. The description the 'banality of evil', indissolubly linked with Arendt's name and her report on the Eichmann Trial, has been identified by Steven Aschheim as originating from the pen of Karl Jaspers in a letter to Arendt. See 'Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers: Friendship, Catastrophe and the Possibilities of German-Jewish Dialogue'. In Aschheim, Steven E., *Culture and Catastrophe. German and Jewish Confrontations with National Socialism and Other Crises*. New York: New York University Press, 1996, pp. 97-114. Jaspers's use of the term appears in his letter to Arendt of 19 October 1946. See Kohler, Lotte and Hans Saner (eds.) *Hannah Arendt/Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926-1969*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992, p. 62.
33. *The Times*, 27 January 1966, p. 9.
34. *New Statesman*, 4 February 1966, p. 170.
35. *The Sunday Times*, 30 January 1966, p. 45.
36. *New Statesman*, 4 February 1966, p. 170.
37. *The Spectator*, 4 February 1966, p. 137.
38. *The Sunday Times*, 30 January 1966, p. 45.
39. *The Times*, 27 January 1966, p. 9.
40. *The Financial Times*, 27 January 1966, p. 24.
41. *The Sunday Times*, 30 January 1966, p. 45.
42. *Plays and Players*, (January 1966), p. 22.
43. *New Statesman*, 4 February 1966, p. 170.
44. Arthur Miller in Davies, Hunter. 'Arthur Miller.' *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 23 January 1966, pp. 25,24,25,27.
45. Arendt, Hannah. 'Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship'. In *The Listener*, 6 August 1964: 185-205. p .205.

46. *Plays and Players*, (January 1966), p. 22.
47. *Evening Standard*, 27 January 1966, p. 4.
48. *Plays and Players*, (January 1966), p. 23.
49. Weales, Gerald. 'Arthur Miller's Shifting Image of Man'. *The American Theatre Today*. Downer. Alan S. (ed.). New York: Basic Books Inc., 1967. Reprinted in *Arthur Miller. A Collection of Critical Essays*. Corrigan, Robert W. (ed.): 131-142. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall Inc., 1969. References are to this reprint.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
52. Reno, Raymond H. 'Arthur Miller and the Death of God'. *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*. Vol. II no. 2 (1969): 1069-1087.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 1085.
54. Hannah Arendt in *The Listener*, 6 August 1964, p. 205.
55. Cohn, Ruby. 'The Articulate Victims of Arthur Miller'. In *Dialogue in American Drama*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971. Reprinted in revised form in *Arthur Miller (New Perspectives)*. Martin, Robert A. (ed.): 65-74. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall Inc., 1982. References are to this reprint.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
57. Brater, Enoch. 'Ethnics and Ethnicity in the Plays of Arthur Miller'. In *From Hester Street to Hollywood*. Blacher Cohen, Sarah (ed.): 123-136. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983, p. 132.
58. Lowenthal, Lawrence D. 'Arthur Miller's *Incident at Vichy*: A Sartrean Interpretation'. *Modern Drama* Vol. 18 (March 1975): 29-41. Reprinted in *Arthur Miller (New Perspectives)*. Martin, Robert A. (ed.): 173-187. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall Inc., 1982. References are to this reprint.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 173. Jean Paul Sartre's *Réflexions sur la Question Juive* was first published by Éditions Morigien in 1946. The first English edition, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, translated by George J. Becker, was published by Schocken Books NY, in 1948. A new edition has recently been published with a preface by Michael Walzer: Schocken Books NY, 1995.
60. Sartre, Jean-Paul. 'Forger des Mythes'. Originally published in English as: 'Forgers of Myths'. Trans. Rosamond Gilder. *Theatre Arts* Vol. 30 no. 6 (June 1946). Reprinted in *Sartre on Theatre* Contat, Michel and Michel Rybalka, (eds.):33-43. Trans. Frank Jellinek. London: Quartet Books, 1976. (This essay in the original translation, by Rosamond Gilder.) References are to this reprint.
61. Contat, Michel and Michel Rybalka, (eds.) 1976, pp. 34,36,40,41,42.

62. Lowenthal, Lawrence D., in Martin, Robert A. (ed.), 1982, pp. 174-175.
63. Rajakrishnan, V. 'After Commitment: An Interview with Arthur Miller'. *Educational Theatre Journal*. Vol. 30 (May 1980): 196-204. p. 201.
64. Lowenthal, Lawrence D., in Martin, Robert A. (ed.), 1982, p. 180.
65. Langer, Lawrence. 'The Americanisation of the Holocaust on Stage and Screen'. In *From Hester Street to Hollywood*. Blacher Cohen, Sarah (ed.): 213-230. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983.
66. Ibid., p. 221.
67. Ibid., p. 222.
68. Ibid., p. 222.
69. Ibid., p. 223.
70. Ibid., p. 224.
71. John, S. B. 'The Mirror of the Stage: Vichy France and Foreign Drama'. In *Literature and Society. Studies in nineteenth and twentieth century French Literature*. Burns, C.A. (ed.): 200-313. Birmingham: John Goodman and Sons Ltd., (for the University of Birmingham), 1980, p. 210.
72. Ibid., pp. 210-211.
73. Bigsby, C. W. E. *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama. Volume II. Williams/Miller/Albee*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 218. (Bigsby also discusses *Incident at Vichy* briefly in his 1967 article 'The Fall and After' *Modern Drama* Vol. X no. 3 (September 1967): 135-136; and in *Confrontation and Commitment. A Study of Contemporary American Drama 1959-1966*. London: MacGibbon and Kee Ltd., 1967, pp. 47-49.)
74. Centola, Steven R. '" The Will to Live": An Interview with Arthur Miller'. *Modern Drama* Vol. 27 (1984): 345-360. p. 359.
75. Arendt, Hannah, 1965. (The appeal of Arendt's report is particularly suggested by her provocative description of the Court room scene in Jerusalem, which she explicitly likens to 'theatre'. The passage where this description appears is given in Appendix a, 'Documents in Defence' (ii)). For British press reviews of her report see: *The Observer*, 13 October 1963, p. 25; *The Sunday Times*, 13 October 1963, p. 35; *The Times Literary Supplement*, 30 April 1964, pp. 365-368; *New Statesman*, 11 October 1963, pp. 488-489.
76. Robert Shaw took the lead role in a children's television series *The Buccaneers* (for which he was later to receive both kind hearted teasing and abuse from his fellow professionals), and roles in films such as *The Dambusters* (1955), *From Russia with Love* (1964), and *The Battle of the Bulge* (1965). He was most

- well known for his role as Henry VIII in *A Man for All Seasons* (1966), and as the ill-fated General of the Seventh US Cavalry in *Custer of the West* (1967).
77. *New Statesman*, 13 January 1967, p. 54; *The Listener*, 19 January 1967, p. 103; *Punch*, 11 January 1967, p.66; *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 January 1967, p.22; *The Spectator*, 13 January 1967, p. 49, respectively.
  78. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 12 January 1967, p. 21.
  79. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
  80. French, John, 1993, p. 107; All references to the play text are to: Shaw, Robert. *The Man in the Glass Booth*. London: Samuel French Inc., 1968.
  81. See Alderman, Geoffrey. *Modern British Jewry*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, p.341.
  82. *The Guardian Journal*, 12 July 1967. (On the Nottingham Playhouse production which opened on 11 July 1967 before its transfer to St Martins Theatre on 27 July.)
  83. *The Illustrated London News*, 5 August 1967, p. 36.
  84. *New Statesman*, 4 August 1967, p. 154.
  85. *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 July 1967, p. 17.
  86. For the text of the *draft* declaration of 20 November 1964 see: Rynne, Xavier. *The Third Session. The Debates and Decrees of Vatican Council II. September 14 to November 21, 1964*. London: Faber and Faber, 1964, pp. 369-372. For the *final* text of 28 October 1965 see either Abbott, Walter M. (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966, pp. 660-671; or Flannery, Austin (ed.), *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Dublin: Pillar Books, by arrangement with Costello Publishing Inc., 1975, pp. 738-749. The Roman Catholic Church have recently issued their latest report on the Church's thinking about the Holocaust: *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*. Cassidy, Edward Idris, Pierre Duprey and Remi Hoeckman (eds.). Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. The Vatican, 1998.
  87. *The Guardian*, 28 July 1967, p. 6; *The Times*, 28 July 1967, p. 6.
  88. *Daily Mail*, 28 July 1967, p. 10.
  89. *The Sunday Times*, 30 July 1967, p. 39.
  90. *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 July 1967, p. 17.
  91. *The Times*, 28 July 1967, p. 6.
  92. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
  93. *Daily Mail*, 28 July 1967, p. 10.
  94. *The Financial Times*, 28 July 1967, p. 24.
  95. *Queen*, 16 August 1967, p. 9.

96. *The Times*, 28 July 1967, p. 6.
97. *The Financial Times*, 28 July 1967, p. 24.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
100. *Queen*, 16 August 1967, p. 9.
101. *Daily Mail*, 28 July 1967, p. 10.
102. *The Sunday Times*, 30 July 1967, p. 39.
103. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
105. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
106. French, John, 1993, p. 108.
107. Robert Shaw interviewed by Tom Burke. *The New York Times*, 10 November 1968, Sec. II p. 7.
108. Brief mention is made of *The Man in the Glass Booth* in Downer, Alan S. 'More Strange Than True': Notes on the New York Theatre 1968-1969'. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* Vol. LV no. 2 (April 1969): 232-233; Neumeyer, Peter F. 'Arcadia Revisited: Arthur Goldman and Nicolas Poussin'. *The University Review* (The University of Missouri - Kansas City), Vol. XXXVI no. 4 (June 1970): 263-267; Hughes, Catherine. *Plays, Politics and Polemics*. New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1973, pp. 145-154. More recent treatments include Schiff, Ellen. *From Stereotype to Metaphor. The Jew in Contemporary Drama*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982, pp. 185-188. Two more significant contributions are discussed in the text and detailed below in Notes 109 and 117.
109. Egan, Robert. 'Performance as meaning in Robert Shaw's *The Man in the Glass Booth*'. In *Drama and The Actor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 159-175.
110. Egan, Robert. In *Drama and The Actor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 160-161. It is Arendt's point that Eichmann through his inordinate normality disappointed those desiring to find a Nazi monster. Egan's point is that Shaw's dramatic strategy was shaped by his attempt to meet audience expectation if not for a monster, then for 'theatre', for 'a show'.
111. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
113. See Bernstein, Michael André. *Bitter Carnival. Ressentiment and the Abject Hero*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. I have discussed this theme with specific reference to Hegel's *Phenomenology* and Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew* at greater length in my unpublished MA thesis, *Oedipus Texts*.

London: City University, 1990, Chapter 5: "The Cunning of Reason." *The Oedipal Tragedy of the human spirit*.

114. *Playing for Time* was broadcast in the US on 30 September 1980. Fénelon had been a cabaret singer, and had joined the Resistance before her arrest. She spent a year in Drancy transit camp prior to being deported to Auschwitz. Her account of her experiences as a member of the camp orchestra in Auschwitz was published in France in 1976 as *Sursis pour l'orchestra*, and in Britain as *The Musicians of Auschwitz*. Trans. Judith Landry. London: Michael Joseph, 1977.
115. Miller, Arthur. *Broken Glass* New York: Dramatists Play Service Inc., and London: Methuen Drama, both 1994.
116. Isser, Edward. 'Arthur Miller and the Holocaust'. *Essays in Theatre/Études Théatrales*. Vol. 10 no. 2 (May 1992): 155-164. pp. 156 and 163.
117. Skloot, Robert. *The Darkness We Carry. The Drama of the Holocaust*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 87.
118. Egan, Robert. In *Drama and The Actor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 172.
- 119 Langer, Lawrence in Blacher Cohen, Sarah (ed.), 1983, p. 221.

## **5 The Royal Court and Peter Barnes's *Laughter!***

1. Taylor, John Russell. 'Ten Years of the English Stage Company'. *Tulane Drama Review* Vol. 11 no. 2 (T34) (Winter 1966): 120-131. p. 121.
2. Ibid., p. 123.
3. Reinelt, Janelle. *After Brecht: British Epic Theatre*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996, p. 12.
4. Ibid., p. 13.
5. See Gaskill, William. *A Sense of Direction. Life at the Royal Court*. London: Faber and Faber, 1988, pp. 136-137.
6. Irving Wardle quoted in Doty, Gredna A. and Billy J. Harbin. *Inside the Royal Court Theatre 1956-1981. Artists Talk*. London: Louisiana State University Press, 1990. p. 210. (In October 1981 Louisiana State University hosted a conference to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the English Stage Company entitled 'The English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre Production, Practices and Legacies 1956-81'. The proceedings of this conference were published almost a decade later, in 1990, as *Inside the Royal Court Theatre 1956-1981*, the most substantial account available of the work of the Royal Court in the period 1968-1978. Many of the artistic directors, playwrights,

- literary managers and critics most closely associated with the Royal Court's work between 1956 and 1981 participated in the conference affording multiple perspectives on the place of the Royal Court, on the British theatre scene.
7. Ibid., pp. 210-211.
  8. Ibid., p. 210.
  9. Itzin, Catherine. 'Alternative Theatre in the Mainstream'. *Theatre Quarterly* Vol. V no. 19 (September - November 1975): 3-14. p. 3.
  10. Brenton, Howard. 'Petrol Bombs through the Proscenium Arch'. *Theatre Quarterly* Vol. V no.17 (March -May 1975): 4-20. See especially pp. 10-11. See also the following articles where each of the named authors discuss left-wing oppositional theatre: Edgar, David. 'Ten Years of Political Theatre, 1968-78'. *Theatre Quarterly* Vol. VIII no. 32 (Winter 1970): 25-33; Hare, David. 'The Play is in the Air. On Political Theatre'. In *Writing Left-Handed*. London: Faber and Faber, 1991, pp. 24-36. See also: Bigsby C. W. E. 'The Politics of Anxiety: Contemporary Socialist Theatre in England'. *Modern Drama* Vol. XXIV no. 4 (December 1981): 393-403, and McGrath, John. 'The Theory and Practice of Political Theatre'. *Theatre Quarterly* Vol. IX no.35 (Autumn 1979): 43-54.
  11. Bigsby, Christopher. 'The Language of Crisis in British Theatre: The Drama of Cultural Pathology'. In *Contemporary English Drama. Stratford Upon Avon Studies: 19*. Bigsby, C. W. E. (Assoc. ed.): 11-51. London: Edward Arnold, 1981, p. 31.
  12. Ibid., p. 33.
  13. See Ansorge, Peter. *Disrupting the Spectacle. Five Years of Experimental and Fringe Theatre in Britain*. London: Pitman, 1975, pp. 30-35; and Barker, Clive. 'Pip Simmons in Residence'. *Theatre Quarterly* Vol. IX no. 35 (Autumn 1979): 17-29. For *An Die Musik*, see Shank, Theodore. 'Commemorating the Nazi Concentration Camps. The Pip Simmons Group'. *The Drama Review* Vol. 19 no. 4 (T-68) (December 1975): 41-46.
  14. *New Statesman*, 11 July 1975, p. 62.
  15. Elsom, John. *The Listener*, 10 July 1975, p. 57.
  16. Taylor, C. P. *Good. A Tragedy*. (Rev. ed.). London: Methuen, 1983. See Chapter 6 for a discussion of the London première of Taylor's play.
  17. Michael Billington, *The Guardian*, 29 December 1976, p. 6.
  18. Anthony Field quoted in *The Guardian*, 14 January 1977, p. 1.
  19. Robert Kidd quoted in *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 January 1977, p. 19.
  20. John Osborne quoted in *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 January 1977, p. 19. Greville Poke publicly conceded in *The Daily Telegraph* article: 'There has been a

failure to attract the public. We obviously have not been putting on the right plays.' (15 January 1977, p. 19.) But in *The Guardian* he also defended the Royal Court's role as a venue pre-eminently committed to exposing the work of new writers with its attendant risks: 'With our kind of new work and new plays you can never tell how we'll do.' (14 January 1977, p. 1.) Despite the critical mauling that the Royal Court had consistently received from critics during the 1970s the press somewhat surprisingly came to the ESC's defence. *The Daily Telegraph* commented: 'The threat of closure is unthinkable for the English Theatre Company, which has delighted audiences since it took over the theatre 21 years ago.' (15 January 1977, p. 19.) *The Guardian* editorialised: 'No other post-war theatre in Britain has such a remarkable record... It was largely this company that discovered and sustained two generations of now nationally famous dramatists and had the courage to sustain them even when the critics criticised adversely and audiences stayed away... Our commercial theatre takes no such risks.' (15 January 1977, p. 10.)

21. Stuart Burge quoted in *The Guardian*, 27 January 1977, p. 12.
22. Barnes, Peter. *Laughter!* Reprinted in *Peter Barnes. Plays One*. London: Methuen Drama, 1989, pp. 339-412. This and all subsequent references are to this edition.
23. *The Times*, 25 January 1978, p. 13.
24. *The Guardian*, 25 January 1978, p. 10.
25. *The Observer*, 29 January 1978, p. 28.
26. *The Spectator*, 4 February 1978, p. 27.
27. *The Times*, 25 January 1978, p. 13.
28. *The Guardian*, 25 January 1978, p. 10.
29. *The Observer*, 29 January 1978, p. 28.
30. *New Statesman*, 3 February 1978, pp. 160-161.
31. *The Guardian*, 25 January 1978, p. 10.
32. *The Listener*, 2 February 1978, p. 153.
33. *New Statesman*, 3 February 1978, p. 161.
34. *The Listener*, 2 February 1978, p. 153.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
36. *Plays and Players*, Vol. 25 no.6 (March 1978): 26-27. p. 26.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
41. *The Guardian*, 25 January 1978, p. 10.



42. *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 December 1977, p. 13.
43. *The Sunday Times*, 5 February 1978, p.35.
44. *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 January 1978, p. 12.
45. *Evening Standard*, 25 January 1978, p. 20.
46. *Daily Mail*, (1st edition), 27 January 1978, p. 22; *The Daily Telegraph*, 25 January 1978, p. 15; *The Guardian* 25 January 1978, p. 10; *Evening Standard*, 25 January 1978, p. 20; *New Statesman*, 3 February 1978, p. 161; *The Observer*, 29 January 1978, p. 28; *The Spectator*, 4 February 1978, p. 27; *The Times*, 25 January 1978, p. 13, respectively.
47. *Plays and Players*, Vol. 25 no. 6 (March 1978): 27.
48. *The Financial Times*, 25 January 1978, p. 15.
49. Dukore, Bernard F. *The Theatre of Peter Barnes*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1981, p. 38.
50. *The Observer*, 29 January 1978, p. 28.
51. *The Guardian*, 18 September 1979, p. 10.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
53. Hayman, Ronald. *British Theatre since 1955. A Reassessment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979; Elsom, John. *Post-War British Theatre* (Rev. ed.). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979; Chambers, Colin and Mike Prior. *Playwrights' Progress. Patterns of Post-war British Drama*. Oxford: Amber Lane Press, 1987; Cave, Richard Allen. *New British Drama in Performance on the London Stage 1970-1985*. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd., 1987; Rabey, Ian David. *British and Irish Political Drama in the Twentieth Century. Implicating the Audience*. London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1986.
54. Reinelt, Janelle. *After Brecht. British Epic Theatre*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994.
55. Dukore, Bernard F. *The Theatre of Peter Barnes*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1981; "'People like you and me": The Auschwitz plays of Peter Barnes and C. P. Taylor'. *Essays in Theatre* Vol. 3 no.2 (May 1985): 108-124; 'Peter Barnes and the Problem of Goodness'. In *Around the Absurd Essays on Modern and Postmodern Drama*. Brater, Enoch and Ruby Cohn (eds.): 155-173. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1990.
56. Skloot, Robert. *The Darkness We Carry. The Drama of the Holocaust*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, pp. 63-67.
57. Worthen, W. B. *Modern Drama and the Rhetoric of Theater*. Oxford: University of California Press, 1992, pp. 168-173.
58. Peter Barnes in Dukore, Bernard F. 1981, pp. 62 and 63.
59. *The Times*, 25 January 1978, p. 13.

60. A large part of the scholarly controversy in Germany in the 1980s about the Holocaust, the *Historikerstreit*, concerned the degree to which a new class of career bureaucrat influenced the development of a genocidal policy and viewed the administration of the 'Final Solution' as a means of advancement in the party, at least one scholar not hesitating, albeit in an informal discussion, to describe them as 'Nazi yuppies' whose significance he was, nevertheless, at pains to down play in relation to the importance attributed to them by some German scholars. The scholar was David Bankier in a public lecture during Jewish book week in London in 1994. See his *The Germans and the Final Solution. Public Opinion under Nazism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992; also, Browning, Christopher R. *The Path to Genocide. Essays on launching the Final Solution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, specifically Chapter 6: 'Bureaucracy and Mass Murder: The German Administrator's Comprehension of the Final Solution'.
61. Dukore, Bernard F., 1985, p. 109.
62. Ibid., pp. 109 and 110.
63. Dukore, Bernard F., 1981, p. 59.
64. Ibid., p. 65.
65. Ibid., p. 33.
66. Worthen, W. B., 1992, pp. 146, 149, 155, 157.
67. Skloot, Robert, 1988, pp. 64-65.
68. Ibid., p. 65.
69. Dukore, Bernard F., 1981, p. 59.
70. Dukore, Bernard F., 1985, p. 114. See Barnes, Peter, 1989, pp. 382, 389.
71. Ibid., p. 109.
72. Worthen, W. B., 1992, pp. 169-170, 171.
73. Ibid., p. 172.
74. Skloot, Robert, 1988, p. 66.
75. Ibid., p. 67.
76. Worthen, W. B., 1992, pp. 172-173.
77. Bigsby, C. W. E., 1981, pp. 396-397.
78. Ibid., p. 397.
79. Skloot, Robert, 1988, p. 67.
80. Dukore, Bernard F., 1981, p. 38.
81. Unpublished transcript of a discussion between Peter Barnes and Timothy West (who took the part of Gottleb), p. 1. See the file on *Laughter!* in the Royal Court Theatre production archive, the Theatre Museum, Covent Garden, London.

82. Bly, Mark and Doug Wager. 'Theatre of the Extreme: an Interview with Peter Barnes'. *Theatre* no. 12 (Spring 1981): 43-48. p. 46.
83. Peter Barnes in 'On Class, Christianity, and Questions of Comedy'. (An interview with Clive Barker) *New Theatre Quarterly* Vol. VI no. 21 (February 1990): 5-24. p. 24.
84. Worthen, W. B., 1992, p. 172, note 13.
85. Ibid., p. 172, note 13.
86. Unpublished transcript. of a discussion between Peter Barnes and Timothy West, p. 2. See the file on *Laughter!* in the Royal Court Theatre production archive, the Theatre Museum, Covent Garden, London.

## 6 The RSC at the Warehouse and C. P. Taylor's *Good. A Tragedy*

1. Beaman, Sally. *The Royal Shakespeare Company: A History of Ten Decades*. London: Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 332.
2. Howard Davies quoted in Cook, Judith. *Director's Theatre*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989, p. 74.
3. Chambers, Colin. *Other Spaces. New Theatre and the RSC*. London: Eyre Methuen and TQ Publications, 1980, p. 48.
4. Howard Davies quoted in Cook, Judith, 1989, p. 74.
5. Ibid., pp. 74-75.
6. Chambers, Colin, 1980, pp. 51 and 52.
7. C. P. Taylor quoted in Road, Alan. 'Taylor-Made Theatre'. *The Observer Magazine*, 17 June 1979, p. 84.
8. C. P. Taylor quoted in Road, Alan, 1979, p. 84.
9. Ibid., p. 84.
10. Mortimer, Peter. 'C. P. Taylor - An Appreciation of His Work and Life'. *Drama* no. 145 (3rd quarter, 1982): 16-17. p. 17.
11. Ibid., p. 17.
12. C. P. Taylor quoted in Oliver, Cordelia. 'Interview with C. P. Taylor'. *The Guardian*, 2 August 1977, p. 8.
13. Taylor, C. P. 'A Silent Nightingale'. *The Guardian*, 8 September 1979, p. 10.
14. Taylor, C. P. 'A direction of our own'. *Scottish Theatre* (April 1970): 4.
15. C. P. Taylor quoted in Road, Alan, 1979, p. 84.
16. C. P. Taylor quoted in Elsom, John. 'Taylor on Tyneside'. *The Listener*, 21 January 1982, p. 30.
17. Howard Davies in the Foreword to *Bandits* by C. P. Taylor. North Shields: Iron Press, 1977.

18. Chambers, Colin, 1980, p. 49.
19. Beauman, Sally, 1982, p. 337.
20. Howard Davies quoted in Cook, Judith, 1989, p. 75.
21. Beauman, Sally, 1982, p. 337.
22. Chambers, Colin, 1980, p. 53.
23. Ibid., pp. 52-60.
24. Ibid., pp. 52-60.
25. Ibid., p. 59.
26. Ibid., p. 55.
27. Donohue, Walter (ed.). *The Warehouse: A Writers Theatre*. Dartington Occasional Paper Vol. 8 no. 3 (1979), pp. 5-6.
28. Friesner, Susan. 'Travails of a Naked Typist: the Plays of C.P. Taylor'. *New Theatre Quarterly* Vol. 1X no. 33 (February 1993): 44-58. p. 54.
29. See Friesner, Susan, 1993, pp. 55-56.
30. Howard Davies quoted in Cook, Judith, 1989, p. 75.
31. Howard Davies quoted in Friesner, Susan, 1993, p. 56.
32. Ibid., p. 56.
33. C. P. Taylor quoted in Friesner, Susan, 1993, p. 45.
34. C. P. Taylor. Author's Note. *Good. A Tragedy*. (Rev. ed.) London: Methuen, 1983. (All subsequent references to the text are to this edition.)
35. *The Guardian*, 11 September 1981, p. 8.
36. *The Listener*, 21 January 1982, p. 30.
37. *The Guardian*, 11 September 1981, p. 8.
38. *The Observer*, 13 September 1981, p. 27.
39. Reported by John Elsom in *The Listener*, 21 January 1982, p. 31.
40. *The Financial Times*, 10 September 1981, p. 21.
41. *The Guardian*, 11 September 1981, p. 8.
42. *The Listener*, 10 September 1981, p. 285.
43. *The Times*, 10 September 1981, p. 12.
44. *The Financial Times*, 10 September 1981, p. 21.
45. *The Spectator*, 19 September 1981, pp. 24-25.
46. *The Listener*, 10 September 1981, p. 285.
47. *The Observer*, 13 September 1981, p. 27.
48. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 9 October 1981, p. 1163.
49. Ibid., p. 1163.
50. Ibid., p. 1163.
51. Ibid., p. 1163.
52. Ibid., p. 1163.

53. Ibid., p. 1163.
54. Since the RSC's production of *Good* in 1981, the role of 'good' Germans in the implementation of the Holocaust has become an area of intense scholarly debate, and controversy. The literature is voluminous, but see specifically: Kershaw, Ian. 'The Persecution of the Jews and German Popular Opinion in the Third Reich'. *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* no. 26 (1981): 261-289; Kulka, Otto Dov. '"Public Opinion" in Nazi Germany and the "Jewish Question"'. *The Jerusalem Quarterly* no. 25 (Fall 1982): 121-144; Kulka, Otto Dov. '"Public Opinion" in Nazi Germany; The Final Solution'. *The Jerusalem Quarterly* no. 26 (Winter 1983): 35-45; Kater, Michael H. 'Everyday Anti-Semitism in Pre-war Nazi Germany: The Popular Bases'. *Yad Vashem Studies* no.16 (1984): 129-159; Wilhelm, Hans-Heinrich. 'The Holocaust in National-Socialist Rhetoric and Writings'. *Yad Vaslem Studies* no. 16 (1984): 95-127; Peukert, Detlev J.K. *Inside Nazi Germany. Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life*. London: Batsford, 1987; Bankier, David. 'The Germans and the Holocaust: What Did They Know?' *Yad Vashem Studies* no.20 (1990): 69-98; Bankier, David *The Germans and the Final Solution. Public Opinion under Nazism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992. More recently and controversially Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah. *Hitler's Willing Executioners. Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. London: Little, Brown and Co., 1996.
55. See C. P. Taylor: Author's Note. *Good. A Tragedy*. (Rev ed.) London: Methuen, 1983.
56. Ibid.
57. Snoo Wilson's review for *Time Out*. In *London Theatre Record* Vol. I no. 18 (1981), p. 461.
58. Rabey, David Ian. *British and Irish Political Drama in the Twentieth Century. Implicating the Audience*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1986, p. 127.
59. Ibid., p. 127.
60. Cave, Richard Allen. *New British Drama in Performance on the London Stage 1970-1985*. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd., 1987, p. 255.
61. Friesner, Susan, 1993, p. 54.
62. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 9 October 1981, p. 1163.
63. Friesner, Susan, 1993, p. 45.
64. C. P. Taylor quoted in Friesner, Susan, 1993, p. 44.
65. C. P. Taylor quoted in Road, Alan. 'Taylor-Made Theatre'. *The Observer Magazine*, 17 June 1979, p. 84.
66. C. P. Taylor: Author's Note. *Good. A Tragedy*. (Rev. ed.) London: Methuen, 1983.

67. Skloot, Robert. *The Darkness We Carry. The Drama of the Holocaust*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, pp. 53-54.
68. *Evening Standard*, 10 September 1981, p. 27.
69. Skloot, Robert, 1988, pp. 54-55.
70. *Ibid.*, pp. 55 and 53.
71. C. P. Taylor quoted in 'Steve Grant meets C. P. Taylor'. *The Guardian*, 4 September 1981, p. 77.
72. *The Listener*, 21 January 1982, p. 30.
73. Friesner, Susan, 1993, p. 56.
74. Howard Davies quoted in *The New York Times*, 15 October 1982, p. C.4.

7 *George Steiner's The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.*

1. Thorncroft, Anthony. 'The Mermaid Re-surfaces'. *The Financial Times*, 11 October 1980, p. 5.
2. Hamilton, Alan. 'The Mermaid's Stormy Days'. *The Times*, 24 October 1981, p. 6. Although Christopher Hampton's *George Steiner's The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.* would enjoy a commercially successful run, it would not save the theatre. The subsequent production *Dear Liar* closed on 29 May after only four weeks, and by early August the theatre was up for sale to settle debts of £650,000. It was bought for £695,000 by Gomba Holdings, a trading, industrial and financial services group in October 1983.

It was revealed in *The Sunday Telegraph* on the 14 August (p. 4) that the refusal of the Arts Council to resume paying grants following the Mermaid's rebuilding programme was a major factor in the decision to sell.

3. See Higgins, John. 'Aiming for people's consciences'. Interview with John Dexter. *The Times*, 15 January 1982, p. 7.
4. Christopher Hampton quoted in Barber, John. 'How Hampton Resurfaces'. *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 January 1982, p. 10.
5. See Higgins, John. 'Aiming for people's consciences'. *The Times*, 15 January 1982, p. 7
6. John Dexter quoted in Higgins, John. 'Aiming for people's consciences'. *The Times*, 15 January 1982, p. 7.
7. Christopher Hampton quoted in Owen, Michael. 'Adolf on trial in Hampton's Court'. *Evening Standard*, 15 January 1982, p. 24.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
9. Schonberg, Steven. *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 July 1981, p. 27.
10. Bragg, Melvyn. *Punch*, 17 June 1981, p. 981.

11. Lively, Penelope. *Encounter* Vol. 57 no. 5 (November 1981): 84-85.
12. Bergonzi, Bernard. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 12 June 1981, p. 660.
13. Burgess, Anthony. *The Observer*, 24 May 1981, p. 29.
14. Conrad, Peter. *New Statesman*, 27 June 1980, p. 968. (Following its publication in *The Kenyon Review*, Steiner's novel had *first* been issued in an abridged form by Granta in June 1980. The *New Statesman* review is of this edition.
15. *The Sunday Times*, 21 February 1982, p. 40.
16. *New Statesman*, 24 February 1982, p. 968.
17. *Plays and Players*, (April 1982): 18-19. p. 19.
18. *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 February 1982, p. 20.
19. *The Financial Times*, 18 February 1982, p. 21.
20. *Plays and Players*, (April 1982), p. 18.
21. *The Observer*, 21 February 1982, p. 29.
22. *The Times*, 18 February 1982, p. 11.
23. *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 February 1982, p. 13.
24. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 26 February 1982, p. 217.
25. *New Statesman*, 24 February 1982, pp. 30-31.
26. *The Guardian*, 18 February 1982, p. 10.
27. *The Sunday Telegraph*, 21 February 1982, p. 14.
28. *Daily Mail*, 18 February 1982, p. 3.
29. *The Spectator*, 27 February 1982, p. 29.
30. *The Guardian*, 18 February 1982, p. 10.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
32. *The Spectator*, 27 February 1982, p. 29.
33. *The Observer*, 21 February 1982, p. 29.
34. *Plays and Players*, (April 1982), p. 19.
35. *The Times*, 18 February 1982, p. 11.
36. *New Statesman*, 24 February 1982, p. 968.
37. *Plays and Players*, (April 1982), p. 19.
38. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 26 February 1982, p. 217.
39. *Plays and Players*, (April 1982), p. 19.
40. *The Guardian*, 18 February 1982, p. 10.
41. *The Times*, 18 February 1982, p. 11.
42. *New Statesman*, 24 February 1982, p. 968.
43. *Plays and Players*, (April 1982), p. 19.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
45. *The Observer*, 21 February 1982, p. 28.

46. *The Sunday Times*, 21 February 1982, p. 40.
47. *The Observer*, 21 February 1982, p. 29.
48. Steiner, George. 'A Kind of Survivor'.(1965) In Steiner, George. *Language and Silence*. London: Faber and Faber, 1985, pp. 164-179.
49. *The Financial Times*, 18 February 1982, p. 2.
50. *The Guardian*, 18 February 1982, p. 10.
51. *The Observer*, 21 February 1982, p. 29.
52. *The Financial Times*, 18 February 1982, p. 21.
53. *New Statesman*, 24 February 1982, p. 968.
54. Gilbert, Martin. 'Steiner's Hitler : a travesty'. *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 February 1982, p. 20.
55. Ibid., p. 20.
56. Ibid., p. 20.
57. Gilbert, Martin. 'Who do you think you are kidding, Mr Hitler?' *The Times*, 6 March 1982, p. 9.
58. Ibid., p. 9.
59. Ibid., p. 9.
60. Ibid., p. 9.
61. Ibid., p. 9.
62. Ibid., p. 9.
63. Steiner, George. 'Who do you think you are kidding, Dr. Gilbert?' *The Times*, 11 March 1982, p. 12.
64. Ibid., p. 12.
65. Ibid., p. 12.
66. Wesker, Arnold. 'My Shylock and his Hitler'. *The Times*, 20 March 1982, p. 6.
67. George Steiner. Letter to *The Times*, 27 March 1982, p. 9.
68. George Steiner in 'The *Jewish Chronicle* Interview'. *The Jewish Chronicle*, 26 March 1982, pp. 26 and 36. Steiner granted this interview with the *Jewish Chronicle* on condition that a personal statement be published simultaneously affirming his integrity and disassociating him from opinions which had appeared in an earlier issue of the *Jewish Chronicle*. The text of this personal statement is given in full in Appendix a: 'Documents in Defence' (iii).
69. *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 March 1982, p. 26.
70. Steiner, George. 'Who do you think you are kidding, Dr Gilbert?' *The Times*, 11 March 1982, p. 12.
71. Ibid., p. 12.
72. George Steiner in 'The *Jewish Chronicle* Interview'. *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 March 1982, p. 26.



73. In Stefan Kanfer's review of Steiner's novel, which appeared in *The New Republic* beneath the title 'The Perversity of G.S.', Hitler is referred to as 'George Steiner's surrogate'. Steiner himself is excoriated as unstable of mind and impediment of motive:

Let us charitably assume that he is a man obsessed, that he must continue to flog his theories at any cost, even if A.H. has to become the mouthpiece of G.S. To do otherwise is to impute the very worst kind of motives and to assume that although Steiner's pose remains mandarin, his prose has become collaborationist. (*The New Republic*, 21 April 1982, pp. 35-36.)

Morris Dickstein making his critical contribution in *The New York Times Book Review* the following month offered little by way of succour to Steiner, elaborating a more precise justification for the kind of acerbic reception that Kanfer had given the novel, and confirming the most uncharitable views of the English theatre critics:

The characters in the book lack the spark of life a skilled novelist could have given them. The Nazi-hunters have different names and histories, but they are merely verbal figments, hard to keep apart. The spies and officials who keep tabs on them... are such stereotypes of their nationalities, filled out with more of Mr Steiner's favourite ideas, that I cringed as I read them. A digressive chapter is devoted to each of them, but surprisingly they play no role in the novel's resolution.

To avoid sounding discursive, Mr Steiner has made the book wearisome. He suffocates his material under an excess of 'fine writing'. His high-pressure style is a clear instance of the will doing the work of the imagination.

All too often he betrays his urgent themes in pretentious passages of self-display. His most ambiguous trait (it is crucial for this novel) is the moral anguish he wears on his sleeve.

Nearly every detail of the fictional Hitler's apologetics can be found, in less exaggerated form in Mr Steiner's *Language and Silence* (1967) or in the second chapter of *In Bluebeard's Castle* (1971)... When the author glibly recycles those same ideas through the mouth of Hitler in this novel, he unwittingly creates sympathy for Hitler by making him old and pathetic yet also lucid and brilliant - at once absurdly harmless and unconvincingly dangerous.

*The Portage to San Cristobal* is a misconceived and badly executed novel, a side-show distraction from the serious business of thinking through the unspeakable horrors of the Nazi era. (Dickstein, Morris. 'Alive and 90 in the Jungles of Brazil'. *The New York Times Book Review*, 2 May 1982, pp. 13 and 21.)

74. Rosenfeld, Alvin H. *Imagining Hitler*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985. Alvin Rosenfeld's review 'Steiner's Hitler' first appeared in *Salmagundi* no. 52-53 (Spring-Summer 1981): 160-174, and later in a slightly revised form in his book *Imagining Hitler*.
75. Rosenfeld, Alvin H., 1985, p. 90.
76. See 'A Kind of Survivor'. In Steiner, George. *Language and Silence*. London: Faber and Faber, 1985, pp. 164-179; *In Bluebeard's Castle or Some Notes Towards a Re-definition of Culture*. London: Faber and Faber, 1971, pp. 40-42. Also see Note 83 below where the chief points made in these sources are noted.
77. Rosenfeld, Alvin H., 1985, p. 98.
78. Boyers, Robert. 'Steiner's Holocaust: Politics and Theology'. *Salmagundi* no. 66 (Winter-Spring 1985): 26-49. A slightly revised version of this article also appeared in Boyers, Robert. *Atrocity and Amnesia. The Political Novel since 1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
79. Rosenfeld, Alvin H., 1985, p. 97.
80. Boyers, Robert. 'Steiner's Holocaust: Politics and Theology'. *Salmagundi* no. 66 (Winter-Spring 1985): 26-49. p. 43.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
82. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.
83. The justifications which Steiner placed in the mouth of the stage Hitler are easily discernible in 'A Kind of Survivor'. (1965) Following the order in which they appear in *The Portage* as A. H.'s defence at the hastily improvised tribunal, Steiner had earlier expressed these arguments thus:

By one of the cruel, deep ironies of history, the concept of a chosen people of a nation exalted above others by particular destiny, was born in Israel... In the vocabulary of Nazism there were elements of a vengeful parody on the Judaic claim. The theological motif of a people elected at Sinai is echoed in the pretence of the master race and its chiliastic dominion. Thus there was in the obsessed relation of Nazi to Jew a minute but fearful grain of logic...

The implication of the European and Russian Jew in Marxism had natural causes... The dream of a secular millennium... relates the social utopia of Communism to the messianic tradition. For both Jew and Communist history is a scenario of gradual humanisation, an immensely difficult attempt by man to become man. In both modes of feeling there is an obsession with the prophetic authority of moral or historical law, with the right reading of canonic revelations...

In one of the vilest episodes in modern history, the militia and police of European appeasement and European totalitarianism collaborated in handing over Jews...

Which bestial bargain and exchange... made eloquent the decision to hound the Jews out of European history. But also the peculiar dignity of his torment. Perhaps we can define ourselves thus: *the Jews are a people whom totalitarian barbarism must choose for its hatred...*

*Men are accomplices to that which leaves them indifferent.* It is this fact which must, I think, make the Jew wary inside Western culture, which must lead him to re-examine ideals and historical traditions that, certainly in Europe, had enlisted the best of his hopes and genius. The house of civilisation proved no shelter...

The state of Israel is undeniably a part of the legacy of German mass-murder. ('A Kind of Survivor'. In Steiner, George. *Language and Silence*. London: Faber and Faber, 1985, pp. 177,172,173 and 177.)

With characteristic ambition Steiner launched another inquiry into the condition of European civilisation, and the relationship between the 'old literary' culture and 'the new burgeoning technology', a kind of pan-European, post 'Two-cultures' assessment of civilised discourse in post-humanist, post literate society in his T. S. Eliot Lectures delivered in March 1971 at the University of Kent at Canterbury, published later that same year as *In Bluebeard's Castle or Some Notes Towards a Re-definition of Culture*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1971.) A more specific purpose within this free ranging enquiry was to seek some possible answers to the question of how the Nobel laureate, literary critic and devout Anglican T. S. Eliot, in his *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* written in 1948, could possibly fail to make reference to the Holocaust when the newsreel images of the European Jewish Catastrophe were still reverberating in the minds of those who had seen them even if they had not lived through the horrors. Steiner comments in his *Notes*:

The failure of Eliot's *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* to face the issue, indeed to allude to it in anything but an oddly condescending footnote, is acutely disturbing. How, only three years after the event, after the publication to the world of facts and pictures that have, surely altered our sense of the limits of human behaviour, was it possible to write a book on culture and say nothing? How was it possible to detail and plead for a Christian order when the holocaust had put in question the very nature of Christianity and of its role in European history.

It seems to me incontrovertible that the holocaust must be set in the framework of the *psychology of religion*, and that an understanding of this framework is vital to an argument on culture. *This is a minority view.* [my italics] (*In Bluebeard's Castle* p. 34.)

This minority view, a psychology of religion must be able to wield explanatory power not merely at the level of political motivation, economic reality or

sociological organisation - the jejune explanations dismissed in Steiner's response to Martin Gilbert - but 'at the level of philosophical intent' (p. 35) inherent in the Nazi pursuit of the 'Final Solution', and the thesis which Steiner advances is none other than that found in the stage Hitler's speech when he launches into the second of his self-justifications, accusing the Jews of 'the blackmail of transcendence' and which many of the American critics recognised as a direct transposition from *In Bluebeard's Castle*.

Steiner writes in 'A Season in Hell', the second part of *In Bluebeard's Castle*:

Monotheism at Sinai, primitive Christianity, messianic socialism: these are the three supreme moments in which Western culture is presented with what Ibsen terms 'the claims of the ideal'. These are the three stages, profoundly interrelated, through which Western consciousness is forced to experience the blackmail of transcendence.

Three times, Judaism produced a summons to perfection and sought to impose it on the current and currency of Western life. Deep loathing built up in the social subconscious, murderous resentments. The mechanism is simple but primordial. *We hate most those who hold out to us a goal, an ideal, a visionary promise which, even though we have stretched our muscles to the utmost, we cannot reach, which slips, again and again, just out of range of our racked-fingers - yet, as this is crucial, which remains profoundly desirable, which we cannot reject because we fully acknowledge its supreme value.* In his exasperating 'strangeness', in his acceptance of suffering as part of a covenant with the absolute, the Jew became, as it were, the 'bad conscience' of Western history.

When it turned on the Jew, Christianity and European civilisation turned on the incarnation - albeit an incarnation often wayward and unaware - of its own best hopes... In the holocaust there was both a lunatic retribution, a lashing out against intolerable pressures of vision, and a large measure of self-mutilation. The secular, materialist warlike community of modern Europe sought to extirpate from itself, from its own inheritance, archaic, now ridiculously obsolete, but somehow inextinguishable carriers of the ideal. (pp. 40, 41, 42)

This short quotation provides further evidence that there is no substantial difference between Steiner's views on the fate of European Jewry and those espoused by the stage Hitler in *The Portage*, and that no literary sleight of hand can succeed in placing an aesthetic, or a moral distance between the claims of A. H. and the views of Steiner.

The book reviews on both sides of the Atlantic were highly critical of *In Bluebeard's Castle*. (See for example: Schorske, Carl E. *The New York Times*, 7 November 1971, Sec. 7 Part 1, pp. 8 and 10; Ricks, Christopher. *The New*

*York Review of Books*, 18 November 1971, pp. 27-29; *The Times Literary Supplement*, lead article (unsigned), 17 December 1971, p. 1; Hampshire, Stuart. *The Observer*, 10 October 1971, p. 32; Brophy, Brigid. *The Listener*, 28 October 1971, pp. 582-584; Grigson, Geoffrey. *New Statesman*, 22 October 1971, pp. 545-546; Hardy, Barbara. *The Spectator*, 4 December 1971, pp. 810-811.) The prominent US critic Irving Howe, attacked the tenor of Steiner's theses in the following terms:

If at first glance it seems flattering to the Jews to be told that they have been the 'bad conscience' of Western history, bringing with them, 'the blackmail of transcendence', a moment's reflection ought to reveal that it is empty talk, at once grandiose and trivial. As an explanation for the rise of totalitarianism, it suffers from a characteristic fault of *Geistesgeschichte*: the encapsulation of an extremely complex group of historical events by a theory so nebulously inclusive that it leaves no possibility for refutation. And a theory that can't be refuted can't be demonstrated. (Howe, Irving. 'Auschwitz and High Mandarin'. In *The Critical Point. On Literature and Culture*. New York: Horizon Press, 1973, p. 183.)

84. Maccoby, Hyam. 'George Steiner's "Hitler". Of Theology and Politics'. *Encounter* Vol. LVIII no. 5 (May 1982): 27-34. pp. 32-34.
85. Boyers, Robert. 'Steiner's Holocaust: Politics and Theology'. *Salmagundi* no. 66 (Winter-Spring 1985), p. 47.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
87. Steiner, George. *After Babel. Aspects of Language and Translation*. London: Oxford University Press, 1975.
88. Sharp, Ronald. 'Steiner's Fiction and the Hermeneutics of Transcendence'. In *Reading George Steiner*. Scott Jr., Nathan A. and Ronald A. Sharp (eds.): 205-229. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 206.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 206.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
93. Steiner identifies four movements in the task of translation, and Sharp finds 'the parallels with *The Portage... striking*'. (Scott Jr., Nathan A. and Ronald A. Sharp (eds.) 1994, p. 211.) The four movements in brief are:

Initiative trust, an investment of belief... epistemological exposed and psychologically hazardous... that there is 'something there' to be understood... instantaneous and unexamined... The second move of the translator is incursive and extractive... The translator invades, extracts and brings home... The third movement is incorporative... The import, of

meaning and of form, the embodiment, is not made in or into a vacuum... It instances... the issue of 'alterity'... which concentrates different possibilities and versions of being... Fourth, the... movement of trust puts us off balance. We 'lean towards' the confronting text... We encircle and invade cognitively. We come home laden, thus again off balance... The hermeneutic act must compensate. If it is to be authentic, it must mediate into exchange and restored parity... But... the work translated is enhanced the interpretative act is inherently inflationary: it proclaims that...there is more here than meets the eye.(Steiner, George. 1975, pp. 296-300 and 333.)

These extracts from 'The Hermeneutic Motion,' Chapter five of Steiner's *After Babel* provide the frame for Sharp's presentation of Steiner's explanation of the hermeneutics of translation. His summary captures much of the romantic spirit of Steiner's account of the act of translation, but his selective quotation of specific passages fails to indicate, let alone emphasise (as they would run counter to his argument) the qualifications that Steiner himself at least notes: 'The trust can never be final. [It] will ...be *tested* more or less *severely*'; 'the [translated] text... has become almost *materially thinner*'; 'the dialectic of embodiment entails the possibility that we may be *consumed*'; 'Unquestionably there is a dimension of *loss or breakage*...there is unbalance. The translator has taken *too much*... or too little'. [my italics] (Steiner, George. 1975, pp. 296-301.)

Sharp's selective use of Steiner's hermeneutic model, gives little consideration or weight to the qualifications Steiner notes, and allows Sharp a generosity of interpretation which borders on the irresponsible. In Sharp's application of Steiner's model of the hermeneutic's of translation to *The Portage*, the search party's 'situation represents a dramatic enactment of precisely that radical exposure and hazard of which Steiner speaks... intensified and symbolised by the enormity of physical danger that they confront throughout their mission... But these men are in the obsessive grip of a vision directed by their leader via radio'. (Scott Jr., Nathan A. and Ronald A. Sharp (eds.) 1994, pp. 211-212.) (Movement 1); Kulken's attentive vigil beside the radio-transmitter as a 'subtext about translation achieves a power and resonance of its own that is virtually mythic in its portrayal of interpretation as a primal hunt for meaning'. ( Scott Jr., Nathan A. and Ronald A. Sharp (eds.) 1994, p. 212.) (Movement 2); The international interludes and the presence of Crownbacker represent 'the array of semantic fields waiting hungrily on the jungle's periphery... ready with their own structures of understanding to absorb and demonstrate even this wild new piece of reality'. (Scott Jr., Nathan A. and

Ronald A. Sharp (eds.) 1994, p. 213. (Movement 3). (See Steiner, George. 1975, pp. 296-301.)

However, if Steiner's own qualifications noted above are also applied it may justly be claimed that the 'pact of generosity' between the audience and author, 'the trust', was indeed severely *tried* and *tested* by the two dimensional figures of the search party in their 'jungle', as though lifted from the pages of an airport thriller. Kulken achieved new approximations to shallowness in the further *emptying* of the caricature of the manque modern conquistador - all bristle, belly and bullish in the sweltering heat of the Brazilian rain forest. The international interludes in the dramatic adaptation were a missed opportunity for Steiner himself to mount the stage, for the characters merely recycle a number of cause célèbres so clearly Steiner's own that it would have been a more honest enactment of inter-textuality had he done so. While Sharp proclaims the 'profundity' of these 'literary strategies', their crassly obvious nature, the ineptitude of their execution, and, not least, the relentless voice of Steiner distinguishable in nearly every single character simply palls. The material is *thin*, and we are consumed by *monotony*. This leads to the conclusion that Sharp has lost the ability to recognise truly intelligent literary ideas and genuinely imaginative creation. The patchwork of theoretical musing which Steiner audaciously describes as a novel is the triumph of the thoroughly pedantic.

94. Ronald Sharp in Scott Jr., Nathan A., and Ronald A. Sharp (eds.)1994, pp. 213, 214, 215, 216.
95. For a thoughtful defence of essentialism in face of the avalanche of post-modern literary theorising, see Rudnytsky, Peter L. *The Psychoanalytic Vocation*. London: Yale University Press, 1991, pp. 149-169.
96. Wyschogrod, Edith. 'The Mind of a Critical Moralist: Steiner as Jew'. In Scott Jr., Nathan A. and Ronald A. Sharp (eds.): 151-179, 1994. pp. 168-169.
97. Ibid., p. 168.
98. Skloot, Robert. *The Darkness We Carry. The Drama of the Holocaust*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, pp. 91 and 92.
99. George Steiner interviewed by Nicolas Tredell. In Tredell, Nicolas. *Conversations with Critics*. Manchester: Carcanet, 1994, pp. 78-79.
100. George Steiner in the Preface to *Tolstoy or Doskoevsky. An Essay in Contrast*. London: Faber and Faber, 1980.
101. Ibid.
102. Steiner, George. 'The Retreat from the Word'. In *Language and Silence*. London: Faber and Faber, 1985, p. 50.

103. Arthur Miller in his Introduction to Miller, Arthur. *Collected Plays. Vol. I.* London: Secker and Warburg, 1967, pp. 37-38.
104. George Steiner quoted in 'Devil's Advocate for Hitler'. [Interview with Stephen Fay] *The Sunday Times*, 14 February 1982, p. 16.
105. See, for example, George Steiner speaking to Nicolas Tredell (1994):

In a great creative artist, there is an innocence which I simply do not have. Such an artist has something which we don't have a terribly good word for a supreme intelligence, an innocent necessity, of shaping. My fiction... comes out of an idea, out of what might have been an essay. I hope this is a little less true of some of the most controversial parts of *The Portage*. These are not things I could have said in any other form. The novel wrote itself in three days and three nights at a moment of very deep personal crisis. If one could do the real thing all the time, one would. (p.89)

See also Steiner's 'Responion' in Scott Jr., Nathan A. and Ronald A. Sharp (eds.) 1994: 'I do not possess the inventive innocence, the somnambular immediacy of the poet and the novelist... My fictions are, in essence, allegories of argument, "stagings" of ideas.' (p. 279.)

## 8 The Royal Court Theatre and the 'Perdition Affair'

1. See Gaskill, William. *A Sense of Direction. Life at the Royal Court.* London: Faber and Faber, 1988, pp. 136-137.
2. Max Stafford-Clark interviewed by Tony Dunn: '"A Programme for the Progressive Conscience": The Royal Court in the 'Eighties'. *New Theatre Quarterly* Vol. 1 no. 2 (May 1985): 138-153.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 144, 140.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
5. Max Stafford-Clark in Dunn, Tony. '"A Programme for the Progressive Conscience": the Royal Court in the 'Eighties'. *New Theatre Quarterly* Vol. 1 no. 2 (May 1985), p. 138.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
9. The new outlook is indicated by the production of more work by women playwrights. When asked about this Stafford-Clark observed:

I'm not conscious of any positive discrimination in favour of women's work. Simply, the most interesting work at the moment - in the personal



as opposed to the epic area – is influential and powerful political movement of my time at both women and men have written in recent years. But obviously for women it has led to great personal liberation and discovery, and we've reflected that in productions of work by Caryl Churchill, [*Cloud Nine; Top Girls; Fen*] Andrea Dunbar [*The Arbor; Rita; Sue and Bob Too*] Sarah Daniels, [*Ripen Our Darkness; Devils Gateway; Masterpieces*] Louise Page, [*Salonika*] Lis Bond, and Timberlake Wertenbaker. (Ibid., p. 139.)

10. Ibid., p. 148.
11. Gruenwald's accusations are quoted in Segev, Tom. *The Seventh Million. The Israelis and the Holocaust*. Trans. Haim Watzman. New York: Hill and Wang, 1994, pp. 257-258.
12. See Note 11 for publication details.
13. Segev, Tom, 1994, p. 258.
14. Ibid., p. 272.
15. Ibid., pp. 280-281.
16. Ibid., p. 284.
17. Ibid., p.282.
18. Rubenstein, W. D. *A History of the Jews in the English-Speaking World: Great Britain*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996, p. 376. See also Mandel, Arnold. 'The Image of the Jew after the Arab-Israeli War. In Britain'. *Patterns of Prejudice* Vol. I no. 4 (July/August 1967): 3-7.
19. Rubenstein, W. D., 1996, p. 378.
20. Billig, Michael. 'Anti-Jewish Themes and the British Far Left - I and II'. *Patterns of Prejudice* Vol. 18 nos. 1 and 2 (January and April 1984): 3-15; 28-34, respectively.
21. Billig, Michael. 'Anti-Jewish Themes and the British Far Left - I'. *Patterns of Prejudice* Vol. 18 no. 1 (January 1984), p. 10.
22. Allen, Jim. *Perdition*. London: Ithaca Press in collaboration with Jerusalem and Peace Services, 1987. A number of versions prior to publication are identifiable:
  - . The text first sent to the Royal Court in the summer of 1985.
  - . The revision of this text which incorporates corrections to the errors and omissions identified in David Cesarani's report, and edited to half its former length.
  - . The text sent to Manchester's Library Theatre for their consideration.
  - . The rehearsal text adopted for the move to production in Autumn 1986, with the première date set for 22 January 1987.
  - . Press text circulated by the Royal Court Press Office January 1987.

- The text discussed by the Royal Court's Council on 20 January 1987.
- Final rehearsal's text(s).
- The text supplied to the participants of the Channel 4 *Diverse Reports* programme on the 'Perdition Affair', 18 March 1987.
- The published text, July 1987.

It is impossible to determine precisely how many versions of *Perdition* were written and are extant. (The Weiner Library London has an unidentified typescript copy of *Perdition*. This could be either the version provided to journalists in January 1987 shortly before the planned première, or the version supplied to participants of the *Diverse Reports* programme screened on Channel 4 on 18 March 1987 which took the 'Perdition Affair' as its subject.) On the assumption that there were just three later versions (which followed the long version first sent to the Court and upon which Cesarani compiled his report), and which Cesarani labels: Mk.2 (the press copy distributed by the Royal Court), Mk. 3 (supplied to the participants in the Channel Four *Diverse Reports* discussion on 18 March 1987 on the *Perdition* controversy), and Mk. 4 (the Ithaca Press published version), Cesarani makes a cursory survey noting the chief additions, deletions and changes to language in his extended note to the published text. (See Allen, Jim, 1987, pp. 112-114 for this summary treatment of some significant differences between these three versions.) A detailed analysis of the differences between these versions and what they reveal of Jim Allen's editorial priorities and practice would be highly illuminating, but beyond the scope of this present study.

Two individuals figure prominently in the events dramatised by Allen, Israel Rudolf (Rezso) Kasztner and Hannah Szenes. The spelling of the names of both follows *The Encyclopaedia of the Holocaust* (London:1990) except for titles or quotations in which these names are spelled in a different way.

23. David Cesarani in Allen, Jim, 1987, p. 111.
24. Ibid., p. 111.
25. Allen, Jim, 1987, p. 111.
26. Ibid., pp. 111-112.
27. *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 January 1987, p. 15. See also *Time Out*, 7-14 January 1987, p.8, where Hastings is also reported to have said that while the purpose of *Perdition* was not to 'fir[e] up ancient anti-Semitism' it 'does provide a subtext acutely aimed at discrediting Zionism'.
28. Stafford-Clark, Max. 'Why I Axed *Perdition*'. *The Guardian*, 13 March 1987, p. 19.

29. Ibid., p. 19.
30. Ibid., p. 19.
31. Ibid., p. 19.
32. Dr Stephen Roth in a letter to *The Guardian*, 19 March 1987, p. 14.
33. Rose, David. 'Rewriting the Holocaust'. *The Guardian*, 14 January 1987, p. 7.
34. Brenner, Lenni. *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators*. London: Croom Helm, 1983.
35. *The Guardian*, 14 January 1987, p. 7.
36. Rose, David. 'Rewriting the Holocaust'. *The Guardian*, 14 January 1987, p. 7.
37. Ibid., p. 7.
38. *The Guardian*, 14 January 1987, p. 7.
39. Jim Allen quoted by David Rose. Ibid., p. 7.
40. Max Stafford-Clark quoted by David Rose. Ibid., p. 7.
41. Alfred Marks quoted by David Rose. Ibid., p. 7.
42. Jim Allen in a letter to *The Guardian*, 17 January 1987, p. 14.
43. Stafford-Clark, Max. 'Why I Axed *Perdition*'. *The Guardian*, 13 March 1987, p. 19.
44. Ibid., p. 19.
45. Gilbert, Martin. 'Nazis and the Jews: A Travesty of the Facts'. *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 January 1987, p. 10.
46. Ibid., p. 10.
47. Stafford-Clark, Max. 'Why I Axed *Perdition*'. *The Guardian*, 13 March 1987, p. 19.
48. Ken Loach in *The Guardian*, 18 February 1987, p. 28.
49. Max Stafford-Clark quoted in *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 January 1987, p. 40.
50. *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 January 1987, p. 1.
51. *The Guardian*, 22 January 1987, p. 1.
52. Jim Allen quoted in *The Guardian*, 22 January 1987, p. 1.
53. Jim Allen quoted in *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 January 1987, p. 40.
54. Ibid., p. 1.
55. Editorial. *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 January 1987, p. 12.
56. Gilbert, Martin. 'Nazis and the Jews: A Travesty of the Facts'. *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 January 1987, p. 10.
57. Jim Allen quoted in *Time Out*, 21 - 28 January 1987, p. 20.
58. Lord Goodman. 'This Brutal Insult Has No Place in Art'. *Evening Standard*, 23 January 1987, p. 7.
59. Ibid., p. 7.
60. Ibid., p. 7.

61. Max Stafford-Clark quoted in *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 January 1987, p. 40.
62. *The Times*, 23 January 1987, p. 20.
63. *The Guardian*, 23 January 1987, p. 10.
64. Max Stafford-Clark quoted in *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 January 1987, p. 40.
65. *The Times*, 24 January 1987, p. 16.
66. *The Sunday Telegraph*, 25 January 1987, p. 22.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
68. *The Times*, 3 February 1987, p. 16.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
70. *The Observer*, 25 January 1987, p. 20.
71. *New Statesman*, 6 February 1987, p. 25.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
74. Loach's open letter begins with the stale repetition of Jim Allen's views of *Perdition*'s main thesis which Loach appears content merely to repeat. But the bulk of the letter concerned his perceptions of the Council's failures, amongst which, addressing the Council directly, he includes some of the themes identified earlier as repeatedly asserting themselves, namely: the *distinction* to be drawn between *anti-Zionism* and *anti-Semitism*, the *conspiracy to censor*, and the *Court's handling of the withdrawal of Perdition*. Loach observes:

As Council members, you have presumably read the play... You know it carefully distinguishes between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism... Zionism is a political tendency. To be critical of Zionist ideology does not make the play anti-Semitic... The charge of anti-Semitism is a gross libel. We can only answer it by presenting our work to the public. You have denied us that opportunity.

Your literary manager Michael Hastings, did intervene. In the *Jewish Chronicle* he wrote... 'Perdition could be looked on as an anti-Jewish play'... For a year, Hastings was the most enthusiastic promoter of the play at the theatre. Hastings has not quoted anything to justify his criticism. This sub-text is a subterfuge to provide intellectual cover for Max Stafford-Clark's ban.

Is a play to be denied a hearing because a powerful pressure group is opposed to its political analysis? Is not such argument and debate the very life blood of a free society? Many of us have experienced the 'repressive tolerance' of broadcasting. Is the same censorship to be applied at the Royal Court?

The humiliation of Stafford-Clark and Hastings should perhaps concern you, the Council. Can the Royal Court maintain its credibility as a theatre that respects its writers. Whatever authority is delegated by the Council, the buck stops with you.

The Council must also take responsibility for the selection of its own members. Neither Jim Allen, nor I, nor the cast were asked to meet the Council or its representatives. But we understand that a group from the Council, led by Sonia Melchett, met George Weidenfeld and Martin Gilbert a few days before our opening performance. It is not difficult to imagine the unsubstantiated allegations heaped on the play... Shortly afterwards there was a formal Council meeting again without anyone to refute these charges. Why did you not offer the same opportunity to Jim Allen that some of you were only too eager to give to Gilbert? Jim Allen was the writer whose play your theatre had agreed to perform. Did you owe him no respect or loyalty? Or even a hearing? Then, when Stafford-Clark caved in, Matthew Evans, your Chairman, called the decision 'extremely sensible'. (*The Guardian*, 18 February 1987, p. 28.)

Max Stafford-Clark would respond to many of these criticisms some three weeks later, on 13 March, in his article for *The Guardian*, 'Why I Axed *Perdition*'.

75. *New Statesman*, 20 February 1987, p. 20.

76. *New Statesman*, 20 February 1987, pp. 19-20. The repeated allegations read:

It is simply not credible that the theatre management changed its mind on the script at such a late date without overwhelming and undeclared pressure from the censorship lobby...

At this stage [23 January] no one outside the immediate circle of the production had seen the script that was to be presented. We can only assume that Zionist organisations, possibly the Institute of Jewish Affairs, were circulating an early draft of the script, with copies of hostile reviews from historians sympathetic to their cause...

The play's opponents used their influence to lobby and manipulate behind the scenes. We know, for example, that there was a meeting between some members of the Royal Court Council and Lord Weidenfeld and Martin Gilbert... Its purpose could only be to bring pressure to bear on the Court...

And so the play was banned, apparently on the sole authority of Max Stafford Clark, the artistic director, just as we were preparing for our dress rehearsal. Did he fall, or was he pushed? There have been rumours of threats of withdrawal of funds, which Stafford-Clark has refuted. Certainly the Court is financially vulnerable.

The efforts of the Zionist campaign did not end with the ban at the Royal Court. The lobby has tried to ensure that no theatre will stage the play in London or elsewhere...

These people encourage the very anti-Semitism they seek to prevent, because it appears that a powerful clique has, through its influence in the press and elsewhere, stopped the play from being performed. But the Zionists do not speak for the Jewish people. They are only a political tendency... It is not Jim Allen who conflates Jews with Zionists. That conflation is a fundamental plank of Zionist disinformation today...

77. *New Statesman*, 20 February 1987, p. 20.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
79. *New Statesman*, 13 March 1987, pp. 31-32.
80. *New Statesman*, 27 February 1987, p. 19.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
82. Stafford-Clark, Max. 'Why I Axed *Perdition*'. *The Guardian*, 13 March 1987, p. 19.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
86. *New Statesman*, 6 February 1987, p. 26.
87. Stafford-Clark, Max. 'Why I Axed *Perdition*'. *The Guardian*, 13 March 1987, p. 19.
88. '"*To Stage or Not To Stage.*" *The Case of Perdition*'. London: British/Israel Public Affairs Committee (BIPAC), March 1987.
89. *The Sunday Times*, 25 January 1987, p. 32.
90. See Chapter 7. 4 for Gilbert's response to the stage adaptation of Steiner's novel.
91. See '"*To Stage or Not To Stage.*" *The Case of Perdition*'. London: (BIPAC), 1987, pp. 16-20.
92. Bauer, Yehuda. *Jews for Sale Nazi-Jewish Negotiations, 1933-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 1994. See especially Chapters 9-13, inclusive.
93. *The Guardian*, 14 January 1987, p. 7.
94. Bauer, Yehuda, 1994, pp. 158-159.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
96. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.
97. *Ibid.*, p. 198.
98. *Ibid.*, pp. 198-199.
99. *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200.
100. *Ibid.*, p. 216. See also '"*To Stage or Not To Stage.*" *The Case of Perdition*'. London: (BIPAC), 1987, pp. 19-20, (Pt. 10).
101. Bauer, Yehuda, 1994, p. 176.
102. Brand, Joel. *Desperate Mission*. New York: Criterion Books, 1958.
103. '"*To Stage or Not To Stage.*" *The Case of Perdition*'. London: (BIPAC), 1987, p. 17, (Pt. 4); pp. 17-18 (Pt 6).
104. Michael Hastings's letter to the *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 January 1987, p. 22.
105. Jim Allen in *Time Out*, 21-28 January 1987, p. 20.
106. *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 January 1987, p. 25.

107. Cesarani, David. 'Israel on Trial'. *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 3 April 1987, p. 11; 'The *Perdition* Affair'. *The Jewish Quarterly*. Vol. 34 no. 1 (125) (April 1987): 6-9; 'The *Perdition* Affair'. In *Anti-Zionism and Anti-Semitism in the Contemporary World*. Wistrich, Robert S. (ed.):53-60. London: Macmillan/Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1990.
108. David Cesarani. In Wistrich, Robert S. (ed.) 1990, pp. 54-55.
109. Michael Hastings's letter to the *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 January 1987, p. 22. (The full text of Hastings's letter is given in Appendix a: 'Documents in Defence' (iv).)
110. Cesarani, David. 'The *Perdition* Affair'. In Wistrich, Robert S. (ed.): 53-60, 1990.
111. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
114. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
115. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.
116. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
117. *The Guardian*, 19 August 1987, p. 9.
118. *The Guardian*, 7 May 1988, p. 16.

## 9 Joshua Sobol's *Ghetto* at the Royal National Theatre

1. At his first major National Theatre press conference on 6 August 1963, Olivier expressed the purpose of the National Theatre in a simple and direct manner: 'We aim' he announced 'to give a spectrum of world drama and to develop a company which will be the finest in the world.' (Laurence Olivier quoted in Elsom, John and Nicholas Tomalin. *The History of the National Theatre*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1978, p. 133.) Kenneth Tynan would repeat similar sentiments following the National Theatre Company's first season at the Old Vic, and, skilled publicist that he was, his formula expressing the same aim, is the one which has lodged in the cultural memory: 'Our aim... is the best of everything.' (Kenneth Tynan quoted in Elsom, John, and Nicholas Tomalin, 1978, p. 148.) Elsom and Tomalin point out that having encapsulated the National's purpose in pithy phrases 'spectrum of world drama', 'the best of everything' it was Tynan who 'had the tenacity to compile a reference book of the world's greatest plays... so that future repertoires could be planned systematically.' And yet he could 'conceal his capacity for controlled intuition and careful research beneath a flamboyant facade - of, say, the "romantic

Marxist" (whose love of individualism matched his concern for economic good order), or of the "international hedonist", or of the "dandy wit". (Elsom, John, and Nicholas Tomalin, 1978, p. 151.) 'The National he would sometimes say, was about "show-business", whereas the RSC under Hall was about "art".' (Ibid., p. 152.)

2. See Elsom, John. *Cold War Theatre*. London: Routledge, 1992, p. 137 and Fay, Stephen, *Power Play. The Life and Times of Peter Hall*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996, p. 389, for John Mortimer's later reaction to the production of *Jean Seberg* and what he considered it implied about the National.
3. The creation of the post of Chief Executive had been recommended in a report commissioned by the National Theatre Board from Lord Rayner in August 1985. (Rayner had concluded that the National was operating most efficiently, and although there were small savings to be made, he felt it appropriate to 'record support, on this evidence, for increased government support in real terms'. The increase was not forthcoming, not even from the new Arts Minister, Richard Luce.( See Fay, Stephen. 1996, pp. 403-405.)
4. John Peter, *The Sunday Times*, 18 January 1987, p. 55. On 7 February 1985 Hall had hastily called a press conference to announce the measures the National Theatre would have to take to stand any chance of keeping within budget in light of only a marginal increase in the Arts Council budget - 1.96% while inflation was running between four and five per cent. The Council's refusal to increase the subsidy was the chief reason for the closure of the Cottesloe and the reduction of the number of acting groups and their members. (See Note 7 below.) Subsequently dubbed the 'coffee-table speech' Hall addressed the press corps:

I don't believe this government knows what it is doing. I don't believe the Arts Council is acting responsibly in simply carrying out the government's wishes. In the old days the Arts Council used to fight the government, and the Minister used to try to get more money for the Arts. Now the Minister executes Treasury policy and the Arts Council meekly follows suit. If that continues, we shall not have a subsidised theatre... I have to put it bluntly. I believe the Arts Council has betrayed the National Theatre.(Quoted in Fay, Stephen. 1996, pp. 398-399.)

The chairman of the Board, Rayne, considered Hall had overstepped the mark in his public denunciation of both the Arts Council's failure of will and the direction of government policy, particularly as Hall threatened to make his



opposition into a national crusade by subsequently inviting the artistic directors of subsidised theatres from all over Britain to the National.

The question of Hall's integrity was an entirely different matter. In September 1985 *The Observer* (22 September 1985, p. 3) revealed that Hall had earned more from the transfer of *Amadeus* than the National Theatre itself. The agreement made by Peter Shaffer with the National Theatre specifically excluded any rights to percentage earnings on a Broadway production. Hall's contract negotiated with the Shubert Organisation, (the producing company in the US) by his agent in the US, Sam Cohn, gave Hall four per cent of the box office takings rising to five per cent after the production had recouped its costs, plus five per cent of the profits. Shaffer had offered the National Theatre ten per cent of his earnings from a US production which would have been 10 per cent of the box office gross. Peter Lewis comments: 'The fact that he was... the director of the National Theatre made it appear that he had looked after his own interests a great deal more effectively than he had looked after the theatre's.' (Lewis, Peter. *The National. A Dream Made Concrete*. London: Methuen, 1990, p. 196.) Which is precisely what the papers said.

Hall's arguments about the long standing conventions of subsidised theatre practitioners negotiating commercial contracts when transfers occur simply did not address the basic issues that the individuals concerned, whether directors or designers, had not applied their skills in a vacuum, but in the context of the subsidised theatre, and for which they had not only already received a salary, but also the resources required to develop a production they subsequently appeared to consider their sole legal prerogative and property, excepting the author and the new production company. (See also *The Observer*, 29 September 1985, p. 18, for Hall's letter of response, and a letter from John Elsom, which, rather than heap further opprobrium on Peter Hall, points out that the root of the problem lay with the disincentive to make profits inherent in the accepted practice of theatres registering as 'non-profit distributing companies' under the Charities Act, while simultaneously fearing to show healthy profits lest their Arts Council grants be cut.)

The same allegation resurfaced a second time in *The Sunday Times* on 29 June 1986, (p.25). On this occasion Hall's name was linked with Trevor Nunn's at the RSC. The chief issue was not that this was a premeditated strategy, though there is evidence of this in Hall's own diary entries with specific regard to *Amadeus*, but their assumption that the production was their property and not in any meaningful sense the theatre company's or the taxpayers. See *The Sunday Times*, 6 July 1986, pp. 4, 5 and 22 where, in

response to *The Sunday Times* article, Peter Hall argues that if creative people in the subsidised theatre were 'treated like civil servants' being paid 'annual salaries only' when 'there was a chance for them to earn near fortunes elsewhere' the 'RSC, the National and other theatres would soon be headed by a team of second-raters', concluding that, 'In these monetarist days the idea of happily working for glory only, for prestige only, is gone forever.' (p. 22.)

5. *The Observer*, 22 February 1987, p. 9.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
7. On 22 October 1984 an announcement was made about the reorganisation of the company into five acting groups each led by a director. The groups were headed by Peter Hall, Bill Bryden, Richard Eyre with David Hare, Peter Wood, and Ian McKellen with Edward Petherbridge. Nineteen eighty five brought with it a serious financial crisis, in no small part precipitated by the disastrous episode with *Jean Seberg*, and only three of the five groups could function at any one time with the National also remaining within budget limits. Each group was reduced to seventeen, rather than between twenty and twenty-five actors as planned, and the Cottesloe Theatre temporarily went dark. 'Hall had previously divided command by appointing directors for each theatre but retaining overall control. Now the group leaders were, at least in theory, solely responsible for their choice of actors and of plays.' (Lewis, Peter. *The National. A Dream Made Concrete*. London: Methuen, 1990, p. 183.)

The plan was that the groups would stay together for a period of nine to twelve months and would give at least three productions, one in each of the three auditoriums. It was a return to the idea of ensemble playing, the ideal that had been nurtured by Olivier and abandoned by Hall, a circumstance explicitly commented upon McKellen and Petherbridge:

In the decade since Laurence Olivier retired from the National Theatre, British theatres have been ruled not by actors but by directors. There has been a total decline in the numbers of acting companies working together for longer periods... Even in this theatre there is no pattern of prolonged contracts such as are available to actors in the national theatres of Europe. (Ian McKellen and Edward Petherbridge quoted in Lewis, Peter, 1990, p. 185.)

The vestiges of this arrangement were still formally in existence in Peter Hall's final months at the National, but Hall himself had not adhered to the principle, using quite different casts for the plays he chose to direct, *Coriolanus* and *Yonadab*, and, in the case of Alan Ackybourn's latest play, *A Chorus of Disapproval*, a Hall-group play, Ackybourn himself directed a cast which was

not wholly made up of actors from the Hall group. Peter Wood had never been enthusiastic about the reorganisation, commenting in retrospect: 'Rather than giving you a permanent company, it produced what should be called an impermanent company. One company recruited for three productions meant that you were always having to cast wrongly.' (Peter Wood quoted in Lewis, Peter, 1990, p. 187.) On Richard Eyre's succession to the National's directorship, the group organisation was high on the list of immediate changes to be implemented.

8. Richard Eyre quoted in *The Guardian*, 29 June 1988, p. 17.
9. Eyre, Richard. *Utopia and Other Places*. London: Bloomsbury, 1993, p. 173.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 174, 175.
11. Sobol, Joshua. *Ghetto. In a Version by David Lan*. London: Nick Hern Books, 1989. This and all subsequent references to the text are to this edition, unless otherwise stated.
12. *Plays International* Vol. 4 no.12 (July 1989): 20-22, p. 20.
13. *The Listener*, 11 May 1989, p. 30; *The Guardian*, 29 April 1989, p. 21; *The Observer*, 30 April 1989, p. 45; *The Independent*, 29 April 1989, Arts Sec. p. 32; *The Sunday Times*, 30 April 1989, p. C8; *Evening Standard*, 28 April 1989, p. 35, respectively.
14. *The Times*, 28 April 1989, p. 20.
15. Porat, Dina. 'The Jewish Councils of the Main Ghettos of Lithuania: A Comparison'. *Modern Judaism* 13 (1993): 149-163, p. 149. Vilna had become a haven for Jews escaping Nazi occupied Eastern Europe following the Molotov Ribbentrop pact, and the indigenous Jewish population of Vilna had become considerably increased for this reason, a circumstance not mentioned by the critics. Following Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 German forces entered Vilna just two days later, on the twenty-fourth, and throughout July and again on 1 September, German and Lithuanian troops regularly swept through the Jewish quarter of Vilna rounding up Jews for 'deportation to the East'. On 4 September a child who had escaped the *Aktion* of the 1 September was able to alert the community to the meaning of 'deportation'. Vilna's Jews had been driven in trucks a short distance out of the city to Ponar, a popular mountain resort, where they had been lined up on the lip of especially prepared pits, and shot. On 6 September 1941 the Jewish population was forced into two ghettos, one for skilled, the other for unskilled workers. The ghetto for unskilled workers was liquidated within four weeks of its establishment. It is the ghetto of skilled workers, over which Jacob Gens presided as sole ruler from July 1942, which is the subject of Sobol's play.

16. Arad, Yitzhak. *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 137.
17. *The Weekend Telegraph*, 29 April 1989, p. XII.
18. *Evening Standard*, 28 April 1989, p. 35.
19. *The Times*, 7 August 1989, p. 12.
20. *The Financial Times*, 28 April 1989, p. 27.
21. *The Guardian*, 29 April 1989, p. 21.
22. *The Financial Times*, 28 April 1989, p. 27; *The Times*, 7 August 1989, p. 12; *The Independent*, 29 April 1989, Arts Sec. p. 32; *The Weekend Telegraph*, 29 April 1989, p. XII.
23. *Plays and Players* (July 1989), p. 25.
24. *The Weekend Telegraph*, 29 April 1989, p. XII.
25. *The Guardian*, 29 April 1989, p. 21.
26. *The Times*, 28 April 1989, p. 20.
27. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 12-18 May 1989, p. 514.
28. *The Independent*, 29 April 1989, Arts Sec. p. 32.
29. *The Times*, 28 April 1989, p. 20.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
31. *The Independent*, 29 April 1989, Arts Sec. p. 32.
32. *The Guardian*, 29 April 1989, p. 21.
33. *The Weekend Telegraph*, 29 April 1989, p. XII.
34. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 12-18 May 1989, p. 514.
35. *Plays and Players* (July 1989), p. 25; *The Financial Times*, 28 April 1989, p. 27.
36. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 12-18 May 1989, p. 514.
37. *Plays International* Vol. 4 no.12 (July 1989), p. 21.
38. *The Times*, 28 April 1989, p. 20.
39. *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 23 April 1989, p. L5.
40. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 12-18 May 1989, p. 514.
41. *The Independent*, 29 April 1989, p. 32.
42. *The Guardian*, 29 April 1989, p. 21.
43. *The Weekend Telegraph*, 29 April 1989, p. XII.
44. *The Financial Times*, 28 April 1989, p. 27.
45. *The Independent*, 29 April 1989, Arts Sec. p. 32.
46. *The Listener*, 11 May 1989, p. 30.
47. *Plays International* Vol. 4 no. 12 (July 1989), p. 21.
48. *The Observer*, 30 April 1989, p. 12.
49. *The Times*, 28 April 1989, p. 20.

50. *The Times*, 7 August 1989, p. 12.
51. *The Observer*, 30 April 1989, p. 45.
52. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 12-18 May 1989, p. 514.
53. *The Independent*, 29 April 1989, Arts Sec. p. 32.
54. *The Listener*, 11 May 1989, p. 300.
55. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 12-18 May 1989, p. 514.
56. *The Guardian*, 29 April 1989, p. 21.
57. *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 23 April 1989, p. L5.
58. *The Times*, 7 August 1989, p. 12.
59. *The Weekend Telegraph*, 29 April 1989, p. XII.
60. *The Spectator*, 6 May 1989, p. 38.
61. *The Weekend Telegraph*, 29 April 1989, p. XII.
62. *The Spectator*, 6 May 1989, p. 38.
63. *The Listener*, 11 May 1989, p. 30.
64. *The Independent*, 29 April 1989, Arts Sec. p. 32.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
66. *Punch*, 12 May 1989, p. 46.
67. *Plays and Players* (May 1989): 10-12, p. 12.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
69. *The Daily Telegraph*, 24 April 1989, p. 15.
70. Ben-Zvi, Linda. (ed.). *Theater in Israel*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996.
71. Kohansky, Mendel. *The Hebrew Theatre: Its First Fifty Years*. Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1969; Abramson, Glenda. *Modern Hebrew Drama*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979.
72. Abramson, Glenda, 1979, p. 116.
73. In chronological order of their performance on the Israeli stage, the published texts of these plays are: *Hesbon Hadas (A New Reckoning)*. Nathan Shaham. In *Masakh* Vol. 1 (1954): 5-37. (Hebrew). (There is no published English translation of Shaham's play as far as the present author can ascertain); *Lady of the Castle*. Leah Goldberg. Trans. T. Carmi. Tel-Aviv: Institute for the translation of Hebrew Literature Ltd., 1974; *Hannah Senes*. Aharon Megged. Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Meohad, 1958 (Hebrew); *Hanna Senesh*. Trans. Michael Taub. In *Modern. International Drama* Vol. 27 no.1 (Fall 1993): 95-134. Binghamton: State University of New York, 1993; *Children of the Shadow*. Ben-Zion Tomer. Trans. Hillel Halkin. New York: World Zionist Organisation, n.d.; *Hayyores (The Heir)*. Moshe Shamir. In *Te'atron* no. 9 (Nov-Dec 1963): 27-47. (Hebrew). (There is no published English translation

- of Shamir's play as far as the present author can ascertain, but the Hebrew text published in *Te'atron* is prefaced by a detailed plot summary in English.); *Ha'ona Habbo `eret (The Burning / High Season)*. Aharon Megged. Tel Aviv: Amikam, 1967. (Hebrew). (There is no published English translation of this play as far as the present author can ascertain.)
74. Avisar, Ilan. 'The Holocaust in the Israeli Theatre in the Fifties and Sixties'. In *Holocaust Studies Annual Vol. III 1985. Literature, the Arts, and the Holocaust*. Pinsker, S. and Jack Fischel (eds.): 203-228. Greenwood: The Penkevill Pub. Co., 1987, p. 223.
  75. Ibid., p. 222.
  76. Ibid., p. 223.
  77. Ibid., p. 223.
  78. Ibid., p. 224.
  79. Kaynar, Gad. '"Get Out of the Picture, Kid in a Cap": On the Interaction of the Israeli Drama and Reality Convention'. In *Theatre in Israel*. Ben-Zvi, Linda (ed.): 285-301. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996. p. 291.
  80. Avisar, Ilan. In Pinsker, S. and Jack Fischel (eds.), 1985, p. 225.
  81. See Segev, Tom. *The Seventh Million. The Israelis and the Holocaust*. Trans. Haim Watzman. New York: Hill and Wang, 1993, especially Part VII, pp. 387-418.
  82. Amichal-Yeivin, Ada. *Impure Until Evening*. Trans. Richard Flantz. Tel-Aviv: Institute for the translation of Hebrew Literature Ltd., 1974. As far as the present author can ascertain Miriam Poldash's (Foldes) *The Journey* has not received an English translation.
  83. Horowitz, Danny. *Cherli Ka Cherli*. In *Modern Israeli Drama*. Joseph, Herbert S. (ed.), Cranbury N.J: Associated University Press, 1983.
  84. Sobol, Yehoshua. *Ghetto*. Trans. Miriam Shlesinger. Tel-Aviv: Institute for the translation of Hebrew Literature Ltd., 1974; *Ghetto*. Adpt., Jack Viertel. Trans. Kathleen Komar. In *Plays of the Holocaust*. Fuchs, Elinor (ed.): 153-230. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1987; *Ghetto. In a Version by David Lan*. London: Nick Hern Books, 1989; Lerner, Motti. *Kastner*. Trans. Imre Goldstein. In *Modern International Drama Vol. 27 no. 1 (Fall 1993): 33-93*. Binghamton: State University of New York, 1993.
  85. Sobol, Joshua. *Underground*. Trans. and adapted, Ron Jenkins. In *Theater (Yale School of Drama/Yale Repertory Theater) Vol. XXII no. 3 (Summer/Fall 1991): 18-43*. New Haven, Conn. 1991; *Adam* Trans. and adapted, Ron Jenkins (Unpublished manuscript courtesy of translator and adaptor, Boston: 1993.)

86. Feldman, Yael. "Identification With the Aggressor" or the "Victim Complex"? Holocaust and Ideology in Israeli Theatre: *Ghetto* by Joshua Sobol'. *Modern Judaism* (May 1989): 165-178, p. 168.
87. Ibid., pp. 167-168.
88. Rokem, Freddie. 'Jehoshua Sobol's Theatre of the Ghetto'. In *Small is Beautiful*. Schumacher, Claude, and Derek Fogg (eds.): 140-146. Glasgow: Theatre Studies Publications/IFTR, 1991, pp. 144, 143, 144.
89. Ibid., p. 145.
90. Ibid., p. 146.
91. Rokem, Freddie. 'Theatre and Survival: On the Fantastic in Holocaust Performances'. In *Staging the Holocaust. The Shoah in Drama and Performance*. Schumacher, Claude.(ed.) Forthcoming, Cambridge University Press, 1998. Courtesy of the editor.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
94. Sobol's justification for the identification of Nazism with Zionism on the grounds of the Freudian idea of 'identification with the aggressor' is given chiefly in a dialogue between Dr Paul and Kruk in which allusions to the history of Zionism serve to emphasise the link between the Vilna ghetto and the contemporary concerns of Israel in the mid 1980s. *This speech was omitted from the David Lan version*. But Feldman indicates that there exist a number of additional allusions to this identification, which he considers *Israeli* spectators would have struggled to notice, and to draw the conclusions Sobol intended they should. Feldman points to:

**(i) The speech of Gens** (which concludes Part One in Lan's version), and in which Gens warns of the spiritual nature of the battle, against the Germans.

In Lan's version this speech reads in part: 'The Germans want to destroy us. Physically yes, but worse than that, spiritually. They want to cut out our souls... They want to kill us all. Listen: all. They won't. No, no they're going to lose this war. But when they've retreated, gone, what state will our souls be in? Pure, Jewish, healthy? *Or riddled with their fatal disease?* [my italics] (*Gh.* p. 30.)

Feldman draws attention to the contrast between Gens description, 'their fatal disease' and the fact that this speech is made in response to Kruk's condemnation of theatre and cultural activity in the ghetto, and *Kittel's* earlier description of the Jewish soul: 'Your shops! Your cafes! Your theatres! Exhibitions! Concerts! Cabaret! Your sense of style... I love it! Your

resilience.' (*Gh.* p. 20.) Feldman detects a Freudian dualism in this contrast between the 'life instinct' of the Jews, and the 'death instinct' of the Germans. (Feldman, Yael, 1989, pp. 169-170.)

(ii) **The arrival of Dr Paul in the ghetto** Feldman considers that this 'neatly constructed opposition [the Freudian dualism] breaks down in the second act... we realise for the first time that the Judaism which Kittel/Paul covets is emphatically un-Hebraic and diaspora oriented. Dr Paul enters the stage via a coffin identifying himself with Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai, the founder of Yavne (and by extension - of diaspora Judaism).' (Feldman, Yael, 1989, p. 170.) For the most part, the allusions would have been lost entirely on a British audience not versed in the intricacies of the Rabbinical schools in the development of Judaism in Central and East Europe. The episode is the least satisfactory in the entire play, a rather risky strategy given that it is almost the opening scene of the second part of *Ghetto* in David Lan's version. Moreover, the episode necessitates a long theoretical explanation by Feldman to draw out the associations which it is crucial for an audience to make in order that they may follow Sobol's line of thought, a task made all the more difficult for a British audience because crucial lines of Dr Paul's conversation with Kruk are omitted in the Lan version. In Miriam Schlesinger's literal translation of Sobol's Hebrew text Dr Paul comments to Kruk: 'When I talk Yiddish or listen to it spoken I can sense the warm and unbridled *vitality* of my forefathers all the way back to the Middle Ages before we became fossilized and lost our way in the dark forest. Have you been to Jerusalem?' (Quoted in Feldman, Yael, 1989, pp. 170-171.) However, *these lines simply do not appear in the Lan version*. Feldman's explanation of Sobol's line of association in the whole episode of Dr Paul's arrival is suitably casuistic:

Again the same 'vitality', the same Jewish life force. Except that this time, it is openly identified with *Yavne* with the beginning of diaspora Judaism. For an audience versed in modern Hebrew literature or familiar with the codes of Zionist arguments since the turn of the century, the allusion to M. Y. Berdichewsky is inescapable [!] [He] opposed the Jewish diaspora tradition, symbolised by *Yavne* (and its founder, Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai), and suggested instead the original Hebraic tradition, symbolised for him by Mount Sinai. The opposition between *Yavne* and Sinai was later reinterpreted as 'Jewishness' vs. 'Hebraism', and from there it was just a short step to 'Jew' vs. 'Israeli' or Diaspora vs. Jerusalem (Zion). It is this very opposition that should serve as our interpreting sign. Except that for Kittel-Paul the markers of the two terms are reversed: In his system, 'Yavne' is the preferred value and



'Jerusalem' is negatively marked... It is clear, then, that the play's thematic argument is coded by two oppositions: one external - Judaism vs. Germanism; the other internal - Yavne vs. Sinai, or Diaspora vs. Zion. (Feldman, Yael, 1989, p. 171.)

Feldman goes on to argue that Kittel/ Paul clearly is 'the fatal disease' of Nazism who is envious of the 'resilience' of diaspora Judaism embodied, not in Gens, but in Kruk with whom he converses. This indicates that Gens must be the representative of Jerusalem, of Zionism. But Gens is not a straightforward case, for he has argued against the armed resistance of the Zionist underground and argued that resistance must also be spiritual. But it is Dr Paul who identifies Gens as a Zionist, when he remarks to Kruk: 'Why defend him? Or his cronies? I don't. I can't bear to look at them. They imitate us but they fail. Repulsive fairground caricatures.' (*Gh.* p. 38.) In Feldman's view there is an inconsistency here in the dramatic representation of Gens. He is the advocate of spiritual resistance in Part I, and the Zionist advocate of armed resistance (in the perceptions of Dr Paul) in Part II, an inconsistency he considers Sobol was forced into for the sake of ideational symmetry: Gens (Jerusalem) vs. Kruk (Diaspora), or indeed: Kruk - Diaspora - vitality vs. Gens- Jerusalem (Zion) - fatal disease ('fairground caricatures'). Feldman is forced to concede that 'hardly any *spectator* is liable to capture the logical argument outlined... while the plot is unfolding' (Feldman, Yael, 1989, p. 172), but he considers that Sobol's thesis is made clear in later episodes.

**(iii) The Hebraicizing of the Ghetto** When Kruk criticises Gens for preventing the theatre troupe from singing resistance songs and his use of a Jewish police force, Gens flies back with the retort: 'Who in this ghetto has genuine national feeling? Me. Who's the real Jewish patriot? Me. From tomorrow we're going to talk Hebrew. It will be taught in the schools. The bible is Yiddish. An abomination... There's too little nationalism in Vilna.' (*Gh.* p. 54.) To which Kruk responds, in the Lan version, 'Nationalism breeds nationalism.' (*Gh.* p. 54.), a response which in Miriam Schlesinger's translation is prefaced by: 'What a shame that Dr Paul isn't here. They've succeeded more than they might have imagined', (quoted in Feldman, Yael, 1989, p. 172), *a line which is omitted from the Lan version*

Feldman remarks: 'One need not be too imaginative in order to hear the political controversy in Israel of the 80s through this ostensible dialogue in Vilna 40 years earlier.' (Ibid., p. 172.) But in Feldman's view this encounter is not a satisfactory dramatic resolution to the apparent ambivalence in the

contrasting perceptions of Gens in Part I compared to Part II of Sobol's play. Feldman suggests the explanation can be found in a lengthy dialogue between Dr Paul and Kruk in another episode later in the play, and which is the chief locus of Sobol's identification of Zionism with Nazism.

**(iv) The Birth of 'Zionist' aggression** Rather than the ambiguity of Gens position be an intended dramatic strategy adopted by Sobol, for which Feldman considers there is little supporting evidence, he argues that the 'consistency in Gens' character was sacrificed for the sake of the ideational argument of the last act (of the Israeli production). Here Dr Paul 'explains' the birth of 'Zionist aggression' and, by implication, also the change in the perception of Gens. In Feldman's view Sobol's rationalisation 'is an exercise in popular Freudianism' (Ibid., p. 173), and is expressed in a lengthy dialogue between Dr Paul and Kruk:

Paul: ... Isn't there the least bit of vindictiveness in you? Not the least bit of aggressiveness?

Kruk (*After a moment of silence*): You promised me you'd send the study to Berlin.

Paul: Do you know what your Freud says about the origins of aggressiveness? Kruk: Yes. That it derives from the death impulse.

Paul: So German aggressiveness proves that there's a death impulse in our souls, isn't that it?

Kruk: You know more about that than I do.

Paul: Which means that when you do not exhibit any violence you prove that the Jewish soul is devoid of the death impulse. Is that what accounts for the eternity of the Jewish people?

Kruk: Perhaps.

Paul: You don't seem very enthusiastic about my theory. It should have pleased you as a Bundist and an anti-Zionist.

Kruk: What does that have to do with it?

Paul: I don't know whether you'll like this or not: The Zionist Jews in Palestine are utterly different from you in this sense. They have been organising militarily and it's a very effective organisation at that, believe me! They've set up night brigades. Not only do they fight back when attacked, but in 1936 and 1937 they even pre-empted the enemy and attacked its villages before the villagers had a chance to attack them. They're no strangers to aggressiveness, Mr Kruk. Is that the death impulse that we've succeeded at last in transmitting from our own soul into that of the Jew?

Kruk: What do you mean 'we succeeded?' Zionism began before you came to power in Germany.

Paul: I'm talking about all the peoples of Europe. Two thousand years of anti-Semitism, pogroms and persecution. You have to understand, Mr Kruk, there's nothing more irritating than your never-ending capacity to

suffer. Nothing that brings out our aggressiveness more effectively than your own lack of it. Nothing that generates the death impulse in our soul more than the total lack of any such impulse in yours. The Jew is someone who wants to go on living no matter what the cost. To swallow any degradation and humiliation, so long as he is allowed to stay alive. You don't even take death into account. It's outrageous! Maybe it's because our death impulse is the strongest that only we Germans are putting into practice what all of the people's of Europe feel towards you but don't dare to manifest openly. (Quoted in Feldman, Yael, 1989, pp. 173-174.)

This speech is retained in the adaptation by Jack Viertel, which was the text used for the US première of *Ghetto* in Los Angeles at the Mark Taper Forum, 30 October 1986, (see Fuchs, Elinor (ed.). *Plays of the Holocaust. An International Anthology*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1987, pp. 210-211), but *the speech was completely cut from Lan's version*, in all likelihood out of consideration for over all playing time, and the tax upon the spectator's ability to follow an intricate argument concerning the conflicting beliefs of rabbinical tradition, rather than political sensitivity.

In Feldman's view it is the Freudian concept of 'identification with the aggressor' to which Paul makes recourse in his explanation, and this psychological mechanism is 'openly attributed here to *Zionist Judaism*'. (Feldman, Yael, 1989, p. 174.) This explanation becomes the dramatic means through which Sobol attempts to resolve the apparent ambivalence in Gens' stance toward armed struggle and commitment to the Zionist cause. In Feldman's view Sobol's resort to this pseudo-explanation is most unsatisfactory, for it

exposes more boldly the arbitrary omission from the plot of the underground activities of Itzhak Wittenberg, Abba Kovner and their followers. One may rightly ask why Sobol has chosen to stretch a line of 'identification' from Nazi aggression to Zionist nationalism in Israel while skipping the local link of the Vilna partisans. (Ibid., p. 174.)

Feldman is on decidedly shaky ground here as Sobol had dedicated an entire play to the Zionist underground centred on the figure of Itzhak Wittenberg in his triptych of plays on the Vilna Ghetto. In Freddie Rokem's view Sobol's version of these events 'emphasises that not only did the underground comply with the German demands but also that Gens, in some ways, was much more of an activist than the underground movement itself'. (Rokem, Freddie. 'Yehoshua Sobol - Between History and the Arts: A study of *Ghetto* and

*Shooting Magda (The Palestinian Woman)*. In *Theatre in Israel*. Ben-Zvi, Linda (ed.). Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996: 201-224, p. 210.)

Feldman also suggests that Sobol by-passed the underground as the obvious exemplar of the psychological process of 'identification with the aggressor' because of its 'left' location on the political map. *Hashomer Hatzair* - would have confused the ideological 'allegory' as indeed would Kruk and the partisans because they too belonged to 'the left', 'an unwelcome fact in this psycho-political reconstruction'. (Feldman, Yael, 1989, p. 174.) Once again Feldman's line of argument runs awry.

Sobol's thesis does establish a psychological explanation for Gens's apparent ambivalence, and Sobol finds it in the *common* psychological factors inherent in the tyrannical sadism of Nazism, of a *Jewish* ruler of the ghetto, and the victimisation of an Arab minority in contemporary Israel. In Sobol's view corresponding, but contrasting common factors are found in the dynamics of the ghetto's leftwing factions resistance to oppression, and the actions of the political left in Israel. The ideological views and the emotional tone of violent expression are different in the latter case precisely because the 'identification' with the regime in the case of Gens is lacking. Such a 'choice' corrupts, because it is made under extreme duress. While Feldman is no doubt correct in claiming that 'historical facts are carefully selected here... so that current ideology may be critiqued,' which is to say, the political tendencies are drawn in an over-schematised fashion (as Freddie Rokem indicates), Feldman is wrong to conclude that 'the reasoning supporting this argument is... spurious'. (Ibid. p. 175.) He points out that to be consistent, Sobol should portray Kruk, representative of the 'polar opposite' of Gens, as defying Paul, while in fact Kruk continues to work for Paul, prolonging the lives of both. This is entirely consistent with Sobol's dramatic intentions. Kruk obeys under duress, as does Gens, for the sake of survival. Sobol took on the difficult task of both attempting to draw the hair breadth distinction between co-operation under duress/apparent *passivity* (but in which circumstances covert defiance is a possibility), and collaboration, with its concomitant danger of pleasure in the power bestowed through *involvement* with the very forces which oppress, and to ask whether judgement can be made in retrospect by those who were not there. Nevertheless, deprived as they were of crucial lines and scenes in the Royal National Theatre's production of *Ghetto*, London audiences may well have missed Sobol's intention to offer a critique of Israeli policy, and while some critics (Billington, Coveney, and Levin) indicate their recognition of

Zionism as a factor in the play, their discussion of *Ghetto* in relation to Jim Allen's *Perdition* concerns the issue of collaboration in the respective historical circumstances, and not the contemporary policies of Israel.

95. Feldman, Yael, 1989, p. 175.
96. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
97. Rokem, Freddie. In Schumacher, Claude and Derek Fogg (eds.), 1991, p. 141.
98. Kaynar, Gad. In Ben-Zvi, Linda (ed.), 1996, p. 292.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 292.
100. *Ibid.*, p. 293.
101. Avigal, Shosh. 'Liberated Women in Israeli Theater'. In *Theatre in Israel*. Ben-Zvi, Linda (ed.): 303-309. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996.
102. *Ibid.*, pp. 304-305.
103. *Ibid.*, pp. 304-305.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 305.
105. *Ibid.*, p. 305.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 303.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 303.
108. Rokem, Freddie. 'Theatre and Survival: On the Fantastic in Holocaust Performances'. In *Staging the Holocaust. The Shoah in Drama and Performance*. Schumacher, Claude (ed.). Forthcoming, Cambridge University Press, 1998. Courtesy of the editor.
109. Joshua Sobol. '*Ghetto*. A Note From the Playwright'. In The Royal National Theatre programme to *Ghetto*.
110. Joshua Sobol quoted in *The Daily Telegraph*, 24 April 1989, p. 15.
111. Hytner, Nicholas. 'First Nights, Last Nights'. *The Independent*, 22 April 1989, Weekend Arts p. 34.

## 10 Conclusion

1. Young, James E. *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust. Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, p. 133.
2. Adorno, Theodor W. 'Cultural Criticism and Society'. In *Prisms*. Trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber. pp. 19-24. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1983, p. 34.
3. Adorno, Theodor W. 'Commitment'. In *Notes to Literature. Volume Two*. Trans. Shierry Weber NicholSEN. Tiedeman, Rolf (ed.): 76-94. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, p. 88.

4. Bartov, Omer. *Murder in Our Midst. The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 89.
5. Patraha, Vivian M. 'Contemporary Drama, Fascism, and the Holocaust'. *Theatre Journal* Vol. 39 no. 1 (March 1987): 65-77. p. 70.
6. Alford, C. Fred. *What Evil Means To Us*. London: Cornell University Press, 1997, p. 112.
7. Skloot, Robert. 'Holocaust Theatre and the Problem of Justice'. In *Staging the Holocaust. The Shoah in Drama and Performance*. Schumacher, Claude. (ed.). Forthcoming, Cambridge University Press, 1998.
8. Ibid.
9. Adorno, Theodor W. 'Commitment'. In Tiedeman, Rolf (ed.), 1992, p. 88.
10. See Gilman, Sander L. *Jewish Self-Hatred. Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews*. London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, especially pp. 345-354.
11. Skloot, Robert. *The Darkness We Carry. The Drama of the Holocaust*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 71.
12. Skloot, Robert. In Schumacher, Claude (ed.). Forthcoming, Cambridge University Press, 1998.
13. Worthem, W. B. *Modern Drama and the Rhetoric of Theater*. Oxford: University of California Press, 1992. See especially Chapter Four, 'Political Theater: Staging the Spectator'.
14. Dukore, Bernard F. '"People Like You and Me": The Auschwitz Plays of Peter Barnes and C. P. Taylor'. *Essays in Theatre* Vol. 3 no. 2 (May 1985): 108-124. p. 115.
15. Ibid., p. 112.
16. See 'The Rhetoric of Hitler's "Battle"'. In Burke, Kenneth. *The Philosophy of Literary Form. Studies in Symbolic Action*. (Sec. ed.) pp. 191-220. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967; and 'Propaganda as Perlocutionary Act'. In Stern, J. P. *Hitler. The Führer and the People*. London: Fontana, 1975, pp. 35-42. Steiner was no doubt familiar with both texts.
17. Alford, C. Fred, 1997, pp. 27-28.
18. Ibid., p. 52.
19. Ibid., pp. 125-126.
20. Maier, Charles S. *The Unmasterable Past. History, Holocaust, and German National Identity*. London: Harvard University Press, 1988. p. 164.

21. Wollaston, Isabel. *A War Against Memory? The Future of Holocaust Remembrance*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1996, p. 39.
22. Maier, Charles S., 1988, pp. 165-166.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
24. Bartov, Omer, 1996, p. 117.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
26. Hartmann, Geoffrey H. (ed.). *Holocaust Remembrance. The Shapes of Memory*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994, p. 19.
27. Bartov, Omer, 1996, p. 134.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 133 and 134.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
30. Alford, C. Fred, 1997, pp. 79-80.
31. Langer, Lawrence L. *Holocaust Testimonies. The Ruins of Memory*. London: Yale University Press, 1991, p. 144. For an extended discussion of the tragic genre in relation to the Holocaust see Langer's *Versions of Survival. The Holocaust and the Human Spirit*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982, particularly Chapters 1 and 2.
32. Hartman, Geoffrey H. (ed.), 1994, p. 5. See also Blanchot, Maurice. *The Writing of the Disaster*. Trans. Ann Smock. London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986.

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*Chasing Shadows.* Written and Presented Hugo Gryn. Produced and Directed Naomi Gryn. (A See More Production for Channel Four. Channel Four MCMXC.)

*Children of the Holocaust.* Produced and Directed Peter A. Gorden. (Network First. Yorkshire Television Ltd., 1994.)

*Genocide 1941-1945.* Written by Charles Bloomberg. Produced and Directed Michael Darlow. (The *World at War* Series Produced by Jeremy Isaacs. Thames Television, 1974.)

*Hitler's Forgotten Victims.* Produced Molve Shewa. Directed David Okuefuna. (An Afro Wisdom Films Productions for Channel Four and International Family Entertainment. Channel Four Television Corporation/International Family Entertainment Inc., MCMXCVII.)

*Liberation.* Produced and Directed Rex Bloomstein. (A Nucleus Production for Channel Four in association with the Discovery Channel. Channel Four Television Corporation MCMXCIV.)

*Master Race.* (Peoples' Century 1900-1999 Series. Executive Producer BBC Peter Pagnamenta; Executive Producer WGBH Zvi Dor-Ner. BBC/WGBH co-production. BBC MCMXCV.)

*Nazi Gold.* Written and Directed Christopher Olgiati. Produced Thomas Buomberger and David Marks. Inside Story series edited Olivia Lichtenstein. (A BBC/WGBH Frontline/SF DRS Switzerland/NCP Israel Co-production. BBC MCMXCVII.)

*Nuit et Brouillard.* Written Jean Cayrol. Directed Alain Resnais. (Argos Films/ BFI France, 1955.)

*Nuremberg.* Directed Stephen Trombley. Produced Bruce Eadie. (A Worldview Pictures Production in association with Channel Four Discovery Channel YLE-TV2 RTL Television Evangelische Omroep. Worldview Pictures Ltd., 1996.)

*Occupation.* Written by Charles Bloomberg. Produced and Directed Michael Darlow. (The *World at War* Series produced by Jeremy Isaacs. Thames Television, 1974.)

*Playing to Survive.* Directed Teresa Smith. (The Works Series Editor Michael Poole. Executive Producer Andrea Miller. BBC MCMXCVI.)

*Pope Pius XII: Reputations.* Written and Produced Jonathan Lewis. (A BBC/Arts and Entertainment Networks Co-production. BBC MCMXCV.)

*Richard Dimbleby at Belsen. Remember.* Fiftieth Anniversary Production. Presented Jonathan Dimbleby. Produced Carol Sennet. (BBC MCMXCV.)

*Schindler.* Written/Produced/Directed Jon Blair. Executive Producer Catherine Freeman. (Thames Television, 1993.)

*Shoah.* Produced and Directed by Claude Lanzmann. Edited by Claude Lanzmann and Ziva Postec. (Films Aleph. Historica Films Ministère de la Culture, 1984.)

*The Fifty Years War. Israel and the Arabs.* Series Producer Norma Percy. Producer/Director Dia Richards. (Brian Lapping Assocs. for the BBC. In association with WGBH. BBC MCMXCVIII.)

*The Long Way Home.* Written and Director Mark Jonathan Harris. Produced Rabbi Marvin Hier and Richard Trank, 1998.

*The Nazis a Warning from History.* Written and Produced by Laurence Rees. Associate Producer Tilman Remme. (A BBC/ A and E Network co-production. BBC, MCMXCVII.)

*Tsahal.* Director Claude Lanzmann. Produced Yanai Shavit (Israel) Yvonne Freche (France). (A Les productions Dussart, France 2 Cinema, Les Films Aleph (France), Bavaria-Film, West-Film, WDR (Germany) co-production. Visa d'exploitation 76493(C), 1994.)

*Victory.* Written by Martin Gilbert and Rabbi Marvin Hier. Screenplay written and directed by Arnold Schwarzman. Produced Arnold Schwarzman and Rabbi Marvin Hier. (Moriah Films A division of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, 1994.)

*What Did You Do In The War Auntie?* [The BBC and the Second World War]. Written and Produced by Jeremy Bennett. (BBC Bristol, MCMXCV.)

### **Fiction Features**

*The Damned.* (Las Caduta degli Dei), Italy. Dir. Luchino Visconti. Written: Nicola Badalucco, Enrico Medioli, Luchino Visconti. Produced Alfred Levy and Ever Haggiag. Warner Bros Seven Arts Inc., 1969.

*The Diary of Anne Frank.* US Dir. George Stevens. Written Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett. Produced George Stevens. Twentieth Century Fox Corp., 1959.

*Mephisto.* Hungary. Dir. István Szabo. Written Peter Dobai, István Szabo. Based on the novel by Klaus Mann. Mafilm Studio Objectiv/Manfred Dumiok Productions, 1981.

*Playing for Time.* US Dir. Daniel Mann. Written Arthur Miller, from Fania Fénelon's autobiography. CBS-TV, 1980.

*Schindler's List*. US Dir. Steven Spielberg. Written Steven Zaillian. Based on the novel by Thomas Keneally. Produced by Steven Spielberg, Gerald R. Molen, Branko Lustig. Universal City Studios Inc./Amblin Entertainments Inc., 1993.

*Sophie's Choice*. US Dir. and Written Alan Pakula. Based on the novel by William Styron. Produced Alan Pakula and Keith Barish. ITC Films Inc., 1982.