

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Lawrence and the Edwardian Realist Theatre

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the University of Hull

by

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May 1981

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ABBREVIATIONS

- BC Elizabeth Baker, Chains (London, 1911).
- BrGC Harold Brighouse, Garside's Career (London, 1914).
- BrHC Harold Brighouse, Hobson's Choice, with an introduction and notes by E.R. Wood (London, 1964).
- BrPCa Harold Brighouse, The Price of Coal, in Nine Modern Plays, edited by John Hampden (London, 1926), pp. 55-74.
- BrPCb Harold Brighouse, The Price of Coal (London, 1911).
- BrTLP Harold Brighouse, Three Lancashire Plays (London, 1920).
- CL The Collected Letters of D.H. Lawrence, edited by Harry T. Moore, 2 vols (London, 1962).
- DHLR The D.H. Lawrence Review.
- ET Jessie Chambers, D.H. Lawrence: a Personal Record, second edition, edited by J.D. Chambers (London, 1965).
- GBMH Harley Granville Barker, The Madras House, with an introduction and notes by Margery M. Morgan (London, 1977).
- GBTP Harley Granville Barker, Three Plays (London, 1909).
- GI John Galsworthy, The Inn of Tranquility (London, 1912).
- GP The Plays of John Galsworthy (London, 1929).
- HL The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, edited by Aldous Huxley (London, 1932).
- HW The Works of Stanley Houghton, edited by Harold Brighouse, 3 vols (London, 1914).
- IS D.H. Lawrence, 'Italian Studies', English Review, 15 (1913), 202-34.
- JR Henry Arthur Jones, The Renascence of the English Drama (London, 1895).
- JRP Representative Plays by Henry Arthur Jones, edited by Clayton Hamilton, 4 vols (London, 1926).
- JSS Henry Arthur Jones, Saints and Sinners (London, 1891).

- L The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, edited by James T. Boulton
(Cambridge, 1979-), Volume I (1979).
- LIL D.H. Lawrence, Lawrence in Love: Letters to Louie Burrows,
edited by James T. Boulton (Nottingham, 1968).
- MM D.H. Lawrence, Mornings in Mexico and Etruscan Places
(Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1960).
- N Edward Nehls, D.H. Lawrence: a Composite Biography, 3 vols
(Madison, Wisconsin, 1957-9).
- P D.H. Lawrence, Phoenix: Posthumous Papers, edited by Edward
D. McDonald (London, 1936).
- PII D.H. Lawrence, Phoenix II: Uncollected, Unpublished and Other
Prose Works, edited by Warren Roberts and Harry T. Moore
(London, 1968).
- PSP The Social Plays of A.W. Pinero, edited by Clayton Hamilton,
4 vols (New York, 1967).
- S The Works of Bernard Shaw, 31 vols (London, 1930-4).
- SL D.H. Lawrence, Sons and Lovers (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1960).
- SRS Githa Sowerby, Rutherford and Son (London, 1912).
- TI D.H. Lawrence, Twilight in Italy (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1960).
- WP D.H. Lawrence, The White Peacock (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1950).

INTRODUCTION

Lawrence's plays have received scant attention from scholars. They have most frequently been ignored, or, when they have received attention, have been awarded grudging and, on occasion, hostile commentary. More often than not they have been considered not as valid and legitimate pieces of theatre but have been plundered for their implications for Lawrence biography or have been considered only of interest in so much as they can cast light on thematic aspects of Lawrence's fiction. The success of Lawrence's plays on the stage in the late sixties and early seventies, which was initiated by productions at the Royal Court and, following their lead, in provincial repertory, did much to prove that Lawrence's plays could successfully be staged and that they can be considered as legitimate pieces of drama in their own right. But old attitudes die hard and Emile Delavenay, demonstrating a typical hostility towards Lawrence's drama, was unconvinced by the success of the plays on the stage. Of The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd and A Collier's Friday Night he commented,

Neither of these two plays having been envisaged by him as theatrical innovations, but as realistic "slices of life", they can be considered together with the corresponding short stories, as part of the cycles linked to one or other of the Lawrentian themes of that period.

Of A Collier's Friday Night in particular he was especially dismissive seeing as its only value its provision of a photographic sketch of Lawrence's family and friends of little inherent dramatic value. He says of it,

A pure slice of life, the play contributed neither to drama, nor, once Sons and Lovers is taken into account, to a better understanding of its author.¹

For Delavenay the plays only exist in the matrix of their biographical implications and their place in the thematic pattern of Lawrence's other work. In a more recent article, Gerald Coniff, whilst seeing The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd as a work worthy of serious interest,

¹Emile Delavenay, D.H. Lawrence: the Man and his Work, pp. 104 and 106.

chose to discuss it so far as it exemplified a typical Lawrence theme.¹ Such an approach has its own value, but there is another context in which Lawrence's plays can be placed and from which their worth can be ascertained - the context of the late Victorian and Edwardian theatre.

This study is divided into three main sections: the first is an examination of the late Victorian and Edwardian theatre and drama; the second, an examination of Lawrence's response to that drama; and, finally, an examination of Lawrence's colliery plays The Daughter-in-Law, A Collier's Friday Night, and The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd. I have singled these three plays out from Lawrence's drama as they represent his most successful and striking efforts, and in them can be seen the features and techniques which mark Lawrence out as an original and innovatory dramatist. These are the plays in which can be seen most fully the features which give evidence of an essentially Lawrentian drama. Because of the scope and size of this study it has been necessary to be highly selective in the material that can be included from the mass of late Victorian and Edwardian drama. No attempt has been made to present a full survey of this theatrical period.

Despite the importance of certain continental dramatists, notably Ibsen, Strindberg and Chekhov, during this period, this study is only concerned with the British drama except in so far as Lawrence himself makes a commentary on continental dramatists and this commentary can be used to indicate Lawrence's response to drama and the theatre, and except where continental dramatists were instrumental in affecting the British drama. Thus Ibsen's work is considered in so far as it can be seen to have exerted an influence upon the British drama. Other exclusions have had to be made on the grounds of subject matter and technique. The poetic drama and historical drama have been excluded

¹See Gerald Coniff, 'The Failed Marriage: Dramatization of a Lawrentian Theme.'

although they are an important part of the drama of the period; only plays which take as their subject matter modern, contemporary life have been included. Attention is paid most closely to those plays which utilise techniques and conventions which produce the effect of a realistic depiction of society so that that realistic depiction is an important and primary purpose of the drama. I do not wish to provide here a working definition of realism, but the principles from which I work will become apparent in the discussion of the plays themselves. Most attention is paid to those plays whose techniques and conventions and principles of organisation and definition have a relevance to those of Lawrence's plays, either in that they demonstrate a congruity with Lawrence's practice or in that they demonstrate Lawrence's departure from established practice.

Despite Shaw's importance and dominance of the Edwardian theatre, the exclusion of extensive discussion of his work is justified as many of his pre-war plays fall outside the prescribed scope of this study on the grounds of subject matter in that they do not treat of modern life, and more importantly, they are excluded because it is rare that his plays utilise conventions which present a realistic depiction of society as a primary dramatic purpose. Such a depiction is invariably subordinated to the polemical intention of the plays to an extent which is not true of Galsworthy or Granville Barker who are polemical in different ways.

The inclusion of material for discussion has been determined by its relevance to issues raised by the three plays of Lawrence with which I am primarily concerned. The British minority drama with Shaw, Galsworthy, and Granville Barker at its head, which emerged in the first decade of the century, made significant moves in subject matter and technique towards Lawrence's drama, and there may seem to be a more obvious relationship between Lawrence's plays and the plays of the

minority and regional dramatists than between Lawrence's plays and the commercial society drama of upper middle-class life which had as its major exponents Arthur Wing Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones. But the society drama dominated the realistic drama of modern life of the period, and the emergence of the minority and regional drama did little to affect it as the dominant mode. Despite the greater attention which is now bestowed upon the minority drama, the fact that much of it was conceived as a conscious reaction to the ideology and the theatrical habits of the society drama is indicative of a theatrical context which has as its base the commercial society drama. Like the minority dramatists Lawrence as a dramatist belongs to a theatrical context determined by the hegemony of the society drama.

A note is also needed on the cut-off dates which mark the period. The end of the period is marked by the cataclysm of the First World War, after which both the theatrical organisation and the intellectual climate which fostered the society drama had largely passed away.¹ The beginning of the period is more difficult to pin down precisely. But the production, in 1884, of Jones's depiction of lower middle-class dissenting life, Saints and Sinners, is in some ways appropriate. Saints and Sinners did not especially presage a new type of playwriting, nor did it represent an area which Jones was later to follow up. He switched from that area of subject matter to the more familiar and successful area of the society drama. Its significance is that it was the first of Jones's plays which indicated that he was to become a serious and important dramatist, a central figure in the serious Edwardian theatre. The play also has a convenient proximity to the year of Lawrence's birth, thus placing his own major playwriting period firmly within this era. Only Touch and Go and his biblical play David were written in their entirety after 1914; the major

¹Only in the case of Harold Brighouse has this final cut-off date been exceeded.

colliery plays, were all written before the outbreak of the war. Throughout this thesis the term Edwardian drama will be used as a shorthand for this epoch of drama and theatrical history so defined.

Because of the extent of the material available during this period and because of the need for concision the account of the dramatic base of the period, the society drama, has been more general to establish it as a type of drama than the provision of a full discussion of individual plays would allow. Individual works of the minority dramatists have required more extensive treatment, in particular the subtlety of Granville Barker's work has called for a rather different treatment. The argument of the thesis has been so organised to indicate that there was a move which, in certain works, came close to the sort of drama Lawrence wrote, but it must be stressed that it is not my intention to suggest that the move was in any way a coherent or chronological progression towards Lawrence's drama or that Lawrence's drama was the logical outcome of the shifts in subject matter and technique I have discerned. I merely want to demonstrate that there was a theatrical context which is appropriate for the study of Lawrence's plays.

It is from the relationship between the Edwardian drama and Lawrence's colliery plays that the issues arise which are the basis of the two main chapters of this work. But I also hope that my discussion of the Edwardian drama is valid as an aspect of that drama in its own right. Underlying and giving shape to much of my discussion are issues of more general literary consequence. I have been concerned with the relationship of discernible ideologies which are presented and theatrical techniques and conventions which are utilised to the realistic mediation of the experience of certain ways of living. In particular I have been concerned with the effect this

relationship has on the treatment of working-class characters and the mediation of working-class ways of living. Some of these more general issues are reviewed in the section 'Some critical problems' in Chapter Three which looks back to my discussion of the Edwardian drama and forward to my discussion of the colliery plays.

Finally, the aim of my discussion of the colliery plays in this work is not just to place them in the context of a genre and historical period but to dispel the idea, expressed by Delavenay among others, that there is no dramatic technique in them above that of photographic documentary by establishing the conventions and principles from which Lawrence creates the drama of the plays.

CHAPTER ONE

FROM THE PARISH OF ST JAMES'S TO THE SUBURBS OF SALCHESTER:

A MOVEMENT IN THE EDWARDIAN DRAMA

I

The commercial Edwardian theatre was dominated and characterised by the figure of the actor manager. These figures, who had immense power in the organisation of the theatre, leasing and managing the building, choosing and directing the plays, and usually acting a leading role, set the tone for the theatre as a social institution. They epitomised an upper middle-class conception of the theatre which was espoused not only by themselves, the purveyors of the drama, but also by the patrons of the theatre. In doing so, they attempted to personify an idealised vision of upper middle-class decorum, grace, and, above all, irreproachable respectability. In the images they created, both on and off the stage, they presented a suitably flattering and acceptable version of Edwardian experience to the bulk of the Edwardian theatre going public. The social image was founded in social fact. In the earlier part of the nineteenth century, the acting profession was not genuinely received into polite society, but, by the Edwardian age, it had so successfully been assimilated into the upper ranks of the social hierarchy that those at the top of the profession, the actor managers, were liberally bestowed with knighthoods for their services to the theatre. Irving, Bancroft, Wyndham, Hare, Tree, Forbes-Robertson and Alexander all received such honours in the late Victorian and Edwardian period. This relatively new-found social position and respectability affected a whole range of basic assumptions about the nature and function of the theatre as an institution and about the drama it presented.

An insight into these assumptions is provided by W. Macqueen-Pope's memoir of his own recollections of the Edwardian theatre, Carriages at Eleven. Although it was published in 1947 with the benefit of

hindsight, it presents so partial and nostalgic a view of the period that its objective accuracy is suspect. The real significance of the book is that it reflects in its own commentary the blinkered vision of the Edwardian commercial theatre. It is a compendium of the smug and self-satisfied Edwardian theatrical set-up, and unashamedly espouses the snobbery and prejudice of the middle classes who frequented the theatre.

The theatre was run according to a strict social etiquette, and was organised so as not to offend or disturb the conceptions and assumptions of such an audience,

It was run as were the homes of the people, with stately decorum and good manners. It had distinction with stability, and this was bestowed upon it by the actor-managers, whose theatres were their homes.¹

The same phenomenon was observed by the Italian critic, Mario Borsa, but he avoids the partisan attitude of the Englishman:

Thither do the Briton and his womankind resort, arrayed in full evening panoply, in calm expectation of a reception befitting the guests of a peer's drawing-room, rather than the patrons of a place of public entertainment... The entire organization of the theatre reflects that special and aristocratic conception of its status which is the point of view of its patrons.²

The architecture of the building itself reflected and upheld a rigid system of subtle class stratification, the principles of which are fully endorsed by Macqueen-Pope:

If by reason of your social standing, or your purse (and in Edwardian days this was becoming almost the same thing) you occupied the boxes, stalls or dress circle, you wore evening dress. You would not have dreamt of doing otherwise - and if you had, you would not have been admitted. If you were a still honoured, but not top-table guest, well, there was the pit or the gallery to suit your pocket and your wardrobe, or that curious, class-conscious part of the house, the upper circle, for what might be described as the lower middle class of playgoers.³

¹W. Macqueen-Pope, Carriages at Eleven, p. 8.

²Mario Borsa, The English Stage of Today, p. 279.

³W. Macqueen-Pope, Carriages at Eleven, p. 9.

Without Macqueen-Pope's nostalgic glorification of the institution and the class system it ratified, Robert Roberts, in The Classic Slum, noted a similar stratification in a provincial theatre:

Nowhere, of course, stood class division more marked than in a full house at the theatre, with shopkeepers and publicans in the orchestra stalls and dress circle, artisans and regular workers in the pit stalls, and the low class and no class on the 'top shelf' or balcony. There in the gods hung a permanent smell of smoke from 'thick twist', oranges and unwashed humanity.¹

The conservatism of the theatre's endorsement of a system of stable social distinctions and its belief in the value of maintaining that system reflected what was comforting to the sensibility not only of the Edwardian playgoer but the playgoer of the eighteen-sixties who applauded the vision of the class system of the honest working man Sam Gerridge in Robertson's Caste:

People should stick to their own class. Life's a railway journey, and Mankind's a passenger - first class, second class, third class. Any person found riding in a superior class to that for which he has taken his ticket will be removed at the first station stopped at, according to the bye-laws of the company.²

When the new Her Majesty's Theatre opened in 1897, this desire for distinct segregation according to the most subtle of social gradings was catered for in the fact that the seating was divided into no less than eight separate areas. It was on this sort of theatre, whose organisation was founded on class conscious segregation, that Lawrence himself commented:

In English theatres every man seems to have an abnormal sensitiveness in his knees and elbows, and he keeps himself contracted as tight as he can, so as not to touch his neighbours.³

II

This theatre, with its overwhelming concern with what it saw as an established social hierarchy and its concern with its preservation,

¹Robert Roberts, The Classic Slum, p. 117.

²The Principal Dramatic Works of Thomas William Robertson, I, 93-4.

³IS 231.

demanded the presentation of a certain sort of play which Bernard Shaw describes in the Preface to Three Plays for Puritans. He claimed that the public was unconcerned whether a play was good or bad so long as it was 'nice',

nice plays, with nice dresses, nice drawing rooms and nice people are indispensable: to be ungentleel is worse than to fail.¹

This demand for 'nice dresses' and 'nice drawing rooms' encouraged the presentation of a certain visual spectacle in the drama; 'nice people' dress nicely and move in suitably nice surroundings. The tinsel and glitter of historical drama provided the gratification and pleasure in visual spectacle which the Edwardian audience found suitable. But the need to achieve a similar gratification in the serious realistic drama of modern life created a marked tendency for the production of plays which dealt only with the upper reaches of society - the society drama. Only in that area of modern life could the trappings of elegant and fashionable society and the costuming of the members of that society provide the opportunity for observing the visually 'nice'.

The strength of this tendency arose not only from the audience's predilection and the image they had of the actor manager, but also from the image the actor manager had of himself. The distancing effect of historical drama gave the actor manager more leeway. The fact that, if only visually, there were fewer points of contact between the life presented on the stage and the life which could be recognised as belonging to Edwardian England gave the actor manager more freedom in the roles he could play and still cut a good figure. But, in the drama of modern life, the actor manager could only truly cut such a figure by representing figures from the higher sections of society. The demonstrable class consciousness of the theatre as an institution

¹S IX, xvii.

which the figure of the actor manager at its head both fostered and created, also demanded that he should in himself represent a reflection of the social status of the highest section of that audience or the highest point to which it could reasonably aspire. Harley Granville Barker accounts for the unpopularity of Henry Arthur Jones's drama of lower middle-class provincial life from this attitude alone:

The actor-manager had then to be reckoned with, who, whatever his artistic virtues, did not see himself, and simply could not have let his faithful audiences see him side-whiskered, reach-me-down suited, with pepper-and-salt trousers slightly baggy at the knee. In the popular play, too, pretty ladies must parade in smart frocks, half a dozen at least, and as many more as the playwright could provide for and the management afford. Women went to the theatre as much for the dresses as the drama; they must have their money's worth. Not the lowest of the barriers between Ibsen and the "recognized" London theatre was the distressing fact that there is hardly a fashionably dressed woman to be found in his plays. Hedda Gabler, to be sure; but heaven help us, even she walks home after a party!¹

No carriages at eleven for Hedda Gabler. Even if Ibsen's morality had been acceptable, his depiction of the Norwegian bourgeoisie was sufficiently removed from the setting of fashionable London society to provoke from Clement Scott the criticism of him as being 'suburban'. Scott's criticism, in this instance, is of value precisely because it expressed the feeling of a large number of Edwardian middle-class playgoers.

The demand for 'nice' plays encouraged not only the presentation of plays providing a certain sort of spectacle, but also those which demonstrated a non-objectionable subject matter and morality. The successful plays of the serious commercial theatre tended to be extremely conservative in outlook. The audience generally preferred plays which reinforced their own sense of morality and standards. The implicit endorsement throughout the performance flattered the audience's sense of

¹Harley Granville Barker, 'The Coming of Ibsen', p. 166.

belonging to a cohesive group by showing the morality and standards more or less unreservedly triumphant at the close of the play. What the audience did not want was the uncomfortable feeling of seeing the basis of its assumptions threatened or attacked. In this the society plays of the Edwardian age exhibit many of the features which J.S.R. Goodlad ascribes as necessary to drama if it is to be commercial and popular. The actor managers provided what the audience wanted. The society drama of Jones and Pinero were both commercially successful and popular in the Edwardian age. One of Goodlad's major assumptions about the nature of popular drama is true of this drama:

The providers of popular drama operate within the same social nexus as the consumers of it and that drama that is not in line with the tastes of the consumers will not in fact be popular.¹

It was not, however, the case that the actor managers were merely pandering to the philistine taste of a self-satisfied and conservative audience. They were in many ways satisfying their own view of themselves and the function of their theatre and the best parts of Edwardian society as they saw it. The actor managers, concerned as they were with social status and the proprietorship of their theatres as their homes, were not inclined to present plays of modern life which showed them in roles which seemed to condone the unfitting or the indecorous. It is only natural that they should have taken as a moral reference point the role of characters who affirmed the dominant morality - that of the upper middle class.

III

However, the treatment of moral and social issues in the Edwardian theatre was complicated by the appearance of Ibsen on the English stage in the eighteen-nineties. The staging of A Doll's House

¹J.S.R. Goodlad, A Sociology of Popular Drama, p. 68.

in 1889 and Hedda Gabler and Ghosts in 1891 produced in most critics a horror at the spectacle of the desecration of their household gods. The horror was not, as Harley Granville Barker suggested, because of the dearth of fashionably dressed women but because of the offence to the gentlemanly instincts of the actor manager and his audience.

Not only were they cheated of the vindication of their own values and standards but Ibsen dared to speak of the unmentionable. The spectacle of a woman who could desert her home, husband and defenceless children, and the depiction of the effects of congenital disease provoked a storm of outraged vilification. The following choice epithets flowed from the pen of Clement Scott - 'an open drain', 'a loathsome sore unbandaged', 'a dirty act done publicly', 'a lazar-house with all its doors and windows open'.¹ His hysteria is now justly notorious, but he undoubtedly expressed the feeling of many middle-class Edwardians, as other contemporary criticism in a similar vein indicates. Scott's imagery is significant, suggesting, as it does, not that such things do not exist but that they are outside the world picture of the Edwardian commercial theatre, that they had been and should continue to be excluded from that world of selective vision.

The strength of Ibsen's impact necessarily affected the commercial stage. Sydney Grundy, stalwart of Victorian conventionality, acknowledged Ibsen's presence by a direct satirical attack on Ibsen and naturalistic work in general. In A Bunch of Violets (1894), Mark Murgatroyd, a plain spoken provincial up in London (he describes himself, 'I'm a real Yorkshire pudding, I am - plain but wholesome'), reads of a theatrical 'masterpiece' and goes to see it as feels 'in the mood for a good laugh'; not surprisingly he comes away disappointed:

Hero was suffering from some brain complaint - and his wife didn't like it: so she got making eyes at husband's doctor, but that came to nought, for he had something the matter wi' his ancestors. Well they were seen philandering by t'owd mother, but that came to nought, for she was paralyzed and couldn't tell tales. Then wife and doctor shoot one

¹George Rowell, The Victorian Theatre 1792-1914, p. 129.

another - husband shoots himself - and t'auld girl's
left alone wi' the three corpses.¹

Grundy's statement indicates that the advanced drama had its own conventions and dramatic devices, its own version of reality. Other dramatists were necessarily more subtle in their acknowledgement of Ibsen's impact and they inaugurated a process of assimilation rather than attempted Grundy's hostile satire. Shaw analysed the situation:

In short, a modern manager need not produce *The Wild Duck*; but he must be very careful not to produce a play which will seem insipid and old-fashioned to playgoers who have seen *The Wild Duck*, even though they may have hissed it.²

What resulted was a compromise between the outspokenness of Ibsen which the audience found objectionable and the conventional realistic play to which the audience was accustomed. The chronology of the appearance of Pinero's first successful major problem play, The Second Mrs Tanqueray, in 1893 after the first important productions of Ibsen in England in 1899 and 1891 illustrates the tendency. Pinero's play shows not a direct influence from Ibsen but an extension in subject matter and tone which the appearance of Ibsen contributed towards bringing about. The Second Mrs Tanqueray is typical of many plays of the period in that it was a conventionally moral play with a veneer of something which appeared to be like Ibsen in its treatment of serious social issues. Whilst appearing progressive, this sort of play was successful because it was not too far ahead of public opinion and consequently was not too offensive to the audience or the actor manager.

IV

But however satisfying the society drama was to the general public, there was, throughout the two decades spanning the turn of the century, amongst certain critics, dramatists and sections of the playgoing public

¹Sydney Grundy, A Bunch of Violets, pp. 22 and 12.

²S XXIII, 174.

an awareness of the shortcomings of the commercial drama and a sense of dissatisfaction with the way they felt it distorted and falsified life through its restricted morality, subject matter and constructional principles. This strength of feeling created the need for and the espousal of a different sort of drama which can be designated the minority drama. Such drama required for its staging a different sort of theatrical organisation from that which was the home of the society drama. Such ventures as the Independent Theatre Society, the Stage Society, the seasons at the Court Theatre, and the regional movement provided such an organisation for plays which were unsuitable for and could not be accommodated within the domain of the commercial theatre.

Although it is convenient and indeed necessary to make a distinction between the commercial theatre and its drama and the minority theatre and its drama, the distinction is by no means clear cut; the two were not distinct and totally separate. There is no distinction chronologically as the minority theatre did not supersede the commercial theatre, they existed simultaneously. There was often a blurring at the edges of the two movements. It was often the case that the same actors and actresses, the same managers, and theatres were involved in both movements.

Despite the overlap, there is a basic difference in the attitude and assumptions of the two movements. The minority theatre was very conscious of its role in providing an alternative to the established theatre. The Independent Theatre Society, established in 1891 by J.T. Grein and inspired by the work of the Théâtre Libre in France and the Freie Buhne in Germany, aimed to give 'performances of plays which have a literary and artistic rather than commercial value'.¹ The Stage Society, founded in 1899 after the demise of the Independent

¹ Quoted in Allardyce Nicoll, English Drama 1900-1930, p. 52.

Theatre, originated from a similar desire 'to secure the production of plays of obvious power and merit which lacked, under the conditions then prevalent on the stage, any opportunity for their presentation'.¹ What both comments suggest is that the alternative they provided was to the commercial necessity which governed the established London theatre. As Bernard Shaw said of the Independent Theatre, its most essential independence was that it was 'independent of commercial success'.²

It is far from the truth to suggest that all managers or dramatists of the commercial theatre were unprepared to take risks in the interests of their art, nor was their only integrity commercial. But the established theatre was bound by the exigencies of commerce in that managements could not afford to stage plays that would not pay and dramatists could not afford to write plays that the managers would not accept. The minority theatre was freed from such exigencies by the nature of its financial organisation. It was financed in various ways, by endowments and donations, subscriptions from members, and occasionally the money for productions was raised by the actors themselves. There is often a tendency to link commercial failure with artistic attainment, and it is easy to laud the efforts of the minority theatre and scorn the necessities of filthy lucre which governed the commercial stage. But it is a chastening thought to realise, as William Archer did, that 'if the Shaw drama had been forced from the first to pay its way, as were the Robertson drama and the Pinero drama, it would long ago have died of starvation'.³

As opposed to the solidity of the commercial theatre and its organisation during the period, the minority theatre trod a precarious path and remained in nature generally experimental. The more interesting

¹Incorporated Stage Society, Ten Years 1899-1909, p. 7.

²S XXIII, 20.

³William Archer, The Old Drama and the New, p. 338.

question is why the minority theatre could not establish a financial viability. The answer lies largely in the nature of its material. The congruity between the assumptions which inhered in the society drama and the social assumptions which the commercial theatre created for itself created a style and area of subject matter which had a likely chance of success. The conservatism of both played a large part in their popularity. The different assumptions of the drama of the minority theatre in subject and style made it unpopular and highly unlikely to be successful financially. As one critic said of an Independent Theatre production (and the hostility was common amongst many towards minority theatre productions in general not just Independent Theatre productions), an Independent Theatre play was synonymous with amateurish construction and unpleasant theme.¹ The objection recognised an interrelation between the aesthetic and the morality which I will discuss later.

As well as providing an outlet for unacted drama, the other common aim of the minority theatre was to find and provide a stage for new dramatists. One of the stated aims of the Stage Society expressed a common attitude:

The most important function of the Society has been, and must continue to be, the search for new playwrights.²

The search for new dramatists included opportunities given to Ibsen and other continental dramatists as well as to native talent. The Independent Theatre, in the last years of the nineteenth century, was criticised for promoting foreign instead of native drama, but later enterprises, the Stage Society and the Court seasons, did promote the native drama. Galsworthy, Granville Barker and Shaw all found a stage in the early years of the twentieth century thanks largely to such alternative ventures.

¹See Anon., [review of Thyrza Fleming], The Theatre, 25 (1895), p. 107.

²Incorporated Stage Society, Ten Years 1899-1909, p. 8.

The activities of these ventures presented opportunities for new British dramatists which previously had not existed. The emphasis in the new ventures on short runs and repertory seasons helped create a more rapid turnover of plays presented than was possible in the established theatre. The commercial management's necessity to milk a successful play for as long as it was making money resulted in long runs and the frequent revival of past successes to keep the books in the black. The number of plays presented by the commercial theatre, and therefore the opportunity for dramatists to find a stage for new work, was considerably limited by these conditions. The following figures indicate the sort of opportunities a minority theatre venture could open up. During the three years of the Court seasons, thirty-two plays were presented; during the same period George Alexander, a highly esteemed and successful commercial manager, staged eight plays. The ventures also helped ease the grip held on the stage by the elite of proven dramatists recognised as the 'dramatic ring'. The conservative management's tendency to rely on the 'ring' prevented new authors of even conventional plays from getting a hearing. The advent of the new enterprises and societies gave opportunities to dramatists who remained excluded from the 'ring' not least because the nature of the plays they wrote was unacceptable to the commercial theatre. By 1908 Mario Borsa felt that the situation had changed so radically that he could claim:

It is an established fact that all attempts and all efforts in the direction of more serious dramatic work can now find a stage open to them.¹

This is undoubtedly an overstatement, but it does indicate, by the very fact that Borsa felt able to make such a statement, a considerably improved situation.

¹Mario Borsa, The English Stage of Today, p. 117.



What is of especial significance for the study of Lawrence's plays is the appearance of clubs and societies and theatrical ventures, both professional and amateur, outside London, the undisputed centre of theatrical activity. It betokens in the provinces an interest in the drama which went further than productions of plays described with varying degrees of accuracy as 'London successes' provided by touring companies in numerous theatres royal. In the provinces the emphasis was frequently placed on the performance of original plays of a regional nature written by local authors. It was a significant regional amateur society, the Altrincham Garrick Society, which gave the first public performance of any of Lawrence's plays, The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd in 1920. Because of their subject matter Lawrence's colliery plays, and much of his other drama, are of this regional nature. Lawrence's drama coincided with a wider movement of regional writing and ^atheatrical movement which encouraged such writing. Despite the improved opportunities, Lawrence remained overlooked as a dramatist; it was not the case, as Borsa claimed, that all attempts and all efforts in the direction of more serious dramatic work could find a stage open to them.

One of the most important effects of the minority drama as a whole and of the regional drama in particular was to help break down the expectation that the drama of modern life was restricted to the setting of the upper reaches of society - the society drama of Mayfair and country houses as practiced by Jones and Pinero. The more frequent adoption of the settings of the drama of provincial life in particular, Archer realised, would widen the limitation set upon the Edwardian drama by the centralisation of the society dramatists:

The moment a man enters upon a career as a playwright, he inevitably settles in London; and London has none of that local self-consciousness which is the very mainspring of

so many French, German, and Scandinavian dramas. Less in London than anywhere else is the individual life apt to come into conflict with the social machinery; and when such conflict does arise, it is generally in 'society', narrowly so called, which is practically a small city within the great city... If a law could be passed banishing our half-dozen leading dramatists to as many provincial cities for the next ten years, and at the same time placing Brighton, Homburg, and Monte Carlo 'out of bounds' for them, we should find our drama, at the end of that period, incalculably richer and more varied.¹

The shift in setting to the provinces embraces a shift in the experience, the ways of living, expressed in the drama. The importance of the regional theatre movement was in establishing the opportunity for authors to write plays which extended the drama to include plays with a genuine provincial subject matter as a matter of policy.

Of the professional provincial enterprises, by far the most important and significant was the repertory venture founded by Miss Horniman at the Gaiety Theatre in Manchester in 1908. Following this example, similar provincial repertory theatres were established at Glasgow in 1909, Liverpool in 1911, and Birmingham in 1913. In addition to the Manchester movement's achievement of seniority, none of the other provincial repertory ventures was able to build up around them a school of regional dramatists as did the Gaiety. The primogenitor of a regional theatre with its own dramatists was of course centred in Dublin at the Abbey Theatre. By virtue of exceptional playwrights in Synge and Yeats, its achievement still outshines the regional drama which appeared in Britain. Despite the influential nature of the Irish movement, its aims and consequently much of its drama were essentially different from the Manchester theatre and its attendant dramatists. They did not share the self-conscious nationalism of the Irish, and the plays of the Manchester school differed in tone, lacking the same sense of proud urgency.

¹Mario Borsa, The English Stage of Today, pp. 258-9.

Whatever we make of the final achievements of the Gaiety Theatre, its most important contribution was the school of local drama it produced, despite the opinion of Harold Brighouse, one of the Manchester dramatists, that 'at Miss Horniman's theatre in Manchester, there were so many bigger things being done than the earlier, technically weak plays of the local authors'.¹ This statement may arise from modesty or a genuine sense of his own and his colleagues' deficiencies, but the single innovatory and original contribution was its school of local dramatists. The Gaiety had no monopoly over the other material it staged and was not the most important movement to promote Shaw, Ibsen, Granville Barker, or even Euripides. Their work had been staged earlier and continued to be staged by other groups. The Gaiety's work in introducing advanced drama to a provincial audience in Manchester had been pre-empted by a Manchester branch of the Independent Theatre Society which, between 1893 and 1898, presented plays which included A Doll's House, The Master Builder, An Enemy of the People, Rosmersholm, and Hedda Gabler, Shaw's Candida and George Moore's The Strike at Arlingford.

A primary aim of the founder of the Gaiety was to create a truly regional drama whose subject matter was based on Lancashire life and to find and foster local Lancashire dramatists, and in so doing bring about a shift in emphasis from the metropolis and country houses to a predominantly industrial area of England. Miss Horniman set out her intention:

I want to find English dramatists who will write better than the Irish. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves. If Lancashire playwrights will send their plays to me I shall pledge myself to read them through. Let them write not as one dramatist does, about countesses and duchesses and society existing in imagination, but about their friends and enemies - about real life.²

¹BrTLP 11.

²Rex Pogson, Miss Horniman and the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester, pp. 36-7.

A drama centred in the people and concerns of this specific provincial locality, which she asks for, demands not merely a shift in the locality of the subject matter but also a shift in social class to a drama which rejects the upper classes and finds its material in the middle or lower classes. She is wrong in assuming that these shifts will result in the drama of 'real life', but it will result in a drama which employs a different set of principles which define the drama and therefore mediates a different experience from the drama of countesses and duchesses. These shifts in interest to the provinces, to lower social classes, and to the concerns of ordinary life could sound like a brief of Lawrence's drama; and historically Lawrence's drama coincides with this trend. Had such a repertory theatre existed in Nottingham, Lawrence could possibly have been discovered and encouraged as a dramatist long before 1968, for, as Brighthouse commented,

The stimulation of local drama is possible only where a local producing theatre exists; the education of a dramatist is unfinished until he has heard his lines spoken and watched his puppets move.¹

The close **depiction** of working-class life as presented in Lawrence's colliery plays was alien, if not objectionable, to the expectations and taste of both the purveyors and patrons of the Edwardian commercial theatre. The colliery plays excluded the glittering spectacle of upper middle-class life and the gratification of seeing orthodox middle-class morality triumphant. In most ways the experience they mediate was diametrically opposed to the experience mediated by the society drama. The minority theatre movement, and in particular the regional theatre movement, made significant moves in creating a context and opportunities for drama more closely akin to Lawrence's colliery plays. The minority drama's shift to middle-class and working-class settings constituted an important step in a line of which Lawrence's drama is a part. Instead of the country houses of the wealthy and the drawing-rooms of Mayfair, different settings and

¹BrTLP 16.

a new tone appeared with increasing frequency: 'the tradesman's parlour or the unlovely but sumptuous dining-room of the rich manufacturer. The older drama had an atmosphere of anglican respectability: the drama of the younger school breathed close dissent'.¹ The social setting of the society drama constituted a world whose limits were conceived of by one of Pinero's characters as 'our little parish of St. James's'; the world of the regional drama shifted to the industrial north, to Houghton's setting of the suburbs of Salchester.²

Lawrence's plays belong to this same line of development that the Edwardian minority drama took. He used a similar area of subject matter and showed a similar concern with presenting a greater appearance of realism as opposed to the theatricality of the well-made society drama. Yet Lawrence's drama was ultimately unacceptable to the minority theatre. Despite marginal interest shown by the minority theatre, his plays remained unstaged until 1920. That this was the case was not merely because there was no repertory theatre in Nottingham like the Gaiety in Manchester. The reason resides far more fundamentally in the method by which Lawrence wrote drama. The minority drama did not just shift the area of subject matter which was customary in serious commercial drama, it made different assumptions which necessitated the use of different techniques and therefore the employment of different conventions and a differing set of ordering principles to create the drama and define dramatic situations. Despite apparent similarities between the colliery plays and the minority drama, Lawrence also employed different conventions and ordering principles from those employed by Galsworthy, Granville Barker and the Manchester dramatists. Lawrence's ordering principles have been largely ignored and received scant appreciation. The following study will not attempt

¹A.E. Morgan, Tendencies of Modern English Drama, p. 174.

²PSP I, 77.

to prove the greater truth or reality of the commercial theatre, or the minority theatre, or of the colliery plays, but will examine the different assumptions, techniques and conventions they utilise, and thus assess Lawrence's position in the Edwardian theatre.

2. The Society Drama: Henry Arthur Jones and Arthur Wing Pinero

I

As I suggested above, Henry Arthur Jones's first significant achievement was Saints and Sinners. In many ways it depicts an area of experience and attempts to portray ways of living outside the parameters of the society drama of which Jones and Pinero were the most accomplished practitioners in the eighteen-nineties. In contrast to the depiction of upper middle-class life and its implicit social and religious nexus of smoothly conservative anglicanism of the society drama, Jones intended Saints and Sinners to depict the experience of a provincial dissenting community and the lower middle-class tradesman class. Jones's choice of this area of subject matter is not in itself remarkable. Much nineteenth-century melodrama and comedy worked their plots in similar fields, but there the drama of lower social classes was determined and defined by the theatrical situations and conventions of melodrama and comedy. Jones himself was conscious of this fact and claimed no originality for himself in his choice of subject matter:

Of course there is no lack of business-men in our modern plays; rather, of one certain type of business-man... there is an inordinate profusion. Indeed, this particular individual, under various aliases and constantly changing his trade, may be said in one sense to have been the greap prop and mainstay of English comedy for some twenty years past... Ordinarily the man of business is simply a peg to hang jokes upon.¹

The implication is that the lower middle-class, and the lower classes in general, are not material from which serious drama can be made and that they must be victim to the butt of comedy or the vicissitudes of melodrama. Jones's intention was to avoid the creation of the drama of a particular social class in terms of familiar theatrical conventions but to reproduce

¹JSS 121.

faithfully and truthfully a particular section of English life. The crucial question is one of the treatment of a certain social class and the ways in which it is depicted and drama created from it.

What is remarkable about Saints and Sinners is not that Jones claims authenticity for the play, most dramatists do that for their work, but that his defence of the play, 'Religion and the Stage', which was written in response to objections to his depiction of commercial corruption and religious hypocrisy, indicates that in conception the organising principles of the play were thoroughly naturalistic.¹ The espousal of naturalistic conventions of the formation of character, Jones believed, would achieve the faithful and truthful depiction of life and would avoid the insincerity and triviality of drama which was defined by theatrical conventions and whose subject matter was restricted by contemporary prejudice. Naturalism, he implies, is the method by which serious, even great, drama can be created from the experience of lower middle-class life:

It is useless to upbraid modern playwrights for not producing great plays when in so small a matter as the putting upon the stage of so common a type of modern English life as a middle-class tradesman, one is not allowed to paint him thoroughly, according to one's poor judgment, in a faithful searching way, and giving, so far as the exigencies of dramatic art allow, a truthful picture of the man and his environment, and of the man moulded or modified by his environment... The drama claims for its province the whole heart and nature and soul and passions of man; and so far as religion has to do with these, so far is the dramatist within his right in noting the scope and influence of religion upon the character he has to portray. The whole teaching of modern psychology, the conception of human character as a natural production arising from the action of the various surrounding agencies upon the individual man and his ancestors through countless ages and the reactions resulting therefrom: this doctrine forbids the dramatist to accept any reservation of a certain plot or parcel of a man's nature which must be screened off and veiled and assumed to be non-existent before the analysis of the character can be made.

¹The defence appeared in The Nineteenth Century in 1885 and was later appended to Saints and Sinners on its publication in 1891.

Every character is woven all of a piece; if some threads are taken out, the garment is mutilated and falls to bits. The whole of the nature of man is sacred to the dramatist, as the whole of the body of man is sacred to the physician. One part is not more sacred than another. The folly, the hate, and meanness, and envy, and greed, and lust of human kind are just as sacred in this sense as the higher and nobler qualities, and are treasured with the same care. One might as well dictate to a surgeon that in his survey of the human body he must omit to take note of the presence of such and such an organ and its influence upon the rest of the body - say the heart - because of some sacred mystery attaching to it, as to dictate to a dramatist that he shall not be allowed in his study of a certain character to mark, if necessary the shaping and leavening of the whole of that character by the religious milieu in which it has been produced.¹

Jones's statement and justification of his aim and intention constitute a fairly standard naturalist document. His reliance on the two major determinants of character - heredity and environment, his concept of the absolute interdependence of these elements, and his use of the scientific analogy of the author's role are not uncommon. Jones's claim that he utilises the 'whole teaching of modern psychology', that is the scientific understanding of the formation of character in real life, as the basis for his creation of character in drama implies a greater seriousness and truthfulness than the creation of characters according to theatrical necessity. Similarly, the tendency of the argument to scientific objectivity precludes any ethical assumptions about the nature of material which is worthy of dramatic presentation and that which is not. The tendency of the argument also assumes that the treatment of the material should not be governed by a priori ethical assumptions about human nature or the nature of society which will govern the outcome of certain situations and the final resolution of the plot.

Jones's theoretical position is that of the orthodox naturalist. Yet the play itself bears the mark of the playwright not free from the habits and techniques of melodrama in which he served his apprenticeship.

¹JSS 126-8.

Jones himself acknowledged this fact in the preface to the published edition of the play, and elsewhere he made the apology, 'Don't forget that when I began it was the day of Robertson and H.J. Byron. They were my only models'.¹ The organising principles of the play, the means by which the drama is created and defined, lie uneasily between the seeds of the naturalistic conception and the melodramatic intonation and morality. The uneasy relationship between the two is symptomatic of many of the conventions which inform the society drama.

The plot of the play comprises two elements - a fairly conventional seduction drama and also the depiction of religious hypocrisy in the figure of the church deacon, Hoggard. The dramatic link between the two is the nonconformist minister, Jacob Fletcher. Of the two elements, the former is the one where the melodramatic intonation is at its strongest, where the characters and situations derive from and are defined by the conventions of melodrama. The characters and their functions fit a familiar pattern: the aristocratic villain and seducer, Fanshawe; the misguided and seduced Letty, poor but basically honest; the wronged father, Jacob, dignified and restrained; the man willing to stand by Letty despite her fall from grace, George, virtuous and strong, faithful in affection. Similarly with the action of the plot: in the battle between black and white, good and evil, virtue is eventually triumphant after initial discomfiture, and Fanshawe earns just retribution from a universe which does not countenance his villainy. The latter point is conveniently made by one of the characters:

It seemed like a judgment on him, his getting killed over in India almost as soon as he set his foot there.²

However, there is, amongst the overtly melodramatic nature of the treatment of the material, evidence of Jones, in accordance with his theoretical defence of the play, attempting to establish the cause

¹See JSS xix; John W. Cunliffe, Modern English Playwrights, p.33.

²JSS 97.

of the seduction drama by the use of naturalistic conventions. This appears at its crudest and least effective in the portrayal of Fanshawe. The effects of heredity and environment on Fanshawe, which are introduced by Jones to explain the character's wickedness, do not prevent him from remaining what he is in the play - the stage stereotype of the aristocratic villain. The overt pointing in Fanshawe's own soliloquy is unconvincing as either an explanation of his character or of his present motivation:

When a man has been as badly used by womankind as I have been, damn it all! he owes it to his own sense of justice to be revenged on womankind as often as he can... And I might have been a good man, I suppose, - if I could have chosen my own father and mother, and if everything and every creature I've met, from my cradle upwards, hadn't pushed me to the bad.¹

In this instance, the concept of naturalistic determinants, such as they are, are not shown in action within the play but are merely asserted to lend a flimsy, spurious substance to a character already defined by the conventions of melodrama.

Letty's susceptibility to the attractions which result in her seduction are initially suggested by the two major determinants of naturalism. Letty is meant to inherit a disposition to wildness and irresponsibility from her aunt who went off the rails and came to a bad end. Letty's interest in her aunt's history is sufficient to indicate an unhealthy state of mind. Fanshawe's attractiveness for her is not only dependent on her inherited predisposition, but Jones attempts to establish the way in which a contributory factor is her response to the narrow social and moral code of the midlands town. The boredom and constriction of the environment helps throw her into Fanshawe's arms. In the passage where Letty explains her attitude to her father, there is a slight but significant break in tone and in the experience mediated. She is sick

¹JSS 26.

of this silly town, and our silly people. Everything in Steepleford is so commonplace, and so respectable, and nothing ever happens, and you and I are buried under it all! Oh, how I wish that something would happen! Anything! Anything!... Oh, I wish - I wish - I wish - oh daddy, I'm so tired of this dull, stupid life! I wish something would happen to take me out of it.¹

That there is a discernible shift in tone from what has preceded it in the play indicates something of the uneasy relationship between naturalism and melodrama as the defining principle in the play. Consider such a speech and its implied system of definition by relation to the ways of thinking and living in the midlands town with Letty's statement of the melodramatic dilemma in which she finds herself in having to choose between Fanshawe and George Kinsmill:

Oh, if I had but the courage to see him no more. If I dared but refuse to meet him. Oh, to be loved by these two men, and to feel that I shall leave the good and choose the evil!²

Or George's melodramatic vow of revenge:

Four weeks since she left home - a whole month; and she is still in his arms. Oh my enemy, I shall find you yet! Let me but meet him face to face -³

Despite Jones's efforts to create the seduction element in the plot in accordance with the terms of his naturalistic conception, the melodramatic intonation is ultimately the principle of definition here. Concomitant with the intonation is Jones's inability to organise the plot in accordance with the naturalistic determinants tentatively introduced early in the play.

Letty eventually succumbs to Fanshawe not because of the promptings of heredity or environment, but because she is tricked by him, inveigled onto the train to London by the machinations of the villain. Her downfall, when it occurs, is not the result of her inheritance from her aunt nor the result of her boredom with provincial life, but is defined by the ethic of seduction melodrama. Shortly afterwards when her father learns of her melodramatically engineered abduction, Jones restresses the naturalistic tendency by providing

¹JSS 13.

²JSS 20.

³JSS 58.

Jacob with the direction, 'Happens to see picture of LETTY'S aunt, goes to it, turns its face to the wall'.¹ But whether the definition here is in fact naturalistic (relationship with her aunt) or melodramatic (the tendency to sensation in the stage business) indicates Jones's ambivalence. When she is installed as the supposed Mrs Fanshawe, she is not able, as we would have expected her to be from the naturalistic suggestion, to enjoy the immoral, reckless life with the dashing aristocratic army officer. Her repentance and atonement through good works until she becomes an 'angel on earth', and the sanctimonious aura surrounding her eventual death when she is forgiven by those who had previously condemned her are all determined by the definition of melodrama not by naturalistic convention.² Any naturalistic determination emanating from the fact that Letty is her father's daughter as well as her aunt's niece is subsumed by the endorsement of the ethic of melodrama which makes that ethic the dominant principle of definition. Fanshawe's death is not presented through the action of the play as demonstrating naturalistic principles at work, but is presented as a *fait accompli* as a part of the aesthetic and morality of melodrama where ends are neatly tied up and a providential universe engineers satisfactory conclusions.

Jones's potentially greater achievement lies in his treatment of the other element of the plot - the depiction of the lower middle-class dissenting life - and his attempt to demonstrate 'the shaping and leavening of the whole of that character by the religious milieu in which it has been produced'. Jones's attempt to create from this particular area of life a serious drama where the milieu is an active formative influence in the play, where the drama is created and defined by the action of social, economic, and cultural pressures is of historical significance as it predates similar areas of subject matter and the aim

¹JSS 49.
²JSS 97.

of much of the Edwardian minority theatre and Lawrence's own plays. The naturalistic conception is incorporated far more effectively and successfully into the depiction of the religious community than Jones was able to work that conception into the seduction drama element.

Jacob is partially defined within the play by a precise financial reference. His housekeeper complains of her struggles to maintain a standard of decency on 'less than eighty pounds a year'.¹ An element of definition is here introduced which is usually absent from the more common commercial serious drama of modern life, the society drama. There the majority of the characters are sufficiently wealthy to suffer no material impingement on their lives or on the elegance of their surroundings or dress. Jacob's financial position is visually signified in the play. His study is dingily furnished with well-worn furniture, and he is shabbily dressed in a coat six or seven years old and 'much darned'.² The play makes explicit that what he eats and drinks is dependent on his limited income. Although at some points these facts are established too directly through statement and assertion rather than through the action of the play, Jones's intention is clear, and his attempts to achieve a definition dependent on ways of living created by a precise financial reference rather than a definition dependent on theatrical conventions are praiseworthy. In the action of the play itself his poverty puts Jacob and his uncompromising virtue at a genuine disadvantage in the face of the power which Hoggard's money gives. However, it is also true that it is part of the melodramatic intonation of the play that Jacob is poor and virtuous.

Similarly the congruity between his profession as clergyman and his role as the father in the seduction drama creates an ambiguity

¹JSS 2

²JSS 6.

which makes it difficult to tell whether he is defined by his position in the dissenting community or by theatrical convention:

No, George, vengeance is not ours. I have been wronged more than you. My home is broken and all the pride and joy of my life taken from me, but I will leave my vengeance to whom vengeance belongs.¹

Jones claimed that in Jacob he rendered a 'full acknowledgment of the sterling qualities to be found in English dissenting life', but ultimately Jacob's virtue, as it is mediated through Saints and Sinners, is not an exclusive correlative of nonconformity.² He is not so much a man of a certain class and religion but a figure from the lime-lit world of the Victorian stage.

Jacob's role in the seduction drama detaches him to a great extent from the depiction of the 'religious milieu', the portrayal of which as a moulding and formative influence Jones saw as his primary purpose. In relation to Lawrence's colliery plays this is an extremely important organising principle as the definition of the drama of Lawrence's plays arises from the interplay between the ways of living of a particular community and the behaviour of the characters who inhabit it. Despite Letty's centrality to the melodramatic seduction plot, it is initially through her consciousness that a sense is established of the effect of social and moral inhibitions of the midlands town and its nonconformist religion. Her initial outburst about 'this silly town' and its 'silly people' is provoked by the interview which she overhears between Hoggard, the chapel deacon, and her father. It is the righteous and canting language of nonconformist religion covering the hypocrisy of the tradesmen and deacons Hoggard and Prabble which creates the dominant experience of dissenting life. Yet it is partly in the treatment of these characters that Jones's depiction of the religious milieu, his faithful reproduction of an aspect of English life, becomes unsatisfactory.

¹JSS 57-8

²JSS xxiii.

Apart from Jacob, whom I contend belongs more to the melodramatic elements of the play, and his faithful retainers, Lydia and Lot, the examples of a nonconformist congregation are two humour characters, Uncle Bambery and Peter Greenacre, one a deaf old soul and the other a merry drunkard, and Hoggard, a self confessed swindler and blackmailer, and Prabble, who hypocritically wants his competitors condemned from the pulpit. This then constitutes Jones's depiction of a religious sect, which he felt was so central to the naturalistic concept of the play that he was prepared to alter the ending of the play for its performance. He reflected that 'on the whole the final dénouement was not of such vital consequence as the presentation of the picture of English religious life'.¹ Jones's satirical intention overshadows his naturalistic conception; what he has produced is competent and effective satire, but it is not the picture of English religious life.

Jones was not able to surrender the main action of the play to the more or less virtuous poor who would represent the dominant experience of nonconformist life. The action is centred on the melodramatically virtuous Jacob or the criminal Hoggard. Representatives of the dissenting tradesman class do not exist in Saints and Sinners by virtue of the dramatic possibilities inherent in their ordinary existence but are only worked into the fabric of the play by virtue of the dramatic possibilities inherent in their criminality. Jones stacks the cards rather too heavily in his satiric attack. Hoggard, Jones considered, was 'a not unfair representative of a very widely-spread class in narrow English religious communities', and one could not complain that he is an improbable character.² But there is a

¹JSS xxiv.

The death of Letty in an aura of sanctimonious repentance may now seem conventional, even hackneyed, but in the context of a tradition of happy endings it was seen as a daring stroke of realism which an audience would find unpalatable. On the advice of Clement Scott the death was expunged for the performance of the play, and Letty and George were joined in a happy union.

²JSS xxii.

certain unfairness in presenting a character who sets the norm of nonconformist life as a swindler and a blackmailer. The essence of Hoggard's hypocrisy can be shown equally well in a less extreme, and thus more representative, character in, for example, Titus Price in Anna of the Five Towns, or even in Bulstrode, whose criminality is balanced by other elements in the presentation of provincial life in Middlemarch.

Jones's predisposition to an uncharitable satire emanates from certain a priori presuppositions which are insinuated in the preface to the play:

This at-first-sight astounding discordancy of belief and practice is much more frequent in the narrower and smaller and less intellectual sects, and is partly the correlative of a low degree of intelligence.¹

Once made, such presuppositions are then maintained throughout the play. The formative influences which create the basis of the assumptions are not shown at work in the action of the play itself.

Other aspects of the depiction of nonconformist life are tinted by manifestations of this predisposition on Jones's part. Jones establishes a relationship between the chapel and money through certain members of the congregation who pay their pew rent and then expect a good return on their investment by expecting to be able to enlist the church in support of their own business interests and who view religion as being based on the same principle as trade in that it is dependent on 'business-energy and push and advertising'.² The depiction is not so much a progressive exposé of common elements in nonconformist worshippers, for, by the end of the play, the tone taken towards the chapel is patronising and the attitude endorsed is one of detached amusement at its expense. Jones directs his uncharitable satire from the basis of the tacit assumption of the social superiority of mainstream anglicanism, which assumption informs the world depicted

¹JSS xxii.

²JSS 76.

in the society drama in which Jones later found his métier.

Jones's execution of his naturalistic conception may have turned out to be crude and limited, marred by and finally subordinated to established theatrical habits and to his satirical intention. But his conception was praiseworthy and his achievement nonetheless considerable. His was a real attempt to create, in Hoggard and Prabble, characters determined by their work and class. Their view of religion as business may be turned to satirical account, but it is based on what we can take to be the habits of thinking conditioned by their roles as tradesmen. It is their concern for their business activities which provides the motivation for their action. In Hoggard's swindling of the defenceless poor and in his blackmailing of Jacob with threats to throw him out of home and living there is something of the intonation of the foreclosing landlord beloved of melodrama. But the following dialogue indicates the advances Jones made over his depiction of Fanshawe and the treatment of the seduction drama element:

JACOB. You will drive me to that? Either I must stand by and let you rob the widow and orphans of my dead friend, or you will blast my child's name. That is what you offer me?

HOGGARD. Yes, if you like to put it in that way; and remember, if this business comes to light, we shall be obliged to call upon you to resign your ministry, and I don't think you'll find it very easy to get another if I have anything to do with the references.¹

The tone and expression of Jacob's speech puts him in the midst of a melodramatic dilemma, but there is a new element of plausibility and conviction behind Hoggard's villainy. It is firmly related to the ethics of the community depicted and to expected standards of behaviour of a nonconformist minister. The mention of references, for example, shifts the emphasis of the way in which the situation is defined into an area of experience which has a greater congruity with the events of

¹JSS 90.

ordinary life than many of the events of the seduction drama. The plausibility is created from the mediation of a network of relationships governing the concept of motivation, character, and the results of actions which have substance by being created in relation to a particular community, a particular way of life, and a particular class.

This is true of Hoggard's eventual downfall. His downfall is morally impeccable, evidence of a universe which eventually punishes wickedness and restores the righteous. It is presented as a *fait accompli*, as Fanshawe's downfall was, in that we are not actually shown the steps in his downward path. But his downfall seems not just to be the engineering of the controlling dramatist implicitly expressing a belief in a moral universe, but is informed by the psychologically probable. His greed and dishonesty shown throughout the play result in speculation until he finally robs the savings from the Penny Bank in a last attempt to cover his losses and maintain his position.

II

I have discussed Saints and Sinners at some length because the assumptions which inhere in the play, that legitimate drama can be created from a conception of environmental naturalism in a provincial and lower middle-class setting, are of considerable significance for the drama which was to follow twenty or more years later from the regional dramatists and from Lawrence himself.

However, the social milieu of much of Jones's later work was to be much more in keeping with the commercial theatre's expectations of the drama of modern life, and his most successful work was emphatically his drama of the upper middle-classes. Jones recanted

from the forthrightness of the naturalistic concepts of the defence of Saints and Sinners in 1885, and, by the early eighteen-nineties, his published statements indicate a far more restricted conception of material from which serious realistic drama could be made. In 1895 he espoused contemporary prejudice about what was seen as unpleasant advanced drama and claimed that

It tried to seduce us from our smug suburban villas into all sorts of gruesome kitchen-middens... But the epitaph - it is already written - on all this realistic business will be "It does not matter what happens in kitchen-middens".¹

Like Clement Scott's attacks on Ibsen, the implication that there are certain sorts of experience which exist but should be excluded from the Edwardian theatre is clear. Jones's defence of his depiction of the determinant of a religious milieu on the grounds that if it were ignored a seventh of man's experience would be lost is replaced by a repugnance which he experienced in certain elements of modern drama which he thought arose from the 'nausea of town-life'; in effect he discountenances not just one seventh of man's experience but the experience of the huge body of the urban population as unfit for dramatic representation.²

Jones's attitude was typical of the commercial theatre as Shaw saw it; the latter dramatist wrote

Our ideal prosperity is not the prosperity of the industrial north, but the prosperity of the Isle of Wight, of Folkestone and Ramsgate, of Nice and Monte Carlo. That is the only prosperity you see on the stage, where the workers are all footmen, parlourmaids, comic lodging-letters, and fashionable professional men, whilst the heroes and heroines are miraculously provided with unlimited dividends, and eat gratuitously, like the knights in Don Quixote's books of chivalry.³

Shaw's stricture is unfair in its suggestion that the world depicted in the work of the society dramatists is as unreal as the world of chivalric romance. After all, the society dramatists did

¹ JR xi.

² JR 295.

³ S X, xxviii.

depict something of the reality of the experience of high society life. But the stricture is valid in its assertion that the social restriction of the society drama excludes the sense of work as a principle of definition, which principle is so central to Lawrence's colliery plays. This fact is largely true of the fashionable professional men who are allowed important and central roles in the society drama. The stricture also indicates that the social restriction tends to exclude a demonstration of the necessity of day to day economics which determine the lives of most. The Edwardian audience seemingly found acceptable and palatable the depiction of the results of the wealth of a modern industrial nation in the dominant class, but not a depiction of the things and class which produce that wealth. The strength of this feeling of aversion was such that Squire Bancroft, a senior and respected actor manager, could say of as playful a piece as The Admirable Crichton, 'It deals... with the juxtaposition of the drawing-room and the servants' hall - always to me a very painful subject'. A.E.W. Mason, who records this conversation, significantly comments, 'It seemed to me that I heard the whole of that era... epitomised and defined in that one unexpected sentence'.¹

The attitude arises not only from a disinclination to the mere portraiture of a certain section of society but also from a belief here expressed by Pinero:

I think you would find, if you tried to write drama, not only that wealth and leisure are more productive of dramatic complications than poverty and hard work, but that if you want to get a certain order of ideas expressed or questions discussed, you must go pretty well up in the social scale.²

The comic marital complications of Jones's society comedy The Liars, which arise from chance and coincidental meetings at riverside hotels, form the dramatic mainspring of that play. Such meetings are of course justified by their being one of the conventions of comedy, but, as Pinero's statement suggests, they depend for their existence

¹A.E.W.Mason, Sir George Alexander and the St.James' Theatre, p. 136.

²William Archer, Real Conversations, p.21.

on the leisure and affluence of a certain social group which can afford to spend its time boating and dining at hotels. The second part of Pinero's statement, which expresses a genuine belief that the quality of a body of thought which can legitimately inform a piece of drama resides only in the depiction of higher social classes, raises fundamental questions about the nature of the Edwardian drama. Pinero suggests that there must be a necessary cohesive intellectual order informing the drama which alone can be found in the depiction of the dominant class.¹ This raises questions about whether his conception of a cohesive body of thought is in itself necessary to drama, about the extent to which drama which surrenders the main action to lower social classes can express such a body of thought in the mainly middle-class institution of the Edwardian theatre; and about whether a shift in social class necessarily demands a shift in the nature of the defining body of ideas or the principles of organisation. It also raises questions of whether the expression of Pinero's conception of an order of ideas or any other order is dependent upon the degree of articulateness which is the prerogative of the standard English of the dominant class but not of the working class. These questions will underly the following discussion of the Edwardian drama and of Lawrence's colliery plays.

¹Pinero's The Gay Lord Quex did present a working woman, the manicurist Sophy Fullgarney, in a central role, but her primary function is to act as a plot device. The relationship between her role in the drama and her social class is significant for Pinero makes her act, admittedly with the best of motives, in a way which would be totally unfitting for a member of the upper middle classes. Clayton Hamilton, in his Critical Preface to the play, recognises (and seemingly approves of) Pinero's tactic. The play, he says, 'skilfully contrasts the manners of the aristocracy with the manners of the lower classes and sets forth a tense and thrilling struggle between the different ideals of conduct that are entertained by a profligate who, despite of all deductions, is a gentleman, and a loyal and well-meaning working-woman who, despite of all additions, remains essentially a vulgar person' (PSP II, 16).

III

Jones's and Pinero's choice of subject matter from the upper middle-class also entails a more fundamental affiliation in that their plays are not just descriptive or expressive of the modes of behaviour and codes of conduct of that class but are instrumental in actively endorsing that ideology. Something of the process can be seen at work in the early and ambivalent Saints and Sinners.

Individual naturalistic elements in Saints and Sinners as a whole and in the treatment of the character of Hoggard are subsumed by the play's final endorsement of the conventional morality of melodrama. Jones did not have the courage to write a play which could end with the fourth act of Saints and Sinners which shows that the world is an unpleasant place where members of a smug and hypocritical community can effect the disgrace and ostracism of the virtuous and dignified. The fifth act engineers a conclusion which provides the comforting and reassuring experience of a universe so organised that the righteous are restored to their rightful positions and the wicked duly punished. Jones's naturalistic conception for Saints and Sinners may well have fitted the advanced minority drama of the late Victorian and Edwardian theatre, but the execution of the play itself accords with the expectations of the commercial theatre. Jones's instinctive aversion to the sort of unpleasantness the minority theatre was thought to revel in is demonstrated by an adaptation he made of Ibsen's A Doll's House in the same year as Saints and Sinners under the title of Breaking a Butterfly. Jones explained the circumstances leading to the adaptation:

When I came up to London sixteen years ago to try for a place among English playwrights, a rough translation from the German version of The Doll's House was put into my hands, and I was told if it could be turned into a sympathetic play, a ready opening would be found for it on the London boards.¹

¹R.A. Cordell, Henry Arthur Jones and the Modern Drama, pp. 51-2.

The idea of rendering Ibsen palatable to the commercial theatre by making him 'sympathetic' is significant of typical attitudes. Jones's consequent sympathetic interpretation of A Doll's House resulted in a travesty of Ibsen's work. In Breaking a Butterfly, Nora, translated into the figure of Flossie Goddard, refuses to assert unfeminine independence by slamming the door and walking out of the doll's house, but remains in the sheltered protection of her husband's home and she affirms the Victorian propriety of wifely duty and so earns the commendation at the end of the play: 'Flossie was a child yesterday: today she is a woman'.¹

Breaking a Butterfly is an easy target, and Jones himself later wished that it would be 'forgotten among the transgressions of [his] youth and ignorance'.² But the deliberate avoidance of unpleasantness in the resolutions of both Breaking a Butterfly and Saints and Sinners is highly important. The ending of Saints and Sinners may comply principally with what is a theatrical expectation of the ethos of melodrama, but it also presupposes and enforces a social and moral ethos. This is more apparent in Breaking a Butterfly where it is the contemporary social and moral ethos of marriage in a middle-class setting which is specifically endorsed.

Recorded remarks of both Jones and Pinero indicate a general compliance in the society drama as a whole with the dominant ideology. A reiterated maxim in Jones's collection of essays, The Renaissance of the English Drama, is that

The wise statesman does not attempt to make laws too far in advance of the moral and intellectual condition of the people. Nor does the wise playwright forget that play-writing is very rigorously limited in similar respects.³

Jones may hint at a sense of restriction, but it was a restriction he was quite willing to observe in his practice. 'I would not,' he claimed, 'willingly offend any single person among my audience;

¹Henry Arthur Jones and Henry Herman, Breaking a Butterfly, p. 76.

²R.A.Cordell, Henry Arthur Jones and the Modern Drama, p. 52.

³JK 99-100.

indeed I would, at some violence to my own convictions, remove any scene that would hurt the natural reverence of any spectator'.¹ Pinero was even more forthright, and lacked even Jones's limited sense of the restrictiveness of such compliance:

I assert unhesitatingly that the instinct by which the public feels that one form of drama, and not another, is what best satisfies its intellectual and spiritual needs at this period or at that is a natural and justified instinct.²

A significant indicator of the society dramatists' attitude towards the dominant ideology is the recurrence of the word 'natural' in connection with it. Despite the fact that Pinero acknowledges that the 'intellectual and spiritual needs' are relative to the age and are not universal, the fact that compliance with the dominant ideology is seen as natural gives the ideology a spurious sense of being comprised of immutable and sacrosanct values deviance from which would be against the essence of human nature. The tendency of this attitude results in drama which is not just a passive compliance with, reflective and expressive of, the dominant ideology but a drama which actively endorses and demonstrates the supposedly necessary and inevitable value of certain ways of thinking and codes of behaviour. Jones expressed himself as follows:

I am still in favor of what is called bourgeois morality, because as a general rule a woman's departure from it is attended by much more disastrous consequences to the children than a man's departure... It is a physiological fact that throughout life a woman's brain and general anatomy is much nearer and more allied to a child's than a man's brain and anatomy... My incessant protest is not against knocking down faulty human institutions, but against the folly of banging one's head against the great first laws and principles upon which all human institutions, all civilization are founded; and also the folly of treating such primary instincts as sex, religion, and patriotism as if they were opinions, instead of being, as they are, impulses and emotions which we cannot root out, but must guide and control as best we may.³

¹JR 71.

²Arthur Wing Pinero, Robert Louis Stevenson as Dramatist, p. 65.

³R.A.Cordell, Henry Arthur Jones and the Modern Drama, pp. 89-90.

What now appears to us as the antiquated and, to many, objectionable prejudices of late Victorian England constituted for Jones part of the eternal and permanent values he thought common to all men at all times which it was the function of the theatre to exhibit. Jones's justification of the double standard of morality, which he significantly calls 'bourgeois morality', is a carefully cooked argument and typical enough of the way in which the society drama itself endorsed the dominant ideology. A supposedly unarguable 'physiological fact' is introduced to create the appearance of an objective scientific defence of what is an untenable position. The possibly unconscious ambiguity of that sentence produces an inescapable secondary meaning that the woman's brain itself is essentially childish; the ambiguity is given authority by the citation of 'physiological fact'. The argument culminates in the categorical assertion, again presented as unarguable fact, that late nineteenth-century manifestations of codes of sexual behaviour, religious feeling, and patriotic fervour are ¹ineradicable, natural instincts, and constitute the basis of all human institutions and all civilizations. The effectiveness of the dramatists' endorsement of belief in a certain ideology depended not only on the sort of unblinking strength of feeling which Jones exhibits, but also, as Pinero realised, on the exhibition of an idealised view of that belief and so of an exhibition of the way in which people would like to think society worked:

I believe... that the playwright's finest task is that of giving back to the multitude their own thoughts and conceptions illuminated, enlarged, and, if needful, purged, perfected, transfigured.¹

The playwright's task then is to construct society rather than reflect it. But whether the society drama is an accurate depiction of what actually happens in upper middle-class society becomes immaterial, for it is the endorsement of the dominant code of behaviour and ethics

¹Gustav Kobbé, 'The Plays of Arthur Wing Pinero', p. 128.

which is the primary organisational principle in the drama.

Both Lawrence's colliery plays and the society drama depict actions within relatively small, discrete, self-contained groups or communities. In both, tension and conflict are created and the drama itself defined by relation to a compliance with or deviance from the codes of the particular social groups. But the difference between the two lies in the society drama's ultimate endorsement of the code it presents in contrast to Lawrence's more neutral attitude towards the code of the mining town. The experience which each conveys is vastly different not just because of the difference of subject matter but also because of the difference in dramatic definition which informs the plays.

IV

This primary principle of definition coupled with the area of social class in which the society drama deals tends to suppress other possible principles of definition. Despite the fact that both groups of plays have socially restricted settings, the kitchens of the mining town on the one hand, and, on the other, certain parts of London, fashionable resorts, and country houses, the sense of community deriving from a sense of place and setting, which is fundamental to the definition of the colliery plays, is absent from the society drama. The difference in social class here is crucial and suggests in very general terms the greater amenability of the lives of the lower classes to literary treatment by reference to environmental determinants than the lives of the upper classes. By reason of their affluence the upper classes can and are frequently shown to be able to ~~choose~~ and have greater control over their surroundings and physical environment. The working classes, as in

Lawrence's colliery plays, are restricted in their choice of environment in that it must be close to their work, and it is frequently a lack of money which affects the quality of their homes and materially affects their lives. Consequently, unlike the colliery plays where the place where the action is shown to occur is central as a principle of definition, within the society drama the stage set tends not to serve an active dramatic function. Erika Meier has commented of Jones's The Case of Rebellious Susan, 'The three rooms through which we are led in the course of the play have obviously no other task than to reflect by their elegance the taste and mode of life of this particular social class'.¹ The stage sets of society drama almost invariably function as a passive background which authenticates the convention of realistic staging in front of which the action is played.

The immediate environment may not figure as a determinant in the society drama, but basic tenets of naturalist theory are occasionally introduced and given credence as a means of defining character. Thus Nina's insouciance and irresponsibility in Pinero's His House in Order is explained by an inheritance from her father; she is 'petted, spoiled, undisciplined; the playmate from babyhood of a foolish, indulgent father'.² Similarly the character of Agnes Ebbsmith in The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith is accounted for by the influence of her demagogic socialist father and by her experience of a wretched childhood and an unhappy marriage. However, in both cases, once these facts have been established, the characters' subsequent actions are not explicable in terms of the given naturalistic determinants. The self-restraint and commonsense, which Nina exhibits in the latter part of His House in Order when she refuses to take revenge by utilising evidence she has found which would expose the hypocrisy of those who slight her, demonstrate not the results of naturalistic

¹Erika Meier, Realism and Reality, p. 117.

²PSP III, 274.

determinants but her assumption of the ethic of duty and self-sacrifice of the good Victorian wife. Agnes Ebbsmith, free-thinking socialist and feminist, when given a Bible by a well-meaning clergyman as a way out of her troubles, flings it in disgust into the stove, only to pull the smoking and charred volume out again moments later and clutch it to her as she kneels on the ground in penitence. The naturalistic determinants established by Pinero in the earlier part of the play are rendered null and void. A satisfactory ending is deemed to have been reached when Agnes is no longer convinced she is leading a movement of liberation but believes herself to be a wanton seductress and returns the man she has been living with to the respectability of wife, family, and political career, and herself retires to lead the life of a semi-religious recluse in the north of England.

The naturalistic determinants, as exemplified by these instances, are not introduced as organisational principles which will subsequently actively define and create the drama, but are introduced, it seems, merely to establish and lend superficial credibility and substance to characterisation and situation at the beginning of the plays. Once an initial situation is established, the naturalistic determinants become subordinate until they disappear, and the initially created problem is worked out in accordance with certain a priori assumptions about how people and society work until a resolution is arrived at which is compatible with those assumptions. Those assumptions are in effect an exposition of the dominant code of ethics and behaviour, and thus the major organising principle becomes an endorsement of that code.

A more subtle vying for position between naturalism and certain ethical assumptions as the major principle of organisation can be seen in The Second Mrs Tanqueray. The central problem of the play is

created by the marriage of Paula, who has previously led a life of questionable morality in the demi-monde, to the impeccably respectable Aubrey Tanqueray. Because of Paula's past the marriage, according to society's regulations, demands their ostracism from polite society and they retire to Aubrey's country house to live out their lives together away from other company. In the early part of the play, it seems that the principle which defines her character is based on naturalistic concepts. It is clearly established that the carelessness, bad temper, and sneering tone which she exhibits result from her previous dissolute experience and are fired by her boredom with her present environment in which she is effectively exiled not only from the glamour and excitement of café life to which she is used but from almost all society of any sort. She is a victim of her past; her experience has determined her in such a way that her every thought and action, which render her unfit for society or for holding the position of Aubrey's wife, are unintentional and unconscious. Her husband, assuming the ways of thinking of the dominant ideology, describes her in terms of her deviance from the dominant code of behaviour:

There's hardly a subject you can broach on which poor Paula hasn't some strange, out-of-the-way thought to give utterance to; some curious, warped notion... But it makes it the more dreadful that such thoughts should be ready, spontaneous; that expressing them has become a perfectly natural process; that her words, acts even, have almost lost their proper significance for her, and seem beyond her control.¹

Ellean, Aubrey's daughter by his first marriage, is similarly defined. Her uncompromisingly unwordly, unemotional religiosity, which, socially if not morally, renders her unfit for normal society life, results from a hereditary determinant from her frigid Roman Catholic mother and from the experience of her upbringing in an Irish convent.

¹PSP I, 107.

It is in the subsequent treatment of these characters that it becomes apparent that certain ethical assumptions possibly enter into the naturalistic principles of definition. Ellean, under the guidance of the kindly and sociable Mrs Cortelyon, is whisked off to Paris where she is able to cast off her conditioning and learn to live and love in accordance with the accepted modes of behaviour of her social peers. Paula has initially had an upbringing and background resulting in an innocence as pure as Ellean's; Aubrey tells her:

I know what you were at Ellean's age. I'll tell you. You hadn't a thought that wasn't a wholesome one, you hadn't an impulse that didn't tend towards good, you never harboured a notion you couldn't have gossiped about to a parcel of children.¹

But once she has deviated from the code which governs sexual relationships for women, her slip is irrevocable. Unlike Ellean, who is able to escape her determinants because of a new environment, Paula, even under the 'refining influence' of the 'intensely respectable surroundings' of Aubrey's home, is beyond redemption.²

At this point the naturalistic conception of character and the ethical assumptions lie in an uneasy, ambiguous relationship. It is only after Ellean's return from Paris that it becomes quite clear that the major principle of organisation is an endorsement of the dominant code of morality and is therefore ethical. The naturalism of the earlier part of the play counts for nothing and the suggestion that the difference between the treatment of Ellean and the treatment of Paula is an ethical distortion of the concepts of naturalism is hard to escape. When Ellean returns from Paris, she is accompanied by Ardale with whom she has formed an attachment which will probably lead to marriage. In the first act, before Paula marries Aubrey, she hands him a letter containing details of her

¹PSP I, 142.

²PSP I, 123.

previous liaisons; Aubrey, as a gesture of generosity, burns the letter without reading it. Ardale's name was mentioned in the letter. Paula's all embracing cry expressing the ineluctable effects and influence of the past - 'I believe the future is only the past again, entered through another gate' - is provoked not by the inevitability of naturalistic determination but by Pinero's engineering of a coincidental meeting between Ardale and Ellean in Paris.¹ The effect created is not that of a mysterious intersection of chance and fate where arbitrary, apparently freely taken decisions appear to be predetermined, but of clumsy, heavy-handed plot manipulation.

This contrivance in the plot is determined by the techniques of the well-made play, the principles of which inform the construction of the society drama. The aesthetic of the well-made play is inescapably interrelated with the endorsement of the dominant ideology. The response of Clayton Hamilton, Pinero's editor, to the burning of Paula's letter and the introduction of Ardale is conditioned by his expectations of the theatricality of the technique of the well-made play:

We feel instinctively that the ghost of some experience recorded in that letter will rise up subsequently to curse both Paula and himself. This feeling is so emphatic that it afflicts us almost with the force of that nemesis which was customarily foreshadowed by the tragic dramatists of ancient Greece.²

But his statement is more significant in that it indicates a congruity between the events of Pinero's play and the expectations of the dominant morality, so that what appears to us as clumsy engineering seemed to him to be the inevitable workings of a universal justice. The techniques of the well-made play do not merely create the pleasure of witnessing clever and effective construction. The technique - the neatness of loose ends tied up, the complications of the action of

¹PSP I, 190

²PSP I, 42.

chance and coincidence - invariably leads in the resolution of the plays to a satisfying and edifying conclusion compatible with the edicts of the dominant ideology. The experience that the society drama mediates is that there is a neatness in the governing universe of the world depicted correspondent to the neatness of the construction. The construction and the ideology walk hand in hand towards an inevitable, preordained end. The plays are so organised that transgression against the dominant code will out and those who, according to that code, deserve stricture will be dealt with accordingly. The moral universe which controls the tricks and turns of fate in the society drama is a benign one which smiles down upon and provides ultimate endorsement of the social and moral conventions of the Edwardian middle classes.

The technique of the well-made play establishes a certain situation at the start of the plays which constitutes a knotty social and moral problem; for example, in The Second Mrs Tanqueray - can a marriage between a demi-mondaine and a respectable gentleman, which will result in their ostracism from polite society, work?; or in The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith - can a woman of socialist and feminist ideals successfully keep house with a weak-willed and egotistic man already married in the face of pressure from his influential family?; or in The Case of Rebellious Susan - how can a woman repay her husband's adultery in its own kind and still retain her position in polite society? The problems thus established are then invariably resolved in the way I have suggested.

V

A central figure in controlling the action which brings about the resolution of endorsement is the *raisonneur*, a common figure

in the society drama and of great importance in the actor managers' theatre as it was frequently, although not always, the actor manager who played this part. Cayley Drummle, the raisonneur of The Second Mrs Tanqueray, is a commentator on the action. He speaks with the voice of oracular certitude and his assumptions about the nature of things are fully borne out by the action of the play. Elsewhere the raisonneurs, for example Hilary Jesson in His House in Order and Sir Christopher Deering and Sir Richard Kato in Jones's The Liars and The Case of Rebellious Susan respectively, are more active in bringing about the desired resolution in that their commentary constitutes conventional advice which, when acted upon, prevents certain characters from deviating from the requisite codes of behaviour. Sir Daniel Carteret in Jones's Mrs Dane's Defence is actively manipulative of events; his cross examination with its accidental and coincidental discovery of information in a topographical dictionary provides him with evidence of Mrs Dane's dubious past which necessitates her ostracism from polite society. The active role he plays in proving the truth that transgressions will out by apparent coincidence suggests he is the earthly surrogate of the benign universe which enforces the social and moral code of the Edwardian middle classes.

Such roles were important for the actor managers in that they could reinforce on stage the social image they created for themselves as managers of their theatres. The figure of the raisonneur is also important for creating a tone which is common in Jones's comedies of high society life. The raisonneur can take up a fashionably poised, cynical, worldly-wise attitude towards life based on their knowledge of society's codes of behaviour. Such codes they claim to accept pragmatically rather than present as an ideal. Sir Christopher Deering's advice to Edward Falkner and the already married Lady Jessica, who are contemplating decamping together, is typical of the tone:

Now! I've nothing to say in the abstract against running away with another man's wife! There may be planets where it is not only the highest ideal morality, but where it has the further advantage of being a practical way of carrying on society. But it has one fatal defect in our country - it won't work! You know what we English are, Ned. We're not a bit better than our neighbours, but, thank God! we do pretend we are, and we do make it hot for anybody who disturbs that holy pretence. And take my word for it, my dear Lady Jessica, my dear Ned, it won't work. You know it's not an original experiment you're making. It has been tried before. Have you ever known it to be successful?¹

Deering continues for another two pages enumerating those who have tried the experiment of contravening society's regulations concerning relations between the sexes and describing the horrific consequences of the resulting ostracism from society. Any tendency to satire or irony in what appears to be a serious defence of a hypocritical facade upon which society's code of morality depends is negated by the overriding endorsement of Deering's values which the play as a whole demonstrates. The cynicism is not destructive; it is the measure of what the playwrights and actor managers knew the audience would smile at knowingly without its conventional assumptions being seriously disturbed. The reaction of Florence Teignmouth Shore, the biographer of Sir Charles Wyndham, who played the *raisonneur* figure in Jones's major comedies, is undoubtedly typical:

He has all the time such a twinkle in his eyes, such humorous curves around his lips, and there is so much savoir faire and experience at the back of his twinkle, so much belief in and regard for human nature in the smile... In depicting the cultured man of the world, too well bred to show any violent emotion, and with a surface veneer of cynicism, Charles Wyndham has no equal. He is suave, persuasive, tender by turns; he has all the good qualities of the English gentleman on the stage.²

The attitude struck by the *raisonneurs* also had an additional advantage in that they could propound and actually be instrumental in enforcing conventional attitudes and morality without appearing to moralise. Sir Daniel Carteret, the *raisonneur* of Mrs Dane's Defence,

¹JRP III, 172.

²Florence Teignmouth Shore, Sir Charles Wyndham, p. 39.

is presented as an admirable and likeable character, whilst the scandal mongering Mrs Bulson-Porter is treated with justified contempt. But Sir Daniel's apparently more genial methods result in precisely the end Mrs Bulson-Porter was working towards - the maintenance of certain social codes which demand the absolute ostracism of Mrs Dane from polite society. The figure of the *raisonneur* is absolutely central to the organising principle of the society drama.

Characters such as Jones's Lady Susan Harabin (The Case of Rebellious Susan) and Lady Jessica Nepean (The Liars), who eventually act in accordance with the *raisonneur*'s advice, are not impossible manifestations of a certain culture and certain ways of thinking. Their ultimate refusal to rebel may not necessarily constitute a lack of courage on Jones's part but may be a reasonable assumption about how Edwardian ladies of that social class will behave. But the society drama is not just expressive of the ideology which is immanent in the *raisonneur*'s advice, the persistence of the active endorsement of that ideology makes the plays instrumental in enforcing the ideology by showing how people should behave. As early as 1932 Martin Ellehaug correctly analysed the position:

The pretended objectivity of the author is, however, an illusion. He is unable to suppress his desire of lecturing. When without comment he paints graphically the catastrophic effects [sic] of social rebellion, his pictures embody the advice not to rebel, and the cause of society is further pleaded so eloquently that the author commits himself to it.¹

There is an invariable tendency to hypocrisy in the treatment of women, not least of all of course because of the playwright's endorsement of the double standard of morality, but also because of the element of sympathy which is frequently created for the figure of the woman with a past such as Mrs Dane. No matter how sympathetically such women are presented, the plays are so organised as to convey a

¹Martin Ellehaug, 'The Initial Stages in the Development of the English Problem Play', p. 395.

sense of relief and satisfaction that a threat to the dominant ideology has been annulled by the woman's necessary ostracism. In these plays society is defined as much as by those who are excluded as by those who are approbated.

The society's drama's persistent concern with relationships between the sexes to establish a problem which is then solved indicates the particular suitability of that area of subject matter for its enforcing of a certain ideology. Deviance from the code governing relations between the sexes could more easily be depicted and explained as isolated romantic or sentimental aberrations in certain individuals rather than as a suggestion that there is anything fundamentally wrong with the code or with the sacrosanct institution of marriage, or that the code and the institution may actually be a contributory factor in the cause of the deviance. It can all be explained in terms of the old Adam in all of us rather than in social, political or economic terms.

The persistence endorsement of the dominant code of sexual relations resulted in a feature here described by Bernard Shaw:

What is the usual formula for such plays? A woman has, on some past occasion, been brought into conflict with the law which regulates the relations of the sexes. A man, by falling in love with her, or marrying her, is brought into conflict with the social convention which discourages the woman. Now the conflicts of individuals with law and convention can be dramatized like all other human conflicts; but they are purely judicial; and the fact that we are much more curious about the suppressed relations between the man and the woman than about the relations between both and our courts of law and private juries of matrons, produces that sensation of evasion, of dissatisfaction, of fundamental irrelevance, of shallowness, of useless disagreeableness, of total failure to edify and partial failure to interest, which is as familiar to you in the theatres as it was to me when I, too, frequented those uncomfortable buildings.¹

The reluctance on the dramatists' part to investigate deeply the relationship between the man and the woman is necessary if the major

¹S X, xi-xii.

organisational principle is eventually the endorsement of 'the law which regulates the relationship of the sexes'. The reluctance also has an ideological foundation in that a deep and thorough investigation of the relationship between the man and the woman would cause a shift in dramatic emphasis which might easily suggest that the relationship had a validity and seriousness which would question or criticise the codes of behaviour which the dramatists wish to endorse.

VI

Although Pinero and Jones continued to write effective society drama into the new century, and indeed Jones had one of his biggest successes with The Lie in 1915, the things they had to say became increasingly to seem old-fashioned and possibly obsolete. The intellectual running was with the new minority dramatists, Shaw, Galsworthy, Granville Barker. Pinero's own play Mid-Channel in 1909 was an intimation of the knell which, with the advent of the First World War, was to toll for the society drama as a whole. Peter Mottram, the *raisonneur*, significantly has lost credibility **as an authoritative** commentator on or as an effective controller of human affairs. As the War was later to prove, it was becoming difficult to believe in a universe which benignly directed the affairs of Edwardian England.

3. John Galsworthy

I

By 1906, when Galsworthy wrote his first play The Silver Box, much pioneering work had been done in the cause of the minority theatre, and the concept of such a theatre and of the nature of its drama was already established. On the instigation of Edward Garnett, the play was written specifically for performance at the Court Theatre where the Vedrenne Barker seasons were in their third year. Galsworthy claimed in a letter of 1913,

I think I may say (without exaggeration) that I came into theatre-land quite free from the influence of any dramatists or any kind of stage writing.¹

This claim is, however, something of an exaggeration. Galsworthy was consciously writing for a theatre which expected certain things from the realistic drama of modern life it presented and a theatre which was consciously conceived as providing an alternative to the standards of the commercial theatre.² In general terms Galsworthy's drama demonstrates features typical of the minority theatre for which it was written, notably in his avoidance of the complications of plot and the workings of fortuitous chance and coincidence, which brings about a satisfactory and comforting resolution, and in his shift away from the upper middle-classes as being the only legitimate material for the serious drama of modern life. In the latter Galsworthy is perhaps typical not only of the minority theatre but of a more general movement in Edwardian literature. Richard Ellman comments that 'the Edwardians vied with each other in finding more and more commonplace life to write about, and in giving the impression of writing about it in more and more common speech'.³

¹H.V. Marrot, The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy, p. 714.

²Further doubt is cast on this remark by Gary J. Scrimgeour. See 'Naturalist Drama and Galsworthy', pp. 66-7.

³Richard Ellman, 'Two Faces of Edward', p. 197.

It was this element in Galsworthy's work which certain critics and commentators saw as his most remarkable achievement and his major innovation. Of the minority dramatists it was Galsworthy in particular who was thought to present common life seriously and accurately. Ashley Dukes, writing in 1911, asserted:

Mr. Galsworthy has reaffirmed the existence of the common man; an individual long ignored upon the English stage. The West End society drama had no place for him. The man in the drawing-room is not upon speaking terms with the man in the street. Epigrammatic comedy gave him no part, for the common man does not deal in epigrams. The music halls burlesqued him, figuring him only with a battered silk hat, a red nose and a pair of parti-coloured trousers. Even melodrama failed to represent him fairly, for the common man is not addicted to crime.¹

Duke's analysis of the position of the common man in the drama is accurate; his social class and his speech, if accurately delineated, excluded him from much drama, and in the drama in which he did appear he was defined by factors determined by theatrical habit. Writing in a similar vein, P.P. Howe, in 1913, found in Galsworthy's work not just the faithful delineation of a certain sort of character on the stage but a new sort of drama, a drama created out of what amounts to a documentary representation of the lives of the poor:

To a public of playgoers familiarised to tedium with the exhibition of their own drawing-rooms (or drawing-rooms just a little more splendid than they could ever hope to enjoy), Mr. Galsworthy communicated his discoveries as to "how the poor live"; and with this difference, that whereas the drawing-rooms of the rich had not in themselves been held to be sufficient warrant to set the machinery of the theatre in motion, Mr. Galsworthy's drama needed no other motive to come into being than its skilful and sympathetic observation of the houses of the poor. These things are so, it said; you cannot therefore but be the better for knowing about them.²

Howe's comment that the drawing-rooms of society drama form a passive background in front of which the action is played is sound. His implication is that, in contrast, Galsworthy's observation of the houses of the poor constitutes not just a stage set but an active

¹Ashley Dukes, *Modern Dramatists*, pp. 141-2

²P.P. Howe, 'Mr. Galsworthy as Dramatist', pp. 740-1.

setting which informs the play, its characters, and its situations with meaning. In effect Howe suggests that the ordering principle of Galsworthy's depiction of common life is a naturalism dependent upon the workings of environmental determinants, and upon a definition arising from working-class ways of living. However, Dukes's statement requires considerable qualification, and Howe's is misleading if not erroneous.

Galsworthy's vision of his own work and method partially supports Howe's contentions. He himself stressed the importance of the immediate setting. He claimed to have, when he wrote, 'always in my mind's eye not the stage, but the room or space where in real life the action would pass'.¹ His adherence to the concept of the 'fourth wall' in drama echoes the suggestion that his drama was motivated by a documentary impulse:

With plays... it is only a question of the 'fourth wall'; if you have a subject of sufficient dramatic interest, and visualize it powerfully enough, perfectly naturally, as if you were the fourth wall, you will be able to present it to others in the form of a good play.²

The fourth wall image is highly unsatisfactory as an explanation of the method of realistic drama in its suggestion that drama is created from an unmediated eavesdropping on unordered experience, although it may well be the intention of realistic drama to create that impression.

Galsworthy elsewhere qualifies this idea; the aim of the dramatist is

to set before the public no cut-and-dried codes, but the phenomena of life and character, selected and combined, but not distorted, by the dramatist's outlook, set down without fear, favour, or prejudice, leaving the public to draw such poor moral as nature may afford.³

He maintained an aversion to the playwright having a palpable intent upon the audience and to the playwright being instrumental in supporting discernible social and moral codes. The method, he argued, 'requires a

¹H.V.Marrot, The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy, p. 714.

²H.V.Marrot, The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy, p. 565.

³GI 190.

certain detachment; it requires a sympathy with, a love of, and a curiosity as to, things for their own sake; it requires a far view, together with patient industry, for no immediately practical result'.¹ The dramatist, Galsworthy recognises, must choose and select and order his material, but he should also remain impartial. In support of this impartiality he uses a familiar concept of naturalist theory:

In the whole range of the social fabric there are only two impartial persons, the scientist and the artist.²

Despite Galsworthy's claim to the contrary, his outlook is frequently apparent, and his plays are so organised as to be instrumental in demonstrating the workings of a certain ideology. Galsworthy makes a crucial qualification to his own method of environmental naturalism - 'the interplay of circumstance on temperament, and temperament on circumstance', for the naturalism must exist 'within the enclosing atmosphere of an idea'.³ It is the 'idea', the cohesive ideology, which controls and informs the drama.

Galsworthy elsewhere explained further his concept of the naturalism he utilised in his drama:

To deal austerely and naturalistically with the life of one's day is to find the human being so involved in environment that he cannot be disassociated... [My characters] are part of the warp and woof of a complicated society, in which the individual is so netted-in by encircling fates as ever were the creations of the Greek dramatists.⁴

This is an important and significant modification to the concept of an environmental naturalism dependent on the immediate setting ('the observation of the houses of the poor', 'the room or space where in real life the action would pass'), for it becomes clear that the major determinant is the workings of society in a more abstract sense

¹GI 190

²GI 193

³GI 193; see also H.V. Marrot, The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy, p. 714.

⁴The Works of John Galsworthy, XVIII, xii-xiii.

which orders the action of the play and replaces a supernatural fate which he saw as an ordering principle in the Greek drama. The concept that men and women are determined by 'the warp and woof of a complicated society' is perfectly acceptable, but it is the element of abstraction which is crucial. The 'idea' which controls and informs Galsworthy's drama is in fact his preconceived understanding, the understanding of a reforming liberal, of how Edwardian society works. This is the implication of Galsworthy's phrase 'a spire of meaning':

A drama must be shaped so as to have a spire of meaning. Every grouping of life and character has its inherent moral; and the business of the dramatist is to pose the group as to bring that moral poignantly to the light of day.¹

The expounding of the 'spire of meaning' is the motivation and organising principle in Galsworthy's drama not, I would contend, the documentary intention, the communication of discoveries 'as to how the poor live'.

Despite shifts in the social class of major characters and of some of the settings in Galsworthy's plays, which provoked the comments by Dukes and Howe, R.H.Coats's analysis of Galsworthy's settings and characters is a corrective to their enthusiasm:

Twenty-two scenes in all, we find, are laid in better-class residences and country houses; eighteen in what may be designated middle-class homes; six in poor dwellings, streets, and open places. Seven times we are taken to the studios of artists or the rooms of men of letters, six times to offices or board-rooms, and twice to clubs or restaurants. It is noticeable that the curtain rises no fewer than eight times on law-courts, solicitors' offices, and the like. Four times we find ourselves within prison walls. On the other hand, for five of the scenes in one play we are transported to Central Africa, while the entire action of yet another takes place in Devonshire. [My italics]

Coats's classification of the characters in Galsworthy's plays is slightly confused, but from his analysis of over one hundred and ninety-eight characters, there are only twenty of what he calls 'working people and their leaders'; 'rotters', foreigners, and convicts are of indeterminate social class in his analysis and may well be working

¹GI 189.

people if they were classified differently. What is of particular significance for the social settings of Galsworthy's drama is that there appear over thirty men servants and maid servants.¹ Such characters may well properly belong to the working-classes, but they are rarely allowed any other function than that of authenticating the presentation of higher social classes who employ them and in whom the central interest of the drama resides.

Of the plays which are of immediate concern, those which could have given rise to Howe's comments in 1913, three of them, Joy, The Eldest Son, and The Fugitive, deal with situations and themes well trodden in the society drama.² None of them presents scenes in working-class settings, and only one of them presents working-class people in important roles.

II

The depiction, in Joy, of a way of life dependent on the dividends of conservative investment and of a morally irregular liaison between Mrs Gwynn, estranged from her husband, and Maurice Lever, the interloper, places it firmly in the sort of area treated by Jones and Pinero. However, Galsworthy's treatment of the material mediates a very different experience from the experience of the society drama. The dividends upon which Colonel and Mrs Hope depend are pitifully small, a cause of constant irritation, and a strong or contrived plot which would normally produce the satisfaction of a conventionally moral resolution is deliberately avoided. The play mainly consists of the creation of a pervasive twilight atmosphere of enervation and decrepitude, of a country house society left behind by an economic order it does not understand and by a sexual morality of which it disapproves but can do nothing about. Apart from the

¹R.H.Coats, John Galsworthy as Dramatic Artist, pp. 43-5.

²The nature of Galsworthy's plays The Little Dream (1911) and The Pigeon (1912), the one a fantasy and the other a satiric comedy, renders them inappropriate for this study.

attendance of the customary maid and the optional superannuated nanny, anything specifically connected with the working class is non-existent.

The Fugitive, with its ingredients of a wife's coldness towards and boredom with a prosaic husband and the presence of an interloper who compromises the wife's virtue and reputation, is in very much the same vein as Jones's The Liars and The Case of Rebellious Susan; in its tone it is similar to Pinero's Mid-Channel which predated it by four years. The play charts the progress of Clare, the fugitive of the title, from marital respectability to shop girl, to kept mistress, to the verge of prostitution. The play was considered by one critic, Harold Williams, to be a version of A Doll's House, and a 'version more credible and realistic than the original'.¹ In a sense The Fugitive takes up where Ibsen left off, and shows what happens to a Nora after she slams the door and walks out. No doubt the play could be considered more 'credible and realistic' because it shows the result of such an action as leading to the gutter, 'the natural end of idleness and selfishness' as the actor manager Gerald du Maurier put it when considering staging the play.² Unlike the society drama, which was instrumental in endorsing an economic and social system which placed a woman such as Clare in an impossible situation, Galsworthy's play is a criticism of that system which makes her fit for nothing but to be the wife of a wealthy man. Galsworthy's criticism and his depiction of how he understands the system to work in its determination of Clare's descent, 'the warp and woof of a complicated society', form the 'spire of meaning', the organising principle which defines the drama.

Despite the proximity of the situation to Jones's work and despite the fact that Clare escapes the last ignominy of prostitution by taking poison (thus conforming to the expectations of society drama established twenty years earlier in Pinero's The Second Mrs Tanqueray), there is a

¹Harold Williams, Modern English Writers, p. 257.

²H.V. Marrot, The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy, p. 371

bitterness in Galsworthy's treatment which made the play unpalatable to the regular commercial theatre. This can be detected in Galsworthy's treatment of the institution of marriage not as fraught but sacrosanct, as in the society drama, but as a business arrangement where sex is a token of barter. Not least of all, the play was unacceptable to the actor managers' theatre because the character of Malise, which part was offered to Gerald du Maurier, was considered by him to be 'unbearable, a carper, a sneerer, and a bore'.¹

It is characteristic of Galsworthy's tendency to muted sensationalism that, of the stages on Clare's path, we actually see her in the role of kept mistress and incipient prostitute, but her time as shop girl, her only respectable working-class activity, and its effects on her are merely reported. It is also symptomatic of Galsworthy's failure to create effective drama from everyday, commonplace working-class ways of living. Clare's description of her experience would provide sufficient material for one act of the drama:

Lots of the girls are really nice. But somehow they don't want me, can't help thinking I've got airs or something; and in here (She touches her breast) I don't want them!... It's working under people; it's having to do it, being driven. I have tried, I've not been altogether a coward, really! But every morning getting there the same time; every day the same stale "dinner", as they call it; every evening the same "Good evening, Miss Clare," "Good evening, Miss Simpson," "Good evening, Hart." "Good evening, Miss Clare." And the same walk home, or the same bus; and the same men that you mustn't look at, for fear they'll follow you.²

But it seems that Galsworthy was unable to apprehend imaginatively the dramatic possibilities sufficiently to show such material actually on the stage. Such material, the repetitiveness of ordinary working-class existence ('the same stale "dinner"', etc.) was incapable of satisfying Galsworthy's tenet that the artist's 'primary object [is] stirring the emotional nerves... of his audience, and thereby directly, actively giving pleasure' in a way that the dramatic possibilities of

¹H.V. Marrot, The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy, p. 371.

²GP 308-9.

the experience of being a kept mistress or a prostitute are capable of satisfying that end.¹ The Fugitive suggests that material for legitimate drama is not to be found in the everyday existence of a shop girl.

The Eldest Son, despite its country house setting, does present working-class characters who are central to the drama and who are effective in the drama in that their actions determine the outcome of the play. Galsworthy's treatment of these characters and the roles they are allowed to play raises issues surrounding Galsworthy's treatment of working-class characters as a whole. The action of the play is concerned with the fact that Freda, Lady Cheshire's maid, is pregnant after an entanglement with Bill, the eldest son of the Cheshire family. A parallel case is presented; Dunning, an underkeeper to Sir William Cheshire, has put a village girl, Rose in the same predicament. The parallelism, thus established, creates the main interest of the play by demonstrating the discrepancy between Sir William's treatment of his son, the heir to his title, and his treatment of his employee, Dunning. Bill is forbidden from marrying Freda; Dunning must marry Rose or lose his job. Galsworthy uses this technique of parallelism, as he does in other plays, to expose upper middle-class hypocrisy. This is the emphatic purpose behind the play, the 'spire of meaning'.

Despite the centrality of working-class characters to the plot, the emphasis of the play determines their function in the drama and the sense we have of them being working-class people moulded by their own culture and ways of living. Dunning and Rose have no existence apart from being mere devices in the constructional principle of the play. They are a means to Galsworthy's end of demonstrating his understanding of the nature of class relationships in Edwardian society.

¹H.V. Marrot, The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy, p. 193. See also Galsworthy's claim that 'My theory (founded on personal experience) [is] that the physical emotional thrill is all that really counts in a play' (John Galsworthy, Letters from John Galsworthy 1900-1932, p. 114).

Through the marriage which is forced upon Rose and Dunning, The Eldest Son suggests in a general way how the lives of the working class are controlled and manipulated by their employers and the upper ranks of society. But in making this point Galsworthy is not concerned to demonstrate with precision the immediate effects of this control on the lives of the working class as such: rather the emphasis of the events illustrates certain things about Sir William's concept of social control in maintaining a conventionally moral status quo.

The drama of the play is created from an examination of attitudes and prejudices of the dominant class, not from a close depiction of working-class life. With the exception of Rose, who only has eight short speeches in the play in any case, all the working-class characters are either servants or employees of Sir William. As the setting, the country house itself, does not allow them to be seen in their own environment they only exist on the stage as appendages of the culture of the upper middle class. The very nature of their employment as servants in the houses of the wealthy necessitates that their action and speech should not clash with the way of life and speech of their employers. Although this does illustrate one part of the reality of their lives, it eliminates the depiction of a culture which is identifiably their own and separate from the roles which they perform when they are actually on duty as it were.

It is important in the presentation of working-class characters on stage that there should be a sense of them as people who actually work and all that that implies as a decisive determining influence in their lives and as a defining element in the drama. The problem with dramatising a house servant such as Freda is that her work role deliberately irons out any signs of specifically working-class traits. Her passivity and the suppression of any such traits is a function of her work. Thus Freda's speech is undifferentiated from that of Bill or

the other inhabitants of the house. But there is also an implication that Galsworthy could only conceive of her as being worthy or capable of a romantic liaison with Bill to the extent to which she demonstrates middle-class traits, in, for example, her use of the language of the dominant class. However, Freda is in an ambivalent position, being at one and the same time Lady Cheshire's maid and carrying the heir to the Cheshire title. Galsworthy does create some of the drama from the disparity between the role she is forced to play as a maid and what she actually thinks or feels as Bill's lover. There is a tension in the fact that unwittingly Sir William, casual and almost offhand, asks the mother-to-be of his grandchild to fasten his glove for him. But it is also characteristic of Galsworthy's technique that he feels it necessary to overstress the point. He feels the need to make one of the characters draw attention to the significance of the point when she learns the truth of the situation:

DOT. (Suddenly to herself) Ha! When Father went up to have his glove buttoned!¹

It indicates that Galsworthy, unlike Lawrence, could not conceive of a method of drama where an apparently insignificant everyday detail, particularly a detail expressing working-class existence, was capable of carrying dramatic meaning or being dramatically effective without overt pointing.

Studdenham, Freda's father, the head keeper, is the only forceful working-class character, the only one who is decisive in affecting the action of the play. The sense we have of him being someone who actually works as a game keeper is only superficially created, his employment is not worked into the fabric of the play as a principle of definition. The only point where his action, as opposed to passing references to his game book or his litter of spaniel puppies, indicates his employment is a gesture at a moment of tension towards the end of the play; he

¹GP 185.

moves 'his hands as if wringing the neck of a bird', which action, in the instance, gives the impression of the exaggerated gesture of melodrama rather than the natural action of a game keeper.¹ The other references merely act as authenticating devices, restressing for the audience's benefit the fact that he is a gamekeeper.

His forcefulness, his refusal to bow down before his employers, exhibited when he flings the offer of a loveless charity marriage back in their faces, is a pre-established character trait. There is little or no attempt on Galsworthy's part to examine the basis of his character or the foundations of his attitudes, as there is with Bill and his father for instance. The causes and motives of their ways of thinking are sufficiently interesting and important to warrant dramatic presentation. Ultimately Studdenham's forcefulness is merely a device in the drama. It highlights the hypocrisy of the country house set, and it conveniently resolves the problem of the relationship between Bill and Freda in a way which would not have been unsatisfactory to the society drama. Freda conveniently disappears, the Cheshire blood and the established status quo are unthreatened by miscegenation with the lower orders, and Bill goes admonished but unpunished.

III

The subordination of the working-class characters to Galsworthy's primary purpose in The Eldest Son - the examination of upper middle-class attitudes and prejudices - relegates them to a level of secondary importance. The central focus is still on the dominant class which alone was considered capable of dramatic significance worthy of the serious drama of modern life by the commercial dramatists. The plays which more obviously inspired the comments by Dukes and Howe, The Silver Box, Strife, and Justice, do attempt to present working-class life more

¹GP 197. Again Galsworthy feels obliged to make one of the characters draw the audience's attention to it.

fully and to create the drama itself from the representation of that life in its own environment, but the presentation is nevertheless marked by the features noted in The Eldest Son.

Despite P.P. Howe's assertion that a primary purpose in Galsworthy's drama was to communicate 'his discoveries as to "how the poor live"', there are only two scenes from The Silver Box, Strife and Justice which are actually set in working-class homes. One short scene of The Silver Box presents the action in the home of the Joneses, an unemployed workman and his wife, a char. Stage directions describing the room are minimal, 'The bare room, with tattered oil cloth and damp, distempered walls, has an air of untidy wretchedness'.¹ Galsworthy gives the barest outline of a stage set which reflects the poverty and wretchedness of an unemployed workman's home. The contrast here with the stage directions describing the miner's home in A Collier's Friday Night, for example, which are extremely precise and minute, is at once apparent and indicates a different concept in the two dramatists of how effective drama is to be created from working-class life. This difference in concept is also indicated by Galsworthy's use of everyday domestic activity in the Jones home. The only precise notation occurs at the beginning of the scene after Mrs Jones has entered:

She puts her parcel down, unwraps an apron, half a loaf, two onions, three potatoes, and a tiny piece of bacon. Taking a teapot from the cupboard, she rinses it, shakes into it some powdered tea out of a screw of paper, puts it on the hearth.²

There is some precision here. The details of the food, the enumeration of the exact number of vegetables, the half loaf, the size of the piece of bacon, the fact that it is powdered tea, all of which we can presume she has just bought with the money she has available, signify the condition of her life determined by her economic position. But, within the construction of the scene, this is a piece of stage business before

¹GP 20.

²GP 20.

the dialogue begins, and is followed up by imprecise directions such as 'Mrs. Jones goes on again with the preparation of the meal'.¹ Despite the vagueness of Galsworthy's directions, his plays when staged were praised for the accurate realism of their staging and setting. He was able to rely on those concerned with staging his plays to create his vision without his precise notation.² However, this support was not available to Galsworthy in the published editions of the plays. When there was a tradition established by Shaw, of lengthy and elaborate stage directions of description and analysis in published Edwardian plays Galsworthy's omission is significant. It indicates that his literary intention was not to create a principle of definition for his working-class characters or to create the drama from a close and accurate delin^aation of their immediate environment and habitual activity.

There is little active interrelation between the characters and the setting. The dramatic significance of such details as are provided by Galsworthy is not supported by the dialogue or action, so such details remain fundamentally at the level of an authenticating technique and are not worked into the fabric of the play. The limited role that these details serve in the drama of the scene means that there is little inherent dramatic necessity that it should be set in the Jones home; it could just have effectively been set in the street. The main function of the scene in the play as a whole lies not in any documentary intention of its setting but in the sensational entry of the plain clothes detective, Snow, and the arrest of Mr and Mrs Jones which serves to advance the action of the play.

¹GP 22.

²There is evidence that Harley Granville Barker, director of Justice, created, or at least heightened, some of the drama in the trial scene by incorporating elaborate details not notated by Galsworthy. See St. John Ervine, Bernard Shaw, pp. 343-4, and P.O. Howe, The Repertory Theatre, pp. 189-90.

The only other scene set in a working-class home, the Roberts home in Strife, is again established as a stage set not as an active setting:

In the kitchen of ROBERTS' cottage a meagre little fire is burning. The room is clean and tidy, very barely furnished, with a brick floor and white-washed walls, much stained with smoke. There is a kettle on the fire... On the wooden table are a cup and saucer, a teapot, knife, and a plate of bread and cheese.¹

Virtually no details of everyday working-class life, habitual household tasks for instance, are introduced to be incorporated into the drama of the play. There is no attempt on Galsworthy's part to create the experience of working-class life by reference to that sort of activity, nor is such activity used within the drama to define characters and situations as there is in A Collier's Friday Night and The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd.

Galsworthy does attempt to provide some element of definition in this scene by tentatively establishing a sense of a working-class community and of industrial history in the chatter of the workers' wives at the beginning of the scene. But there is an expository formality, a staticness, in the connections between the women's speeches. But the sense of exposition does not inhere so much in the quality of the women's speeches but in the position of the speeches in the construction of the individual scene and of the play as a whole. The industrial conflict, which is the meat of the play, is not ultimately defined or explained by the strength of feeling which the women express about the industrial conditions or the quality of their lives, but by the refusal to compromise by the two leaders in the dispute. This mediation of working-class experience is of little functional importance. Within the construction of the scene itself, the women's talk serves as a prelude to the entry of the manager's wife, Enid Underwood.

¹GP 119.

It is in Enid Underwood's confrontation with Mr and Mrs Roberts that the primary dramatic significance of the scene lies. The central dramatic focus is on the exposure of the limited understanding and liberalism of her middle-class attitudes not on the details of working-class culture and ways of living. Such details are of secondary importance and merely authenticate the setting before the real interest of the scene becomes apparent. Again the implication is that legitimate drama resides in an examination of the ideology of the dominant class. Similarly the interest in other scenes where working-class characters appear often lies in the confrontation between the workers and members of higher social classes.

The necessity of the setting of the scene in the Roberts's home is largely determined by the constructional parallelism of the play. A deputation of the workers visits the shareholders in the manager's home; a visitation from the masters, in the form of Enid Underwood, visits the workers in one of their houses. The active dramatic function of the setting is the creation of an ironic contrast between the huge fire and luxury of the manager's house and the depiction of Mrs Roberts perishing from undernourishment and down to her last coals. Galsworthy may have achieved a 'skilful and sympathetic observation of the houses of the poor', but it is not in itself 'sufficient to set the machinery of the theatre in motion' as Howe claimed. The dramatic justification resides only in the relation of that observation to middle-class ways of living.

The difference between the dramatic function of the setting of these scenes and the famous scene in the solitary confinement cell in Justice is at once apparent. The intention of the scene in Justice is to demonstrate actively the interaction between character and a precisely and accurately delineated environment. Consequently the setting itself assumes a much greater significance than in the working-class homes,

and the different intention is signified by the minute detail of the stage directions in the scene in Justice - from the exact dimensions of the cell to the fact that the novel which lies open is Lorua Doone. The attempt to create a total setting of active importance is similar to Lawrence's technique in the colliery plays. Action and gesture, the means by which the experience of characters inhabiting and using their immediate environment is mediated, are notated with far more precision than the vague directions in The Silver Box as is commensurate with their greater importance. Despite the sensationalism of the scene, it is one of the rare occasions when Galsworthy is able to make non-verbal expression contribute to the drama without becoming mawkishly sentimental. Galsworthy's failure to notate working-class life with similar accuracy and precision indicates a comparative lack of concern in making working-class settings function in the same way.

In Justice, Galsworthy provides the main character, Falder, with a working environment, a solicitors' office. But, as with the working-class home in The Silver Box, the working environment is recreated with superficial verisimilitude and its realism functions as no more than an authenticating device. The specific necessity for the solicitors' office as setting is merely that honesty is expected in its employees; in that respect the setting could as effectively have provided Falder with any employment that demands a similar honesty such as a bank clerk or even a shop assistant. The experience of a specific employment, in this case a junior clerk, as an active determining influence is not mediated nor used as part of the dramatic definition. Falder is not pushed to crime by reason of a condition or state of mind created by anything inherent in the nature or conditions of his employment, but by a theatrically more familiar morally irregular entanglement with a married woman. Falder is only incidentally a clerk. He is not a clerk in the sense that Charley Wilson in Elizabeth Baker's Chains is

a clerk, where his ways of thinking and living and the drama surrounding him are determined by his employment.

IV

Galsworthy handles admirably the speech of his upper middle-class characters, able to exploit the nuances of tone and vocabulary as the expression of a culture and habitual ways of thinking. This is especially effective when such nuances expose the limitations in understanding of certain characters as when the hollowness of Enid Underwood's sensitised paternalism is revealed in conversation with Mrs Roberts:

ENID. You all seem to think the shareholders are rich men, but they're not - most of them are really no better off than working men. (Mrs. Roberts smiles.) They have to keep up appearances.

MRS. ROBERTS. Yes, M'm?

ENID. You don't have to pay rates and taxes, and a hundred other things that they do. If the men didn't spend such a lot in drink and betting they'd be quite well off! ¹

Galsworthy's sureness in handling the speech of the upper classes, with which he was most familiar, is also evidenced in the differentiation between the speech of the mealy-mouthed Liberal, Barthwick, his unashamedly prejudiced and snobbish wife, and their witless, spendthrift son in The Silver Box.

Galsworthy is far less at ease with the dialogue of his working-class characters. He is unable to catch the nuances of tone or the slight differentiations within the register. Their speech is indicated as being different, when it is differentiated at all, from standard English by the most general of features, by small mistakes of grammar (double negatives, lack of agreement between subject and verb) and

¹GP 123.

obvious phonetic pointers (dropped aspirates, omission of the final letter 'g', and the omission of other consonants). Galsworthy's notation is generally of a sort of standard lower class stage accent and is rarely more specific than that. His lack of specificity in handling working-class speech is concomitant with his treatment of working-class life as a whole. But the differences in quality between the dialogue of the lower classes and the dialogue of the upper classes suggests that Galsworthy was unable to utilise the conventions of stage dialogue which give the impression of accurate and effective working-class speech. Galsworthy's lack of ability means that the working-class characters cannot be given an appropriate voice which would be an expression of a cultural network and a range of values specific to that class, and, more importantly, considering the way in which Galsworthy utilises working-class life in the drama, it also threatens at times the superficial verisimilitude itself of his working-class characters.

In the figure of Cokeson, the head clerk in Justice, Galsworthy evinces considerable incompetence, a surprising insensitivity to the way in which speech is affected by context and by the nature of a man's work. At the very beginning of the play, Cokeson's speech is undifferentiated from standard English. There are no objections here. The man holds a senior position in a lower middle-class profession and would quite possibly speak in that way. But the first time Galsworthy specifically notates phonetic deviations in the text is when Cokeson is addressing his employer, the head of the firm. In that situation it would be more likely that Cokeson's language would become more formal and more correct than normal rather than the reverse. Admittedly the phonetic shifts are very minor, but the fact that Galsworthy specifically indicates them demonstrates the insensitivity to which I referred. In the court scene, Cokeson almost becomes a comic figure.

He assumes an excessive confidentiality and familiarity with the judge, counsel, and jury; he exudes a palliness which seems to border on the verge of leering and winking at them. His behaviour is out of keeping with the formality of the occasion, an occasion for which he has no excuse for being unfamiliar. Remember, Cokeson is a senior clerk in a law firm, a post which the play suggests he could well have held for a considerable number of years. Galsworthy may well have been attempting to enliven a dull court scene with a dash of humour, but Cokeson's solecisms over specifically legal and formal terminology, with which he should be thoroughly familiar, are inexplicable in terms of the employment which Galsworthy has created for him in the play.

Coupled with a sense of **specificity** of work is a sense of **specificity** of places. The Silver Box and Justice are set in unspecified localities, but presumably take place in London. Strife, on the other hand, has a specific regional setting, the English Welsh border. But, through the language of the workers very little sense is mediated of either the specific work they do, tin plate manufacture, and only a tenuous sense mediated of the specific locality. Galsworthy occasionally throws in elements of Welsh intonation into the speech of the workers, but the stage directions describing the various workmen indicate a less specific sense of place: Thomas - 'a pure Welshman', Green - 'an Englishman'.¹ His notation of the Welshman's speech is to say the least bizarre:

It iss not Lonton; nor it iss not the Union - it iss Nature. It iss no disgrace whateffer to a potty to give in to Nature. For this Nature iss a fery pig thing; it is pigger than what a man is. There is more years to my hett than to the hett of any one here. It is fery pat, look you, this coing against Nature. It is pat to make other potties suffer, when there is nothing to pe cot py it... This Nature must pe humort. It is a man's pisiness to be pure, honest, just and merciful. That's what Chapel tells you. And, look you, David Roberts, Chapel tells you ye can do that without coing against Nature.²

¹GP 110 and 111.

²GP 132.

Notwithstanding Galsworthy's odd phonetic recreation of the local patterns of speech, there is little sense of the creation of the values and standards, the ways of thinking inherent to the working-class community. Questions raised by Thomas's speech - what is the relationship between nature and chapel? what is the cultural environment which has produced these opinions? - are not entered into by Galsworthy. It is not his intention to use such material from working-class life as a means of creating or defining the drama.

Galsworthy's unwillingness or inability to utilise details of working-class life or working-class culture as an active principle of definition through stage action has an immediate effect on the dialogue for such details have to be overtly voiced by the characters. This imparts to such speech the function of conscious explanatory exposition. When this occurs in the case of middle-class characters, as when the shareholders discuss the condition of the striking workers in Strife, the formality of the enunciation is not totally incongruous with their normal patterns of speech. And, in certain contexts, it is not inappropriate for working-class characters to speak in such a way. During the strike meetings in Strife, the fact that the workers are publicly making speeches justifies the declamatory effect; and it is not incongruous that Livens in the court scene in The Silver Box should explain the effects of unemployment in response to the magistrate's questions. However, Galsworthy maintains something of this explanatory, declamatory manner in scenes where a greater intimacy of tone is required. It is here that the verisimilitude tends to break down. The dialogue between Mr and Mrs Jones, when they are alone in their home, is strained and uncomfortable. Jones makes speeches about the effects of unemployment because Galsworthy does not mediate the experience of unemployment through action or indirectly through more natural sounding conversation between the characters. It is the very overtness which is out of key.

When I go seekin' for a job now, and see the brutes lookin' me up an' down, it's like a thousand serpents in me. I'm not arskin' for any treat. A man wants to sweat hisself silly and not allowed - that's a rum start, ain't it? A man wants to sweat his soul out to keep the breath in him and ain't allowed - that's justice - that's freedom and all the rest of it. (He turns his face towards the wall.) You're so milky mild; you don't know what goes on inside o' me. I'm done with the silly game.¹

Galsworthy is obviously not insensible of the problems yet he cannot articulate them convincingly within the context of an intimate working-class setting and the idiom that that requires. Jones expresses as best he can the position that Galsworthy understands him to be in rather than creates the impression that he is expressing his own understanding of his position. Galsworthy's is a failure in technique, a failure in finding an appropriate voice for the expression of working-class experience.

V

The nature of the role and treatment of working-class life in the Galsworthy drama emanates from two interrelated factors. The first is his inability to recreate and mediate the details of working-class life and culture, and thus his inability to utilise such details as organising principles in the drama. Galsworthy's attitude is very much that of the sympathetic but weekend visitor. The second is that the organising principle which is in operation, his creation of a 'spire of meaning', subordinates the treatment of working-class life so that the working-class characters are defined not in terms of their own culture but defined by relation to that 'spire of meaning'.

Justice indicts and demonstrates the workings of an inhuman and unrelenting mechanical judicial system. The play is an examination of the system of punishment and imprisonment and of the attitude of respectable citizens to convicts which crush Falder. In this respect

¹ GP 20.

the working environment and Falder himself seem to be created merely to provide a situation so that Galsworthy can prove the truth of his vision of a certain social system. Falder is a pawn, his function is that of an example. His entire existence is warranted, defined and determined by the tendency of Galsworthy's drama.

In The Silver Box, Galsworthy uses a similar method to the one he employed in The Eldest Son. The parallelism he establishes between identical petty crimes committed by the son of a wealthy Liberal M.P. and an unemployed workman proves that there is a world of difference in the legal process and courts of law in the treatment of the two. The rich man, by his general appearance of respectability and by hiring clever solicitors, in effect is able to buy his son off; Jones ends up with a month's hard labour. And again, as in The Eldest Son, the emphasis is on the attitudes and hypocrisy of the upper middle classes who engineer and countenance this dual standard.

The exactitude of the parallelism constitutes the use of a plot device which informs the play with a sense of form as neat, in its own way, as the ravelling and unravelling of the plot of the well-made play in the society drama. The thesis - that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor - which Galsworthy is able to prove by these means is not necessarily wrong. But there is a crudity in the presentation of the argument which threatens the credibility and verisimilitude which the convention of supposedly accurate observation creates.¹ Galsworthy's hand is clearly at work in the organising of the plays; the construction and the ideology, which is expressed through that construction, impose an externally created sense of form, a cohesive intellectual order, on the action and on the characters. The action of the plays shows the working out of certain a priori assumptions about the nature of Edwardian society. The plays present

¹For further discussion of this point see Gary J. Scrimgeour, 'Naturalist Drama and Galsworthy', pp. 73-4.

a proof of the truth of those assumptions just as Jones and Pinero engineered their plays to prove the truth of their a priori assumptions about the workings of Edwardian society. In all three dramatists, situations are contrived that, granted certain assumptions, must end in a certain way. Unlike the indeterminate endings of Granville Barker's The Voysey Inheritance and The Madras House, for instance, which create the impression of a lack of imposed constructional form, there is a finality at the end of Galsworthy's plays which puts a full stop to them. The interest created in the action of the plays, and the experience which they mediate culminate in the point made at the final curtain. The plays are so constructed that we are not invited to consider the problems characters will have or the way in which they will live after the play has ended. The finality of the endings, the deaths of Clare and Falder, the downfall of Roberts and Anthony in Strife, Jones's imprisonment in The Silver Box, is effectually the q.e.d. of the assumptions from which Galsworthy creates the action. The experience of the plays is self-contained and derives its meaning from points about society which Galsworthy wishes to make.

The nature of the principle of definition to which Galsworthy's working-class characters are subordinate results in the presentation of a partial vision of working-class life. Their existence is warranted only in so far as they illuminate the social problems under scrutiny or illustrate Galsworthy's understanding of those problems. There are virtually no personal crises amongst the working-class characters which do not emanate directly from the tendential nature of the plays, which tendency creates the definition by which we understand their function in the drama. Galsworthy thus eliminates the variety and fullness of their lives which carry on in spite of the big events. The working-class characters are allowed no scene which expresses a sense

of their lives which has some measure of autonomy from the externally imposed social thesis.

In order to illuminate his conception of the position of the working-class in Edwardian society, Galsworthy frequently needed to make his working-class characters passive and weak. Despite the centrality of the roles of characters such as Falder and Jones, they have to be acted upon, they are not effective agents in the drama. Galsworthy's own sense of the injustice and unfairness of working-class life necessitates presenting it as invariably a life of wretchedness and oppression. As I have suggested, it is not that Galsworthy's conception of certain facts about working-class life is necessarily wrong, or that individual characters are in themselves unrealistic. But defined and determined as they are within the drama, they are denied a full range of emotions and aspirations. Galsworthy's reaffirmation of the common man on the stage is a distortion limited by his own understanding of the dramatic possibilities in their lives and of their relationships within Edwardian society as a whole. The distortion and limitation result from the depiction being dependent on a principle of definition extraneous to working-class life and culture. And, despite Dukes's observation that even melodrama, traditionally the entertainment of the working class, failed to present the common man fairly for it showed him addicted to crime, Galsworthy's preoccupation with crime in The Silver Box and Justice, places his depiction of Jones and Falder in a similar tradition.

Apart from Studdenham in The Eldest Son, the only major working-class character who does not share the passivity of Clare, Jones, and Falder is Roberts, the strike leader in Strife. But in creating a forceful working-class character Galsworthy also found it necessary to abstract and distance him from the class to which he belongs. Enid

Underwood's hasty disclaimer that he is not a common man like the other workers, 'I mean he's an engineer - a superior man', is typical of the limitation of a woman of her position and class.¹ It is also very much the way that Galsworthy presents the character. Roberts is quite deliberately disassociated and isolated from the other workers and made unrepresentative of those he leads.

The action of Strife is set within the framework of an industrial dispute, and, as such, is a genuine part of working-class experience and history. But the industrial dispute is only a framework. The play is not concerned with historical or economic forces, or a sense of industrial experience as a cause or basis of understanding the conflict. The drama crystallises into a conflict between the two leaders as individuals. This is quite in keeping with Galsworthy's own conception of the play. The effective representatives of labour and capital, the other workers and members of the board, desert their leaders who then become isolated and abstracted from the context not only of the immediate industrial dispute but also from the context of the idea of the industrial dispute as a historical and social fact. The two men are united in defeat; the differences of culture and class between them, or the precise relationships between each other and between them and their followers, or their involvement in an industrial dispute become immaterial as a means of defining the drama. The culmination of the drama, the recognition of the similarity between Roberts and Anthony, deliberately shifts the definition away from any precise social correlatives towards a more vague sense of identity:

ANTHONY rises with an effort. He turns to ROBERTS, who looks at him. They stand several seconds, gazing at each other fixedly; ANTHONY lifts his hand, as though to salute, but lets it fall. The expression of ROBERTS' face changes from hostility to wonder. They bend their heads in token of respect.²

The evidence of the play and Galsworthy's own conception of it (although inflated as to the actual effect of the play) concur:

¹GP 123.

²GP 155.

It has always been the fashion to suppose that it is a play on the subject of capital and labour. But the strike, which forms the staple material of the play, was only chosen by me as a convenient vehicle to carry the plays's real theme, which is that of the Greek *ὄργη*, or violence; Strife is, indeed a play on extremism or fanaticism... People who go to Strife expecting Capital or Labour to get a hoist are in for a disappointment. And people who go to Strife to see a photographic reproduction of an industrial struggle of to-day will come away saying that this, that, or the other is not true to life. But I suggest that people shouldn't go to Strife to see any such things. They should go to Strife to see human nature in the thick of a fight, the "heroism" of diehardism, and the nemesis that dogs it.¹

The intention and effect of the play have in reality little to do with the portrayal of working-class life. Galsworthy had a more accurate understanding of this work than either Dukes or Howe.

VI

In his pre-war plays, Galsworthy was only prepared to present working-class figures in their relationship to his own middle-class understanding of general social issues or in their interrelationship with higher social classes. He made a considerable shift of emphasis in presenting working-class characters in major roles in serious drama, but it goes no further than that. Their presence is validated in that they can be used as vehicles to illuminate the middle-class attitudes and prejudices of other characters or illustrate Galsworthy's own essentially middle-class vision. Thus the ideology which informs the plays and their central dramatic interest still reside in the dominant class. Working-class characters and life are a means to an end, alone they are not sufficiently interesting in their own right to provide material from which can be created legitimate drama. Realistic detail of their homes or ways of living serve an authenticating function not a defining function. The parallel between Jones and young Barthwick in

¹H.V. Marrot, The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy, pp. 637-8.

The Silver Box, the reduction of Falder to the role of example in Justice, and the conception of Strife as a tragedy in the Greek manner demonstrate, not an interest in presenting working-class life accurately defined by its own cultural and physical environment, but an interest in presenting a tangential meeting of the social classes defined by Galsworthy's conception of Edwardian society.

4. Harley Granville Barker

I

Granville Barker's first performed play of note, The Marrying of Anne Leete, is, by nature of its late eighteenth century setting, outside the bounds of the present study, but it does illustrate tendencies in Barker's treatment of his material symptomatic of his plays of modern life which I wish to discuss more fully. The play depicts the sterility and decay of the country house oligarchy of the Leete family, and also depicts political corruption in the contrivances of the figure of the politician Carnaby Leete. The public world of political duplicity and the emotional sterility of the Leetes and their circle are concomitant for Leete has distorted the natural affections and impulses of marriage by having condemned his eldest daughter, Sarah, to a hollow marriage to further his own political ends, and, during the course of the play, he contrives to marry Anne to Lord John Carp in new jiggery-pokery to re-establish his own political standing. Anne rejects her father's political manoeuvring and defies social convention by compounding a marriage with the gardener, John Abud, and thus asserts the possibility of the return of vitality to the sterile society which is presented.

The introduction and centrality of this working-class figure serves a function in the symbolic and metaphorical implications of the play as a whole, as is indicated by the suggestion in his name and by similar suggestions in the naming of some of the other characters. Despite the care and precision with which Barker describes Abud's cottage in the stage directions, it is not his intention to define Abud's character or his role in the play by reference to precise details of his ways of living or his immediate environment. Such details are

authenticating devices, a necessary part of the general convention of realistic staging which Barker employs in his plays, but their active function, and the active function of Abud's work in the garden which is shown on stage, lies not in naturalistic conventions but in the symbolic nudging which inheres in them and provides the meaning which may be abstracted from the play. The experience mediated is essentially different from that mediated by Lawrence's use of working-class dwellings and of the sense of a man's work in the colliery plays. However, the thematic content of the play and its symbolic implications are very similar to much of Lawrence's other work.

The resolution of The Marrying of Anne Leete, the marriage of Abud and Anne Leete, is didactic, not in the sense that it offers a practical solution to the sterility of the Leete world, but that it offers a solution in terms of the symbolism of the fictive world of Barker's play. Archibald Henderson, in 1927, criticised the ending of the play as a 'eugenic, but unnatural, solution of mating the over-civilized and devitalized woman with the coarse but pure-blooded man', and saw in it a 'strictly sociologic motive which might have occurred to Westermarck, but never to Anne Leete'.¹ Henderson's criticism fails to acknowledge the delicacy of the play and is misguided in that it assumes that the organising principle of the play is plausible realism. But, if the sting of hostility is taken out of the comment, there is an important element of truth in Henderson's statement in that it suggests that the play is informed with and defined by a body of ideas which are properly the property of the author rather than the property of the characters. The play, however, is neither doctrinaire in effect nor does it smack of romantic escape. It makes no conclusive statement. There is no assurance of future happiness

¹Archibald Henderson, European Dramatists, p. 389. Edward Alexander Westermarck, Professor of Sociology, University of London 1907-1930; author of The History of Marriage (1891).

for the couple in the final scene in Abud's cottage, only a sense of fragility and uncertainty in their coming together from such widely differing backgrounds. The deliberately elliptical and wandering dialogue prevents the characters from expounding overtly the themes of the play or from explicitly explaining any symbolism. The dialogue leaves gaps which suggest the depths which lie beneath the surface of the conversation. The form of the play with its rejection of a sense of a final ending affirms the need to submit to the flow of life which the marriage between John Abud and Anne Leete asserts.

II

Barker's plays of modern life, particularly The Voysey Inheritance and Waste, take as their area of subject matter the upper middle classes as did the society drama. Margery Morgan comments that

His choice of the intellectual man, in the ruling class, as his hero can be regarded as a sign of the reach of his imagination more than of its poverty; for here was the centre of consciousness in which the complexity of the modern world might be most fully mirrored.¹

Although her statement superficially echoes similar remarks of Pinero about the relationship between the presentation of upper middle-class life and the expression of a certain level of thought or idea, the nature of Barker's conception of the complexities of the modern world, which is mediated through the examination and exploration of the dominant class, creates a very different experience from the experience of society drama.

The plot and area of subject matter of Waste - an initial sexual indiscretion, its discovery, and the consequent disgrace of a figure eminent in social and public life, and his suicide bringing down the final curtain - bear an obvious similarity to the expectations of the

¹Margery M. Morgan, A Drama of Political Man, p. 306.

well-made society drama. Despite the apparent similarity, the treatment of the material was sufficiently removed from the acceptable gentlemanly launderings of the commercial drama to incite the wrath of the Lord Chamberlain's Office and the play was banned by the censor ostensibly for references to the illegal abortion which leads to Amy O'Connell's death. C.B. Purdom had postulated that a contributory factor to the ban was the play's political setting and its biting depiction of political manoeuvring and duplicity.¹ It would seem that the depiction of underhand political dealings was acceptable in an eighteenth-century setting (The Marrying of Anne Leete) but not in a twentieth-century setting. Not only did the actor manager feel that he had a greater freedom in costume drama as it distanced him from immediately obvious comparisons with the manners and morals of his own time, such an attitude also received official endorsement from the censor.

The difference between Waste and the society drama lies not only in the refusal of Barker's play to deodorise the treatment of illicit sexual relationships between Trebell and Amy O'Connell, but in the employment of a very different principle of definition. The definition of characters and their actions does not emanate from the author's implicit endorsement of the codes and manners of upper middle-class ideology as happens in the society drama; the definition of Henry Trebell's character and actions, the means by which we understand what he does and why he does it, arises from the fact that he is an active working politician. The sense of a man's employment as a major factor informing the drama is rare in the Edwardian drama, especially in the case of upper middle-class characters who are either assumed to have a private income or who have a profession attached to them merely as a handle. Barker's achievement is significant not only in itself, but also because a primary principle of definition in Lawrence's

¹See C.B. Purdom, Harley Granville Barker, p. 74.

colliery plays is the experience of work which they mediate. Barker, however, does not employ the experience of work as part of a naturalistic convention, showing how precise details and conditions determine ways of living and thinking, that is how the public world of work affects the private world of the individual (at best an artificial distinction). In Waste, Trebell's public world as a politician and his action and behaviour in his private life exist far more in a symbolic relationship.

For Trebell being a politician is not a job or a career but a vocation. There is a visionary fervour in his preparation to steer through parliament a bill to disestablish the Church and, with its money, endow education. For Trebell, as opposed to the party politicians (Trebell was previously unaligned, but has joined forces with the Tories for the purposes of the bill), it is not just a piece of legislation; the twin themes of education and faith raise it to an act of creation, an affirmation of life. The concept of 'teaching our children' subsumes the religious potency of the Church he plans to disestablish:

What a church could be made of the best brains in England, sworn only to learn all they could teach what they knew without fear of the future or favour to the past .. sworn upon their honour as seekers after truth, knowingly to tell no child a lie. It will come.¹

Trebell is no impractical idealist; he works in a world of the actualities of party politics and powerful lobbies, and it is a world he understands and can manipulate. The conjunction of the power of the visionary and the power of practicality makes him the most effective and able politician in the play. Trebell delights in manipulation, delights in the power he is conscious of having to move the less aware and unwitting pieces on the political chessboard:

¹GBTP 250 and 252.

TREBELL. I'll buy the Church, not with money, but with the promise of new life. (A certain rather gleeful cunning comes over him.) It'll only look like a dose of reaction at first.. Sectarian Training Colleges endowed to the hilt.

WEDGECROFT. What'll the Nonconformists say?

TREBELL. Bribe them with the means of equal efficiency.¹

His control and dominance in political affairs expresses itself in the seduction of Amy O'Connell. He enjoys the power he establishes over her as he manipulates her to his bed. He lands his fish, not as the sportsman does, with admiration and respect for the prey, but as he will engineer his bill onto the statute book. He is cold, hard, calculating. His seduction is logical more than sensual. The qualities which are thought to be necessary and admirable in the politician are not so in the intimacy of sexual relations. Stripped of ameliorating factors such as love, respect, or friendship, his behaviour towards Mrs O'Connell is arrogant, offensive, and at times callous. The starkness of the tone of the relationship is very different from the aura of romance which usually attaches itself to irregular sexual relationships in the society drama and which rendered such relationships acceptable to the commercial theatre.

Trebell attempts to maintain a division between his public world of political affairs and his private world of sexual affairs. Amy O'Connell is a suitable candidate for his attentions as she has little connection with political life. She does not have the knowledge or understanding of politics which the other women, who are relatives of politicians, display and she is noticeably excluded from the political chatter they indulge in. Time Trebell spends with Amy is time he can snatch from what he considers more pressing political business. Her interview with Trebell in the second act, when she tells him of her pregnancy, assumes a symbolic significance in the structure of the play: it is squeezed in between two political interviews which Trebell holds;

¹GBTP 250.

he is 'too busy for love-making now'.¹ Despite the divorce between public life and private life which Trebell believes is possible, the similarity between his treatment of Amy and his behaviour as a politician indicates that there is a fundamental link between the two. In becoming an effective and successful politician Trebell has excluded from his life a full range of emotional responses; he has deliberately failed to realise and has wasted one part of his life.

Initially Trebell cherishes the idea that this is his strength. He boasts of his pulse, 'I promise you it hasn't varied a beat these three big months'.² Trebell's arrogance is mistaken. The implications of his arrogance are suggested by an exchange between Mrs Farrant and Lady Davenport earlier in the play:

MRS. FARRANT. (Brilliantly.) I think a statesman may be a little inhuman.

LADY DAVENPORT. (With keenness.) Do you mean superhuman? It's not the same thing, you know.³

Trebell only realises the deprivation caused by his exaltation of the cold logic of his conduct in political affairs late in the play after Amy O'Connell and her unborn child have died at the hands of the back street abortionist and after he has been excluded from the cabinet and his political life has crumbled:

TREBELL. I want to think. I haven't thought for years.

FRANCES. Why, you have done nothing else.

TREBELL. I've been working out problems in legal and political algebra.⁴

The killing of the unborn child, as the abortion is seen in the play, is for Trebell the conjunction, in the symbolic organisation of the play, of the political and the private. It is a refutation of his political vision translated into concrete personal terms. She kills

¹GBTP 255.

²GBTP 247.

³GBTP 227.

⁴GBTP 326.

the very thing for which he was to build his scheme of endowed education. Her fear of life which drives her to the abortionist is the abnegation of the creativity and the affirmation of life which is immanent in his scheme. Trebell's vision of his scheme encompasses fundamental facts about human existence and emotion:

There are three facts in life that call up emotion ..
Birth, Death, and the Desire for Children. The niceties
are shams.¹

But these facts are nevertheless abstract, removed from the area of everyday human emotion which they imply. They exist in terms of political rhetoric. He is indifferent to the actual fact of the birth of a child to his cousin, and, on hearing the news of Amy O'Connell's pregnancy, his attitude towards mother and coming child is unemotional and purely practical. The pregnancy is just another problem to be solved. It is only in the death of what would have been his child that the truth of his political vision in emotional terms is brought home to him. Amy herself is of no account, it is only because of her pregnancy that she has 'become a person of some importance to the world'. Her death is unimportant; it is, Trebell claims, 'a waste of time' even to think of her. It is the child alone that counts for anything:

The little fool, the little fool .. why did she kill my
child? What did it matter what I thought her? We were
committed together to that one thing.²

The possibility of scandal which inevitably attaches itself to Trebell's contravention of conventional morality takes up most of the third act of the play. But, whilst such material is important as a depiction of the ideological code to which the social class of Trebell's peers subscribe and is therefore necessary to the realistic framework of the play, the play does not employ the relationship between Trebell's behaviour and the social and moral code as the major principle of definition of the play. This constitutes Barker's

¹ GBTP 236

² GBTP 259, 293, and 335.

departure from the society drama where the endorsement of the dominant ethic provided the dramatic definition, and also his departure from the work of a minority dramatist such as Galsworthy where a criticism of the dominant ethic defined the drama. Barker's reliance on a symbolic network as the primary ordering principle subordinates the use of a means of definition which inheres in the realistic social setting of the play. The threat of scandal does not materially affect the plot of the play. Trebell is finally excluded from the cabinet because of political infighting not because he is genuinely considered unfit by his moral lapse nor because the politicians believed that they cannot control the scandal. Trebell himself is contemptuous of the fatuity of a code which condemns him 'for that one natural action, which the slight shifting of a social law could have made as negligible as eating a meal'.¹ And, in the last act, the central focus is not so much on the social outcome, Trebell's exclusion from the cabinet, as on Trebell's personal realisation of the implications of Amy O'Connell's death. The definition which informs those implications, and which informs the action of the play as a whole, arises from Barker's creation of symbolic interconnections between those implications and Trebell's work as an active politician.

III

Just as Waste employed a political milieu to define the drama, so The Voysey Inheritance employs the working of a solicitors' office in a similar way. Barker mediates something of the everyday business of the firm in which Edward Voysey and his father are working solicitors. But the fact that the firm is dishonest shifts the centre of emphasis. For although the nature and effect of the dishonesty are presented in precise and concrete terms firmly rooted in a realistic social setting,

¹CBTP 295.

it is the concept of the dishonesty, not its precise workings, which informs the play and defines the ways of living depicted.

The play treats of very much the same section of society that the society drama was prepared to utilise as subject matter. Pinero's play Iris, for instance, also dealt with the dishonest use of investors' capital by an unscrupulous solicitor. But characteristically Iris does not suggest that the crime is anything more than an isolated case or that its cause lies anywhere else than in the fraudulent dishonesty of one particular rogue. In The Voysey Inheritance, the dishonesty implicates not only the individual Voyseys but the institutions and ideology of a whole class and the economic base which supports them.

The Voysey Inheritance reverses the endorsement of conventional values which defined the society drama. There is a heroism in Voysey's amorality as he casts off the trammels of a legal system which hampers his vitality. Beatrice expresses the judgement of his peculiar talent which the play confirms:

He was a great financier .. a man of imagination. He had to find scope for his abilities or die. He despised these fat little clients living so snugly on their unearned incomes .. and put them and their money to the best use he could. ¹

In putting money to its best use Voysey is the most effective capitalist in the play; his amorality implies an amorality fundamental to the idea of capitalism as a whole. The legal system is, according to Voysey's amorality, an artificial institution created to protect those who have grown weak and soft from living off inherited wealth and unearned income. This form of wealth, the economic basis of upper middle-class life, is called in question by the opinions and actions of Voysey and is summed up by advice given to Alice Maitland by her guardian, a man of 'great character and no principle':

¹GBTP 202.

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He said once to me .. You've no right to your money. You've not earned it or deserved it in any way. Therefore don't be surprised or annoyed if any enterprising person tries to get it from you. He has at least as much right to it as you have .. if he can use it better, he has more right.¹

The polarity of Voysey's view is that 'You must either be the master of money or its servant'.² The definition of the play creates a system of values in which the strength of Voysey's mastership and the fact that he actively works to make money are more admirable than George Booth's dependence on passive investment. George Booth is money's servant. He is defined by a financial reference which is rare in the portrayal of wealthy men:

Money has given him all he wants, therefore he loves and reverences money; while his imagination may be estimated by the fact that he has now reached the age of sixty-five, still possessing more of it than he knows what to do with.³

He is the substance on which the Voyseys batten. He is unable to use money like Voysey. His greed and excessive concern for money are based on an abstract sense of wealth. Even though he has been swindled out of roughly half of his capital, he will suffer no diminution of his creature comforts for the rest of his life. Yet both he and the vicar, Colpus, when they learn of what the firm has been doing, devise a scheme to avoid bringing in the law and exposing the firm and thus having to be content, like the rest of Voysey's clients, with ten shillings or so in the pound. In effect they blackmail Edward Voysey. They are willing to compound the felony by keeping quiet so long as he makes reparation to them before any other client to the tune of a thousand a year. Their ethics and motives require no comment. The fact that Colpus is the local vicar is a gentle reminder of the ramifications of the nexus of inherited and invested wealth.

Although Barker's commentary on this aspect of the economic system by necessity concerns itself mainly with the upper middle class, the

¹ GBTP 154-5

² GBTP 128.

³ GBTP 103-4.

organisation of the play prevents it from being solely a critical examination of the mores of one particular class. The following stage directions describe Peacey, the head clerk of the firm of Voysey and Son:

A very drunken client might mistake him for his master. His voice very easily became a toneless echo of Mr. Voysey's; later his features caught a line or two from that mirror of all the necessary virtues into which he was so constantly gazing; but how his clothes even when new contrive to look like old ones of Mr. Voysey's is a mystery, and to his tailor a most annoying one.¹

The past tenses of the verbs indicate the element of Shavian analysis which is common in Barker's stage directions. The details of Peacey's speech patterns and dress, which are a slightly less than successful aping of his employer, are a realistic indicator not just of the way a man in Peacey's sort of employment might emulate the model of his social superior. In the symbolic system of the play, the similarity in appearance emphasises the fact that Peacey is part of the same system as Voysey. As generations of Peaceys succeed each other they blackmail Voysey for their silence. Peacey's hush money is a modest two hundred a year, but his implication is complete. Like Booth he is a parasite of the capitalist system, metaphorically willing to let others do the stealing for him. Unlike Galsworthy who defined his plays by means of a vertical division between social classes, Barker's definition is more inclusive and indicates a more comprehensive and subtle correlation of social classes within a conception of one social and economic system. At one point Edward asks his father,

Is every single person who trusts you involved in your system?... My mind travelled naturally from George Booth with his big income to old Nursie with her savings which she brought you to invest.²

The suggestive hinting in the idea of Voysey's 'system', the very choice of word, extends the implications of Voysey's dishonesty towards a symbolic relationship between that dishonesty and the depiction

¹GBTP 83-4.

²GBTP 128.

of economic society as a whole. Whether it is Booth with his thousands or the old nurse to the Voysey family with her five hundred pounds savings, they both participate and are implicated in Barker's depiction of economic society.

The inheritance of the title of the play is most obviously the bequest of deception as the firm passes from father to son. It is an inheritance which involves the Peaceys as well as the Voyseys; Edward observes to Peacey, 'This little pull of yours over the firm is an inheritance from your father, isn't it?'¹ The reference to the concept of heredity is a pointer to Barker's symbolic method. The inheritance is not just the succession of the family firm, it has intimations of the naturalistic convention of a biological determinant, thus implying that the criminality has a more common typicality than an isolated outbreak of deceit. In the experience mediated by the play, the suggestion cannot be avoided that there is a latency of the inheritance in all of us. Members of the Voysey family, impeccable in their superficial respectability, have no hesitation in advising Edward to continue his father's practice. Edward alone realises what this signifies:

Oh, listen to this! First Trenchard .. and now you!
You've the poison in your blood, every one of you.
Who am I to talk? I daresay so have I.²

The idea of poison in the blood is a familiar convention in naturalists such as Zola and Ibsen, but Edward is victim not of congenital disease but of internal and external psychological pressures, the implications of which inform the play with a symbolic more than naturalistic definition.

History repeats itself in the career of Edward as he follows in his father's footsteps. The motivation is more subtle than the fact that 'the fascination of swindling one's clients will ultimately prove

¹GBTP 162.

²GBTP 150

irresistible'.¹ Edward senses the latency within himself; he realises the possibility of the repetition of a chain of events:

He [Edward's father] must have began like this. Trying to do the right thing in the wrong way .. then doing the wrong thing .. then bringing himself to what he was .. and so me to this. (He flings away from her.) No, Alice, I won't do it. I daren't take that first step down. There's a worse risk than any failure. Think .. I might succeed.²

As soon as Edward does attempt to do the right thing in the wrong way by attempting to put right the accounts of the small investors who would be hurt most by a crash, he is enmeshed in the ineluctable psychology of the Voysey system, which, the symbolic nudging of the play suggests, is an inevitable correlative of living within a society whose economic basis is inherited and invested wealth. Edward's earlier principles, which accepted as a model of behaviour the absolute sense of right and wrong as defined by the legal code, made him a weak, passive character. The shouldering of the burden from his father, the attraction of the activity of work, and the responsibility of creating one's own standards of ethics makes a man of him. Alice Maitland, who becomes Edward's fiancée at the end of the play, is a key figure in the final cementing of the inheritance. She tells Edward,

There was never any chance of my marrying you when you were only a well-principled prig. I didn't want you .. and I don't believe you really wanted me. Now you do. And you must always take what you want.³

She adds sexuality to the comprehensive network of subtle insinuations which makes up the Voysey inheritance.

IV

The Madras House through its four acts presents a series of loosely connected vignettes concerned with aspects of life **linked** with the clothing industry. As in Waste and The Voysey Inheritance

¹GBTP 165.

²GBTP 158.

³GBTP 207.

there is a sense of definition arising from the experience of work and profession. The first two acts at first sight appear to be concerned with a naturalistic presentation of characters whose lives are determined by environmental conditions.

The first act is set in the large, comfortable, fairly wealthy middle-class home of Henry Huxtable, owner of the drapery manufacturers Roberts and Huxtable. The house is inhabited by his six unmarried daughters aged between twenty-six and thirty-nine. A precise financial reference is crucial to their definition. The stage directions describe Emma, the second youngest daughter:

She would have been a success in an office and worth perhaps thirty shillings a week. But the HUXTABLES don't want another thirty shillings a week and this gift, such as it is, has been wasted, so that EMMA runs also to a brusque temper.¹

Barker's creation of an active principle of definition from an unsensational, mediocre financial situation is an uncommon achievement in the Edwardian drama of middle-class life. The daughters' enthusiasm and vitality are sapped by their mediocrity; they have enough money not to need to strive for any more, but not enough to make them extravagant. It affects both father and daughters, as Emma's comment indicates:

Father seems afraid of spending money, though he must have got lots. He says if he gave us any more we shouldn't know what to do with it,... and of course that's true.

The girls' existence is in a process of atrophy. Deadened by deprivation of meaningful activity, they create busyness for themselves, which is equally meaningless, finding things to be done around the house and 'there's calling and classes and things'.² The limited culture, which is available to them from outside their home and which could have expanded their potential, is only a further cause for dissatisfaction. Julia had a talent for watercolours so was sent to art school.

¹GBMH 3.

²GBMH 25.

And in two years she learnt enough about the trade of an artist not ever to want to do those watercolour drawings again. JULIA is now over thirty and very unhappy... On a holiday she'll be off now and then for a solitary day's sketching, and as she tears up the vain attempt to put on paper the things she has learnt to see, she sometimes cries.¹

Barker's handling of this material carries with it an implicit criticism of the middle-class ways of living he depicts.

The thematic link between the experience of the Huxtable girls and the rest of the play is in their passional deprivation. The gaggle of unmarried daughters is fast approaching irreversible spinsterhood. Jane, the youngest, is the only one who has apparently had an offer of marriage, but the dictates of middle-class decorum put a stop to it because 'they heard of something he'd once done.'² Barker succinctly adumbrates their experience and its resultant psychology in one incident:

A collar marked Lewis Waller came back from the wash in mistake for one of father's. I don't think he lives near here, but it's one of those big steam laundries. And Morgan the cook got it and she gave it to Julia... and Julia kept it. And when mother found out she cried for a whole day. She said it showed a wanton mind.³

Julia's fantasising over a contemporary stage idol is adolescent - but Julia is thirty-four.

The second act is set in the business offices of Roberts and Huxtable and depicts the relationship between the conditions of the living-in system of the manufacturing industry and the passional and sexual deprivation they enforce on the workers. The naturalistic convention demonstrates a warping caused by environmental factors. As in the depiction of the Huxtable household, the economic reference is crucial. For the consideration of the thirty pounds a year he is allowed for living in, Brigstock is forced to keep his marriage a secret. The couple are forced to live apart and so are deprived of normal sexual relations. The deprivation produces a hysteria which Mrs Bristock

¹GBMH 2-3

²GBMH 24.

³GBMH 23-4.

can only just keep under control:

I lie awake at night away from him till I could scream with thinking about it. And I do scream as loud as I dare...not to wake the house. And if somebody don't open that window, I shall go off.¹

Bristock's limited horizons, the thought of raising enough capital to start his own business, are the motivation behind his and his wife's self-imposed separation. Brigstock's vision is futile and probably only a pipedream; it probably has no more substance than Julia's dreams of Lewis Waller. The prolonged effect of the working conditions saps vitality and enthusiasm, and, Miss Yates's testimony suggests, seems even to whittle away desire itself:

The fact is, y'know, it's only the very young men that ever do ask you to marry them here. When they get older they seem to lose heart...or they think it'll cost too much.²

The end result appears in the living-in housekeeper, the spinster Miss Chancellor, who sees as the highest attainable virtue an indifference to relationships between the sexes. She has sublimated her frustration into a stern but possibly spiteful moralism, and exalts the effects of the deprivation into a noble calling when she claims that 'I look upon spinsterhood as an honourable state, as my Bible teaches me to'.³ The only worker who has been able to retain any vestige of life is Miss Yates. Her pregnancy is a rejection of the enforced morality of the living-in system and social convention. In this Miss Yates attains a symbolic importance in the organisation of the play which is far greater than the small amount of time she is actually on the stage.

There is an equivalence between the deprivation of Huxtable's daughters and his employees. He is, despite his general kindness and good intentions, the keeper of a domestic and an industrial seraglio. The thematic link between the two acts is an intimation of Barker's method. Despite the fact that the characters and their ways of living

¹ GBMH 45.

² GBMH 56.

³ GBMH 52.

are initially defined by reference to environmental determinants, Barker's principal dramatic intention does not lie in a naturalistic recreation of their experience. The naturalistic depiction is used more in the way of metaphorical pointing towards the real intention of the play which is an examination and indictment of a culture determined by a more general and abstract concept of a commercial system. Ultimately, as the last two acts of the play demonstrate, the organisational principle resides in Barker's own abstracted concept of society not in the precise definition of ways of living presented in the first two acts.

But, despite the subordination of the working people to Barker's overall purpose, the very precision of their definition during the second act itself prevents them from becoming mere counters in a middle-class statement about the nature of society. The dominance of the naturalistic conventions over the symbolic purpose in the actual presentation of the working-class characters at this point in the play defines them in relation to what is mediated as the typicality of the ways of living of their own class and thus they are allowed what appears to be a far greater autonomy from the playwright's tendential purpose than working-class characters are generally allowed in the work of Shaw or Galsworthy where working-class characters such as Lickcheese or Henry Straker, or Falder or Jones are in different ways subordinate to the authors' own purpose.

The symbolic use to which the naturalistic vignettes of the first two acts are put becomes clear in the third act of the play which is set in the retail outlet of the Madras House. The act establishes thematic links with the earlier part of the play and examines commercial culture through a series of metaphors which extends the implications of the sexual deprivation depicted in the first two acts. The symbolic method is heightened by the fact that, in contrast to the earlier

realistic naturalism, the action has the air of a grotesque fantasy, particularly in the apparition of the parade of mannequins. The fashion parade is directed by the manager, Windlesham, who, hovering around the models, is a mere function of the adornments he fastidiously adjusts. He is emasculated, made neuter, as is suggested by the hint in his name, by his finicky concern with the minute fripperies of the fashions displayed. The models themselves create an air of unreality, a sense of divorce from normal human response. They are almost inhuman, stripped of any identity apart from the fashions they parade and the numbers they are allotted. The titillation that they and their fashions provoke is nervous and artificial for the mannequins are in fact desexed and mechanical. The element of the ludicrous in the idea expressed of replacing them with mechanical moving figures is subsumed by the symbolic appropriateness of the suggestion.

The perversion of sexuality by commercial culture, which has already been established, is metaphorically extended in images of prostitution. State's Nottingham retail outlet, where the 'Ladies' department [is] served by gentlemen... the Gentlemen's by ladies', has an undercurrent of salaciousness which is barely disguised by the fact that State claims that 'anything Depraved' is rigorously avoided.¹ The concept of fashion as an aphrodisiac, which is hinted at in the mannequin's parade, is pointed up by the fact that Parisian fashions designed for the respectable middle class follow those of the cocotte la Belle Helene; as is wryly observed by Philip Madras,

What can be more natural and right than for the professional charmer to set the pace for the amateur!²

Eustace Perrin State, who buys the Madras House, is a caricature of the American businessman. His methods and ideas put the keystone to the idea established in the first two acts of the play that

¹GBMH 84.

²GBMH 77.

exploitation, particularly exploitation of women, is the correlative of commercial culture. Women, for him, are thought of in bulk as forming 'one of the greatest Money Spending Machines the world has ever seen'; and he sees the women's movement not as liberation for women but as a further step into his carefully conceived plan.¹ Women will express themselves, he believes, by buying the fashions he is going to sell to them. State represents a new era in commerce and retailing. His move away from the idea of a firm moulded by the personality and taste of one man (as Constantine Madras put his stamp on the Madras House itself) to the governing of commerce by the scientific principles of market research makes the onward march of crass commercial culture inevitable.

Any attempt in the play to posit an answer or alternative to the commercial culture is inadequate. Constantine Madras's embracing of the Islamic faith appears to be a corrective to the pervasive culture and its artificial sexuality. But in the last act his hollowness is revealed. His choice of religion is merely a convenient endorsement of his polygamous predilections and his sexual chauvinism. Significantly, although it is he who is the father of Miss Yates's child, his chauvinism is symbolically exposed by her attitude which denies him any right over herself or the child. The rest of the play reposes in detached discussion between Philip Madras and his wife in which there is a tendency towards explanation of the themes of the play. The civilised tone of the conversation supports Philip's earlier general contention that 'We've so organised the world's work as to make companionship between men and women a very artificial thing'.² His ambivalent position in the play, at once a victim of the commercial system and its most perceptive commentator, is marked in the indecisiveness of the last act. The intellectuality of his revulsion at the effects of modern society like

¹GBMH 88.

²GBMH 63.

his hope of reform ('I want an art and a culture that shan't be just a veneer on savagery... but it must spring in good time from the happiness of a whole people') seem curiously inadequate as a response to his awareness of the emotional and sexual deprivation depicted in The Madras House.¹

V

The plot of The Madras House is more or less non-existent. The first act seems to lay the groundwork of exposition and establish issues which could be resolved in terms of action and plot, issues such as the paternity of Miss Yates's child, the sale of the Madras House, friction in the relationship between Philip Madras and his wife, the estrangement between Constantine Madras and his wife. But none of these elements, which might have been exploited by another dramatist, is turned into moments of any climactic consequence in the play. The play itself is deliberately inconclusive. At the end, the conversation breaks off mid-sentence, and the final stage direction reads, 'She doesn't finish, for really there is no end to the subject'.² The absence of conventional plot emphasises Barker's method of definition in the drama. The organisational principle of the play is the thematic unity. Form is given to the play by Barker's understanding of society mediated through an interconnecting symbolic and metaphorical network. Plot, as understood by practitioners of the well-made play which resolved and organised their drama, is not allowed to interfere with the real definition of the drama.

This, to a lesser extent, is also true of The Voysey Inheritance and Waste. In The Voysey Inheritance, after what, in the well-made play, would have been the climactic scène à faire at the end of the fourth act - George Booth's discovery of the fraud - the last act does

¹GBMH 136.

²GBMH 137.

not conform to the constructional expectation of showing the consequences and final resolution of the discovery. There is no certainty that George Booth will expose the firm nor any certainty about what Edward intends to do. Instead of finality, Edward and Alice are on the verge of a new departure. Even the finality of Trebell's suicide at the end of Waste is more apparent than real. His death, despite its superficial resemblance to the resolution of the society drama, refuses to be defined by conventional attitudes. Such attitudes (the easy way out, the correct action of a gentleman, etc.) expressed by other characters are hardly partially accurate. Trebell's death is not the convenient resolution of an awkward social and moral problem. His motivation and the nature of his suicide are more tentative and nebulous, as is commensurate with the means of definition in the play as a whole. His death is not an ending, a gesture of despair and futility, but a calm and positive statement which defies conventional opinion as his very last speech indicates: 'My heart's clean again. I'm ready for fresh adventures'.¹

As in The Madras House, the reduced importance of the plot in The Voysey Inheritance and Waste emphasises the symbolic relationships which form the principle of definition and therefore serves an important function in the drama. The fact that the characters do not appear to be circumscribed by the imposition of a contrived and conclusive plot is also important as an authenticating device. As in Lawrence's colliery plays, the absence of a formal plot creates the illusion that the characters and their fates have a greater autonomy than that allowed to the characters of the society drama or of Galsworthy's plays. The didacticism which is immanent in the conclusiveness of a plot which shows the workings of a society and seems to determine the inevitability of characters' ends is avoided. However, Barker's plays

are didactic in a way in which Lawrence's plays are not, in that they do make statements of an abstract and general kind about the nature of Edwardian society. But such statements and the ways in which they define the characters and action have a subtlety which is frequently lacking in other Edwardian dramatists. In both Lawrence and Barker, the form which inheres in the plays, although very different in kind, is less intrusive than the form which emanates from obvious plot construction.

Barker employs in his dialogue an authenticating technique very similar to the one Lawrence employs in the dialogue of the colliery plays. Conversation meanders and is inconsequential. The effect is the creation of a sense of life on the peripheries of the drama and a sense of life which is going on in the plays which is separate from and not immediately germane to the main action. The conversation ebbs and flows. In the last act of The Voysey Inheritance, for instance, much of the talk concerns the impending separation of Hugh Voysey and his wife, Beatrice. This has nothing to do with the discovery of the fraud, or what George Booth or Edward are going to do. The death of Ethel, one of Voysey's daughters, which has happened in the meantime is mentioned only in passing. At one time, presumably, Ethel's death would have been the main topic of conversation, and in the future, the implication is, Hugh and Beatrice will only be mentioned in passing; other events will take their place as being more important. An illusion of reality is created by using a convention whose effect concurs with our experience of real life.

Individual members of the Voysey family are invested with plots of their own which seem to be detached from the main action. There is a certain amount of satirical intention in the presentation of the individuals which implies a general criticism of upper middle-class ways of living. But the presentation of the Voysey family and its

concerns is central to the symbolic definition of the play. Like Wemmick in Great Expectations, Voysey advocates and appears to create a split between his business life and his private life. 'You must realise,' he advises Edward, 'that money making is one thing, and religion another, and family-life a third'; 'You must learn whatever the business may be to leave it behind you at the Office. Why, life's not worth living else'.¹ The lack of immediate relevance of the everyday trivial concerns of the Voysey household to the criminality of the firm of Voysey and Son seems to endorse the practical achievement of Voysey's philosophy. But there is a more fundamental symbolic relationship between home and firm. The solidity of English bourgeois life carries on no matter how shaky its foundations. Voysey tells Edward after the latter has learnt of the firm's deceit:

You'll find the household as if nothing had happened.
Then you'll remember that nothing really has happened.²

The implication of the symbolic relationship is inescapable: the solid respectability of the standard of behaviour and ways of living of the English middle class depends upon a deceit which is inherent in the nature of its economic foundation. And indeed, it is only through the maintenance of the appearance of unimpeachable respectability represented by the family which enables Voysey to perpetrate his system. For it is the perpetuation of the manners of the middle class that inspires the trust and confidence of his clients which means that Voysey can cheat them with impunity. Although the essential definition of Barker's drama is symbolic, its mode of presentation is realistic and such authentication arising from the dialogue is essential to that realism.

A similar use of dialogue can be seen in both The Madras House and Waste. The dialogue helps create the experience of not just the characters on stage but also of the habitual behaviour and thinking of

¹ GBTP 129 and 86-7.

² GBTP 100.

the social groups to which they belong. Much of the dialogue of the first act of The Madras House consists largely of the inane inconsequential conversational pleasantries upon which middle-class politeness depends. The formalities of introductions and leavetakings, remarks about the weather, and about the view from the window are all endlessly repeated by different characters in an attempt to avoid embarrassing lulls in the conversation. The repetition creates a comedy from the banality; as Gerald Weales comments, 'Only a saving irony keeps Act One of The Madras House from being as boring to the reader as it is to the characters'.¹ The quality of the dialogue in itself actively creates the experience of ways of living, the demonstration of the aimlessness and tedium of which is Barker's primary intention in the first act of the play.

The dialogue in Act One of Waste is wandering, elliptical, digressive; people and events are mentioned briefly only to be dropped or perhaps brought up again later. As a means of exposition it is indirect and difficult to follow. Topics of conversation are familiar to the characters and require no elucidation between them, but for the audience the conversation is bewildering and at times incomprehensible. The technique creates the illusion that we are eavesdropping on the conversation of people we don't know and we try and pick up the threads. Within the thematic scheme of the play, the dialogue creates the ambience of the political environment which defines Trebell and the action of the play. There is a tone of self-satisfaction and smugness which characterises the political environment of the ruling oligarchy where important political issues are settled at country house weekends as the politicians and their wives chat in the same way as they chat about golf or billiards.

Barker manages to create the illusion of the authenticity of actual speech and also uses the dialogue to inform his general thematic purpose.

¹Gerald Weales, 'The Edwardian Theater and the Shadow of Shaw', p. 185.

But there is another level of organisation in the dialogue. Margery Morgan, in her penetrating and persuasive study of Granville Barker, demonstrates how the most minute of references and images contribute to the more general symbolism of the plays. She demonstrates that there is an interlinking network of specific symbolic reference in what appears to be mere inconsequentiality. Her analysis indicates that there is a level of definition in the dialogue which is consciously literary and artistic. She explains the way this level of dialogue functions by analogy with the effects of music, dance, architecture, and sculpture. In effect she analyses the dialogue in terms of conscious art, in terms of other forms of art; that is, in terms which are extraneous to the life presented in the play itself. I do not wish to imply that there is anything wrong in this, or that there is anything wrong in plays which are so defined that they offer themselves to this sort of literary criticism. I stress the point to demonstrate the difference from the definition in Lawrence's dialogue, which is not extraneous to the life depicted in the plays and is created internally by reference to the mining community portrayed. Lawrence's colliery plays cannot convincingly be explained by the sort of artistic definition which works for Barker's plays. Margery Morgan very appositely quotes a passage from Strindberg's preface to Miss Julie which sums up Barker's method and is also a pointer not only to Lawrence's departure from Barker's method but also from more familiar sorts of naturalism:

I have avoided the symmetrical and mathematical construction of the French dialogue, and have instead permitted the minds to work irregularly, as they do in reality, where, during conversation, the cogs of one mind seem more or less haphazardly to engage those of another, and where no topic is fully exhausted. Naturally enough, therefore, the dialogue strays a good deal as, in the opening scenes, it acquires a material that later on is worked over, picked up again, repeated, expounded, and built up like the theme in a musical composition.¹

Strindberg's theory illustrates that it is possible to employ authenticating techniques which create the appearance of the workings of conversation as

¹Margery M. Morgan, A Drama of Political Man, p. 60.

they occur 'in reality' but this organisational principle derives not so much from a sense of real conversations as from conscious artistry.

VI

Barker is one of the most satisfying and fascinating of the Edwardian dramatists. Lawrence considered him to be, along with Shaw and Galsworthy, one of the 'rule and measure mathematical' dramatists.¹ But, although the ultimate principle of definition by means of a system of symbolic relationships is very different from the colliery plays, some of his incidental techniques - conventions of plotting and dialogue, and a context created from a sense of work - are close to the primary techniques of the colliery plays.

¹L 509.

5. The Manchester School and the Regional Drama

I

The establishment of a repertory system at the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester in 1907 fostered and encouraged a school of dramatists which was consciously and deliberately regional, and moreover provincial. This shift does not just indicate a movement away from the hegemony of the London commercial stage as did the establishment of the minority theatre movement in London itself. The move to the provinces for the setting of the plays away from the centre of political power and the centre of society life also entails a necessary shift in emphasis in the class structure of the drama. In particular, a move to the industrial north, the centre of heavy industry and the manufacturing base of Edwardian England, suggests something of the nature of this shift away from the London theatre in terms of relationships of wealth, work and power which can be explored in the drama. This general movement had already been initiated by the minority drama before the opening of Miss Horniman's repertory seasons at the Gaiety. Notable plays of the minority theatre, Galsworthy's Strife for instance, had provincial settings. And even the society dramatists, Jones, in The Triumph of the Philistines, and Pinero, in The Thunderbolt, shifted the action of their plays to the provinces, and both made shifts, concomitant with the geographical shift, in social class away from the usual social matrix of the society drama.

However, Jones's treatment of the lower middle classes in The Triumph of the Philistines is subject to a similar sort of snobbery and uncharitable satire already noted in the earlier Saints and Sinners. Members of that class are the philistines, crass, stupid and hypocritical, of the title. They are dramatically worthy of only detached amusement,

which attitude is expressed through and endorsed by the socially dominant characters of the play - members of the aristocracy and the upper middle classes. Despite the move in setting and social class of some of the characters, it is still the dominant class which is approbated and dramatically validated to the effect that any emotional engagement is reserved for the romance between Sir Valentine and Alma rather than for the revelation of tradesman Jorgan's hypocrisy. Of particular significance as an indication of the validation of the provincial setting is that the dominant class is never presented as an integral part of the provinces and, at the end of the play, its members can conveniently escape the narrowness and meanness of Market Parberry, abandoning it and its philistine accomplishments to its rightful possessors, the lower middle classes.

Pinero's The Thunderbolt is a far more satisfactory play and lives up to its subtitle, 'an episode in the history of a provincial family', with more honesty than Jones's piece. The snobbery which attends Jones's treatment is largely absent from The Thunderbolt. Pinero, in his depiction of provincial life and of the impoverished middle-class Mortimore family, introduces the experience of ways of living alien to those of the society drama, ways of living which entail an awareness of the ways in which work, money, and the consciousness of a small town community are decisive factors in the lives of his characters. Pinero's play suggests that this experience is worthy and capable of serious dramatic interest. Although much of the dramatic impetus centres around the complications resulting from a stolen will and its eventual discovery, such complications are not introduced into the plot merely for their own sake or for the sake of constructional pyrotechnics. They just as much serve the purpose of revealing relationships within the Mortimore family. Pinero presents a critical examination of a certain social class represented by the Mortimore family none of whom receive full

approbation. This is a marked departure from the society drama where it is usually the case that one or two individuals are castigated from a social class which is generally approved. George Rowell's comment indicates the discrepancy between The Thunderbolt and the expectations of the actor managers' commercial theatre: 'the drab setting and, above all, the spectacle of George Alexander as a shabby music-teacher were abhorrent to the audience at the St. James's'.¹

II

What distinguishes the Manchester school from the provincial drama of the minority dramatists or of the society dramatists is a self-conscious regionalism. Harold Brighouse, dramatist and spokesman for the Manchester school, stated:

The dramatists of the Manchester school have diverse aims, but there is ground which is common to them all. They have their whimsies, their wayward trick of flying off at unexpected tangents, their adventures with plays which by no manner of means can be called Manchester plays, but you may know a man of the Manchester school by this sign - that his earth is the earth of Lancashire and his most characteristic plays are plays of Lancashire life. He may stray from the fold, he may write plays about fairies or Londoners, but (to use a perilous phrase) his spiritual home is in Lancashire, and only when he is writing about Lancashire does he properly and intimately belong to the Manchester School of Drama... It is authenticity of local character... and dialogue correctly representing the spoken word of our county which one claims as the distinctive marks of the Manchester school.²

There is a chauvinism here which also occasionally finds expression in the plays themselves. Brighouse's exclusively geographical definition of the Manchester school is unnecessary for its work is frequently similar to other regional drama in that its aim was to create by its setting a drama whose definition arises from the experience of the ways of living and a system of cultural, economic, and social networks geographically distinct from the drama of modern life set in fashionable

¹George Rowell, The Victorian Theatre, p. 117.

²Harold Brighouse, 'The Manchester Drama', pp. 77 and 81.

London. Thus Elizabeth Baker's dramas of the London suburbs, Chains and The Price of Thomas Scott, are, in contrast to the society drama, essentially regional.

Nevertheless, although significant shifts in geographical setting and related shifts in social setting are frequently made in these plays, it is often the case that the organising principles of the plays do not reside in their distinctly regional or provincial nature. Harold Brighthouse published a volume specifically entitled Three Lancashire Plays, but only of one, The Northerners, a historical drama of industrial unrest in the eighteen twenties, can it really be said that the play's regional setting is essential to the drama. But the extent of The Northerners' dependence on wooden and stereotypical situation and characterisation suggests that the setting is conditioned by the historicity of the subject matter not by its utilisation as an active principle in the creation of the drama itself. The two plays of modern life in the volume, Zack and The Game, with which I am more closely concerned, are Lancashire or provincial only in name and by virtue of incidental reference. Their setting does not enter at all as a means of definition in the drama. The same is true of the majority of Stanley Houghton's plays collected in his three volume Works even though there is some specificity of the settings of such plays as Independent Means and The Younger Generation in the suburbs of Salchester (an agglutination of Manchester and Salford). Despite occasional novelties, for example the intrigues of professional football in The Game, or the occasional limited sense of middle-class regional mores defining the drama, as in The Younger Generation, the major organisational principle of these plays is the conventions of a genre of rather nondescript light-weight comedy - the stock material of many a church hall amateur drama group. This organisational principle ultimately outweighs any sense of regionalism; and in Houghton's Marriages in the Making, which is a most trivial sort of comedy and presents

an image of life as the Edwardian garden party ('The play takes place in glorious June weather, in an atmosphere of sun and flowers and colour and summer frocks'), the extremely convoluted comic plot is the only organisational principle.¹ The play lacks the dependence on a certain social matrix which informs even the society drama.

Even a play which avoids that sort of comic mould, Brighouse's Graft, and has a much greater affinity with the minority drama of Shaw and Granville Barker, shows similar limitations in its use of a specifically regional definition. The first act of the play depicts the home of the Pilling family and mediates the experience of the effects of poor housing and a general environment determined by the conditions of a northern industrial city. This is expressed primarily through the effects on the health of the child, Dick Pilling. But, as the play continues, it becomes apparent that the first act is very much inessential to the structure of the play as a whole and the act functions as no more than a sort of prologue. The Pillings' home is not returned to and the characters presented in it do not appear again in any important role. The rest of the play is concerned with presenting, though far less forcefully, a similar sort of civic corruption and profiteering as appears in Shaw's Widowers' Houses and is not concerned with presenting experience defined by the conditions and ways of living of a particular social class and locality.

Frequently these plays are not marked linguistically as being regional. And, indeed, the dramatists of the Manchester school seem oddly uncomfortable or even apologetic not only about the use of dialect in drama but also about its existence in real life. Brighouse states what is probably sound dramatic practice, 'The true dialect dramatist is not the man who exactly imitates the speech of a district, but he

¹HW I, 99.

who most skilfully adapts its rhythms and picks out its salient words'.

But some dozen or so lines earlier he writes,

The Lancashire writers have avoided dialects as, in the first place, impracticable, and in the second place, disused, except (to quote Houghton) "amongst the roughest class in the most out-of-the-way districts."¹

Elsewhere Brighouse also cites Houghton with reference to the latter's play Hindle Wakes: 'It is about Lancashire people and is practically in dialect, though not barbaric.'² Why should dialect be 'barbaric'? Why should it be associated with the 'roughest class' etc.? Both dramatists were preoccupied by a fear that a play in dialect (even Hindle Wakes which eventually achieved international reputation) was unsuitable for any but a local audience. I can only attribute such a deprecating attitude towards one of the primary acquisitions of regional drama to a consciousness of their deviance from the hegemony of the standard English of the commercial theatre's serious drama of modern life. I frequently feel that the aggressive regional chauvinism expressed by certain characters in the plays is not just an expression of the way they may think but is tacitly endorsed by the playwrights as a defensive statement of their own position as regional dramatists.

A recurrent theme and situation of many of the plays of the regional dramatists, and of the Manchester school in particular, is the rebellion of children against their parents. Whether one takes the view of A.E. Morgan that the recurrence of the theme indicates a serious concern with and reflection of the breakdown of outworn Victorian ideals, or claims, as Brighouse did of one of Houghton's plays, that 'the attitudes of parents and children suggest, for 1910, a social backwater rather than the broad stream of life' is not really relevant for the way in which the theme is utilised as a principle of organisation in the drama.³

¹BrTLP 13

²Harold Brighouse, What I Have Had, p. 178.

³See A.E. Morgan, Tendencies of the Modern English Drama, pp. 175-182. HW I, xlv.

A similar situation is of central interest in Lawrence's A Collier's Friday Night, but whereas the relationship between Ernest Lambert and his parents, I will argue, is defined in terms of not just a development within an individual family but as a development within the mining community presented and is implicitly interrelated with a whole range of aspirations and expectations provided by new educational opportunities, the dramatists of the Manchester school generally do not choose that sort of means of definition. I do not intend to imply that merely because of that fact, they are necessarily inferior dramatists, or that they are ignorant of the existence of new educational opportunities or of the ways in which their effects can be incorporated into the drama. Much of Brighouse's Garside's Career concerns itself with such educational opportunities represented by the fact that Peter Garside, a working engineer, has attended night classes, and, as the play opens, has just been awarded a B.A. degree. The implications of this in terms of working-class history is indicated by his entry into Parliament and is expressed by the formulation of his mother's class consciousness:

He's fighting for his class, he's showing them he's the better man. He can work with his hands and they can't, and he can work with his brain as well as the best of them.

The sentiment is echoed by Garside himself, 'I've proved my class as good as theirs'.¹ But such issues and the gaining of a degree are mediated as part of a preconceived character trait of overweening ambition which is developed throughout the rest of the play and eventually leads to his downfall. The play has a comic resolution in that he returns to his proper working-class sphere and marries the grand hearted working-class lass he should have done in the first place before he became too ambitious. Similarly in The Game, the educational opportunities and their effect on the young generation are incorporated into a comic definition in the incongruity between Jack's working-class

¹BrGC 11 and 14.

origins and his profession as a footballer, and his pride in his interest in different translations of Plato and his sense of regret when he mentions that 'We've two members in the Mutual Improvement League at our Sunday School who can read Plato in the original'.¹ But in The Game the definition of the rebellion of youth is not mediated as being a part of a specific historical process, it is seen as a generalised process through which all generations pass as is the case in many of Houghton's plays where the definition is that 'There's a struggle between every generation'.² As an organisational principle the rebellion does not have precise historical correlatives but functions only in as much as it can provide potentially comic situations.

III

Nevertheless, it is possible for the major principle of dramatic definition to be that of comic convention, with the necessary exaggerations and contrivances which that entails, and yet at the same time for the play to be informed in an active way by shifts in geographical and social setting. It is not that there is an uneasy alliance between the two sets of principles, the comic and the regional, a contest whereby one set eventually dominates at the expense of the other. The two sets can successfully coexist in a satisfying amalgam. An example is Harold Brighthouse's Hobson's Choice.

The major organisational principle of the play is dependent on comic reversals - the servant, Willie Mossop, eventually gets the better of his master, Hobson, and the old maid, Maggie Hobson, eventually turns out to have secured a marriage which is more satisfactory than the marriages of her apparently more eligible sisters whose social and sentimental pretensions are thus deflated. The setting of the play in

¹BrTLP 41.

²HW II, 241.

1880, some thirty-six years before it was first performed, stresses the ascendancy of the comic definition by divorcing the play from a ready relationship with contemporary reality. But the definition of individual events of the play is also dependent on a precise and concrete relation to the social, economic and geographical setting as is proclaimed by the stage directions describing Hobson's shop:

The business is prosperous, but to prosper in Salford in 1880 you did not require the elaborate accessories of a later day. A very important customer goes for fitting into Hobson's sitting-room. The rank and file use the cane chairs in the shop, which is dingy and business-like. The windows exhibit little stock, and amongst what there is clogs figure prominently.¹

The definition thus created has a direct relationship to the values and standards of the provincial lower middle-class tradesman class. Admittedly some events of the plot depend very little for their effectiveness on a relationship with this element of definition. For instance, the scene where Maggie drags the reluctant Will Mossop by his ear into the wedding chamber and the scene towards the end of the play where the ailing and helpless Hobson puts his three daughters to a test of their affection and worth partake respectively of the traditions of farce and of the austere, potentially tragic folk tale. Much of the drama, however, is subject to both principles of definition.

The initial positions of the characters can be seen as the created situation from which the comic action will then ensue. But their positions are also defined specifically by a system of relationships within a lower middle-class business. Mossop is emotionally and intellectually retarded by his absolute submission to Hobson's authority. Like a mole he pops up from the cellar, where he is forced to work, only when ordered to by his superiors. Maggie is established in the role of old maid at the beginning of the play, trapped by her age and her domestic and commercial usefulness to her father; as he puts it,

¹BrHC 1.

'Maggie's too useful to part with. And she's a bit on the ripe side for marrying'.¹ Hobson, complacent master of the business, is only dimly aware of the extent to which its success depends on Maggie's ability and is completely unaware of the extent to which it is dependent on Mossop's craftsmanship. The reversal of these initial positions forms the mainspring of the comic spirit of the play. But as well as conforming to an abstract sense of comic justice they also depend, partially at least, for their working out on a system of values and attitudes which inhere in the ways of living of the geographically and socially selected community Brighouse depicts.

The reversals of the fortunes and positions of Mossop and Hobson, former servant and master, although comic in effect, do not come about by comic trickery or the contrivances of a complicated plot but as a result of the success and failure of their businesses. Hobson's downfall is a result of the natural progression of alcoholism. It is established in the opening lines of the play that he drinks too much and consequently neglects his business; the ensuing decay of both his health and his business comes to a head in the last act. Mossop's triumph is the result of careful diligence and sound business sense and practice. His success is measured by a takeover of the firm of his previous master. That the comic resolution takes this particular form indicates the presence of elements of definition other than the comic.

The role played by Maggie is crucial in establishing the system of values which defines the judgements of characters and situations which are made in the play. Maggie herself is part of the dual system of definition. Her forceful dominance is her created comic character trait and it precipitates the comic reversals of the play, yet it also exists in a context determined by the pressures and urgency of the

¹BrHC 13.

position of a thirty year old spinster in this particular community. The experience, in Maggie's justification of her forcefulness, is precisely interrelated with the play's regional setting:

A Salford life's too near the bone to lose things through fear of speaking out.¹

Maggie chooses Mossop for her mate and is instrumental in the development which results in his eventual ascendancy. The old maid, who makes an at first sight unappealing and ill becoming match in an act of final desperation, but whose marriage eventually turns out to be the true coin which exposes the social pretensions and hollow sentimentality of other marriages is a typically comic convention. Maggie's forthrightness is essential to the exposition of the virtues of common sense and practicality which are effective in her exposure of her sisters and their marriages. But Maggie also introduces a system of values and assumptions which have a more precise relationship to the play's social setting than the exposure of pretentiousness by common sense.

Maggie initially proposes her relationship with Mossop as a business partnership, ideas about the necessity of love are sentimental nonsense. The relegation of the range of usual responses expected of romantic situations is necessary to the nonemotional element in their relationship which promotes the more farcical incidents. But what is important is what these romantic expectations are discarded in favour of. Their relationship is not a business arrangement by way of metaphor, although it is that; it is such an arrangement in actual fact. Maggie is the brains in the shop and Mossop is the hands in the work room. Together they make a successful business. A system of values is entailed by which Mossop is judged not as a poor choice but the best Maggie can do; he is valued at the highest rate. He is validated in proportion to his skill as a worker and to the fact that he is a master craftsman, no matter that his craft is making boots or that his hands are dirty. The

¹BrHC 16.

fact that his hands are 'clever', in terms of Maggie's values, far outweighs the values attached to social appearance and position subscribed to by her sisters.¹ From the timid and cowering Will Mossop of Act One to the attainment of the social and commercial confidence he displays in the last act, Maggie teaches Mossop the value of his worth. Mossop's talent, Maggie is right in believing, will eventually be recognised by a system of values which is the ultimate assessment of success in this community; as she tells her future brothers-in-law, 'Another twenty years and I know which of you three men 'ull be thought most of at the Bank'.²

Hobson's Choice is quite a traditional sort of play.

But, if we compare it to Jones's treatment of the lower middle-class tradesman class, its importance lies in Brighouse's allegiance to his material. The ways of living he depicts and the system of values which inhere in them are not, despite the comic exaggeration of the play, patronised or held up for uncharitable amusement at the expense of the particular geographical and social community presented. It is not necessary that those values should be endorsed by the action as they are in Hobson's Choice, but the shift in affiliation is important which means that regional or provincial experience is interesting in its own right and that legitimate drama, both serious and comic, can be created from and defined by that experience.

Lawrence's plays of the Nottinghamshire Derbyshire coalfield have a historical affinity with the Edwardian regional drama, with that conscious attempt to create drama of serious intention from regional experience. The remainder of this chapter will examine a small number of selected plays which indicate a concern of the regional drama movement to mediate a similar experience and to utilise similar principles of definition to those found in the colliery plays.

¹BrHC 14.

²BrHC 40.

III

The action of Githa Sowerby's Rutherford and Son, performed at the Court in 1912, takes place in midwinter and the play is suffused with an atmosphere of harsh gloom conveniently transposed from Scandinavia. The expression of the atmosphere seems to acquire accretions of metaphorical layers of meanings, as in the following exchange:

MARY. I wonder what it's like here when the sun shines!

ANN. Sun?

MARY. It doesn't look as if the summer ever came here.

But any sense of Ibsenite or universal metaphorical Weltschmerz is disposed of by the tone, aggressively deflatory, of Ann's rejoinder:

If ye're looking for the summer in the middle o' December ye'll no' get it. Ye'll soon get used to it. Ye've happened on a bad autumn for your first, that's all.¹

The harsh, gloomy atmosphere of the play emanates from more precise correlatives - the nature of the setting, the industrial north east, and, more particularly, from the hard conditions of the glass industry which supports the local community depicted. Though the major characters of the play are of the Rutherford family who own the glass works, and thus the play is concerned with presenting an action depicting the masters rather than the men, the Rutherford home is deliberately close enough to the works 'to admit of the master going to and from the Works in a few minutes' so that those conditions of actual work cannot be ignored as a presence, 'the dirt and the ugliness, the clatter and bang of the machinery, the sickening hot smell of the furnaces'.² The experience mediated is vastly different from Galsworthy's Strife where the board of directors and, to a certain extent, the chairman of the board himself are just visitors to the regional setting of the tin plate works and the action of the play. The Rutherford family are inescapably

SRS 6

²SRS 1 and 20.

related to and dependent on the regional setting and its industry just as the manual workers are.

The fact that Rutherford's grandfather was a manual worker, the same as many another, is crucial to the play. It betokens a mediation of a sense of industrial history and the Rutherford's affiliation to the region and its industry which does not exist in Galsworthy's play. Consider this exchange between Rutherford's son and daughter:

ANN. There was the beginnings of a strike once, years ago, and he stopped it then. The men at the furnaces struck work - said it was too hot for 'n. And your father he went doon into the caves and took his coat off afore them all, and pitched joost half as much coal again as the best of 'em - now!¹

JOHN. Yes, that's the sort of argument they can see - it catches hold of the brute in them. If the Guv'nor had sat quietly in his office and sent his ultimatum through the usual channels, he would have been the owner of Rutherford's, and the strike would have run its course. Shovelling coal in his shirt with his muscles straining, and the sweat pouring off him, he was "wor John" and there's three cheers for his fourteen stone of beef and muscle. That was all very well - thirty years ago.

The exchange is important for establishing this sense of industrial history and the relationship of Rutherford to it. In essence his vision of himself is as one of the men rather than the owner of the firm in the sense that John, who will inherit the firm, understands that term. But what is more important for the dramatic definition of the action of the play itself is contained in John's last comment. The definition arises from the specific relationship of the Rutherfords to this development within the industrial and local community.

Both of Rutherford's sons, Dick and John, represent a development of the set of their relationships to the local community which is created by shifts in their social status and educational opportunities. The very fact that these shifts are not generally available to the whole community, but are acquired partly because they are

¹SRS 20-1

the factory owner's sons and partly because of their father's money, is crucial to their definition and depends upon the mediation of the experience of their social and economic position within this particular community. The two sons and the daughter, Janet, are forced into an isolated and anomalous social position whereby they are too good to mix with local workers' families, but not good enough to mix with the true gentry of the local squirearchy. The experience of the daughter in particular is one of cruel deprivation. She is condemned to the fate of an old maid because of the lack of socially acceptable partners, and, in conforming to her father's idea of gentility, she lives a life of futile idleness. Her passionate outburst in the argument with her father indicates how Githa Sowerby has created a definition by reference to the relationships and ways of living within a particular industrial community:

The women down there know what I wanted... with their bairns wrapped in their shawls and their men to come home at night time. I've envied them - envied them their pain, their poorness - the very times they hadn't bread. Theirs isn't the dead empty house, the blank o' the moors; they got something to fight, something to be feared of. They got life, those women we send cans o' soup to out o' pity when their bairns are born. Me a lady! with work for a man in my hands, passion for a man in my heart! I'm common - common.¹

Any tendency to sentimentalisation of the privations of working-class experience is not a distortion of that experience by the author but is dramatically fitting as an expression of Janet's sense of her own position.

The provision of education for Dick at theological college has similarly alienated him from the concerns and attitudes of the community he is meant to serve as curate, a fact of which his father is astutely aware:

Well - perhaps a year or two at a Theological College wasn't the best of trainings for a raw hell like Grantley. It always beats me - whenever a man thinks it's his particular

¹SRS 77.

line to deal with humanity in the rough, he always goes to school like a bit of a lad to find out how to do it. ¹

It is not just the case that a theology college education is incapable of preparing a man for this particular community; in the organisation of the play, Rutherford himself is largely responsible for the isolation of Dick and his other son. The second part of Rutherford's comment suggests something of a contradictory impulse in the man. He provides the education necessary for his son's social and financial position yet seems to dislike the results, seems to dislike the inevitable developments which this education produces in both his family and his firm. He subverts any positions of respect or influence his sons may have either in the local community or within the firm of Rutherford's. This subversion may be unconscious in the case of Dick, a process of passive indifference towards the affairs of his curate son, but the play shows in action Rutherford's belittling and annulling of any position John may hold in the firm he is meant to inherit. Rutherford refuses to accept the threat to his ways of living and thinking which his sons represent precisely because of the education he has provided for them. He has felt obliged to bestow upon his sons an education befitting their position and then negates any value in the development this entails by reverting to the strength of his position as master of both family firm and the strength of a relationship to the local community which predates his sons.

The figure of Rutherford is central in creating not only a means of defining the drama by the precise location of characters in a system of relationships in what is mediated as a specific regional community. Rutherford is also central to another major means of definition - the firm of Rutherford's itself. The firm functions as a principle of definition not by reference to actual conditions of work but by acquiring a symbolic significance as characters are ranged in various attitudes towards

¹SRS 49.

and relationships with the concept of a family firm such as Rutherford's. Although, as I have suggested above, some sense of the actual conditions of the work process is mediated through the play, the fact that the action of the play and the experience of the firm is expressed by a self-conscious expansive metaphor indicates the way in which the firm works as a principle of definition:

Well, Moloch was a sort of a god - some time ago, you know, before Dick and his kind came along. They built his image with an ugly head ten times the size of a real head, with great wheels instead of legs, and set him up in the middle of a great dirty town... And they thought him a very important person indeed, and made sacrifices to him - human sacrifices - to keep him going, you know. Out of every family they set aside one child to be an offering to him when it was big enough, and at last it became a sort of honour to be dedicated in this way, so much so, that the victims gave themselves gladly to be crushed out of life under the great wheels.¹

Rutherford's importance lies in the eponymous relationship between the man and the firm which is inherent in the very nature of a family firm. A metaphorical equivalence between the two is established in the organisation of the play which makes it simultaneously a family and an industrial drama. Rutherford creates and imposes values and standards which automatically become those of the firm; he himself frequently becomes impersonal in attitude and the firm consequently takes on an existence and identity of its own. Thus, not by the nature of naturalistic determinant but by metaphorical suggestion, the firm itself becomes an active force in the play and is destructive of natural bonds and relationships of trust and love. These values are replaced by mercenary and commercial values finally realised at the end of the play when John's wife literally sells her own son to Rutherford and his firm.

Githa Sowerby's technique is by no means unique in the Edwardian drama, but the fact that she introduces and utilises as an element of a central organising metaphor a specific heavy industry precisely

¹SRS 22.

located within its own community shows a considerable movement towards Lawrence's own drama.

IV

Despite the presence of what is predominantly a working-class community as a means of definition in Rutherford and Son, the fact that the centre of the dramatic action is still located in the family of factory owners indicates that Githa Sowerby was not prepared to locate the primary dramatic interest in members of the working-class community itself. Serious and legitimate dramatic interest and significance is still invested in the depiction of the lives of a section of the community more dominant than the lives of the ordinary worker or the respectable poor.

In Rutherford and Son, the works owner, Rutherford, held a particular relationship to his men and to the local community because of his proximity to them. In Stanley Houghton's Hindle Wakes, we see something of this particular relationship between master and men in action. Thus, far more than in Rutherford and Son, much of the dramatic interest is invested in Christopher Hawthorn and his family whose experience is mediated as not being exceptional in the working-class community. They are defined specifically by the fact that Hawthorn is a workman, a slasher at Daisy Bank Mill, and by his position within the system of relationships in this particular community. Again the industrial and geographical setting of a Lancashire cotton town is crucial to the experience of the play. The visual fact of the physical proximity of the places of work established in the opening stage directions describing Hawthorn's home is not just a piece of local authentication. Nevertheless, only the first scene is set in Hawthorn's home; the rest of the play is set in the breakfast

room of the home of Nat Jeffcote, owner of Daisy Bank Mill. Houghton's own note draws attention to an inevitable contrast between the two sets: 'The scene for Act I, Scene I, should be very small, as a contrast to the room at the Jeffcotes'.¹ Hawthorn's house, as we have seen, is close to his work at the mills and Houghton provides a precise financial reference that it is rented at about 7s.6d. a week. Jeffcote's house is also provided with precise social and economic points of reference:

The breakfast-room at NATHANIEL JEFFCOTE's house, Bank Top, Hindle Vale, is almost vast, for the house is one of those great old-fashioned places standing in ample grounds that are to be found on the outskirts of the smaller Lancashire manufacturing towns. They are inhabited by wealthy manufacturers who have resisted the temptation to live at St. Anne's-on-the-Sea, or Blackpool.²

The dramatic function of the contrast is not instrumental as it so often is in Galsworthy's works in inducing an ethical judgement from the presentation of the two settings. (The ironic contrast between the manager's and worker's houses in Strife is an example). The dramatic function of the contrast in Hindle Wakes is expressive of certain sets of relationships within the community presented; it is not intended to arouse a liberal conscience.

The same is true of Houghton's treatment of class relationships. The situation from which the action of the play springs is that Hawthorn's daughter, Fanny, has gone away with Jeffcote's son, Alan, for a dirty weekend in north Wales. The resulting problem lies in proposals to right the wrong done to Fanny by arranging a marriage with Alan who is already engaged to Beatrice Farrar, the daughter of another mill owner. The intention is not to demonstrate the tangential meeting of what are seen as essentially culturally discrete social classes and provide an exposé of certain attitudes and values held. Houghton presents what is a more homogeneous experience, not a system of social class which is

¹HW II, 87.

²HW II, 104.

conceived vertically as in Galsworthy, but a system whereby a particular industrial community is conceived of as a broad horizontal band and can contain a social hierarchy within a single network of mores and values. The definition which informs Hindle Wakes is far from the class conscious definition of the seduction drama - the honest working girl seduced by the wicked social superior - despite the apparent similarity of the opening situation of the play to the convention of seduction drama.

The social and economic differences between the Hawthorn and Jeffcote families obviously contribute elements to the drama of the play. But Hawthorn and Jeffcote in younger days worked side by side in the mill and both their wives once worked on the looms; it is only foresight on the one hand and a missed opportunity on the other, when Jeffcote invested his savings in Trafalgar Mill and Hawthorn didn't, which has created the present difference between the two men. The experience which the play records is a development within the two individual families and a development within the industry itself which has taken place within one generation. The inconsequential chatter of the two men is of work in hand, and of the industrial history of the area. It is this sense of shared industrial experience which is of greater importance to their system of relationships in the community than the obvious differences between the two men. The experience of the play is that such differences are fortuitous and that in essence the culture, values, and ways of thinking of the two men are common and habitual.

It is within this framework of definition that the drama which arises from attitudes towards and values inhering in Alan's trip to Llandudno with Fanny lies. Jeffcote's outburst to his son indicates this quite clearly:

Thou cursed young fool! I could find it in my heart to take a strap to thee, so I could. Why hadn't thou the sense to pay for thy pleasures, instead of getting mixed up with a straight girl? I've never kept thee short of brass. And if thou must have a straight girl, thou might have kept off one from the mill. Let alone her father's one of my oldest friends.¹

Alan's behaviour is not defined by reference to the absolute morality of seduction drama, or by reference to the threat to ordered society which is provoked by sexual irregularity and misalliance in the society drama. Fanny's mother insists upon a marriage between her daughter and Alan Jeffcote with rather more an eye on the main chance of Fanny marrying into money than a belief that Fanny is dishonoured and moral reparation must be made. Conventional morality is subsumed by the opportunity she sees for her daughter to better herself within the economic and social relationships of this particular community. Jeffcote's injunction that Alan's engagement to Beatrice Farrar must be called off and that he must marry Fanny is based on a concept of honesty which again is not dependent on an absolute system of morality. It is dependent on a sense of decency and fair play which is defined by the relationship between Jeffcote and Hawthorn within the historical context of this community. The formation of Jeffcote's values and loyalty predates his present social position, and by refusing to settle the matter with a cheque he refuses to accept a mode of behaviour which is now open to him because of change in his financial and social position. It is also made quite clear that Mrs Jeffcote's attempts to protect her son from what she considers to be a socially undesirable match indicate an overriding allegiance to her relatively new found social position and require a denial of what are mediated as the communal values of her husband. The possibility of a Galsworthian definition by social class is precluded. Because of the system of relationships and values in this community, social class is not such an important

¹HW II, 124.

attribute in a wife as her usefulness to a man's work. Jeffcote is proud that his own wife helped him to make money and was not merely socially decorative. By this standard Fanny, a loom worker, as was Mrs Jeffcote herself, is as likely to make a suitable wife for his son as anyone else. A principle which was utilised largely for comic effect in Hobson's Choice is mediated in Hindle Wakes as a value determined by the matrix of the pressures of class, economics, and work in this particular community.

Alan Jeffcote represents a development within the community. The development is quite precisely defined by what the play suggests about his education and by the way in which the play shows that his father wants to consolidate his own acquired wealth and position. The process which is being enacted will in effect create a new set of relationships particularly of social class; Jeffcote explains to his wife:

Why did I buy a motorcar? Not because I wanted to go motoring. I hate it. I bought it so that people could see Alan driving about in it, and say: 'There's Jeffcote's lad in his new car. It cost five hundred quid.' Tim Farrar was so keen on getting his knighthood for the same reason. Every one knows that him and me started life in a weaving shed. That's why we like to have something to show 'em how well we've done. That's why we put some of our brass into houses and motors and knighthoods and fancy articles of the kind.¹

Fanny is crucial to the play, for it is her refusal to marry Alan which provides the resolution to the problem. Yet, although we can make certain assumptions about her education and the like, such determinants in her case do not figure in the play as defining elements. I don't think that, in Hindle Wakes, it is the case that Houghton was unwilling or unable to provide a definition for the daughter of one of the workers which relates her to developments within the community but was willing and able to do so for the son of the mill owner. Rather it is the case that Fanny's attitudes and values emanate from concepts which are

¹HW II, 106-7.

unrelated to the regional and industrial definition which informs the rest of the play.

I have suggested that the dramatic definition of the central situation of the play is not that of seduction melodrama, but the dramatic effectiveness of her refusal to marry emanates from what is a refutation of the theatrical expectation dependent on the values of the tradition of seduction melodrama. Fanny's final claim that her independence is financial and is a result of local industrial conditions, 'I'm a Lancashire lass, and so long as there's weaving sheds in Lancashire I shall earn enough brass to keep me going', is unconvincing as a means of definition primarily because it is unsupported throughout the rest of the play.¹ The tone seems to me to be an example of a regional chauvinism, endorsed by Houghton, but which is not very helpful in the creation of a definition dependent on the precise delineation of a regional community. The strength of the independence and feminism she exhibits is dependent on another theatrical tradition, a tradition of the minority theatre. John W. Cunliffe was undoubtedly correct when he sensed that

Fanny, with her downrightness, is perhaps the most attractive of the tribe of Ibsen's Nora, from whom she obviously descends.²

v

The Price of Coal, a short one act play by Harold Brighouse, is, in relation to Lawrence's colliery plays, extremely interesting for it shifts the action entirely into a socially selective setting of the hard manual labouring class, particularly so for its choice of a colliery setting. Before discussing the play in detail, a note on the two dialect versions is necessary.

¹HW II, 179.

²John W. Cunliffe, Modern English Playwrights, p. 159.

The play was first staged in 1909 by the Scottish Repertory Theatre at Glasgow. For this performance the play was 'freely translated' into the dialect of Lanarkshire, and it was this 'translation' which was first published in 1911.¹ The original Lancashire version of the play had to wait until 1926 for its publication in John Hampden's anthology Nine Modern Plays. The fact that the play was 'translated' in this way indicates the consciousness within the regional movement of the relevance of a particular piece and the dialect in which it is written to the community to which it is presented. What is more interesting for the present study is the effect of the 'translation'. The Lancashire version includes far more dialect words and notates the regional pronunciation of words to a far greater extent than any of the other examples of regional drama I am considering. This is undoubtedly due to the particular social selectivity of this play - all of the characters are members of mining families. The effect of this is that we are disposed to accept that the tone and rhythm as well as any dialect are in themselves the expression of the ways of living and thinking of this very specific social group. The Lanarkshire version is in some instances a true translation; for example, the Lancashire miner's 'baggin'' becomes the Scottish miner's 'piece' (what Lawrence's miners would call 'snap').² This sort of accuracy, particularly in matters of pit slang, is extremely important to the creation of the sense we have of these characters belonging to a mining community. But frequently the 'translation' is no more than an indication that the words of the Lancashire version are to be spoken in a Scots accent. And on occasion the specificity on which the effectiveness of the dialect depends is completely lost as when the Lancashire is paraphrased into English with a Scots accent:

Lancashire version: Yo're nobbut having me on a piece o' string all time.

¹ BrPCa 56; BrPCb 5.
² BrPCa 62; BrPCb 17.

Scottish version: Ye're only keeping me in suspense.¹

What is lost in such instances, and in the Lanarkshire version as a whole in a more nebulous way, is the effect of a particular use of language which is expressive of and in part mediates a particular experience.²

What is printed as the opening stage directions of the play constitutes a preface and indicates a remarkable conception from which the play springs. Despite its length it is worth quoting in full:

Modern industrialism has evolved its special types, and the Lancashire collier is small and wiry. He swings a pickaxe for hours on end crouched in an impossibly small space in heated atmosphere, and physique on the grand scale is unsuited to such conditions. He takes tremendous risks as part of his daily routine. His recreations are, to a fastidious taste, coarse. He works hard under ground, and plays hard above ground. Constrained attitude is so much his second nature that he sits in perfect comfort on his haunches, in the pictured pose of the mild Hindu, his back to a wall, discussing, amongst expectoration - a long row of him - football, dogs, his last spree and his next, the police reports, women.

Altogether a most unpleasant person, this undersized, foul-mouthed, sporting hewer of coal - until you come to know him better, to discover his simplicity of soul, his directness, his matter-of-fact self-sacrifice, the unconscious heroism of his life; and to lose sight of his superficial frailties in your admiration for his finer qualities.

The womenkind of the colliers are marked by the life of the pits no less than the men. They are rough, capable housewives, dressing with more care for durability than effect, tolerant of their menfolk's weaknesses, and, above all, stamped with the pit-side stoicism apt to be mistaken for callousness. The sudden death of their breadwinner is an everyday hazard, accepted without complaint and without concealment as part of their life. Like their husbands, they exist from hand to mouth on the brink of eternity. Thrift, when any day's work may be your last, seems a misplaced virtue. Lean fare approaches as pay-day recedes, and illness, meagrely provided for by membership of a "sick" society, is tided over in the main by the unfailing generosity of neighbours whose own table suffers by the charity.³

Brighouse's concept of the lives of the miners and their families is that they are formed and determined by a Darwinian naturalism dependent

¹BrPCa 61-2; BrPCb 17.

²Discussion will henceforth be of the original Lancashire version.

³BrPCa 57-8.

on the precise conditions of work and environment. Whether this concept, though worthy, consists of generalisation, sentimentality, and even caricature is less important than its indication of a belief that such material is worthy of dramatic presentation and that there is a technique by which the material can be turned into drama. It is an attempt to create the experience, and create drama from that experience, of the habitual and common modes of behaviour, values and ways of thinking which are the property of this particular industrial community. Unfortunately the play itself does not measure up to its concept. The women of the play exemplify the qualities attributed to them in the opening lines, but Jack, the only miner in the play, turns out to be not the sort of miner described, but more of a working-class romantic lead.

Much of the early part of the play is superficially very similar to A Collier's Friday Night in its presentation of documentary details of mining life. The stage directions notate closely the start and preparations of what appears to be the start of any day - the rising, making cocoa and the miner's lunch. These details are certainly expressive of certain ways of living and they are of undoubted significance in that Brighouse is prepared to mediate this experience as being sufficiently interesting and worthy for dramatic presentation. But, unlike the function of such details in A Collier's Friday Night, they are not part of the dramatic definition of the play; they do not contribute to create the drama or define dramatic relationships within the play.

Mining experience is utilised in the tendential way suggested by the title and is elaborated upon by Jack's mother:

Theer's wimmin as keeps house in the places th' coal goas
to as pays for their coal wi' brass. We pay for it a sight
heavier here. We pays wi' the lives o' men.¹

¹BrPCa 70.

The pit accident which occurs in the play is inescapably related to this attitude. The women's laconic reminiscences of the horrific details of previous accidents mediates the industrial history of this community and the values and ways of thinking which it has engendered. But the primary dramatic effect of the women's talk supports the tendency of the play by becoming an explicit polemic about the hazardous conditions of the mining industry. Brighthouse is capable of quite subtle statements of this sort; a neighbour, Polly, comments that her menfolk would have been involved in the pit accident if they hadn't have missed work because they were sleeping off the effects of their previous night's drinking. This incident is capable of the polemic which is implicit in the findings of a Sheffield doctor, cited in Engels' The Conditions of the Working Class in England, on the effects of grinders inhaling metallic particles:

Grinding is a most pernicious trade; so much so, that they who frequent the beer-houses, and are the greatest drinkers among the grinders, are sometimes the longest lived, owing to their more frequent absence from their work.¹

However, these elements are subordinated by the fact that the ultimate organising principle of the play is that it is essentially a romantic vignette. The accident and the women's talk, which stresses the danger of the accident, become emotional levers in what is a sentimental tale. Mary, who has been courted by Jack, whimsically refuses to answer his proposal of marriage until after his shift. Until his safe return at the end of the play the dramatic tension and suspense arise from the fact that he may have died not knowing that she intended to say yes. The tension is released when Jack enters with no more injury than a broken arm. The tone of the dramatic resolution is created by Mary's acceptance of his proposal and Jack's pleased response in the final speech of the play:

¹Friedrich Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England, p.230.

A'll goa round an' see parson about putting up th' banns
 when my arm's set. A'll be having soom time on my hands.
 A reckon getting wed 'ull fill 'un in nicely.¹

The ending is not impossible nor necessarily unrealistic. Sentimental it is, hackneyed it may be. But sentimental and hackneyed situations are capable of powerful emotional response both in real life and on the stage. The effect in terms of the dramatic organisation of the play is to render null and void the mediation, earlier in the play, of the experiences of mining life as an element of definition. The price of coal now, it seems, is a broken arm and the winning of your heart's desire. Despite the similarity of subject matter the use to which such material is put within the drama is very different from Lawrence's colliery plays.

VI

Elizabeth Baker's play Chains shows a clear allegiance not only to the experience of the respectable poor as interesting and worthy dramatic material, but it is also the play which most consistently uses that experience alone as a means of defining the drama. Elizabeth Baker chooses possibly the least sensational discrete working group she can, clerks living in suburban London, and from that material, which the common standard of the Edwardian theatre considered dramatically intractable, she creates a very satisfying drama whose definition resides in the fact that these people and their families belong to this upper working-class group.

Charley Wilson, dissatisfied in his work, wants to throw it up and follow a fellow clerk, Tennant, who has done that in order to emigrate to a farming life in Australia. It is Charley's suggestion that he would like to do the same and the opposition which he meets,

¹BrPCa 74.

which creates the drama of the play. The dramatic definition is thus created from the mediation of an experience of a particular sort of work and the ways of living and thinking it engenders.

Because of the organisation of the play, much of it is necessarily a polemic about the stultifying conditions of work which have to be directly stated and explained, not without some passion, by Charley Wilson in his defence of his plan. His self-respect and, he claims, the self-respect of all like him is reduced not just by the tedium of the work, but by the whittling down of wages which they are all too timid to fight once they have got a secure job. The financial reference is important to the quality of their lives and figures in creating the drama of the play. Their only prospect of advancement and earning more money is to become a head clerk, 'a sort of policeman over the other chaps'.¹

What is more interesting than Charley's or Tennant's revolt is the conflict which he has with his wife's family who meet his plans with blank incomprehension. For here is mediated the habitual ways of thinking, the values and attitudes held which constitute the chains of the title which fetter Charley to his desk. The chief chain is clearly financial. Charley barely earns enough and he cannot threaten that little by offending his employers by signs of dissatisfaction. The elements of steadiness and regularity and security against which he chafes are the very things which, in the eyes of the others, make his job so satisfactory. The conflict of ideas from which the drama springs is defined by the experience of work in this social group. What the play also does is mediate the existence of a network of values and attitudes created by the experience of work which are in themselves ramifications of the central attitude towards work.

Because of the values held by the others in the play, Charley's

¹BC 19.

attitude towards his work as a clerk and his plans to leave for Australia and establish himself there before his wife's arrival lead to his condemnation as a wife deserter, a shirker of duty both social and religious, and a socialist agitator. The last attack is more of a jibe from one of the characters, but the other attitudes are mediated as part of a single interdependent system whose solidity and strength is formidable when the arguments which support it are expressed by Charley's mother-in-law:

Suppose we all stopped work when we didn't like it? A pretty muddle the world would be in. Charley is forgetting there is such a thing as duty... Do you expect work to be pleasant? Does anybody ever like work? The idea is absurd. Anyone would think work was to be pleasant. You don't come into the world to have pleasure. We've got to do our duty, and the more cheerfully we can do it, the better for ourselves and everybody else.¹

The mindless fatuity of what Charley Wilson is up against is expressed by their anthem, the hymn 'Count your blessings'. The final link in the chain, which squashes Wilson's dream, is the inevitable result of one of the first links in the chain, his marriage. At the end of the play Lily Wilson announces that she is pregnant and complacent chirrup her favourite hymn as the curtain falls.

The effect of parts of Chains seems too consciously polemical, too programmatic. But the play is, despite this, undoubtedly the most similar in dramatic method to Lawrence's colliery plays in its reliance on the experience of a specific sort of work and its attendant ways of thinking as a means of creating and defining the drama.

VII

My selection of certain plays from the regional drama indicates that there is frequently an affinity between that movement's area of subject matter and the subject matter of the colliery plays. Some of the plays I have discussed also employ similar techniques and principles

¹BC 46.

of definition and organisation to those of the colliery plays. Yet often other, sometimes more dominant, elements of definition are present in the regional drama; that is true of the polemical elements in Chains despite the similarity of much of its technique. It is these other elements which were sufficiently familiar to an Edwardian audience to give the plays their limited success. What marks the colliery plays' divergence from the regional drama and resulted in the consequent misunderstanding of Lawrence's drama is the consistency with which Lawrence employs certain organising and defining principles. I shall discuss the nature of these principles in the final chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

LAWRENCE AND THE THEATRE

1. Lawrence's experience of playgoing

I

It is something of a truism in making introductory remarks about Lawrence's literary criticism and experience of reading to state that there is no single source in his work to which one can turn for a summary of his thought. The Studies in Classic American Literature and various essays in the posthumous volumes of Phoenix are self-contained commentaries on literature, but what constitutes an overall critical opinion and reaction to literature is the collation and interconnecting of random remarks and comments from the rest of his work; not least, of course, from the letters.

This is no less true of Lawrence's commentary on dramatists and the theatre, except that the problems of establishing a corpus of thought from eclectic comments are magnified in this sphere. Whereas there exist self-contained essays on certain writers of fiction, Hardy, Galsworthy, and the American novelists, for example, there is no such treatment of dramatists or the theatre. The nearest thing to such essays are Lawrence's description of his visits to the local Italian theatre at Lago di Garda in Twilight in Italy and the preface to his play Touch and Go. Neither is there, in terms of volume, anything like the amount of scattered commentary on the drama as there is on the fiction. Consequently there is less of that limited sense of cohesiveness in Lawrence the critic of plays and playwriting than there is in Lawrence the critic of the art and function of the novelist. Nevertheless, by documenting his experience of reading and seeing plays, and by using the implications of some of his pronouncements on fiction as a commentary on the drama, some sense of Lawrence's attitude to individual dramatists and to the drama in general can be established.

II

It is common for critics to treat Lawrence's plays and their genesis as literary. This attitude generally takes two forms. The first is that Lawrence's job was writing fiction and that he had no business to be dabbling in a genre to which he was unsuited. This is the attitude taken by Eric Bentley, who, in The Playwright as Thinker, links Lawrence with other modern novelists and poets who tried to write plays, and places him in a tradition of nineteenth-century closet drama:

There is hardly an important modern writer - not Auden, nor Joyce, nor Lawrence, nor Henry James - who has not fancied himself as a dramatist with largely unhappy consequences. The list could be extended back through the nineteenth century to the earliest Romanticists, nearly all of whom (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Byron) wrote bad plays in verse.¹

The second form of the attitude is that Lawrence was not a practical man of the theatre and that this is reflected in his own dramatic efforts. The implication is that Lawrence's experience of drama was from the armchair and the printed page and not that of the stalls and stage. Arthur E. Waterman, in his generally dismissive article, 'The Plays of D.H. Lawrence', claims erroneously that Lawrence 'rarely went to the theater, so his knowledge of the drama was fairly well limited to texts rather than stage presentation.'² It will be useful, therefore, in establishing Lawrence's experience of drama, particularly the modern drama, to try and make a distinction between his experience of playgoing and his experience of reading plays, and to lay some stress on the former. At the same time, one must beware of the temptation of getting carried away in the opposite direction and declare, as the author of the catalogue of the 'Young Bert' exhibition of 1972 in Nottingham did, that Lawrence had a 'passionate addiction to theatre-going.'³

¹Eric Bentley, The Playwright as Thinker, p.76.

²Arthur E. Waterman, 'The Plays of D.H. Lawrence', p. 349.

³Nottingham Festival Committee, Young Bert: An Exhibition of the Early Years of D.H. Lawrence, p.30.

III

One opportunity which did exist for Lawrence to gain some experience of practical theatre was through amateur dramatics. The turn of the century witnessed an upsurge of the amateur drama movement. The Nottingham Amateur Dramatic Society, for instance, gave its first performance in April 1902 with H.V. Esmond's sentimental comedy, One Summer's Day. There were also innumerable 'vocal and dramatic recitals', benefit and fund raising concerts given in the small mining towns of the Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire coalfield during the period preceding the First World War. Lawrence's group of trainee-teacher friends, the Pagans, who attended Ilkeston Pupil Teacher Centre could have provided the nucleus for an amateur drama group, although there is no evidence of them actually participating in this form of pastime. The fact that the exhibit for the Pagans in the 'Young Bert' exhibition took the form of an imitation Victorian theatre bill is somewhat misleading in this respect.

One event involving Lawrence, however, is clearly recalled by May Holbrook:

During Bert's last year at the teacher's training centre... a play was put on by the students, and he gave me a ticket, saying his mother and elder sister... were also going. He sat with me when not with the players, and excitedly pointed out a tall, fair girl taking a prominent part as the one most heartily to be applauded.¹

Lawrence's exact role in the proceedings is not clear; but quite possibly the evening's entertainment was akin to a social evening given by the Ilkeston Assistant Teacher's Association in 1904 which provided a 'programme of varied character, consisting of humorous sketches, songs, dances and violin solos'.²

Whilst Lawrence was studying at the University College in Nottingham the students also engaged in amateur dramatics. Professor Boulton conjectures that a letter appended to the volume of Lawrence's letters

¹ N III, 598

² Ilkeston Pioneer, 11 November 1904, p.8

to Louie Burrows, Lawrence in Love, was written by Lawrence for Louie to send to her French pen-friend; Lawrence mentions that 'Tous les Samedis nous avons des assemblées du "Students Associations"'. Nous nous rencontrons à sept heures du soir dans le Collège pour un discours, un concert, ou un petit drama'.¹ Lawrence specifically refers to 'La Medée de Euripide' which was given in the summer of 1908. Other pieces given during Lawrence's time there were The Tempest in 1906 and The Rivals in 1907. A 'French and German Dramatic and Musical Entertainment' was staged in April 1907, with the interesting actress Mrs. E. Weekley playing the part of Lotte, the maid, in Fulda's Unter Vier Augen. The student dramatic evenings were an annual occurrence, but seem to have been more dramatic readings than actual performances, though costume and unelaborate stage arrangements were used to enhance the atmosphere.² Lawrence says on Louie's behalf, 'J'aime beaucoup nos Soirs de Samedi', but whether Lawrence was as enthusiastic as she was is unclear.³ He does not appear to have played any major participatory role in these affairs, which is hardly surprising for the young man who had the two train journeys to Eastwood and back each day and was engaged in writing his first novel; as the uncritical drama critic of The Gong reports of The Medea, 'the work put in must have been enormous'.⁴

At school in Croydon, Lawrence was actively involved in the production of school plays: Yeats' one act comedy The Pot of Broth, and the oriental delights of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves were presented. An interesting sidelight into Lawrence's attitude to stage production is that six of his pupils were orphans from the English Actor's Home, some bearing 'well-known names connected in the past with

¹LIL 174.

²The Medea, however, was given a full performance, and 'none of the characters read so much as a single line' (The Gong, 14 (July 1908), p. 8).

³LIL 174.

⁴The Gong, 14 (July 1908), pp. 8-9.

the English stage'. After the initial rehearsals, Lawrence remarked, 'These actor boys know more than we do about this kind of thing. We can't teach them the beginnings of play acting. Let them run this show as they think fit'.¹ Lawrence did not have, it seems, the disregard for the professional skills of the theatrical profession that is frequently imputed ~~to reside in~~ novelists who attempt to write drama.

IV

The fact that Lawrence was a voracious reader, particularly in the pre-war period when he wrote most of his plays, has been amply demonstrated by Rose Marie Burwell.² His play-going activities were inevitably far less frequent than his forays between book covers and are far from as well documented. In this respect it is as well to recall some well-trodden areas of Lawrence biography to gain perspective on Lawrence the play-goer.

Lawrence was born and spent the first twenty-three years of his life in Eastwood, 'a mining village of some three thousand souls, about eight miles from Nottingham', clearly not the place to expect much in the way of theatrical entertainment.³ Lawrence's scholarship to the Nottingham High School, his short-lived employment at Heywood's, the manufacturer of surgical appliances, and his time as a student at the University College studying for the Teacher's Certificate brought him into closer contact with what Nottingham, the nearest city of any size, could offer. The three years between 1908 and 1911, Lawrence spent in Croydon teaching and had access for the first time to the London theatres. Shortly following this, Lawrence eloped to the continent with Frieda, and, apart from the war years which were mostly

¹N I, 87.

²See Rose Marie Burwell, 'A Catalogue of D.H. Lawrence's Reading from Early Childhood', DHLR, 3 (1970), 193-324; and 'Addenda to a Catalogue of D.H. Lawrence's Reading from Early Childhood', DHLR, 6 (1973), 86-99.

³p 133

spent away from any large English city (and thus any centre of theatrical activity), Lawrence left England in 1919 and returned for only infrequent visits. Lawrence's experience of visiting English theatres is restricted, by necessity, to a period prior to 1912. Conveniently, this period can be considered to constitute the formative years of Lawrence the playwright.

Although Eastwood suffered some theatrical deprivation, it was not altogether devoid of theatrical activity. It was served by troupes of travelling players performing under canvas. The most popular of these troupes was Teddy Rayner's, which, according to Harry T. Moore, did such good business that it sometimes stayed for months in the Eastwood area.¹ William Holbrook, in a letter to Edward Nehls, wrote of them:

Here I must explain who this Rayner outfit were. They were travelling showmen, one night stand of actors which visited the hamlets around England. The price was 2 pence. Planks (rough seats) were provided, but the wealthy Tycoons could be accommodated with a strip of carpet, but this luxury cost 6 pence or half a bob, known by the public as a Tanner. The cast included all the Rayner family, two or three generations of them.²

This theatre was not the place for high drama, as Lawrence's own recollections of a performance of Hamlet shows:

When I was a child I went to the twopenny travelling theatre to see Hamlet. The Ghost had on a helmet and a breastplate. I sat in pale transport.
'Amblet, 'Amblet, I am thy father's ghost.'
Then came a voice from the dark, silent audience, like a cynical knife to my fond soul:
'Why tha arena, I can tell thy voice.'³

Whatever this theatre's shortcomings as a purveyor of Shakespeare, melodrama of violent crime, such as Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street or Maria Marten, or the Murder in the Red Barn, was better appreciated by its audience. Lawrence looked back to the scenes of his

¹See Harry T. Moore, The Priest of Love, p.34.

²N III, 746.

³TI 82.

Eastwood childhood when he wrote in The White Peacock:

It was Saturday... and the lads ran off to the little travelling theatre that had halted at Westwold... They sat open-mouthed in the theatre, gloriously nicknamed the 'Blood-Tub', watching heroes die with much writhing, and heaving, and struggling up to say a word, and collapsing without having said it.¹

The obvious delight that Lawrence takes in describing Houghton's Pleasure Palace in The Lost Girl shows that Lawrence had more than a nodding acquaintance with similar popular entertainment. But the last word on the zest and enthusiasm that such shows aroused rests with William Holbrook:

This tribe of Yemen got so carried away with their blood-and-thunder performance that they staged a real blood-letting performance on each other, much to our delight. Then we were getting 2 pennyworth. This, needless to say, was super de luxe to the intended play, which was Sweenie Todd the Barber or The Murder in the Red Barn. All this was enacted in a much worn old tent, and was lighted by coal oil flares.²

Nottingham, on the other hand, was graced with static professional theatres, and was mainly served, as were many other provincial towns, with tours of popular second-hand West End material, which was described, with varying degrees of accuracy, as London successes. This was the main bill of fare at the Theatre Royal which frequently claimed in its advertising to be showing the 'entire London production'. There was also the Grand Theatre where the entertainment was provided by visiting companies, but with a greater tendency towards the melodramatic vein. Similar was the King's Theatre, but this theatre, which started presenting plays just after the turn of the century, presaged the fate of many others and was showing programmes made completely from movies before Lawrence left for Croydon. The Empire and Barrasford's Royal Hippodrome were variety houses.

Occasionally, during the early years of the century, the minority drama reached Nottingham. Shaw's Captain Brassbound's Conversion with

¹WP 80.

²N III, 746.

Ellen Terry was presented in 1908, and Maeterlinck's Pelleas and Melisande was given for a single night in 1905 with Sarah Bernhardt and Mrs Patrick Campbell. In both cases the plays had the drawing power of big names behind them. An anonymous historian of the twentieth-century Nottingham theatre has commented,

The town was recognised as a No. 1 date for musical comedies, but a doubtful one from a box office point of view for 'straight' plays... I recall, too, an early visit of a touring company with Ibsen's 'A Doll's House' which played to empty houses; while an early tour of the Birmingham Repertory, presenting two contemporary comedies, 'The Cassilis Engagement' of St. John Hankin, and 'David Ballard' by Charles McEvoy, was also scantily supported.¹

Unfortunately for Lawrence and his plays, there was no repertory theatre in Nottingham, as there was in other provincial cities. Such a venture would not only have built up a tradition of support for tours from repertory companies, such as the one from Birmingham which visited Nottingham, but may have provided an outlet for and established a school of local dramatists as happened in Manchester. Nottingham eventually got a repertory theatre of sorts in 1921 when Virginia Compton, mother of Fay Compton and Compton Mackenzie, took over the Grand with a short-lived repertory venture. Amongst the plays represented was a poetic drama in the tradition of Stephen Phillips called A Tale of Young Lovers; whatever the merits of the play, the significant fact is that the author was a local Nottingham writer, Cecil Roberts.

The most substantial, single record of Lawrence's trips to the theatre is in Jessie Chambers' account of Lawrence's early life. She recalls, 'We went to the theatre occasionally'.² That it was only occasionally is hardly surprising, when not only the cost of the seats, but the cost and effort of the eight mile journey to and from Nottingham are taken into consideration. They saw Macbeth and Hamlet, the latter

¹Uncatalogued manuscript deposited in the Local Studies Department of County Library, Nottingham.

²ET 108

making Lawrence 'intensely excited'.¹ Jessie gives an interesting insight into Lawrence's attitude to play-going at that time. 'Going to the theatre,' she comments, 'was the same as reading, Lawrence identified himself with the play, and for the time being lived in its atmosphere.'² The intense, personal attitude and involvement which Lawrence had towards characters in novels, a feature which is present in much of his later literary criticism as well as in his youthful reactions, applies as much to the stage as to his reading.

An illustration of this tendency is his extravagant reaction to Sarah Bernhardt who visited Nottingham as Marguerite Gautier in La Dame aux Camelias in June 1908. Jessie reports:

The next day he wrote to me that the play had so upset him that at the end he rushed from his place and found himself battering at the doors until an attendant came and let him out. He ran to the station to find the last train gone, and he had to walk home [obviously another of the hazards of visiting the theatre in Nottingham]. He added, 'I feel frightened. I realize that I, too, might become enslaved to a woman.' On the Saturday afternoon he came up and told us all about the play, and showed us how Sarah Bernhardt died in the last scene. He looked quite worn out with emotion.³

A letter to Blanche Jennings describes Bernhardt's performance with something of the gauche enthusiasm of the young man, summing her up as 'the incarnation of wild emotion', and the representation of the 'primeval passions of woman'. Lawrence is more restrained about his flight from the theatre, not mentioning it to his friend in Liverpool, but hints darkly, 'Take care about going to see Bernhardt. Unless you are very sound, do not go... it is too much in one evening'.⁴

Another play that Jessie claims Lawrence and she saw in Nottingham was Galsworthy's Strife, '... and on another occasion we saw Galsworthy's Strife'.⁵ When she visited Lawrence in Croydon and they lunched with Ford Madox Hueffer and Violet Hunt, she further mentions, 'We said we had seen Galsworthy's Strife in the theatre

¹ET 108.
²ET 109.

³ET 109.
⁴L 59.

⁵ET 109.

at Nottingham', and briefly records a conversation with Hueffer about the play.¹ This reference at the end of November 1909 would seem to refer to a recent occasion, and indeed, Strife had been presented by a touring company at the Theatre Royal, Nottingham for a week commencing 6 September 1909. However, Lawrence could not have been in Nottingham that week to be able to see the play with Jessie. The school term in Croydon began on 30 August, and there is no reason to believe that Lawrence was not at his post. A letter to Louie written and posted on the afternoon of 11 September, the last night of the run of Strife in Nottingham, demonstrates that Lawrence was in Croydon and miles from Nottingham. Interestingly, the letter shows that Lawrence actually knew of the play's performance in Nottingham:

I wish I were in Nottingham at this moment - it is two o'clock - to be going with you to the theatre. I should very much like to see Strife.²

In his next letter to Louie, dated 17 October 1909, the comment about his visit to Tristan and Isolde that he 'would much rather have seen Strife', suggests that Lawrence had not seen the play by that date.³ Jessie's statement that they saw the play together in Nottingham would seem to be incorrect. Despite the convincing circumstantial detail surrounding Jessie's account, if she saw the play in Nottingham, she saw it without Lawrence. Neither is it the case that Jessie merely mistook the venue of the play. Jessie's visit to Croydon at the Easter of 1909 did not coincide with the initial run of Strife in London (9 March to 3 April 1909), so it is unlikely that they saw the play together there.

This reference of Jessie's has been reiterated without qualification in several places. In Harry T. Moore's biography of

¹ET 172

²L 138

³L 140

Lawrence, The Priest of Love, its appearance is merely an incorrect fact reported.¹ Its appearance in Sylvia Sklar's The Plays of D.H. Lawrence carries with it certain implications by the very fact that the reference is made in a specific statement about Lawrence as a playwright.² But the greatest danger becomes apparent in Michael Marland's introduction to The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd and The Daughter-in-Law where the supposed event is used to underpin part of his argument on Lawrence's experience of the theatre whilst writing his colliery plays. 'It is particularly interesting,' he writes, 'that Lawrence knew Strife for it represents the successful 'serious' play of the time'.³

Lawrence did eventually get to know Strife as he refers closely to the play in the preface to his own play Touch and Go.

V

Lawrence also made trips to the opera when it visited Nottingham. Jessie mentions that they saw the D'Oyley Carte Opera with Gilbert and Sullivan, and Il Trovatore and Tannhauser, all of which were regular visitors to the Theatre Royal. And it is visits to the opera which Lawrence frequently mentions in his letters to Louie Burrows from Croydon. Lawrence twice proposed trips to the opera together on her visits, to see Lucia di Lammermoor and Puccini's La Fanciulla del West. He also saw Puccini's La Bohème, Saint-Saens' Samson and Delilah, Cavalleria Rusticana and Pagliacci, Strauss's Elektra, and some Wagner, Tristan and Isolde, Lohengrin, and Siegfried. From his comments on

¹See Harry T. Moore, The Priest of Love, p.111.

²See Sylvia Sklar, The Plays of D.H. Lawrence, p.22.

³D.H.Lawrence, The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd and The Daughter-in-Law, with an introduction by Michael Marland, p. xvii.

the latter it is clear that he had heard others from the Ring cycle. Lawrence's ideas crystallised into a conflict between German and Italian opera. 'I love Italian opera,' he claimed, 'It's so reckless. Damn Wagner and his bellowings at fate and death.' The Italian opera was 'natural, naive, inartistic and refreshing', it was just like the games of charades that they used to play, Lawrence reckoned. He liked 'the Italians who run all on impulse, and don't care about their immortal souls, and don't worry about the ultimate'.¹ His views on opera are important as a preliminary exposition of his ideas on northern and southern consciousness which were to develop later and become a decisive factor in his attitude towards the modern European drama represented by the works of Ibsen and Strindberg.

Lawrence's years in Croydon made available to him the range of the Edwardian London stage. However, the plays we know Lawrence saw during this period are mostly trivial pieces now almost totally forgotten. They represent the typical entertainment of the Edwardian commercial theatre, and on the whole Lawrence was adequately amused by them. An exception to this general rule was his reaction to Justin McCarthy's The Proud Prince: a Story of Robert, King of Sicily, which he saw at the Lyceum in September 1909; 'never saw such rot in my life', he told Louie.² There were several other plays of a popular nature which he saw. He visited the Garrick with Jessie during her visit of November 1909 to see Making a Gentleman, by the second wave society dramatist Alfred Sutro.³ In October 1909, he saw Rudolf Besier's Don, a modern Don Juan story, which he thought 'very good', and Graham Moffat's Buntie Pulls the Strings, 'a delightful comedy on Scotch manners of 1845 (circa)'.⁴ The former was preceded by Gentlemen of the Road by Charles McEvoy, a playwright connected with

¹L 247.

²L 138.

³Jessie misremembers the title as The Making of a Gentleman.

⁴L 141 and L 304.

the Manchester school of dramatists, and the latter by H.M. Walbrook's one-acter, The Touch of Truth.

Lawrence assesses these plays in terms of their entertainment value - how much he enjoyed them, how much they amused him. Bunty Pulls the Strings is merely 'a delightful comedy on Scotch manners of 1845' which 'amused' him 'very much'.¹ Don was 'jolly good! We enjoyed ourselves'.² Lawrence's critical perception is never intensely engaged. These plays of the London commercial theatre did not merit the attention which Lawrence paid to literature and plays which interested him more deeply. Ibsen and Strindberg, for instance, were worthy of such interest even though he detested their work.

There is a sense of detachment in Lawrence's reaction to these plays which is further illuminated by Jessie's description of his attitude to the stage when they saw Making a Gentleman:

Lawrence explained to me that the theatre existed mainly in the interests of fashion, and that the leaders of Society came not for the play (which was obviously rubbish) but to observe the varied and beautiful dresses worn by the leading ladies.³

The importance of this comment cannot be overlooked. Lawrence had no illusions about the nature and function of the London commercial theatre. But his attitude is not just the display of sophisticated cynicism in front of his provincial girl friend, his insight is remarkably similar to that of contemporary commentators on the Edwardian theatre such as Bernard Shaw and Granville Barker. What is particularly significant about this remark is that the play it concerns is in very much the same vein as the work of Henry Arthur Jones and Arthur Wing Pinero, and, as such, constitutes the mainstream of Edwardian commercial serious drama.

In a later, more polemical mood, Lawrence made a sweeping condemnation of the theatre as entertainment. Lawrence saw all types

¹ L 304

² L 143

³ ET 165-6.

of theatre as pandering to a demand for entertainment which creates a sense of detachment and prevents the spectator from coming to grips with real problems:

We go to the theatre to be entertained. It may be The Potters, it may be Max Reinhardt, King Lear, or Electra. All entertainment.

We want to be taken out of ourselves. Or not entirely that. We want to become spectators at our own show. We lean down from the plush seats like little gods in a democratic heaven, and see ourselves away below there, on the world of the stage, in a brilliant artificial sunlight...

The secret of it all, is that we detach ourselves from the painful and always sordid trammels of actual existence.¹

Similar ideas were propounded in a letter of 1925 which further indicates that Lawrence saw the entertainment element as an impingement on the playwright's true task:

I hate the actor-and-the-audience business. An author should be in among the crowd, kicking their shins or cheering on to some mischief or merriment. That rather cheap seat in the gods where one sits with fellows like Anatole France and benignly looks down on the foibles, follies, and frenzies of so-called fellow-men, just annoys me.²

Whilst in Croydon, Lawrence saw two performances of plays of a more advanced nature than the run of the mill commercial theatre. In October 1911, at the Savoy, he saw Sumurun, a musical, wordless play, based on The Arabian Nights, by Max Reinhardt and the company from the Deutches Theater, Berlin. Lawrence was favourably impressed by this attempt to free the theatre from the constraints of naturalistic, literary drama, even though his own plays written during this period remain firmly within that tradition. The other was a performance at the Court in February 1912 of three plays firmly in the minority theatre camp: Yeats' The Hour Glass, J.G. Adderley's Epiphany, and Lady Gregory's The Travelling Man. His reaction was lukewarm.

¹MM 52.

²CL 827.

Again there was nothing in them to engage him greatly. 'It wasn't any very great shakes - but rather nice' was all he could bring himself to say about his evening at the theatre.¹

The evidence suggests that Lawrence enjoyed visiting the theatre, but that he found little on the London stage to excite or interest him overmuch. In a letter to May Holbrook he claimed from his experience of play-going that the theatres did not have 'much staying power'.² Considering the nature of the Edwardian commercial theatre, Lawrence's attitude is understandable. But during his own playwriting period it is not true that Lawrence was incapable of finding the theatre stimulating. His reaction to Sarah Bernhardt and his comments in the chapter 'The Theatre' in Twilight in Italy attest otherwise.

¹L 364.

²L 96.

2. Lawrence's experience of play reading

As a young man, Lawrence's reading was generally of an advanced nature, and this is no less true of his reading of modern British and European dramatists. Although Lawrence may have restricted himself to fairly lightweight material in the London theatres, his play reading consisted not of the work of popular dramatists, but of the work of the representatives of what was considered modern and advanced drama. And, in that reading, Lawrence found the stuff to incite fully his critical engagement.

Ibsen had, by the middle of the Edwardian age, become the most widely published and available of the modern European dramatists, and had emerged, after the controversy of the nineties which considered him a vile pornographer, as an important and serious dramatist, a leader of advanced and modern drama. Lawrence's early reaction to the Norwegian dramatist was, according to Jessie, one of tremendous admiration. They read together Rosmersholm, which was Lawrence's favourite, The Lady from the Sea, which he considered the most poetical of the Ibsen plays he had read, and Hedda Gabler, 'which he thoroughly disliked'.¹ Lawrence's preferences at this stage were for the obviously symbolic and poetical elements in Ibsen's work rather than for the greater realism of Hedda Gabler. But Lawrence was not offended by the features connected with such realism which had offended Victorian propriety. He sharply reprimanded Jessie for omitting a phrase about kept mistresses when they read the play out loud; and in a letter to Jessie's sister, May, he placed Ibsen in the same category as Balzac and Tolstoy, arguing that they are great writers who should not be found offensive.²

¹ET 108.

²See ET 108 and L 96.

Lawrence's attitude towards Ibsen changed rapidly. Only three months later, he gave two volumes of Ibsen to Louie as birthday presents. The first contained The Pretenders, The Vikings at Helgeland and Lady Inger. Lawrence's opinion was that 'The Pretenders' is by far the best of the three'.¹ The second volume contained Rosmersholm, Hedda Gabler and The Lady from the Sea. Lawrence has become patronising about The Lady from the Sea. 'You will like 'The Lady from the Sea',' he condescendingly tells Louie, 'All English people do; you will say it is the best'. He now condemns 'Ibsen's people' as 'fools', and openly displays for the first time the attitude he was to have towards Ibsen and other northern European dramatists for the rest of his life. Rosmersholm, his former favourite, he claims is a 'pale spectre', and Hedda Gabler is 'new-fangled madness'. However, there is some evidence here of Lawrence, as D.J. Gordon suggests he does in much of his literary criticism, establishing a distinction between his moral or ideological criticism and his aesthetic judgement. For, despite his strong aversion to the psychology of Hedda Gabler, he recognised it as a greater work of art, it is 'the subtlest, profoundest - and, I think, truest; least imaginary'.²

The change of direction in Lawrence's attitude from when he read the plays with Jessie is significant. He is now condescending about the poetical The Lady from the Sea; and the more realistic Hedda Gabler, which he previously thoroughly disliked, is now considered the greater work of art because of the features of realism, because it is the 'least imaginary' and therefore 'truest'. Lawrence's shift to a greater estimation for the realistic instead of the poetical coincides with the writing of A Collier's Friday Night, his play which contains the largest amount of seemingly documentary realism.

¹L 112-13.

²L 114

By 1912, Lawrence had read some of the work of the other major Scandinavian dramatist, Strindberg. In a letter to A.W. McLeod in October of that year, he wrote, 'Have you read Strindberg? - he's rotten - Garnett sent the Miss Julia and There are Crimes and Crimes. I hate them.'¹ The Stronger was published in one volume with Miss Julia, so it is reasonable to assume Lawrence read that play too. Lawrence's reaction is unequivocal, lacking even the grudging respect he granted Ibsen. However, the date of Lawrence's letter indicates the extent to which he was in touch with the latest developments in the drama. Apart from two minor examples of Strindberg's work, Simoon and The Stronger performed in 1906, the dramatist only really came to the notice of the English stage in 1912 (the year of Lawrence's comment) with the hostility and anger which accompanied performances of The Father and Miss Julie. In terms of the publication of translations as well as in terms of stage performances, Lawrence was thoroughly up to date with the Swedish dramatist. The volumes Lawrence read, the first to be published in England, had only been published by Duckworth in September 1912, the month before he read them. Clearly Lawrence's connection with Edward Garnett, reader for Duckworth, put him in a fortunate position in this respect.²

Lawrence's acquaintance with Chekhov is a similar case. Lawrence had read some Chekhov by April 1912. On the stage Chekhov came to notice when the Stage Society performed The Cherry Orchard in 1911, followed by The Sea Gull in 1912, and Uncle Vanya in 1914. Translations of Chekhov's plays were not widely available in England until 1923 with the editions by Constance Garnett. But in February 1912 a translation by George Calderon of The Sea Gull and The Cherry Orchard was published, and this is almost certainly the edition which Lawrence read. Again Lawrence was reading the plays only a very short time after they had

¹ L 464. ² Coincidentally, Edwin Bjorkman, who translated the Strindberg, for Duckworth, wrote the introduction for The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd for its publication in 1914.

appeared. His reaction was enthusiastic, 'The plays are exceedingly interesting... Tchekhov is a new thing in drama'.¹ Despite Lawrence's later hostility to Chekhov, he had a greater regard for the Russian than for any other European dramatist at that time, and saw his own plays in a similar relation to the English stage as Chekhov's were to the Russian.

Lawrence read Hauptmann's Elga, a dramatisation of Das Kloster bei Sendomir by the nineteenth-century German Romantic dramatist, Grillparzer, in the original German with Helen Corke. Hauptmann was much more famous for his connection with the naturalistic movement in European drama and the plays produced at the Freie Buhne in Berlin, particularly Before Sunrise and The Weavers, the latter being famous for its predominant concern with mediating working-class experience and feeling. Lawrence was aware of this side of Hauptmann's work; references in The Trespasser and in a letter to Grace Crawford in 1910 indicate that he had some knowledge of Einsame Menschen, a naturalistic play written in 1891 between Before Sunrise (1889) and The Weavers (1892). Interestingly Lawrence preferred the poetic and gothic qualities of Elga to the naturalism of Einsame Menschen which he considered was 'horribly tiresome with dialect, and Ibsenishly dry'.² This is despite the fact that his own colliery plays were written in dialect.

Whilst in Croydon, Lawrence read Pelleas and Melisande and The Sightless of Maeterlinck, both favourites of the minority theatre. Lawrence was briefly impressed, but later in 1914, he dismissed Maeterlinck and the symbolists as 'intellectual'.³ During the pre-war period he also read unidentified works by Gorky, Bjornson, the Norwegian playwright, and Andreev, a Russian.

The evidence of Lawrence's reading of British dramatists is less prolific. He read, in 1911, Galsworthy's minor allegorical play, A

¹L 385. ²L 171. ³CL 280.

Little Dream, which he decided was 'rather good', but added as an afterthought 'a bit mechanical'.¹ A reference in a letter of 1910 shows that he was at least acquainted with Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest, and he had read other prose works by him.²

Lawrence's special relationship with Edward Garnett brought him into contact with the plays of that dramatist, who is now mostly famous for his brush with the censor over his play The Breaking Point rather than for his plays in themselves. Lawrence read The Breaking Point, The Feud, Lords and Masters, and The Trial of Jeanne D'Arc. Lawrence's comments to Garnett about the plays are generally polite, a fact perhaps conditioned by his relationship to his literary mentor. Lawrence was conscious of a great difference between Garnett's plays and his own work, and, at this stage of his career, pays lip service to the superiority of the more experienced literary man,

I enjoyed The Breaking Point very much. What I like is its clean bareness - it is Greek in that. That is so much better than my ravels of detail. It is a fine, clean moulded tragedy, The Breaking Point. I have always got such a lot of non-essential stuff in my work.³

But whether Lawrence indeed preferred Garnett's bareness of style to the circumstantial realism of his own plays is doubtful. To Louie he was more candid, 'I don't care for Garnetts plays - they are not alive'.⁴ Despite Lawrence's opinion, Garnett's work was still preferable to Strindberg's; 'I'll bet your play [The Trial of Jeanne D'Arc] will interest me more than that rotten Strindberg', he wrote referring to the volumes Garnett had sent him in 1912.⁵

A letter of March 1912 to May Holbrook indicates that Lawrence had read Shaw's Man and Superman, 'I'll bring you Man and Superman on Sunday... The play was very good'.⁶ Whether it was Shaw's play that

¹L 326

²See L 185

³L 317

⁴L 326

⁵L 467

⁶L 377

Lawrence thought very good, or some other play he had read or seen is not clear from the letter. Lawrence was generally hostile towards Shaw and his work, although a very early comment of 1908 shows a more lenient attitude:

Do not think because I rave at Bernard Shaw I don't like him. He is one of those delightful people who give one the exquisite pleasure of falling out with him wholesomely.¹

This disclaimer to Blanche Jennings is difficult to accept without qualification, but it does suggest, as in the case of Ibsen, that Lawrence's interest was excited by something of value in Shaw, but he disliked him on moral or ideological grounds. Referring to Shaw in an earlier letter to Blanche, Lawrence had admitted, 'There's a vein of truth in 'em all - else they wouldn't be alive - it's a question of more or less'. Blanche, Lawrence claimed, was unable to see the untruths in Shaw because of his technique, 'a trick of giddy words'.² This attitude was not to be sustained. Lawrence later found nothing in Shaw to inspire the vitality of his interest and criticism. William Gerhardi relates an illuminating anecdote of when he was discussing literature with Lawrence:

When I mentioned Shaw, the passion and indignation which inspired his remarks evaporated completely. He said, with a disdain which did not pay Mr. Shaw the compliment of being positive, a mere absence of interest, a mere negative: "Are you interested in sociology? I'm not!"³

The only British dramatist for whom Lawrence had a genuine respect was J.M. Synge. Riders to the Sea, he thought, 'is about the genuinest bit of dramatic tragedy, English, since Shakespeare, I should say'.⁴ His enthusiasm was not, however, unqualified. Elsewhere he criticised Synge's characters for being 'too bodiless, mere spirits'.⁵ He also read In the ~~Shaw~~ of the Glen, which was in the same volume as Riders to the Sea. But the letter of 1909 where he refers to these plays

¹L 103.

²L 101.

³N III, 14.

⁴L 260-1.

⁵L 183

suggests that he had not by then read The Playboy of the Western World. As he later gave a copy of that play to Jessie he probably read that play as well.

From this evidence, one is able to establish that Lawrence was fairly widely read in modern European drama and had dipped occasionally into the British dramatists. However, it is quite possible that Lawrence's play reading was more extensive than is suggested by the evidence as it stands at the moment. Lawrence's comments give some idea of his immediate reaction to his reading, but there exists a larger body of commentary which can be used to illustrate Lawrence's attitude in a more general sense, and to offer something of a theoretical stance on Lawrence's part towards the drama.

3. Lawrence on drama

I

In an early letter, written in 1908, Lawrence wrote,

I have a wicked delight in smashing things which I think I can make better; besides, I do so much want to know, now, the comrades who are shuffling the days in the same game with me. I put out my hands passionately for modern verses, and drama - and, in less degree, novels.¹

This statement is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, Lawrence at this stage, though now primarily considered as a writer of fiction, was more interested in poetry and drama, and only 'in a less degree' interested in novels. Those who are in the 'same game' as he are poets and dramatists. Raymond Williams is undoubtedly correct when he suggests that Lawrence, at the start of his career was uncertain which way his literary talent would flourish, and so utilised similar material in different genres.² The excitement created by the appearance of new movements in the theatre during the years surrounding the turn of the century, and the appearance of the continental dramatists, the British minority dramatists, and the work of the Abbey Theatre would be an enticement for a young man with literary aspirations to write plays. But, and this is the second point which is of paramount importance, Lawrence was not persuaded by his experience to emulation, to copy the examples of modern drama, but rather to supersede them, to smash their standards because he knows he can do better. The boasting of a young man eager to impress a lady friend (the latter was written to the 'advanced' Blanche Jennings)? Possibly, but this is a consistent note in Lawrence's comments on the modern drama.

Lawrence did not see the playwrights, who, in the Edwardian age, were considered modern, as spokesmen for his generation, but as men of

¹ L 103.

² See D.H. Lawrence, Three Plays, with an introduction by Raymond Williams, pp. 8-9.

an older generation whose position would have to be relinquished in favour of new men with new ways of writing plays. His famous and oft-quoted statement to Garnett on the drama indicates this quite clearly:

I believe that, just as an audience was found in Russia for Tchekhov, so an audience might be found in England for some of my stuff, if there were a man to whip 'em in. It's the producer that is lacking, not the audience. I'm sure we are sick of the rather bony, bloodless drama we get nowadays - it is time for a reaction against Shaw and Galsworthy and Barker and Irishy (except Synge) people - the rule and measure mathematical folk. But you are of them and your sympathies are with your own generation, not with mine. I think it is inevitable... Damn my impudence, but don't dislike me. But I don't want to write like Galsworthy nor Ibsen, nor Strindberg nor any of them, not even if I could. We have to hate our immediate predecessors, to get free from their authority.¹

In an earlier letter to Garnett, Lawrence replied to some criticism of The Fight for Barbara in similar terms, 'You think it couldn't be of any use for the stage? I think the new generation is rather different from the old. I think they will read me more gratefully'.² Lawrence was baulked by the set habits of thinking of such men as Garnett who could not appreciate the advances Lawrence made beyond the drama they were prepared to accept as modern. Quite rightly, Lawrence saw the tradition of most of the modern drama as extensions of an essentially nineteenth-century tradition, what he elsewhere called 'the terrible rut of the Victorian influence'.³ Even though the colliery plays were merely a development of the same tradition and not an essentially new sort of drama, his criticism of a play by the young David Garnett demonstrates how he thought a break with the nineteenth century was necessary: 'It is hardly the kind of thing you will be able to do anything with now - too fin de siècle, and we've got to begin a new siècle'.⁴

Lawrence's condemnation of the British dramatists as the 'rule and measure mathematical folk' implies a criticism of the form and

¹L 509.

²L 478.

³N II, 41.

⁴CL 348.

method of the drama, the writing to an already established concept of what constitutes a play. Such rules of construction, he thought, imposed an artificial form on a writer's work and negated a form which should arise organically from the work itself. To emulate such standards was the mere perpetuation of ossified conventions. His attitude to the novel is equally applicable to the drama:

Tell Arnold Bennett that all rules of construction hold good only for novels which are copies of other novels. A book which is not a copy of other books has its own construction, and what he calls faults, he being an old imitator, I call characteristics.¹

Even Synge, who otherwise was greatly admired by Lawrence, was seen to suffer from this fault of an imposed construction, being 'a bit too rounded off and, as it were, put on the shelf to be looked at. I can't bear art that you can walk round and admire'.²

Similarly, Lawrence eschewed classification by artistic categories of his own work. He wrote of one of his own plays, probably The Daughter in-Law, 'it is neither a comedy nor a tragedy - just ordinary. It is quite objective'.³ Such artistic classifications were artificial and externally imposed distinctions, which, like rules of construction, would give the work a definition extrinsic to the work itself. Drama, Lawrence thought, did not have to elevate experience into tragedy or exaggerate it into comedy in order to be effective. The recreation of 'ordinary' experience does not imply that it needs ^{humdrum} be ~~for~~ it can contain both tragedy and comedy without strain or distortion.

This attitude which refused to reduce things to a set pattern applies also to characterisation. In the preface to Touch and Go, he claimed plays for a people's theatre should simply be plays which are about people,

¹CL 399.

²CL 827.

³L 500-1.

Men who are somebody, not men who are something. Men who happen to be bishops or co-respondents, women who happen to be chaste, just as they happen to freckle, because it's one of their innumerable odd qualities. Even men who happen, by the way, to have long noses. But not noses on two legs, not burly pairs of gaiters, stuffed and voluble, not white meringues of chastity, not incarnations of co-respondence. Not proletariats, petitioners, presidents, noses, bits of fluff.¹

Similarly, one of Lawrence's complaints about Shaw was that his characters exist only as 'ideal or social or political entities, fleshless, bloodless, and cold'.²

Given a theoretical stance which rejected familiar and established methods of giving definition to drama, it is hardly surprising that his practice, the plays themselves, should have been dismissed by the supposed cognoscenti as 'very interesting, but... formless'.³

Lawrence was aware of the necessity of construction in writing a play which raises particular problems in the realistic drama where the need for intensification and concision of material into two or three hours of stage traffic is frequently in conflict with the need to give the impression of echoing the meanderings and unordered quality of life. Even though Lawrence's plays came 'so quick and exciting' from his pen, he thought of them as 'stuff for shaping later on, when I'm more of a workman' (my italics).⁴ This conscious attitude towards workmanship is one which Lawrence did not have towards his novels where his way of going about things was off-hand and pragmatic: 'The usual plan is to take two couples and develop their relationships'.⁵

II

Much of what Lawrence found repugnant in both European and Edwardian British drama was formulated from the basis of an ideological

¹PII 290.

²P 556

³L 381

⁴L 501.

⁵ET 103.

position. His attitude to the European dramatists was conditioned by an ideology based on a geographical psychology of northern and southern consciousness. Broadly speaking, the latter, associated with sensual consciousness and the flesh, is approved; and the former, associated with the mental consciousness, is reviled as a perversion. The southern consciousness worships the body, which includes the mind as well, and results in a whole integrated being; the northern consciousness suppresses the body and mentalises it and its functions by exalting the mind, and results in a split being. It is unfortunate, or possibly symptomatic, that the leading modern European dramatists were representatives of the northern consciousness: the Scandinavians, Ibsen and Strindberg, and the Russian, Chekhov.

Lawrence's condemnation of Ibsen and Strindberg is vehement, but frequently imprecise, almost incoherent if it were not for a wider knowledge of the Lawrentian ideology. Strindberg is 'rotten', a 'lurid wooden stalker', Ibsen is one of the 'nihilists', one of the 'intellectual, hopeless people'.¹ 'I hate Strindberg,' Lawrence wrote to Garnett, 'he seems unnatural, forced, a bit indecent - a bit wooden, like Ibsen, a bit skin-erupty'.² The repetition of the word 'wooden' suggests the inflexible, insensate quality he saw in these writers, and the hint of hidden, obscene activities breaking out into pustules, 'skin-erupty', gives some idea of the sort of response which informed such comments.

Ibsen, Lawrence elsewhere claimed, is an example of the northern consciousness with its demand for purely intellectual elucidation and understanding, for Ibsen 'owned the universality of the mind'.³ He caters for the Englishman who, when he 'listens to a speech... wants at least to imagine that he understands thoroughly and impersonally what is meant'.⁴ Ibsen 'denied the universality of the blood', but

¹ L 467 and 488, and P 304.

² L 465.

³ IS 224.

⁴ TI 69.

this is exactly what Lawrence thought D'Annunzio catered for, expressing the southern temperament, through emotion, the physical, the non-conscious mind:

An Italian only cares about the emotion. It is the movement, the physical effect of the language upon the blood which gives him supreme satisfaction. His mind is scarcely engaged at all... It is the sensuous gratification he asks for. Which is why D'Annunzio is a god in Italy. He can control the current of the blood with his words.¹

Despite this effect, much of what D'Annunzio wrote, Lawrence admits, is 'bosh', and his play is a 'fearful melodrama'.² Despite his ideological position Lawrence still recognises the artistic superiority of Ibsen's work over that of D'Annunzio.

The chapter 'The Theatre' in Twilight in Italy, where Lawrence makes the contrast between Ibsen and D'Annunzio, is the most extended exposition of how his ideas of northern and southern consciousness affected his view of the European drama. One of the plays that he saw during his stay in Gargagno was I Spettri, a version of Ibsen's Ghosts. Lawrence had recently seen the play in Munich. It was 'perfectly produced and detestable', the characters were 'hard, ethical, slightly mechanized'.³ This northern, Germanic version was, in Lawrence's view, the perfect interpretation of Ibsen. Yet, 'when one sees the perfect Ibsen, how one hates the Norwegian and Swedish nations'.⁴ Ibsen at his best is at his most repulsive. The Italian production created a contradiction between the southern, Italian actors and the northern, teutonic characters they were meant to represent. The actor playing Oswald was 'dark, ruddy and powerful, he could not be the blighted son of 'Ghosts', the hectic, unsound, northern issue of a diseased father'.⁵ For Lawrence, this contradiction served to highlight

¹IS 224 and TI 69.

²TI 69 and L 505. Lawrence's attitude towards D'Annunzio was equivocal; see also CL 301 and 448, and P 224 and 243.

³TI 66.

⁴TI 68.

⁵TI 66-7.

what he found noisome in Ibsen, and it provoked a strident condemnation of both him and Strindberg on the grounds of obscenity:

They seem to be fingering with the mind the secret places and sources of the blood, impertinent, irreverent, nasty. There is a certain intolerable nastiness about the real Ibsen: the same thing is in Strindberg and in most of the Norwegian and Swedish writings. It is with them a sort of phallic worship also, but now the worship is mental and perverted: the phallus is the real fetish, but it is the source of uncleanliness and corruption and death, it is the Moloch, worshipped in obscenity.¹

The tone of this accusation of perversity and obscenity is not dissimilar to the vilification flung at Ibsen by Clement Scott in the nineties. Both show the outrage and horror of a sensibility shocked by pornography. However, the nature of the obscenity which the two men found in Ibsen is essentially different. Scott's, and similar critics' virulent attacks were at the offence to Victorian prudery, the very fact that certain things were mentioned at all. Their argument was largely against the content of the plays, the inclusion of what they saw as unpleasant realism. Depictions of unlauded relations between the sexes, demonstrations of the effects of congenital illness, or a conclusion which showed a wife deserting her home, husband and friendless children did not constitute material fit for the stage, and showed a morbid and sick mind in a writer who could dwell on such things. Lawrence's argument is not that certain sorts of subject matter are unsavoury (Lawrence was to suffer himself from the Clement Scotts of his own time) and therefore not welcome in a work of art. Rather he found a sick mind in Ibsen because his work exemplified the hateful northern consciousness which in itself was unhealthy. Lawrence does not attack the presence of sexuality, what he calls 'phallic worship', in the work of Ibsen; he believed it was part of a healthy balance in man and essential to literature. His objection to Ibsen was that the 'phallic worship' was perverted by a

¹TI 68.

mental and intellectual outlook on life which attempted to suppress the body.

Chekhov, for whom Lawrence had an early admiration, also falls victim, in Lawrence's later comments, to his geographic psychology. The charge is not that Chekhov, along with other Russian writers, has mentalised 'phallic worship' as the Scandinavians did, but that his characters have in more general terms mentalised their attitudes to themselves, so becoming self-conscious and hypocritical.¹

Lawrence's reaction to the major European dramatists was quite clearly conditioned by his notions of northern and southern consciousness. There is no denying the strength of feeling communicated by Lawrence's comments where he resorts to the imagery of 'skin-erupty' acne and the 'secret fingerings' of masturbation. But are his comments of any real value? Do they communicate anything more concrete and precise than a violent dislike? Unfortunately they frequently do not, bordering as they do on the hysterical and incoherent. The images are vague and imprecise despite their power. Even in the more extended exposition in Twilight in Italy, we have to guess at their meaning; comments in the letters are cryptic and enigmatic. Admittedly they do tell us something about Lawrence, but we are presented with little evidence of what it is that is so objectionable about these dramatists. Lawrence finds himself trapped in an ambivalent position, particularly in relation to Ibsen; there is fascination as well as horror. Lawrence admits to the greatness of the playwright, and the vehemence and frequency of the attacks suggest Lawrence found things of arresting interest and importance in Ibsen, yet his reaction is ultimately confused and negative. Possibly the critic of the Daily Telegraph unwittingly presented in the

¹See Lawrence's unpublished preface to Mastro Don Guesaldo, the essay 'Germans and Latins', and his review of Fallen Leaves, all of which appear in Phoenix. Lawrence's aversion to Chekhov became most vehement in the twenties, after his own major playwriting period, and was exacerbated by his hostility to Chekhov admirers such as Middleton Murry.

eighteen-nineties Lawrence's position with more openness than Lawrence ever did:

Say what we will about Ibsen, he unquestionably possesses a great power of fascination. Those who most detest his theories, his doctrines, his very methods of art, confess to a strange absorbing interest.¹

Lawrence also attacked Ibsen for the predominant social setting of his realistic drama. And, in view of the working-class settings of Lawrence's colliery plays and the predominantly middle-class setting of so much of the British and European drama it is significant that one of Lawrence's criticisms of Ibsen's characters is precisely on account of the nature of their bourgeois existence. This is typified in the very dress of these people; in Lawrence's essay 'Germans and Latins', he comments of the well-dressed Germans:

They are very often quite domesticated, and in the sense that Ibsen's people are ridiculous, just a little ridiculous. They are so bourgeois, so much more a product of civilization than the producers of civilization. They are so much buttoned up inside their waistcoats, and stuck inside their trousers, and encircled in their starched collars.

But even the Germans are 'never quite so utterly domesticated as the equivalent Scandinavian'.² Parading in the outward signification of a deadening middle-class culture, such characters were, to Lawrence, ridiculous. They are in effect imprisoned by the very stiffness of their self-imposed uniform. For Lawrence, the manner of dress of the Germans and Scandinavians signified a whole consciousness. Significantly he uses the same image in commenting on Ibsen's endorsement of the 'universality of the mind'; this universality, essential to Lawrence's vision of northern consciousness is something 'to which we all subscribe, as to the wearing of clothes'.³ Obviously these comments cannot be taken to be an absolute condemnation of the drama as a whole, but it casts an important light on Lawrence's attitude towards the predominant

¹William Archer, 'The Mausoleum of Ibsen', p.79.

²p 130.

³IS 224.

class setting of much of the British and European drama at that time.

Lawrence's use of the details of modes of dress in his colliery plays is expressive of a very different culture and way of life from that usually presented in the drama, and such details are also utilised in a more active way. Whereas costume in the majority of Edwardian dramas just authenticates and is descriptive of the social setting, the scene in A Collier's Friday Night where Lambert returns from work and changes from his pit clothes into a 'turn-down collar and a black tie, and his black waistcoat is buttoned' preparatory to sharing out the week's wages and going out on his weekly jaunt mediates actively relationships of hierarchy, work, and pleasure which the play explores.¹

III

Apart from isolated remarks on Shaw and Synge, Lawrence did not make the same sort of direct commentary on his major contemporary British dramatists as he did on the modern European drama. However, what Lawrence found at fault with the British novel, particularly in his studies of Hardy and Galsworthy, can be applied with striking effect to features of the Edwardian drama. As with my discussion of Lawrence's attitude to European dramatists, it is not my intention to assess the validity of Lawrence's comments on the novel, or to assess whether Lawrence in fact misreads Hardy or Galsworthy or Tolstoy (which he quite possibly does), but rather to show the relevance and significance of such comments when applied to the drama. In many respects Lawrence's comments are more applicable to the Edwardian drama than they are to

¹The Complete Plays of D.H. Lawrence (London, 1965), p. 486. Further references to Lawrence's plays will be to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.

the novels he describes. For features which Lawrence extracts and decries as faults in his 'Study of Thomas Hardy' may represent a partial reading of the novels, but they are present in a much more extreme and obvious sense in the work of the society dramatists, where such features very largely comprise the dominant ideology of the plays.

Lawrence's fundamental charge against Hardy is that his characters are prescribed not by the moral law of their own vital selves but by an artificially organised social morality, which, Lawrence claims, 'is the weakness of modern tragedy, where transgression against the social code is made to bring destruction, as though the social code worked our irrevocable fate'.¹ The repeated pattern of the Hardy novel, as Lawrence saw it, was the attempt of his characters to burst through socially acceptable modes of behaviour. So it is in the case of the Edwardian society drama; certain characters attempt to break through society's regulations governing the conducting of sexual relationships, and the outcome of the plays does seem to demonstrate a universe where the social code works our irrevocable fate, where transgression against that code can bring destruction, as with Mrs Tanqueray.

The problem for Hardy's characters was that, once that they had burst through, they still had to live in the society, 'the great self-preservation scheme' whose prescriptions they have broken.² In the society drama, this is the situation described time and time again by the *raisonneurs* as they explain the dire social consequences of offending the social code. The potential offenders in the society drama frequently respond by claiming that their illicit ménage à deux will be sufficient in itself, despite the consequences, despite society's hostility. And so with Hardy's characters, according to Lawrence:

¹p 420.

2 p 411.

From the more immediate claims of self-preservation they could free themselves: from money, from ambition for social success. None of the heroes and heroines of Hardy cared much for these things.

But, in both Hardy and the society drama, society with its codes and regulations proves the stronger for

There is the greater idea of self-preservation, which is formulated in the State, in the whole modelling of the community. And from this idea, the heroes and heroines of Wessex, like the heroes and heroines of almost anywhere else, could not free themselves. In the long run, the State, the Community, the established form of life remained, intact and impregnable, the individual, trying to break forth from it, died of fear, of exhaustion, or of exposure to attacks from all sides, like men who have left the walled city to live outside in the precarious open.¹

Lawrence's analysis is more subtle and rather more widereaching than the coinage of the raisonneurs of society drama, whose analysis consists of a recitation of the indescribable horrors of being snubbed and ostracised by the polite upper middle classes of Edwardian England, though they claim that the end result is very much the same. By linking the notion of the state with the community and the established form of life, Lawrence makes explicit the political aspect which is implicit in the advice not to upset the apple cart of sexual relationships given by figures such as Sir Richard Kato and Sir Christopher Deering.

'This is the theme of novel after novel,' says Lawrence (and he could have said it more truly of the society drama), 'remain quite within the convention, and you are good, safe, and happy in the long run'.² The alternative is to be passionate, individual and wilful and then you will find society a prison from which you will escape and die. Now this is what does not happen, normally, in society drama. There, the potential disrupters are not sufficiently passionate, or individual, or wilful, and their incipient rebellion is easily suppressed by the reasonable advice of the self-appointed protectors of society's

¹p 411.

²p 411.

sex regulations. The notion that society is a prison or that one will remain for very long unhappily encaged in it if one does not burst through is given little or no credence. And thus the plays become instrumental in supporting the established dominant ideology and not just expressive of it.

On the issue of the individual and the community, Lawrence claims that Hardy could not do otherwise than represent the interests of the community and condemn the exception, but, as an artist, Hardy's private sympathy will always be with the individual. In the case of the society dramatists, any sympathy that is created for the individuals is subsumed by the overall effect of the play which is usually an unreserved support for the community and its social code. As I have suggested earlier, the emotional claims of men and women in these plays are not seen by the dramatists as a valid expression of an alternative morality, but as a perversion and aberration from the path that all rational men and women should naturally want to follow, which is that defined by the social code.

To bring about the heroes' fall, Lawrence claims that Hardy must give them a certain weakness similar to the way Galsworthy treats his working-class characters. They are not allowed the strength which would raise them above the level of pathetic characters; this, Lawrence saw, was an unfair tactic. 'They have not the necessary strength: the question of their unfortunate end is begged in the beginning'.¹ It is an accusation which could just as easily be raised against the society dramatists as well as against Galsworthy; as Eric Bentley says of the drame à thèse, 'To "prove" a thesis in a play is no better than cheating: all the playwright has to do is stack the cards'.²

¹p 439.

²Eric Bentley, The Life of the Drama, p. 142.

In Twilight in Italy and in the earlier version published as 'Italian Studies' in The English Review, Lawrence gives an interesting account of the cause of the double standard of morality which is endorsed in the society drama and of its effect on the male spectator. The double morality which signifies a more general sexual discrimination, was a fact in Edwardian England, not only in terms of social prejudice, but ratified in law as well. Yet Lawrence saw the way in which this fact was translated onto the stage with its attendant situations and emotions as a distortion of reality. On the stage, Lawrence realised, the distortion is the result of a male hegemony of the theatrical world both as an institution and in the fiction of the plays themselves:

Why are women so bad at playing this part in real life, this Ophelia-Gretchen role? Why are they so unwilling to go mad and die for our sakes? They do it regularly on the stage.

But perhaps, after all, we write the plays. What a villain I am, what a black-browed, passionate, ruthless, masculine villain I am to the leading lady on the stage; and, on the other hand, dear heart, what a hero, what a fount of chivalrous generosity and faith!...

Dear heaven, how Adelaida [the Italian actress] wept, her voice plashing like violin music, at my ruthless, masculine cruelty. Dear heart, how she sighed to rest on my sheltering bosom! And how I enjoyed my dual nature! How I admired myself!¹

Lawrence analyses the ambivalent effect on the audience of sympathy and condemnation towards certain women characters, and, in his analysis, there is an implicit criticism of a discernible dishonesty in the vicarious experience of the male spectator. This is expounded more explicitly in the earlier version:

Every man has a Doppelgänger, a gay young bachelor "blood" who has adventures, while the staid reality remains at home. And the business of the leading lady is to have gallant dealings with this Doppelgänger.²

What is particularly significant is that Lawrence directly relates this comment to his experience of the Edwardian commercial theatre.

¹TI 72.

²IS 227.

Lawrence was highly critical of the whole treatment of sexuality in the drama of his contemporaries, especially critical that the sexuality informing it merely constituted marital infidelity. 'This,' he says, 'is the teaching of the Chief Dramatists and Chief Thinkers of our generation.' Lawrence singles Shaw out for the attack:

To him, all sex is infidelity and only infidelity is sex. Marriage is sexless, null. Sex is only manifested in infidelity... If sex crops up in marriage, it is because one party falls in love with somebody else, and wants to be unfaithful.¹

His description fits exactly the pattern of one of the conventions of society drama, particularly the situation as found in Jones's comedies, The Liars and The Case of Rebellious Susan.

The implications of some of Lawrence's strictures in the 'Study of Thomas Hardy' and his essay 'John Galsworthy' can be extended to features of the work of the Edwardian minority dramatists. The essay on Galsworthy only refers to the novels, but the condemnation of the whole range of Galsworthy's characters can also apply to the drama.

Every single character is determined by money: either the getting it, or the having it, or the wanting it, or the utter lacking it. Getting it are the Forsytes as such; having it are the Pendyces and patricians and Hilarys and Biancas and all that lot; wanting it are the Irenes the Bosinneys and Young Jolyons; and utterly lacking it are all the charwomen and squalid poor who form the background.²

Lawrence is not arguing for characters who are divorced from a money dominated social reality. In the same essay he admitted. 'Money, of course, with every man living goes a long way'.³ His own colliery plays and early fiction indicate the sensitivity with which Lawrence was aware of the direct relation of money to physical conditions and to individual relationships. In fact, that relation is frequently used as a positive reference point in Lawrence's work. It must be noted that the essay on Galsworthy is a late work and its terms of reference are dependent on Lawrence's theory of vitalism and the

¹PII 500.

²p 544.

³p 541.

intuitional being which found conscious exposition after the early period of the colliery plays and Sons and Lovers.

Yet his criticism does point at one of the features of the minority dramatists, that the defining principles in many of the plays are dependent on an abstracted analysis of society. This is true of the way in which groups of characters are bluntly contrasted in Galsworthy's plays according to the implications of their economic position, and also true, to a lesser extent, of a play such as Granville Barker's The Madras House.

The way in which these economic groups are frequently engineered to demonstrate the unfairness, injustice and inequality of society and thus deliberately create sympathy for the downtrodden poor was highly suspect to Lawrence. He saw in it an unconscious sublimation of self-pity and inadequacy into pity for the poor and their conditions:

Where can I find an image of myself? Ah, in the poor, in my poor neighbour labouring in the grip of an unjust system of capitalism. Let me look at him, let my heart be wrung, let me give myself to his service. Poor fellow, poor image, he is so badly off. Alas and alas. I do love my neighbour as myself: I am as anxious about his pecuniary welfare as I am about myself. I am so sorry for him, the poor X. He is a man like me. So I lie to myself and to him. For I do not care about him and his poverty: I care about my own unsatisfied soul. But I sidetrack to him, my poor neighbour, to vent on him my self-pity.¹

He described the Galsworthian sort of philanthropy in a letter to Edward Marsh in 1913; it is like 'a man who feels very strongly for a beggar, and gives him a sovereign. The feeling is at either end, for the moment, but the sovereign is a dead bit of metal'.² It is the representation of an emotion rather than the emotion itself.

The use of such economic groupings in the minority dramatists tends to serve the function of making general points about society. The use of economics in the colliery plays is far more concrete, creating a means by which we can understand certain precise situations

¹p 408

²CL 236.

rather than understand the position of the working class in Edwardian society as a whole. Lawrence's late belief, expressed in the Galsworthy essay, that there is a central core of 'innocence or naiveté which defies all analysis', which money cannot touch, meant that the minority drama based on an economic analysis with its implications of scientific understanding of human affairs, was ultimately untenable and unsatisfactory.¹

IV

Before the First World War, Lawrence found enjoyment and interest in visiting the theatre. That there is little evidence of further playgoing after this may not only be the result of Lawrence's biography but also a disinclination on Lawrence's part. This would seem to be the case when Lawrence fled from the theatre at a performance at the St James's Theatre of Tolstoy's The Living Corpse in September 1919 unable to bear the play any longer. Catherine Carswell, who accompanied him, claims it was the theatrical occasion itself which provoked his reaction,

How he hated it and everything about it, so far as the theatre was concerned! The more the germ of the thing appealed to him, the more he was appalled by what he considered to be the falsity and ineptitude of its stage appeal.²

This disinclination could well be a concomitant of the fact that Lawrence found little satisfaction or encouragement in the drama written or presented during the early part of the century. This is amply demonstrated by Lawrence's comments on the drama and the dramatists, and by the implications of his other comments on literature in general. In the drama, Lawrence was, in the end, unable to discover the rich tradition which, even when he objected to it, he found so stimulating in the European and British novel.

¹ P 540. ² Catherine Carswell, The Savage Pilgrimage, p. 143.

CHAPTER THREE

THE COLLIERY PLAYS

1. Initial attempts at staging and early critical attitudes

I

Lawrence's three colliery plays, A Collier's Friday Night, The Daughter-in-Law and The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd, remain his most striking and original essays in the drama. It is hardly surprising that it was productions of these particular plays between 1965 and 1968 that marked the effectual discovery of Lawrence as a dramatist capable of stage presentation. The reaction from critics to and the success with the public of these productions at the Royal Court and subsequent productions mainly in provincial repertory was not merely polite, as Allardyce Nicoll suggests, but points to the important fact that the plays were acceptable to a modern theatre-going public and not acceptable to the patrons of either the commercial or minority theatres of the Edwardian and immediately post-Edwardian eras. It is indeed probably true that 'if they [the plays] had not borne his name, they would never have been dug out of their dusty obscurity'.¹ But this is not a denigration of the plays as such, which, I take, is Professor Nicoll's implication. It is rather a comment on those who failed to see what was dramatically and theatrically valid in Lawrence's plays when they were written and a reflection of the persistence of such prejudice and hostility, a reflection not only of a continuing unwillingness to accept Lawrence's subject and technique, but also of the tendency to pigeonhole writers into the genres in which they usually wrote, as is shown by the linking of Lawrence with Conrad, Joyce and Henry James - novelists who had a dalliance with writing drama.

¹Allardyce Nicoll, English Drama 1900-1930, p. 383.

When Lawrence wrote the majority of his plays he was not established as a novelist so that the question of pigeonholing does not apply to comments on his plays during this period. These comments demonstrate a reaction by Lawrence's contemporaries to the plays themselves, and also, by implication, cast light on the theatrical standards discussed in the earlier part of this study. This is essential to an understanding of the historical context of Lawrence's plays. I do not intend to trace the genesis of Lawrence's plays in terms of the development of his work as a whole, nor to document in full the course of the various plays in Lawrence's attempts to send the manuscripts of them to Hueffer and Garnett and his even greater efforts to retrieve them once they had been sent. Suffice it to say that he sent the plays in manuscript to his two literary mentors in much the same way as he sent the manuscripts of his novels and other work. It is more relevant to record the reactions of various theatre people to the stage production of the plays.

Interest in Lawrence's plays was largely confined to The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd; all the proposed productions concerned this play. This is in marked contrast to the recent revival of Lawrence's plays where The Daughter-in-Law has proved to be by far the most popular. This is only partly due to the fact that The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd is the colliery play closest to the expectations of the theatre at that time. Lawrence himself said, 'I tried to write for the stage - I tried to make it end up stagily'.¹ Hueffer and Garnett were sufficiently impressed with this particular play to think it worth sending to producers. On the strength of this one play Garnett was, in 1911, willing to publish a volume of three of Lawrence's plays. However, two of the plays were mislaid by Hueffer, and, although they turned up in April 1912 and Garnett

¹L 309. The play went through substantial revision before its publication in 1914 presumably with this end in mind.

had, by that time, seen more of Lawrence's plays, The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd was published on its own in 1914. Whatever Garnett's reason for publishing only this play, the effect was that it was the only one of Lawrence's early plays to be widely known or available to anyone who might have been interested in staging a play by Lawrence. The fact that after 1914 any interest in Lawrence's plays was centred on The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd is directly related to the publication of that play, or rather the lack of dissemination of any other Lawrence plays. The publication of Touch and Go in 1920 and David in 1926 obviously altered the availability of Lawrence play texts, but, of the superior colliery plays, A Collier's Friday Night had to wait until 1934 and The Daughter-in-Law until 1965 before they were readily available.

The first attempt at getting The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd on the stage was made by Hueffer who sent the play to Harley Granville Barker. Granville Barker's importance in the minority theatre of that time is unquestionable, but he failed to see sufficient value in Lawrence's play and returned it with a cursory 'read it with much interest but afraid I don't want it' note.¹ Garnett, to whom Lawrence sent the play next, passed it on to Iden Payne, who, Lawrence's letters for April 1912 show, was interested in staging the play. The fact that Iden Payne had strong connections with the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester, both as business manager and actor, emphasises the affinity between the drama Lawrence was writing and the sort of opportunities that were opened up with the creation of provincial

¹L 298.

repertory theatres.¹ Iden Payne had left the Gaiety in 1913, and in the year following toured with his own repertory company and organised repertory seasons in Sheffield, Leeds, Glasgow and Edinburgh. This clearly indicates the type of provincial repertory organisation that Lawrence's play was considered to be suitable for. On 23 April 1912 Lawrence wrote, 'I had a letter from Iden Payne appointing me a meeting at the Managers Club on Thursday, to which I have written agreeing'.² The meeting presumably took place and a letter shortly after the meeting indicates that Payne and Lawrence had come to some agreement over alterations to the text. But a production never materialised; for some reason the project fell through.³

In December of the following year, Lawrence, on the recommendation of Arnold Bennett, was approached by the Stage Society who were willing to consider a Lawrence play. Again this is further evidence of the minority, even experimental nature of the theatre organisation

¹Sylvia Sklar, in her Ph.D. thesis The Relationship between Social Context and Individual Character in the Naturalist Drama, claims that the Manchester repertory movement was hostile to the naturalistic technique of Lawrence's plays. Her argument runs as follows. The sort of naturalism found in the plays of Chekhov and in those of Lawrence is essentially the same. No plays by either Chekhov or Lawrence were staged at the Gaiety, Manchester whereas Galsworthy's The Silver Box and Shaw's Widower's Houses, which she argues belong to a different naturalistic tradition, were successfully produced there. From this evidence she deduces that the Gaiety found Lawrence's naturalistic technique unacceptable but not the Shaw/Galsworthy tradition. This sort of reasoning is particularly dangerous here, for it is also the case that not one play by Strindberg was produced at the Gaiety. Yet it is a tenet of Dr. Sklar's thesis that there is also a fundamental difference between the naturalism of Strindberg and the naturalism of Lawrence. The connection does not appear to be as simple as Dr Sklar suggests, for Iden Payne's eagerness to produce The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd, in spite of his central position and great influence within the Manchester movement, suggests that he was not hostile as such to Lawrentian naturalism.

²L 386.

³This is presumably the 'play that was perhaps going to be produced in London' which Jessie mentions in her personal record (ET 215).

which might have appreciated Lawrence's drama.¹ As I suggested earlier the relationship between the publishing of Lawrence's play texts and their availability as pieces for the stage is decisive and this is evident in this approach from the Stage Society. In December 1913, The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd was in the final stages of publication and it is quite possible that Arnold Bennett was aware of this, which would perhaps account for the particular form of the approach made by the Stage Society; Lawrence explained in a letter:

The Sec. of the Stage Society wrote me and said Arnold Bennett had told them, if I ever published drama, they must get hold of it.²

Lawrence did not have a manuscript in a fit state or a set of duplicate proofs to send, so this incident is an indication of not only Lawrence's but also the producer's dependence on the published edition of this play.³ In the modern period the practice of publishing plays which were not overtly commercial and which had only tentative chances of production was inaugurated by Shaw in 1898 with Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant, so the circumstances surrounding The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd are not all that unusual. Lawrence's case extends the implication of Raymond Williams' comment, in his introduction to the Penguin collection of the plays, that 'like so many young writers [Lawrence] found publication much easier than any theatrical contact'.⁴ Lawrence said he would send a copy of the play, but whether he did or not, and if he did what was the outcome is now impossible to discover.

¹This is even true of the revival of Lawrence's plays in the sixties. The production of A Collier's Friday Night at the Royal Court in 1965 took the form of a single experimental Sunday evening performance. The play proved so successful that it was repeated the following Sunday.

²HL 174.

³See CL 256.

⁴D.H. Lawrence, Three Plays, with an introduction by Raymond Williams, p. 10.

The course that I have traced for The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd qualifies Williams' assertion that Lawrence 'sent the plays, almost naturally, to be published rather than produced: that was the most available opportunity' (idem).

Catherine Carswell mentions that in the summer of 1914 Lawrence 'was seeing Lena Ashwell, who was hopeful of producing Mrs Holroyd'.¹ Lena Ashwell had made her name in the title role of Mrs Dane's Defence in 1900. However, she was not totally bound by the standards of the commercial society drama, for when, in 1907, she took the lease of the Kingsway as actress manageress, she issued the following manifesto:

The policy of the theatre - I propose to alternate Plays of serious interest with comedies, and to produce at Matinées pieces which, while worthy of production by reason of their artistic merit, would not perhaps interest a sufficient number of the public to warrant their being placed in the regular evening Bill.²

In 1914, the Kingsway itself was sub-let to Harley Granville Barker, but presumably Miss Ashwell was still interested in plays, such as Lawrence's, which were artistically worthy but commercially unviable. In a letter to Edward Nehls, she wrote, 'I have a great admiration for D.H. Lawrence. But I only met him once when he wanted me to act in a very tragic play of his'.³ This is one of the few occasions where there is some concrete evidence of the reasons for the play's failure to reach the stage: she felt it would be too harrowing for the audience. This is an important point and one to which I shall return shortly.

The next interest in The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd was shown by Esmé Percy in September 1914. He had also worked in Miss Horniman's theatre in Manchester, after which he formed a travelling repertory company. I don't wish to labour the point unduly, but again this shows the area of interest in Lawrence's plays at this time. The three towns which are mentioned in connection with venues for performances are Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh.⁴ Manchester is, of course, famous for its Gaiety Theatre, and a repertory theatre had opened in Glasgow

¹Catherine Carswell, The Savage Pilgrimage, p.22.

²Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, The Lost Theatres of London, p. 102. Coincidentally, it was at the Kingsway in 1926 that The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd received its first London performance.

³N I, 598.

⁴See CL 363.

in 1909. It is interesting that Iden Payne, who had previously been interested in Lawrence's play, had organised repertory seasons in both Glasgow and Edinburgh. Again the proposal came to nothing at this time. One can only hazard a guess as to why. The prosecution of The Rainbow in November 1915, two months after the record of Percy's interest, may have a good deal to do with it. Even progressive movements, no doubt, had to be careful of the weight of opinion of the great British public, especially in war time. Also the fact that Esmé Percy himself enlisted in December 1915 may not be totally unconnected.

This marks the last proposed production of any of Lawrence's plays during what constitutes his major playwriting period. There was one further attempt that came to nothing in 1920 when Douglas Goldring attempted to secure a production of The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd with the People's Theatre Society. Lawrence, Goldring claims, was eager to have the play produced and liked the idea of Goldring's wife, Betty, playing the title role, attracted it seems by her silent quality and her big nose!¹ By this time the play had been staged by amateurs at Altrincham, Cheshire and, Douglas Goldring reasoned, 'if a company of amateurs could put on the play successfully in the provinces, surely, with all the professional talent at our command, we could do the same in London'.² Lawrence's association with Goldring and the People's Theatre Society resulted in the publication of Touch and Go and the production of neither play.

The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd eventually found the stage twice in Lawrence's lifetime. In 1920 at Altrincham and in 1926 in London by the Stage Society and Three Hundred Club at the Kingsway Theatre. Lawrence's audience was only to be found, as the other proposed productions indicate, within organisations outside the boundaries of

¹See N I, 491.

²N I, 495.

the commercial theatre - provincial amateurs (I do not intend this to be in any way derogatory) and the experiment orientated Stage Society.

The retracing of the attempts and repeated failure of Lawrence's plays to reach the stage implies that Lawrence's plays in themselves were uncongenial to the expectations of a theatre audience of that time, and quite possibly uncongenial to many theatre producers and actors. Given the standards of the Edwardian commercial theatre, as I have already pointed out, it is clearly impossible that Lawrence would be acceptable to either audiences or purveyors of that sort of drama. Lawrence's colliery plays, in technique as well as in setting, are poles apart from the world of society drama, and it would be foolish to even attempt to imagine some kind of reconciliation between them. However, the drama and organisation of the minority theatre in the first decade and a half of this century would, at first sight, be more likely to accept Lawrence's drama. The rise of groups such as the Stage Society, the occurrence of the Court seasons in London, and the rise of the provincial repertory movement and respectable amateur societies all provided new outlets for a drama similar to Lawrence's. The minority drama itself showed significant shifts towards Lawrence's plays: its move in setting from the London and country houses of fashionable society to suburban, provincial and industrial settings; a greater acceptance of working-class characters as leading figures in serious drama; a move to more ordinary experience than that of just the Mayfair set; and a move to greater realism in dispensing with the overt theatricality of the well-made play in favour of creating an illusion of reality which had a greater correspondence with the experience of real life. The minority dramatists were only partially successful in shaking off the habits of the society

dramatists both in setting and technique. Lawrence's drama, however, can legitimately be seen as an extension of the trends in the Edwardian minority drama that I have rather broadly mapped out. Despite the inevitable changes in sensibility that the new approaches of the minority theatre created, Lawrence still remained unacceptable. In very general terms one can deduce that the reason for this was that, whilst Lawrence continued trends already established by certain dramatists, he took these trends further than was currently acceptable: in short, he went too far. So much so that, despite similarities with the minority dramatists, Lawrence in effect created a different sort of drama by his adherence to principles of organisation and definition which generally only figured spasmodically in the minority drama.

II

Early reviews of Lawrence's plays, particularly of their appearance in book form rather than of productions, are often non-committal expressing some dissatisfaction and some faint praise. But the most consistent comment is the accusation of squalor and sordidness. 'Sordid and uninspiring', 'another sordid picture of lower class life', proclaimed two American reviewers on the publication of The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd in 1914.¹ Apart from the children, opined the Times reviewer of the 1926 Stage Society production of the same play, 'all else is stagnant and tormented; it lies like a burden on the mind'.² This sort of charge is not entirely extinct from modern opinion as Emile Delavenay's

¹Anon., 'The Black Country', Nation (New York), 99 (1914), p. 112; J.R. Crawford, [review of The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd], Yale Review, 4 (1915), p. 624.

²Anon., 'Stage Society: "The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd"', The Times, 14 December 1926, p. 12.

comment on The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd shows: he finds that a 'discordant note of squalid realism is continually creeping in: arguments about money, the old woman's recriminations against Lizzie, the triteness of the mother's final words'.¹ Both A Collier's Friday Night and The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd, when published, were seen by reviewers as being suitable for the theatre as well as just for reading.² But such comments carry little conviction, and Sean O'Casey, practically the only reviewer to come out emphatically on Lawrence's side, was undoubtedly nearer the mark when he credited Lawrence's lack of recognition to the state of the British theatre:

Here is a play that was worth production when it was first written, and it is worth production now [1934]. Had Lawrence got the encouragement the play called for and deserved, England might have had a great dramatist. It's no use saying that the play was hid, and no-one knew about it; the point is that even had everyone known about it the play would not have been produced, for the play is too good in essence to ensure a shower of gold into a manager's lap... Even to-day there isn't a theatre in England in which a writer like Lawrence would be certain to get a chance.³

Reactions to the final scene of The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd, the most startling and powerful scene in the Lawrence drama, demonstrate much of the critical malaise over Lawrence's plays. The spectacle of Holroyd's body being brought in and laid out by the two grieving women is such as to stun an audience with the sheer emotional impact of the sight of so intimate an act on stage. The immediacy of the reality of the scene creates a sense of awe, wonder and horror over the death which is not lessened but rather heightened, by the insistence on the

¹Emile Delavenay, D.H. Lawrence: the Man and his Work, p. 108.

²Its promise lies in an aptitude for the theatre, for while you read you feel that it was not written to be read but to be acted' (Osbert Burdett, [review of A Collier's Friday Night], London Mercury, 30 (1934), p. 376). 'It would be a shame if it were never performed' (Anon., 'Mr. Lawrence's Play', New Statesman, 3 (1914), p.281).

³Sean O'Casey, 'A Miner's Dream of Home', New Statesman, 8 (1934), p.124.

practicality surrounding the event - furniture must be moved in the cramped kitchen to accommodate the body, there is a need to act quickly before the body sets as is emphasised by the very last words of the play: 'We mun get his things off soon, or else we s'll have such a job' (61). The effect is of being at a rite at once rich in emotion and intensely private, a scene rarely witnessed in the theatre. The two reactions which the scene evokes seem to be either a sensation of great emotion, of being at one with the characters on the stage, or a feeling of embarrassment at witnessing in its raw nakedness something that one shouldn't.

The stark realism is what some early commentators objected to. 'The spectacle of the dead man's grimy body through half the last act, with his wife and then his mother washing it for the cerements of the grave is repulsive', commented a reviewer of the 1926 production.¹ Catherine Carswell, who was generally favourably disposed towards Lawrence's plays, wrote in the thirties that the ending of The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd was theatrically unacceptable unless 'the whole production [were] lifted into a plane beyond realism with movements that are classically simplified'.² Thus she translated her sense of repulsion into an aesthetic criterion. Art, the assumption presumably is, is above and superior to the sort of realism they thought Lawrence dealt in. It is interesting that she thought the insistence on the practical action, which is so important a part of Lawrence's technique, was somehow improper in this last scene unless it could be classically simplified; that is, removed from its correlation with everyday life. One critic of the 1926 production complained, 'there crept in the gross sentimentality of a Hecuba turned oyster-wench. But the fault was partly Mr. Lawrence's: he allowed himself to become obsessed by the idea of the corpse, and left

¹Anon., [review of The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd], The Graphic, 114 (1926), p.1093.

²Catherine Carswell, The Savage Pilgrimage, p.142.

the emotional core of the play unresolved... It was the idea of a corpse, not of death'; 'photographic, not imaginative, realism', he claimed.¹

Latter day critics, however, are far from unanimous in taking the other stance and unreservedly praising the scene. They do not condemn the scene on the old chestnut of photographic realism, presumably the experience of more recent twentieth-century drama, especially the realistic drama of the fifties and sixties, has cured them of that. But they express their unease at the spectacle of the laying out of the body. They fear such action will result in embarrassment likely to provoke laughter, partly caused, no doubt, by nervous reaction. Kenneth A. Hurren, writing in 1953, clearly still saw Lawrence, or expected his readers to see Lawrence, as a writer of mucky books and claims that one can be pardonably excused for imagining the plays failed because of censorship difficulties. He wrote of the last scene, 'I am afraid the mechanics of the thing when produced on a stage would, at best, be too dismaying for most audiences and, in an unskilful production, might well result in the disaster of tittering'.² And Jeremy Kingston, reviewing the 1968 Royal Court production, found that 'the final scene, presumably intended to harrow us, comes dangerously close to being embarrassingly comic'.³

Generally, since the Royal Court productions, critics have reacted favourably to this final scene, recognising its emotional power and restraint, and Lawrence's ability to cope with the inherent difficulties the scene poses. Although, as early as 1915, the rather unlikely sounding Homer E. Woodbridge commented, 'The final scene, grimly realistic and of extraordinary power, shows the two women washing

¹Anon., [review of The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd], Nation and Athenaeum, 40 (1926), p.422

²Kenneth A. Hurren, 'D.H.Lawrence as a Playwright', Radio Times, 120 (11 September 1953), p.21

³Jeremy Kingston, [review of The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd], Punch, 254 (1968), p.433.

the body for burial. The best evidence of the author's tact and skill is that the effect neither of this scene nor of the play as a whole is sordid or depressing; it is rather, in the true sense of the word, tragic'.¹ All praise to Homer E. Woodbridge, who, at least in this critical insight, is probably fifty years ahead of his time, for one of the most characteristic reactions to the emotional intensity of this last scene on the part of modern critics is to find it tragic. Possibly the most powerful testimony to the effect of the final scene of The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd when acted and produced well is the reaction of Simon Gray:

For a short time at least, the separate members of the audience become one, not only with the mourning widow, but also with the pathetic and still vulnerable body in her arms. The wretched, wearying battle between husband and wife is over, the division between the stage and the spectators vanished, and something like a community is created out of the shared recognition of the race's tragedy.²

¹Homer E. Woodbridge, 'Plays of Today and Yesterday', The Dial, 58 (1915), p.48,

²Simon Gray, 'Lawrence the Dramatist', New Society, 11 (1968), p.424.

2. Some critical problems

The most fundamental feature of the colliery plays is their complete confinement in subject matter and setting to a particular section of the industrial working class. The very presence of Lawrence's working-class settings and characters in his plays is of great importance from an artistic and historical point of view. Raymond Williams says of Crabbe's poetry that there is 'an alteration of landscape, by an alteration of seeing. The inclusion of work, and so of the working man, is a conscious shift of affiliation'.¹ Lawrence's treatment of the working man in realistic Edwardian drama was a similar shift of affiliation away from the country and town houses of the upper middle class.

It can of course be argued that the working man had already been present in nineteenth-century drama. A play such as The Factory Lad (1832) is of overtly working-class, even revolutionary, sentiment, and the nautical melodrama, such as Black-Ey'd Susan (1829) presented working-class characters in leading roles. But the essential difference in Lawrence is in the method of presenting such characters, the way in which they are seen and their experience mediated.

The problem of the presence of working-class characters and the method of their portrayal is one that critics have recently divined in the nineteenth-century novel. But although different sets of relationships apply, the problem also exists in the drama. Raymond Williams, commenting on the work of George Eliot, notes that although she

restored the real inhabitants of rural England to their places in what had been a socially selective landscape, she does not go much further than restoring them as a landscape... As themselves they are still only socially present and can emerge into a higher consciousness only through externally formulated attitudes and ideas.²

¹ Raymond Williams, The Country and the City, p.110.

² Raymond Williams, The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence, p.64.

And P.J.Keating, in his study of the working classes in Victorian fiction, states as part of his basic proposition,

There are few English novels which deal with working-class characters in a working-class environment in the same sense as there are novels about the middle or upper classes in their own recognizably real settings: in other words, novels which treat of the working class as being composed of ordinary human beings who experience the range of feelings and emotions, social aspirations and physical relationships, that it is the special province of the novelist to explore.¹

The working classes when they do appear, then, are not allowed to exist fully in their own right and are subject to externally imposed attitudes, the attitudes of another class. In the drama the problem has been analysed by Elizabeth Burns:

Shakespeare... never surrendered the main action, even of comedy, to the lowborn. He presented society from the reference point of its highest ranks. It was in other seventeenth century comedy, that of Jonson, Massinger, Marston and Middleton in particular, that representatives of different estates, even those of the lowest, were often allowed to dominate the action, although, for comic or dramatic purposes, the representatives of the lowest were usually in or on the fringe of criminal society. The respectable poor were not considered interesting or articulate enough to provide the main dramatic action. They were seen always from the reference point of those above them in the social scale. Thus the conventional view of behaviour was still that of the dominant class.²

The situation of the working classes as described here could equally apply to the late Victorian and Edwardian drama, which is clearly dominated by the upper middle class.

One of the obvious reforms made by the minority dramatists at the beginning of the century was the introduction of working-class characters who played serious and important leading roles. This marked an advance from the society drama, which ignored the working man, and also a different approach from that of melodrama, which conceived of him and placed him in situations and settings defined by melodrama itself. The minority drama made genuine efforts to ascribe to the common man a

¹P.J.Keating, The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction, p.2.

²Elizabeth Burns, Theatricality, p.111

full range of human emotions and aspirations. Yet, whereas the common man was not merely present as a landscape, as Raymond Williams suggests he is in the work of George Eliot, merely part of her panoramic picture of social life, the minority dramatists were not generally prepared to present such characters and their lives as dramatically valid in their own right. The working-class characters in Granville Barker's The Madras House, for example, and in much of Galsworthy's work are made to fit in with and, to a certain extent, illustrate social theses which the authors wished their plays to propound. Such characters' lives are presented in terms of externally formulated ideas about society and are subsumed into the overtly tendential nature of the plays so that the lives themselves are justified, one is tempted to say excused, within the drama by the presence of a system of values which we can recognise as belonging to the authors and not to the characters. In this way the plays are Galsworthian, Shavian, Barkerian, but not working-class. These dramatists had no clear literary tradition upon which to draw in dealing with the industrial worker in drama and they seem unable to assimilate him into the modes of writing drama available at that time. The working man and his culture fit uneasily into the social problem play, or the sentimental tale that The Price of Coal, after its promising start, turns out to be. To write the working man convincingly into drama in terms of his own culture seems to necessitate the sort of different techniques and assumptions which Lawrence makes in writing his colliery plays: the creation of a form that validates the subject matter.

The conviction that the working-class characters carry in minority drama is undercut by the importance attributed to the social concern. A comparison with the characters in Lawrence's plays, who are seen from within the terms of their own culture, is overwhelmingly in his favour as regards the sense we have of them being genuine working-class

characters. Raymond Williams defines the situation as that of whether the author writes from within a community or not. Lawrence is writing like that because he is 'feeling with his people, not of them or about them'.¹ When the analysis is made in these terms it becomes apparent that Galsworthy and Granville Barker are writing of or about their characters. The problem is largely one of class backgrounds and assumptions about literature which are clear from the nature of their work. When Galsworthy or Barker write about and attempt to recreate working-class life and characters they are not writing about what they know intimately.² Similarly the relationship in the plays between the social issues and the characters shows an imposition on the portrayal of working-class life of the dramatists' own ideas formulated within the terms of the culture of their own class.

Lawrence's background and its relationship to the subject matter of the plays is obvious to the point that some would claim them to be direct autobiography. It is not simply a question of biography. It is not sufficient to say that Lawrence (or any other dramatist for that matter) is writing about the life that he actually knew, as if that either explains, or explains away, his ability and achievement. Lawrence does not have an automatic advantage merely because of his background. It is something that is inherent in the colliery plays themselves, in their technique and the language in which they are written. Raymond Williams suggests as much when he confesses, 'When I read Lawrence's early work - especially the stories up to Odour of Chrysanthemums, the first three plays, and then Sons and Lovers - what I really find is a sort of miracle of language'.³ This miracle, as he sees it, is that the language of the author is at one with the language of the characters; the language

¹Raymond Williams, The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence, p.140.

²This is apparent, for instance, in the difference in quality in the speech of the lower-class Joneses and the upper middle-class Barthwicks in Galsworthy's The Silver Box.

³Raymond Williams, The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence, p.139.

of description and analysis has become colloquial and informal rather than abstract and polite. I presume that Professor Williams would not include such early works as The White Peacock and The Trespasser in this analysis; but, in the works he mentions, the miracle he sees is the removal of the dislocation between the middle-class expression of the writer and the working-class idiom of the characters.¹

This quality is certainly present in Lawrence's plays. There is very little sense of the speech of the characters being an imposition by the author on characters whom we believe would not have expressed themselves in that way. But there are different sets of relationships in operation in a play as opposed to a novel, a fact which Williams himself acknowledges in his chapter on The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd in his book Drama from Ibsen to Brecht. Williams' linking of Lawrence's plays with his novels and tales as an example of a certain use of language is justified in respect of the feel of much of Lawrence's early work, but his analysis of the relationship between the analytical and descriptive prose and the direct speech of the characters must be qualified.

A play does not exhibit this relationship between analysis and description on the one hand and the speech of the characters on the other in the direct way that fiction does. Linguistically drama exists primarily in terms of direct speech, the written dialogue of the characters. However, what amounts to a similar relationship to that which exists in the novel also exists in the drama, and there it takes two forms.

The first is in the form of stage directions: the imposition by the author of explanation and analysis on the text of the play which often incurs the criticism^{of} being novelistic (something of the way the

¹Zola accomplished something of the same effect in L'Assommoir. But for him it was an aesthetic problem, a question of technique not a question of writing from within a community in Williams' sense. Zola commented on his novel. 'Comprenez que des raisons d'équilibre et d'harmonie générale m'ont seules décidé à adopter un style uniforme' (Emile Zola, Les Rougons-Macquarts, II, 1555).

relationship between explanatory or analytical stage directions and the speech of the characters works in the drama is indicated by the fact that the criticism takes this particular form). The stage directions in Shaw's plays are an obvious example, as are, in their very different way, the directions in the plays of J.M. Barrie. Such directions are the result of the plays being prepared and even written for a reading audience, and as such they only intrude when the play is read. They become invisible in a performance of the play; or, at least, if the relationship exists in performance, it does not exist in the same direct fashion as it does in reading. For the directions must be transformed into some sort of action or other theatrically viable expression in a director's interpretation of the play for them to become apparent in performance.

The other way in which the relationship can be seen is through the direct speech of the characters. The creation of characters as mouthpieces is, in effect, a way of writing into the play the equivalent of explanatory and analytical passages in the novel. When such characters belong to the working class, which is the case in point, it frequently amounts to the imposition of a discernible social thesis or view of man and society, which belongs to the author, onto characters who would not normally articulate such ideas, or, if they did articulate them, would express them in a different way. Sets of values, a culture, modes of expression which are quite possibly alien to such characters are foisted onto them and they are denied the values and modes of expression which are available within their own culture. At the most immediate level this results in unconvincing characters, the content and style of whose speech is inappropriate.

The critical problem in the novel occurs when the voice of the author is at variance with the speech of many of the characters, when

there is a dislocation between the 'necessary language of the novelist and the recorded language of many of the characters'.¹ Raymond Williams sees the novels of George Eliot as being a typification of this problem:

We have only to read a George Eliot novel to see the difficulty of the coexistence, within one form, of an analytically conscious observer of conduct with a developed analytical vocabulary, and of people represented as living and speaking in mainly customary ways.²

The problem is exacerbated when the voice of the author is foisted onto characters who would not normally express themselves in that way, as frequently happens in the minority drama.

Galsworthy deliberately tried to efface himself in his drama, to keep his own conscious views of society from the mouths of his characters, even though the overall effect of the plays demonstrates this viewpoint. Galsworthy failed to write convincing working-class speech not because he put his own liberal middle-class views into the mouths of working-class characters, but because of a weakness in his ability as a writer. He was unable to capture the rhythms and tone of the idiom and, as such, he failed to affirm the culture and habitual modes of thinking which the patterns of speech at once mould and express. Yet, despite the fact that Galsworthy tried to avoid placing his own voice in the mouths of his lower-class characters, his plays demonstrate a variation on and an extension of the problem of the disparity between the analytical vocabulary of the writer and the speech of 'people represented as living in mainly customary ways'. For there co-exists in Galsworthy's drama the vocabulary and tone of his upper middle-class characters and his attempts at the vocabulary and tone of his lower-class characters. The very fact that these two modes are present side by side in a single play forces us to make comparisons, to judge, to ascribe values in the terms of the very clear class

¹Raymond Williams, The Country and the City, p. 207.

²Raymond Williams, The Country and the City, p. 207.

definition of Galsworthy's drama. In this respect it is an indirect form of the problem which Williams describes, for it is a question of judging conduct within two modes of class expression.

It is not just a question of vocabulary for the problem emanates from the very basis of the way in which the drama is constructed in terms of social class. Galsworthy, in such plays as The Silver Box, Strife, and to a lesser extent, Justice, presents a view of society which is vertically organised, cutting downwards through the stratification of different class levels to present what is supposed to be a more complete picture of society. But because of the nature of Galsworthy's method of presentation, in the parallels made between lower-class and upper-class characters, we are forced to make judgements in terms of class structuring. That is, we are forced to judge from the point of view of Galsworthy's own middle-class, liberal vision, and thus we become aware of the discrepancy between that essentially analytical vision and the culture of the working-class characters we judge.

The problem can be resolved by restricting the action, by making it socially selective and thus avoiding the discrepancy. This occurs in the work of Jane Austen, Williams argues, leading to a loss in full social reference. It thus lacks the panoramic cross-section of society, but it is able to achieve a unity of language and connect speech and analysis by means of a literary convention. The late Victorian and Edwardian society drama shows an equivalent, and possibly even narrower, social selection. The major characters are invariably taken from one particular class, and are differentiated not in terms of difference of class stratification, as in a panoramic picture, but in terms of their respectability according to a certain social and moral code. Apart from the creation of a deliberate comic effect, the characters therefore all speak within the one basic social register and there is no discrepancy

between different modes of speech as there is in Galsworthy, for example. The speech of the only workers in the society drama (apart from that of the professional gentlemen, lawyers, doctors, and the like, whose speech is in the same register as the rest of the characters), the servants and waiters and similar menials, is strictly limited by their social role and their relation to their employers, so that their speech is a function of only one side of their position in society. Their language is subservient, uncoloured, unobtrusive, conditioned not to clash not only with the language of their employers but also with the very way of life of the fashionable town or country house. They are very rarely seen below stairs where their language would express a different set of values and experience.

By means of a literary and theatrical convention we accept, within certain limits, the reality of the mode of speech in these plays. This is a convention which exists throughout all realist fiction and drama; that the direct speech, as it is written down, is just like real speech. This is clearly a false assumption. The very act of writing down speech changes it, and it is fairly obvious from transcripts of tape recordings of actual speech that speech in naturalistic and realistic works is a very different thing. I presume that dialogue in the society drama exploited this convention fairly effectively, and, although to our more informal age, some of the speech seems old-fashioned and formal, the convention still works. As in Jane Austen, the convention is greatly helped by the social selection of characters and settings that is the basis of the society drama. As there is only one basic register in the society drama it creates its own standard. Within the limits of the play itself we are not given a comparison against which we can make a judgement. But, in Galsworthy, the two modes are simultaneously present and a comparison is forced upon us. Yet because of a critical assumption that there is greater virtue in a presentation of a wideranging

cross-section of society than a narrow, socially restricted picture (Dryden's praise of Chaucer for presenting 'God's plenty' I take to be an example of a still persistent attitude) we are more likely to favour Galsworthy's attempt rather than the achievement of Pinero.

Lawrence's colliery plays are as tightly socially selective as the plays of the society dramatists. There is no social cross-section of Edwardian England; the persons of highest social standing are a pit manager, who is probably a worker who has risen, and a couple of primary school teachers, yet the plays are extremely satisfying and not restricted in the way that the society drama now seems to us.¹ It is difficult to substantiate a simple value judgement that plays restricted to the working classes are better than plays restricted to the upper classes. Yet the fact remains that Lawrence's plays are now generally valued more highly than the plays of Jones or Pinero. This, I believe, can be accounted for not just by a difference in taste in a modern audience but by a difference in technique, a different way of using and treating the material, a different way of creating drama out of an apparently everyday reality. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to a study of how Lawrence achieves this.

¹Teaching was the largest single Edwardian profession. Three quarters of elementary school teachers were women earning on average £75 p.a. Their claim to middle-class status was made by their professional function, not by their salary. (See Donald Read, Edwardian England 1901-1915: Society and Politics, p.44).

3. Setting and stage directions

I

In March 1968 A Collier's Friday Night, The Daughter-in-Law and The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd were presented at the Royal Court as a trilogy of Lawrence plays. Although the plays express similar themes and preoccupations, and contain superficially similar characters, they do not form a trilogy as such. They do not follow on one from the other; they do not, in any real way, extend the themes in a coherent progression, nor, as a group, do they depend on each other for mutual illumination. Helen Dawson suggested that the three plays were presented together for the reason that 'they all take place in the village of Eastwood, where Lawrence was born'.¹ This may sound rather specious an excuse for presenting the plays in a group, but this fact is very important. The autobiographical element in her comment is a red herring. The interest of the plays does not essentially reside in the fact that they portray, directly or indirectly, Lawrence's own life or experience. It does not matter that Lawrence is writing about his own town. The essential fact is that Lawrence is writing drama which inheres in a specific time and place, drama which is not just a period piece or a superficial picture of Eastwood life in 1910, but drama which contains within itself a whole way of life of a particular community at a particular time. It is not necessary to bring external biographical evidence to prove the authenticity of the plays - that the family in A Collier's Friday Night is obviously the Lawrences, that the original for Mrs Holroyd was an aunt of Lawrence - the authenticity is immanent in the text itself.

Lawrence creates a sense of place rare in the drama of Edwardian

¹Helen Dawson, 'Lawrence at Court', Plays and Players, 15 (May 1968), p. 57.

England. The definition informing Lawrence's colliery plays is not that of theatrical expectation, or an elegant code of behaviour, or the social thesis of the minority drama. The definition resides in the consciousness of the industrial history of a particular locality stretching back over two hundred and fifty years as is established in the first two pages of Sons and Lovers, a consciousness of the continuity between the gin pits worked in the time of Charles II through to the introduction of mechanical coal cutters in the first decade of the twentieth century. The gin pits were still in production when Lawrence's father was a lad. Their disappearance had only taken place sixty years previous to Lawrence writing the plays. The link with the seventeenth century was recent enough to be in living memory. This history is not explicitly stated in Lawrence's plays, but nevertheless its presence is felt and underpins the drama and gives it a sense of solidity and concreteness which is a new element in the drama of that period.

II

Not unnaturally, with this creation of a sense of place, the stage setting takes on an added importance. In marked contrast to the society drama where the settings tend to be merely a reflection of the elegant and leisured existence of the main characters in such plays, Lawrence's settings assume an active significance within his plays. Lawrence's sets are not fashionable London drawing-rooms, or hotel dining-rooms which form a passive background, a set in front of which the action is played. They have a much more direct relationship with the characters in the plays. The first words in Lawrence's description of the set in A Collier's Friday Night are these: 'The kitchen or living-room of a working-man's house' (473). The emphasis

is on 'living room' for the phrase takes on an extended meaning. It is not only a room for all-round use, but, more importantly, a room where people live. As Lawrence said of the miners' families in Sons and Lovers, 'the people must live in the kitchen'.¹ It is the room where the men must relax after work, the room where all the family must eat, the room where the student must study, where the woman must cook and work. The inhabitants must use the rooms and its fittings and furniture in a way in which the inhabitants of drawing-rooms don't have to. This room, the kitchen, is the only one available for use, and its very constriction exacerbates the tensions and friction between the people who are forced to share it. Dramatically the kitchen is the central point. The action of all three colliery plays takes place there. From it doors communicate with the scullery, and the passage which leads to the rest of the house. As the individual plays progress, it is from this central static setting around which characters and events radiate that we gain a perception of the whole community of which it is a part.

The setting, the miner's kitchen, in its physical reality depicts a way of life, not only of the community in general, but of the standards and aspirations of the particular families which Lawrence shows us. The difference between the furnishings of the two kitchens in The Daughter-in-Law is a visual signification of the antipathy in attitudes and standards between the mother and daughter-in-law which Lawrence explores in that play.

The stage directions describing the sets in all the colliery plays contribute towards creating a total setting. This is particularly evident at the beginning of A Collier's Friday Night where the stage directions are of greater length and detail than in any other of Lawrence's plays. Much of it is straight description of the physical

¹SL 8.

lay-out of the room and the furnishings in it. Some of it establishes the sort of furniture to be found in that type of room, and thus establishes the norm for the community; for example, the 'comfortable chair such as is seen in many working-class kitchens' (473). But more particularly (and it is in this way that I see Lawrence creating what I have termed a total setting) the objects in the room establish much of the predisposition of the people who use the room. The fact that there is 'a large black enamel box of oil-colours, and a similar japanned box of water-colours, with Reeve's silver trade-mark' (473) and also that there are four shelves of books on one side of the room and at the other a glass fronted bookcase are indications of this nature. The very presence of that number of books in a miner's home in the first decade of the twentieth century raises questions not only of the cultural aspirations of those involved but also raises certain economic questions in relation to the rest of the objects in the room - the bookcase the books are in, for example, is of 'stained polished wood in imitation of mahogany' (473). It also raises economic questions in relation to the other users of the room, particularly the father, which is a point explicitly brought out in the course of the play.¹

However, criticism has been made of the stage directions on the grounds that they are untheatrical. Granted that the number of books in the Lambert household is indicative of certain things about that household, it could be argued that to itemise individual books is to provide information which is theatrically ineffective. The fact the mother is seen reading The New Age or Nellie The Scarlet Pimpernel or to state the titles of certain volumes on the bookshelves is irrelevant to an audience's appreciation of the play. This leads to

¹It may seem extravagant to make so much of the four shelves of books, but in a survey of book ownership made as recently as 1965, 31% of the respondents owned twenty books or less. What average book ownership would be for a specific socially selected group, miners in Eastwood in 1910, is likely to be far less. (See Peter H. Mann, Books: Buyers and Borrowers, p. 24).

the familiar charge that Lawrence was not a born playwright and that he could not write plays without including material usual to the novel but not to plays. An anonymous reviewer of Lawrence's Complete Plays typifies the argument: 'The stage directions are as lengthy as Shaw's, containing much novelistic description, as if Lawrence felt an analysis of the setting (and sometimes of the speakers) essential, but could not work it into the fabric of the play'.¹ Obviously such directions, where they do exist, can only be fully appreciated by a reader of the plays and will be appreciated only in a nebulous way by spectators in the theatre. But to make that a charge against Lawrence's understanding of the art of playwriting is to disregard two important aspects of these stage directions.

The first is the inevitable increased understanding of the characters and their situation by directors and actors involved with the play, which results in the subtle effect that directors of the naturalistic theatre such as Stanislavsky and André Antoine recognised such details have on an actor. This is a genuine theatrical effect. The second point about these directions which is disregarded may not be of a theatrical nature, but to discount it is to ignore the effect of the literary mode of production on Lawrence's plays. This is merely to say that at the time Lawrence was writing there was a publishing market for plays, and that anyone writing plays would have one eye on publication as well as one on the stage. Stage directions therefore were written accordingly. The publication of plays only really became a viable proposition with the ~~copyright~~ acts of 1887 and 1891 which gave some protection against piracy. The production of printed plays for a general readership brought about an automatic change in the nature of the stage directions. Before the ~~copyright~~ acts, printed texts of modern plays had been mainly acting editions with stage directions

¹ Anon., 'Writing the Play', Times Literary Supplement, 17 November 1966, p. 1041.

consisting largely of technical abbreviations irrelevant and frequently incomprehensible to the general reader. Texts for a more general readership recognised the fact that the stage directions would be read as an integral part of the play, and the directions, with this aim in mind, became more expansive and elaborate going beyond what was strictly demanded for theatrical effect. This does not mean that such directions are unjustified authorial intrusions provoking the charge that they are literary or novelistic as opposed to theatrical. Pinero and Jones are generally regarded as practical men of the theatre rather than men of letters, but the published editions of their plays from the last decade of the nineteenth century onwards show this same concern with providing stage directions suitable for a general reading audience. However, the charge becomes more applicable when there are lengthy directions which show little or no direct concern with theatrical effect. This results in the suspicion that the writer could not work this material into the fabric of the play.

The fact that the anonymous reviewer of the Complete Plays links Lawrence with Shaw conveniently brings the issue to a head. The publication of Shaw's Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant in 1898 when there was little chance of stage production in the commercial theatre gives testimony to the fact that there was a reading public for such material for whom lengthy stage directions were appropriate. However, granted that stage directions of this nature were a natural concomitant of the publication of plays as reading texts, there remains a vast difference between the stage directions found in Lawrence and those found in Shaw. A comparison of the opening stage directions of A Collier's Friday Night with those of Candida brings into clearer focus the charge of them being novelistic.

The first thing to note about Lawrence's stage directions is that they are all devoted to the description of the interior of the one room

and its contents and the activities of the mother as she makes preparations for the evening meal. They are devoted to what the audience actually sees in front of it on the stage. Shaw, on the other hand, starts with a description of the surrounding district:

It is strong in unfashionable middle class life: wide-streeted; myriad-populated; well served with ugly iron urinals, Radical clubs, and tramlines carrying a perpetual stream of yellow cars

and its inhabitants - 'respectably ill dressed or disreputably worse dressed people, quite accustomed to the place, and mostly plodding uninterestedly about somebody else's work'.¹ Then he gradually zooms in in decreasing circles. He describes the park that can be seen through the parsonage windows, establishing its character by reference to the uses to which small features such as the sandpit and bandstand are put by the local inhabitants. He then proceeds to the exterior of the house and the arrangement of its rooms before he arrives at the room where the action is to take place. Shaw's picturing of the immediate environment in this way undoubtedly enhances our understanding of the play. But as it stands - starting far afield and gradually moving in - he uses the traditional technique of the novelist. In addition, the element of Shavian analysis and comment, in this instance, can only very tenuously be conveyed by the dialogue and action.

Lawrence, by way of contrast, only describes the particular interior, and it is through the dialogue and action of the play that we receive a very vivid and precise picture of the immediate community and its inhabitants. The very method of Lawrence's play is committed to this end rather than the detached observation we have at the beginning of Candida which is then left behind.

The overt analysis and comment in Shaw's stage directions is a further element that marks his directions as being more novelistic than Lawrence's. This is particularly noticeable in Shaw's description of the

¹S VIII, 77.

interior of the room and its fittings which can be directly contrasted with Lawrence's. The description of the books in the Lambert household in itself speaks volumes; yet Lawrence makes no actual comment on them, leaving them simply as objects from which we can make our own conclusions.

This specific comment is made of the Reverend Morell's books:

An adept eye can measure the parson's casuistry and divinity by Maurice's Theological Essays and a complete set of Browning's poems, and the reformer's politics by a yellow backed Progress and Poverty, Fabian Essays, A Dream of John Ball, Marx's Capital, and half a dozen other literary landmarks in Socialism.¹

Other comments in Shaw's directions are similar: 'there is nothing useless or pretentious in the room, money being too scarce in the house of an east end parson to be wasted on snobbish trimmings' and the clock is 'the inevitable wedding present'.² The aim of creating a total setting, one that depends on economic, social and cultural determinants by paying close attention to such small detail is apparent in both the authors, yet the way in which the setting is established differs widely. Shaw's comment on the relationship between useless frippery and the economic situation in the household is applicable to both the plays, but the difference is that Shaw actually makes the comment. This overt pointing in Shaw does tend towards the technique of the novelist; Lawrence's directions are in essence straight descriptions of the set and are therefore genuine stage directions.

However, some of Lawrence's stage directions require more careful consideration. There are those which, whilst not really adding comment or analysis, add explanation. For example, explanation of why people say things rather than how they say them: 'BEATRICE coughs slightly, adjusts her tone to a casual, disinterested conversation, and then says, from sheer inability to conquer her spite...' (505); or

¹S VIII, 78.

²S VIII, 77 and 78.

explanation as to why someone acts in the way they do: 'GERTIE sighs audibly. The tension of the scene will not let her run home' (479). Although this is explanation which might be more appropriate to the novel, it remains as an aid to the actor or actress on how to deliver the lines, and is therefore not merely a device to make the play more palatable to the reader. Beatrice's spite gives a precise instruction as to the nature of her 'casual, disinterested conversation' and the 'tension' provides a similar instruction to the exact nature of Gertie's sigh.

But what is of greater interest in these explanatory stage directions is their reference to the habits of a certain social class. Lawrence is writing about the details of an area of life containing elements generally alien to the sort of life which was the fare of both the commercial and minority theatres. These particular elements are the recreation on stage of the everyday activity in the miner's home. That such elements were alien to the majority of those who would presumably constitute a reading audience for Lawrence's plays necessitates the inclusion of stage directions of explanation. A direction such as the mention of the hearth in A Collier's Friday Night, which 'has no fender, the day being Friday, when the steel fender is put away, after having been carefully cleaned to be saved for Saturday afternoon' (480), is a detail which is not absolutely germane to the action of the play, although it carries a relationship to the concept of the play which is the Friday night itself. More appropriate are those which explain the reasons for certain actions actually performed on stage; one example will suffice: 'She moves about; lays table for his morning's breakfast: a newspaper, cup, plate, etc. - no food, because it would go dry' (239). Such details are not for the benefit of readers alone. They also serve as useful pointers to those involved in staging and acting in Lawrence's plays, who, in the Edwardian

age, it is reasonable to assume, would come from a background equally ignorant of the sort of detail Lawrence's plays deal in.

III

This emphasis on the detail of everyday activity is an essential part of Lawrence's drama, so much so that much of the action of the three colliery plays seems to be documentary in effect. This is most noticeable in A Collier's Friday Night where a large part of the play is concerned with presenting such detail rather than displaying plot or character as they are usually understood. Galsworthy's drama, at that time, was considered by some to be motivated by a sense of the documentary. Yet, as I have argued above, Galsworthy had little intention of portraying the life of the working man for its own sake, nor did he find the working man's or his family's everyday activity worthy of dramatic presentation. Lawrence, on the other hand, takes great care in the writing of just such details into the fabric of the play. He does not merely provide vague directions as Galsworthy did in The Silver Box, for example, but provides full and precise notation of the exact nature of these minor domestic details and rituals.

Many of these details are necessarily centred around the life of the mine, particularly the miner's return from work and the preparation of his food, his eating the meal and washing the pit dirt off, and, at the end of the day, the preparation for the next day's work. This amounts to a concrete presentation of men in specific employment and of that employment's effect on and relationship with the rest of the family and household. Many of the reviews of Lawrence's plays on the stage have stressed the sense of real life which they invoke, a fact well documented by Dr. Sklar.¹ This sense that we are watching a documentation of real

¹See Sylvia Sklar, The Relationship between Social Context and Individual Character in the Naturalist Drama, p. 27 ff.

life is created largely by the insistence on everyday activity utilising household objects on stage, activity which is carefully notated in the stage directions of the plays.

At a primary level this documentary effect is the use of an authenticating technique - the creation of a solid material context, which, by its own concrete reality, lends credibility to the overall action of the plays. André Antoine, director of the Théâtre Libre and champion of European naturalistic theatre, recognised how important a feature of realist drama this is:

In our interior sets, we must not be afraid of an abundance of little objects, of a wide variety of small props. Nothing makes an interior look more lived in. These are the imponderables which give a sense of intimacy and lend authentic character to the environment the director seeks to re-create.¹

Of course, this can remain merely at the level of technique, a trick or gimmick of staging which gives a superficial veneer of realism to a piece which is intrinsically false.

This is what happens in the work of the mid-nineteenth century dramatist Thomas William Robertson. Robertson's plays earned for themselves, in contemporary criticism, the epithets 'cup-and-saucer' and 'milk-and-water' realism. As these comments imply, his plays made their mark partly through stage business which utilised the everyday objects of the tea table and the rituals which attend it. This was an important step in the development of domestic realism on the stage. For, although it is generally recognised that similar care and attention to small detail had been provided by Vestris and Mathews earlier in the century, they had as their material only burlesque and farce. Robertson, on the other hand, was in a position to produce a more realistic drama with which, under the staging techniques of the Bancroft management, meticulous domestic detail had a far greater congruity. There is an apparent resemblance here with

¹Toby Cole and Helen Crich Chinoy, Directors on Directing, p. 98.

what Lawrence was to do in his own plays half a century later. Many of the stage directions in the three colliery plays involve the use of the stage properties present in the representation of the miner's kitchen, that is, the cups and saucers, the milk and water. The resemblance, however, is only superficial, for, although Robertson's innovations led contemporary critics to enthuse that at last truth had returned to the stage, Robertson's stage business remains largely at the level of an authenticating technique and does not serve the other functions that similar business does in Lawrence's plays. The success of Robertson's innovations and the excitement his plays provoked depended to a large extent on their novelty value, on the very fact that everyday domestic action was shown on the stage. Although he involved his characters in activity that made use of everyday objects on stage, there is little sense of such action creating an active setting for the characters or demonstrating the interrelationships between individuals or groups of characters and their immediate environment. That is to say, the function does not go very much deeper than a delight in merely seeing such actions performed.

Large numbers of the stage directions in Lawrence's colliery plays direct the actors and actresses to make use of the objects around them and to perform homely tasks. Yet such directions are not only part of an authenticating technique, neither do they create interest merely through novelty value as was the case in Robertson. The characters in Lawrence's drama are directed to use the everyday objects around them because such objects are an intrinsic part of the life that is being presented, and, moreover, the use of such objects is in itself an expression of that way of life. Each tiny action underpins and is expressive of a whole range of relationships between people and their physical environment and the community in which they live. The point is that the relationships are not expressed overtly or by explicit discussion

but indirectly through the action. That Lawrence consistently expressed these relationships in such a way ~~was~~ a new thing in the English drama, not to be found in any of the dramatists of the Edwardian minority theatre. It is not just a replication of the social reality of a way of life, an accurate depiction of Nottinghamshire miners and their families living in a small mining town. Everyday action, such as cooking, washing, eating, helps to create the relationships between characters. It is partly through these means that Lawrence creates and controls the drama, the dramatic quality of his plays.

Such is the nature of the use of everyday activity in the colliery plays that in performance the amount of such activity when there is no verbal dialogue becomes very noticeable. In a review of The Daughter-in-Law in the Royal Court season, B.A. Young felt himself driven to comment, 'I found progress rather sluggish. These are the moments where Mr. Gill has relied too much on his ability to plug a space merely with well-observed performance of simple domestic chores'.¹ That the reviewer attributes this to the director shows a failure to recognise its function and importance in Lawrence's method of writing drama which I have outlined briefly above. Yet what these plays also propose is that everyday activity in a working man's home is dramatically interesting and worthy of presentation. This is in itself of considerable historical significance, for no other Victorian and Edwardian drama was prepared to treat of working-class characters in the way that Lawrence did; and, although, in the Edwardian age, minority and regional movements made notable moves in the same direction, none of them was prepared to grant working-class life the autonomy on the stage that Lawrence did.

Lawrence's creation of a viable drama from working-class life is historically important, but his artistic achievement is the way in which he uses the working-class material. It is his achievement in this that answers the charge that his plays 'do not work on any level beyond the

¹B.A.Young, 'The Daughter-in-Law', Financial Times, 8 March 1968, p. 28.

satisfying of a fairly superficial curiosity' and that our interest in them is of a dubious nature akin to voyeurism and the excitement of slumming:

And to suppose that this [the sort of life Lawrence portrays] is superior to, or essentially different from, the kind of romantic gratification that the commercial theatre has afforded so faithfully and long is absurd. There is no particular moral virtue, though some seem to find a special excitement, in the fact that these people are not far removed from peasants. The fascination of watching a miner's linen sorted, his back scrubbed or his corpse punctiliously laid out, is much the same as the pleasure which an older generation still derives from a well-appointed cocktail bar or an immaculately pleated tennis skirt.¹

To dismiss Lawrence's plays as merely documentary or photographic realism only tells part of the importance and function of this material. When I used the term 'verbal dialogue' above, I used it deliberately. What I was hinting at, in what appears to be an unintentional tautology, is that Lawrence, through the use of everyday detail, is able to create a dialogue which is at once satisfying and expressive but remains un verbal and exists at the level of action. The method Lawrence employs to achieve this will be explored later in the chapter.

¹Hilary Spurling, 'Old Folk at Home', Spectator, 220 (1968), p. 378.

4. The role of everyday commonplaces

I

Much of A Collier's Friday Night is concerned with food and action connected with it - its preparation, its consumption, its acquisition. Friday night is market night, it is also pay day. Food, in this play, is inescapably interconnected with money and the economic situation of the family. Much of The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd is connected with housework - particularly washing clothes. In performance, Mrs Holroyd's washing is a powerful visual image of the day-to-day drudgery of her life. The play charts the progress of the stages of her laborious task. In the first scene, she has just brought the washing in from the line, but it is still damp so it has to be draped around the fire to air; in Act Three, she has the ironing to do. In both plays, these elements are not the mere duplication of activity in actual mining households, neither do they indicate merely the quality of such life, but, more importantly, they are utilised in such a way as to define the characters and control our response to them. Such elements become part of the organisational principle of the plays.

II

In A Collier's Friday Night, the mother forms the emotional centre of the play; the major characters are grouped around her, and the way in which she dispenses her affection determines and controls their reactions. In this household, the mother is also head and centre of the home economics - the cooking for and the feeding of her family. The dispensation of food is a concrete correlative and precise register of the dispensation of her affections. It acts not just as a measure of the strength or lack of affection for the various characters, but

also provokes the resentment, tension and reaction amongst the characters as they perceive the actualisation of the mother's favouritism.

In the league table of affection that Mrs Lambert creates, Ernest is decidedly at the top, and both Nellie and her father sense their subsequent deprivation. The situation becomes more complex as Nellie comes second in the league and is therefore favoured before her father but not before Ernest. The mother does not favour herself in this way, the play suggests, but gains her satisfaction from the sacrifices she herself makes, and from the little treats she can provide for her children out of her restricted budget. This is the case when she gleefully unwraps her surprise purchases after her return from market in the last act.

At the beginning of the play, Nellie returns from work and is offered toast and potted meat for tea - suitably nourishing and filling on a raw day, so the mother thinks, and it is also relatively cheap. Nellie turns up her nose at 'pappy potted meat' (475) and becomes petulant, expressing a preference for tinned apricots. Significantly the mother makes the excuse that Ernest is fed up with apricots, the implication being that therefore that particular feed is no longer required in the house. After a moment's hesitation she slips out to fetch a tin and Nellie is appeased and the mother has affirmed that amount of affection for her daughter.

The father returns from work, he is also irritable on account of his day's labour and at finding himself entering a hostile home; he feels 'too tired ter h'eat' (480). He eats his main course of stew and is then offered his dessert of rice pudding which he apparently dislikes and considers 'baby pap' (481). He immediately becomes suspicious, sensing that he is being deprived of the food favours dispensed to the others. The mother's excuse is that, first, he has not had rice pudding for some time, and, second, the all important factor,

that it is Friday tea, the meal before the meting out of the week's housekeeping money, and she has had no money to buy anything with and has had to make do with what she had in the house. The father's reply is possibly nearer the truth than even he realises: 'You wouldna ha'e, not for me. But if you 'a wanted -' (481). If not interrupted he would presumably have continued that if she'd have wanted to she could have got something else. This sounds pretty much like what had happened just a few minutes previously with Nellie. The mother, realising that he is getting too close to the truth for comfort, interrupts and sidetracks him, attributing his bad temper to the fact that someone has upset him at the pit and denies that there is any substance in his claim. Immediately the tensions and recriminations surrounding the mother's handling of the food become apparent.

As Ernest does not eat a meal when he comes in, his position in the field is not made clear until the last act when Mrs Lambert returns from market. Out of her weekly shopping, attention is centred on two little luxuries, both bought for Ernest. The grapes are bought because 'our Ernest likes those little grapes, and they are cheap: only fourpence' (512). The economic justification, continually present, assumes greater importance because of the limited amount of money available for food, especially in the light of the mother's bitterness earlier in the play over the fact that she was only given twenty-eight shillings housekeeping. She has also bought pine kernels for Ernest because he has had them at Mrs Dacre's, and even these are not an unwarrantable luxury, as they can be justified by the fact that they serve as a substitute for suet in mincemeat. The mother, in this scene, is clearly going to some lengths to justify these purchases in front of her daughter on grounds other than that they are bought as treats for her son.

The favouritism is not absolute for Nellie is allowed to share in the grapes and pine nuts, and, indeed, it is as if the mother needs to share her exultation with her daughter over these purchases. She is somewhat mollified when the unusual nuts find favour with Nellie, for then her pampering of Ernest is ratified. But Nellie is only allowed so much and is cautioned for eating too many, which provokes this significant dialogue which exposes Nellie's ambivalent position between **father** and son in the dispensation of the treats:

NELLIE: Beatrice, we can't have a thing in this house - everything's for our Ernest.

MOTHER: What a story! What a story! But he does like those little grapes.

NELLIE: And everything else.

MOTHER (quietly, with emphasis): He gets a good deal less than you.

NELLIE (withdrawing from dangerous ground): I'll bet. (515)

It is hardly surprising that Beatrice shows signs of discomfort in the presence of what is in effect a very private dispensation of favours and at first declines the offer to try the treats rather than become embroiled in the emotional tussle which they signify.

The father is completely left out, not merely through neglect but as a deliberate policy of exclusion. 'I'll take good care he gets nothing extra' (490), vows Mrs Lambert when she receives only twenty-eight shillings housekeeping. And when she returns from marketing everything must be quickly hidden away in a cupboard because, the mother explains,

Your father will be here in a minute, and I don't want him peeking and prying into everything, thinking I'm a millionaire. (514)

There is a conscious aim at secrecy, the father must not know how the money he has earned is spent on housekeeping. The result is that there is a continual sense of suspicion and the opportunity for bitter recrimination. The father's traditional role of provider for his family, his role as breadwinner, is thus undercut making him feel redundant, excluded,

a non-entity in his own home. The very collocation of ideas in the expression 'breadwinner' neatly links the way in which Lawrence presents the interconnection between economics and food in this play. Thus when the father returns and finds the grapes there is a double reason for the emotional explosion between husband and wife. He finds concrete evidence of what he senses is going on behind his back, evidence of his deliberate exclusion; and, from the mother's point of view, it is intolerable that he should feed himself on Ernest's grapes and steal the outward manifestation of her love for her son.

Mrs Lambert's distribution of food acts within the play not only as a measure of her love but also acts as a means of retaining people's love. Thus the father figures very little, and she finds it difficult to believe that he is 'so mightily particular about [his] belly' (481). His likes and dislikes are of little account as their relationship has reached the point where she has no desire to keep his love. Nellie can be placated with a tin of apricots. Ernest's whims and tastes claim priority in the mother's scheme, and the situation is heightened by the fact that Ernest's eating habits are more exotic and wideranging than the others'. He eats out in the neighbouring town of Derby, trying food in strange vegetarian restaurants. The mother has to try hard if he is not to be seduced away by the more exotic fare he gets elsewhere. The pine kernels are specifically bought because Ernest has been given them at Mrs Dacre's (where he gets his lunch in Derby?) and there is an explicit sense of rivalry on Mrs Lambert's part:

Our Ernest's always talking about the nut-cakes he gets at Mrs Dacre's; I thought I'd see what they were like. Put them away; don't let him see them. I shan't let him know at all, if they're not up to much. I'm not going to have him saying Mother Dacre's things are better than mine. (514)

Similarly she has previously tried gelatine sponge as Ernest prefers that to one made with cornflour; perhaps this is something else he first ate at Mrs Dacre's. To the mother's limited understanding, he is

in great danger of growing apart from her as much, if not more, on account of his widening culinary experience as his knowledge of French poetry or his friendship with Maggie Pearson. It is in accordance with this that she expresses a traditional distrust of vegetarian food: 'I shouldn't go to that vegetable place. I don't believe there's any substance in it' (485), and, no doubt, she would like to believe it cannot be a substitute for the substantial food/love she has for her son either.

There is a clear ambivalence in the situation for, although Ernest may be the most spoilt as regards food, in emotional terms his mother's favouritism means that in fact he is the most constricted and bound in a way that the father and Nellie are not.

Although food is a very precise indicator of the nature of Mrs Lambert's affections, an essential point about the way food is used as an organising principle in A Collier's Friday Night is that it is not used in the way of metaphor. It exists primarily as food - an everyday reality and necessity of every household. The tensions, suspiciousness, and reactions it causes are precisely those which are caused by favouritism over food within a family. The characters are therefore primarily arguing over the food itself, not over the affection of the mother, even though there is a clear relationship between the two. The characters are not grouped around the idea of food so that it takes on an extended meaning and stands for something else. The everyday commonplace of food is so utilised that it remains as a commonplace but also works within the play as part of the whole dynamics of family friction and emotion as it would in real life. This is certainly the case with the burning of the bread in the second act of the play. Even though this event precipitates the emotional storm between mother and son, the baking of the bread is part of the weekly ritual, a normal part of the collier's family's Friday night and, in the

context of the play does not take on the function of metaphor or symbol in the way that the burning of Lövborg's manuscript does in Hedda Gabler, for instance. The baking and burning of the bread is portrayed at the most immediate level of documentary action. Lawrence gives full notation, both in the stage directions and in the dialogue, of the various operations involved; and even when the bread is burnt, though it is acknowledged that the event will cause an emotional upset, there is little or no sense of it taking on additional layers of meaning for the primary emphasis rests on the everyday practical action of using a nutmeg grater to get rid of the charcoaled crust. To say that Ernest is destroying a love offering to his mother is an interpretative imposition and distortion of the effect of the scene and its role in the play.

III

The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd utilises elements of household activity in a similar way. In this case, Mrs Holroyd's washing and cleaning help to define many of the incidents and relations between characters in the play. Mrs Holroyd's continual struggle with her washing and housework is, in general terms, a demonstration of the condition and quality of her life, a condition which has a direct relationship to the mining industry in which her husband is employed. The position of her home, its proximity to the headstocks, which are visually present when she opens her door, and to the railway lines, which pass by, is a constant trial to her. She cannot dry off her washing and it is dirtied with black smuts. These attacks on her washing become, in the context of the play, inroads on her battle to maintain her self-respect, of which her concern for cleanliness, expressed through her washing, is a function.

The drama arises not so much from an exposé of the depressing conditions in which Mrs Holroyd lives, but more from the fact that, through Mrs Holroyd's consciousness, it is her husband who has brought things to this pass. She tells Blackmore:

I'd never have come to live here, in all the thick of the pit-grime, and lonely, if it hadn't been for him, so that he shouldn't call in a public-house on his road home from work. And now he slinks past on the other side of the railway, and goes down to the New Inn instead of coming in for his dinner. (15-16)

What is particularly galling to her is that not only does she have to suffer her present conditions, but that the move has not effectively altered Holroyd's drinking habits. As she says, she might as well have stopped in Bestwood where she was before. Not only is Holroyd responsible in this indirect fashion, but she sees him as being, by his neglect, directly responsible for the rats with which they are plagued:

Do you know, this place is fairly alive with rats. They run up that dirty vine in front of the house - I'm always at him to cut it down - and you can hear them at night overhead like a regiment of soldiers tramping. (16)

It is partially the intrusion of a rat later in the play which precipitates a final crisis in the relationship between Mr and Mrs Holroyd.

The rat and the disturbance it causes are directly associated with Holroyd. It is he who finds it, breaks the crockery, and wants to kill it rather than just opening the door and letting it out as Mrs Holroyd suggests. Together with his arrival at home with a couple of trollops from Nottingham in tow, it all amounts to an insupportable situation for Mrs Holroyd, especially as the rat necessitates her having to administer brandy and attention to one of the hussies; she cannot therefore maintain an absolute coldness towards them. There is, as Ronald Bryden suggests, a direct link between morality and the pride she takes in the decency of her home:

As Lizzie Holroyd pursues the endless purification of her house, you know without Freudian hinting or nudging symbolism why she is bound to prefer the genteel electrician who never goes underground, and also why she will never break her marriage for him.¹

The two women not only accompany a literal dirtying of her home, they also represent a moral sully. Their invasion of Mrs Holroyd's sacrosanct home is presented in concrete terms as she actually tries to barricade the door against them, and it marks a decisive moment after which she is prepared to break with Holroyd and elope with Blackmore. She is incapable of seeing, or refuses to see, that her husband is shamefaced over the incident.

Her relationship with Blackmore, the electrician whom she favours, is similarly defined by his relationship to her search for cleanliness. Holroyd besmirches her home, Blackmore is a potential factor for cleanliness. He appreciates her untiring housework and admires her white sheets. His job as electrician is in itself cleaner than Holroyd's, although Ronald Bryden may be wrong in assuming that he never goes underground. He helps, not hinders, her efforts in the house: helps her fold sheets, replaces the broken lamp glass, refuses to dirty a clean towel with his swarfed hands.

Because of his role as an agent on the side of cleanliness and pride in the home, it could possibly be argued that there is a certain irony in his name, Blackmore. But such is the nature of the way in which Lawrence uses his material that any extended dark/light symbolism is inappropriate. Lawrence's play is not susceptible to the usual literary critical search for meaning through symbol or metaphor. The strength of the critical tradition to elucidate texts by a search for symbol or metaphor and the unamenability of Lawrence's colliery plays to this approach is undoubtedly a factor in the lack of any great consideration granted them by literary critics. Lawrence's characters,

¹Ronald Bryden, [review of The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd] , The Critic, 22 March 1968, p. 10.

in The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd, are not placed in a context of cleanliness, darkness and dirt so that their choice can be extrapolated into terms of an abstract morality which the play makes clear through the imagery. Rather, Mrs Holroyd is making choices of an extremely practical nature where cleanliness and dirt affect in immediate and concrete terms the quality of her life. The morality against which this is judged arises from the conditions of living in a certain circumscribed community, not from abstract justice.

What Lawrence does is to select and arrange the events and necessities of everyday life - food, money, washing - as a means of definition and control as equally effective as the use of overt metaphor and symbolism.

Washing, in The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd, has an integrally thematic function beyond the establishing of the relationship between Mrs Holroyd and her husband and Blackmore when the motif is extended to the washing of Holroyd himself, first when he is drunk and finally when he is dead. There is something in the sight of Holroyd when he is senselessly drunk which demands that Blackmore should clean him up. The act of washing the dirt and blood from Holroyd's face is an act of reparation for Blackmore, an unconscious purification or atonement for his desire to kill the drunk just previously. This is not made immediately explicit in this scene, but in the last act, when Mrs Holroyd washes her husband's body, she, having a sense of guilt hanging over her for similarly wishing her husband dead, has to re-establish a sense of decency in the same way that she struggled to maintain the decency in the home - through the washing. It constitutes a purification of her husband and an atonement for herself:

My dear, my dear, what can I do for you, what can I? (59)

The only answer lies in the stage direction which follows her question - 'She weeps as she wipes his face gently' (59). Everyday action in

Lawrence's colliery plays can be as expressive as his finest dialogue and yet he avoids placing on such action an extended meaning which is inappropriate for the documentary effect of the drama to carry.

The effect of everyday commonplaces in the colliery plays may be documentary but their function is not to provide an interesting depiction of how miners and their families before the First World War went about their household tasks. Such elements are used as an organising principle - means to define relationships between characters, give meaning to certain situations, provide an understanding of tensions and frictions in the lives of the characters. In effect they function to create the drama of the plays.

5. Dialogue and dialect

I

The predominant mode of speech in the colliery plays is the dialect of a particular twentieth-century industrial community, and although this mode has more recently been readily accepted, probably because of our becoming accustomed to fiction, drama, film and television dealing with working-class life and characters, it has been one of the reasons why Lawrence's plays were unacceptable for so long. Despite the general acceptance of Lawrence's plays since the Royal Court season, such attitudes are not entirely eradicated as the comments of the French scholar, Emile Delavenay, on the ending of The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd demonstrate:

The lamentations of the old mother seem to be a faint echo of the words of Maurya, towards the end of that play [Riders to the Sea], but here we find no trace of the verbal beauty of Synge, whose characters also possess a dignity worlds away from the platitudes proffered by Mrs Holroyd, Blackmore and the old woman... How far removed from Synge's original and poetical Anglo-Irish idiom is the rough Nottinghamshire speech!¹

There is an inherent element of class consciousness in such comments which is far more apparent in an earlier comment on the same scene which describes Mrs Holroyd as 'a Hecuba turned oyster-wench'.² The class consciousness is inescapably linked with a certain sort of aesthetic - that the industrial, working-class life which Lawrence's plays deal with is somehow not really suitable or sufficiently dignified to be worthy of the name of Art. The poetic realism of Synge's islanders (whether or not their dialogue is an accurate reflection of actual speech is immaterial) can comfortably be accommodated within a traditional idea of art which raises no objection to the working class in a bucolic setting.

¹Emile Delavenay, D.H. Lawrence: the Man and his Work, p. 108.

²Anon., [review of The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd], Nation and Athenaeum, 40 (1926), p. 422.

The realism of the industrial working class cannot, however, it seems, be so readily assimilated.

Instead of the portly set speeches of the *raisonneurs* of Jones and Pinero or the self-conscious epigrams of Wilde which set the tone and expectation of the commercial society drama, there is little attempt on the part of Lawrence's characters at verbal elegance. In the same way that much of the domestic action in the colliery plays demonstrates the exigencies of a particular way of life, so the speech, the mode of expression, is a demonstration of conditions in this community which preclude the niceties of social discourse. The burden of much of the criticism of Lawrence's plays suggests that the tone of their dialogue, which is concomitant with their subject matter, was not acceptable to those whose expectations of drama were determined by the society drama or by a certain idea of what constitutes art.

The characters' speech is predominantly descriptive and denotative rather than witty or metaphoric. The style is mainly that of plain speaking where, for example, Mrs Purdy's bluntness is the usual tone, 'It's a matter of a girl wi' child, an' a man six week married' (213). The facts of the matter are not couched in euphemism between the two matrons. This is not to say that the language is not colourful, for the very bluntness has its own colour, nor that the language is devoid of metaphor altogether. Joe, for instance, finds it necessary to shift into metaphoric speech to get over a problem of finer detail which possibly cannot be openly or forthrightly talked about between the young man and the older women:

JOE: But he [Luther] never knowed owt about [Bertha's pregnancy].

MRS PURDY: He'd seen th' blossom i' flower, if he hadna spotted the fruit a-comin'.

JOE: Yi - but -

MRS GASCOIGNE: Yi but what?

JOE: Well - you dunna expect - ivry time yer cast yer bread on th' wathers, as it'll come whoam to you like. (214)

The metaphoric speech here is not a literary device on the part of the author, his external imposition of ways of speaking on the characters, but it serves its own function within the play as a means of communication between the characters themselves.

Figurative language, in Lawrence's colliery plays, is thus internally necessary to the characters and very different in function from, say, the language of Wilde's characters which frequently tends to be a channel for the author's delight in his own wit. In this light, Joe, the self-professed funny man of The Daughter-in-Law, moves into what are, to him, self-consciously humorous registers to make a joke. His mock funeral at the demise of Minnie's crockery, 'Dearly-beloved brethren, let us weep; these our dear departed dinner-plates...' (228-229), or his claim denying responsibility for the breaking of the plates and blaming the floor, 'I didn't say ter th' floor: "Break thou this plate, O floor!"' (228) are not what one would normally consider the gems of wit arising out of and appealing to a 'cultured' theatre-going public. Joe's inanities are frequently not funny to the other characters but appear to be funny only to himself. This does not, of course, prevent them from being amusing to an audience of the play. Rather, the point is that Lawrence does not contrive Joe's humour merely for the sake of the audience's desire to be amused. Joe is amusing in accordance with P.J. Keating's insight that the true humour of a realist writer is that which is funny to the characters rather than to the reader.¹

The same is true of the simile which Mrs Gascoigne employs to describe marriage: 'Marriage is like a mouse-trap, for either man or woman. You've soon come to th' end o' th' cheese' (210). The homeliness of such figurative language arises from ideas which spring from her own

¹See P.J. Keating, The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction, p. 191.

experience. Indeed, it is the very homeliness, rather than the clever incongruity between tenor and vehicle, which is a feature of the traditional literary simile, which seems to make such dialogue unsatisfactory to the sophisticated mind.¹ J.C.Trewin made this comment on the mouse-trap simile: 'With suitable apologies to Lawrentians, this might be the very voice of Phillpott's Dartmoor ancient Churdles Ash'.² This is a reference to Eden Phillpott's lightweight comedy, The Farmer's Wife (1917). In that play, Ash is a proponent of the cynical maxim about marriage, one example gives the tone and style of the others: 'To marry be like jumping into a river because you're thirsty'.³ It could be argued that Ash's similes are as homely and folkish as Mrs Gascoigne's, but the point is that, within the context of the play, his sayings are a comic device, the author's trick to raise an easy laugh, a superficial hallmark rather than the creation of a character's inevitable means of expression. Moreover his cynicism about marriage is not borne out at all by the outcome of the play where the approach of happy matrimony abounds, as is fitting for such a comedy. Lawrence's use of the simile has a far more serious side to it; it is not an oft-repeated gimmick, for we can take it to be the natural expression of such people, and furthermore the colliery plays as a group demonstrate the truth of Mrs Gascoigne's comment. Lawrence's dialogue is a composite part and essential correlative of the experience which the plays convey.

II

It has frequently been remarked that one of the greatest strengths of Lawrence's colliery plays is the quality of the dialogue and the

¹This finds extreme expression in the deliberately striking dissimilarity between tenor and vehicle in the conceit.

²J.C.Trewin, [review of The Daughter-in-Law], Illustrated London News, 252 (6 March 1968), p.32.

³Eden Phillpotts, The Farmer's Wife, p. 4.

dialect in which it is couched. This has not always been the case as Frank Marcus's amusingly phrased comment on The Daughter-in-Law indicates, 'The play is written in archaic Midlands dialect. As much of it is incomprehensible (with the exception of Minnie), I take it to be authentic'.¹ On a more serious level what Marcus's comment does suggest is the direct relationship between the dialect, the form of the speech, and the life presented in the colliery plays - life which may well be foreign to the experience of the majority of people who actually see the play. Just as bread-making, washing clothes, buying and preparing food are an expression of a certain way of life in the mining town, so is the dialect an expression of that life. Not only through the use of specific mining slang and terminology (for example, Joe's talk of 'pick-haft', 'wringers', and 'clunch') but as a mode of communication it is inescapably integral to this particular community. As Raymond Williams suggests, the dialect is not 'just a variant of printed English but the shape and sound of a particular way of living'.²

It is essential to emphasise that the importance of Lawrence's use of the north Nottinghamshire dialect does not lie in the picturesque recreation of actual patterns of speech. Keith Sagar recognises quite rightly that the dialect demonstrates the 'characteristics of a living, rooted speech', and that it is evidence of personal and cultural histories. Yet there is still the suggestion that there is something rather pleasingly quaint about the way they talk in his comment that 'the dialect and rhythm of their speech functions with poetic force, with potent unfamiliar words like 'sluthering', [and] salty regional proverbs'.³ Despite its charm, the dialect is not just a facet of the plays to be enjoyed as a tourist may enjoy sightseeing. Its dramatic function is more active and precise than that. Its function is in contributing to the definition of the drama of the plays just as everyday domestic activity contributes to that end.

¹Frank Marcus, 'The Dominant Sex', Plays and Players, 14 (May 1967), p. 19.

²Raymond Williams, Drama from Ibsen to Brecht, p. 293.

³Keith Sagar, 'D.H. Lawrence: Dramatist', p. 157.

The differentiation in the speech patterns of some of the characters is an indicator of differentiation in the standards and attitudes within the community from which so much of the drama and conflict in the plays arise. At its most simple and obvious this can be seen in the difference between the speech of Ernest and Lambert in A Collier's Friday Night, the speech of both signifying a different set of interests and assumptions, different ways of thinking and living.

Ernest is immediately marked out by his speech as having acquired a culture which is alien to that of his father, and even to that of his sister who is far from ill-educated. In contrast to his father's racy dialect ('And I wonder how 'er'd like to clap 'er arse into wet breeches' (479)), the son's speech shows not only a difference in content, but also a complete difference in tone and register. He wants money for books: 'I say, Mater, another seven-and-six up your sleeve?... Piers the Ploughman, that piffle, and two books of Horace: Quintus Horatius Flaccus, dear old chap' (483). There is a self-consciousness, not an embarrassment, but an awareness of his own cultivation that comes out most strongly in Act Two in his conversation with Maggie, where he expounds on French grammar and poetry, and on his own poetry, his 'gift of coloured words' (500) as he himself puts it. The cultivated, educated speech of Ernest is a clear indicator of a certain range of past experience and future expectations very different from those of most of the Eastwood mining community. The fact that the registers of father and son are seemingly so clear cut means that the differences and their implications are immediately appreciated by an audience or reader and the effect is relatively easily brought off by the dramatist. But other indicators work not just at the extremes of available registers within the English language nor

employ certain crude assumptions about middle-class and working-class culture.

Lawrence can achieve a far more subtle differentiation in register which indicates the slight but important differences in social standing and aspirations within the prescribed community, for example, between Holroyd, a coal hewer, and Blackmore, a pit electrician, possessed, we must assume, of some technical education. The latter uses a different range of vocabulary which corresponds with his self-mocking description of the pit electricians as 'the gentlemen on a mine' (12). The following dialogue, where Blackmore's search for the latinate 'calumniating' to express himself and Holroyd's automatic use of the colloquial 'mealy-mouthed jockey', is a good demonstration of the difference between the two men:

BLACKMORE: I think I'd better go. You seem to enjoy - er - er - calumniating your wife.

HOLROYD (mockingly): Calammiating - calammiating - I'll give you calammiating, you mealy-mouthed jockey: I'll give you calammiating. (33)

Lawrence uses shifts in the register of his characters to indicate certain facts about those characters and some of the drama of the plays inheres in the tensions built up around the differences established by linguistic means. The use of different registers is not just a straight index of positions on a hierarchical social scale. In The Daughter-in-Law, Minnie's use of dialect evinces an extremely subtle and fine sense of discrimination and definition. Minnie's speech throughout the play is closer to standard English than the speech of the other characters whose use of dialect marks them out as being more a part of the mining community than she is. This point is emphasised by the fact that she was the only character Frank Marcus could understand (or so he would have us believe). The difference in speech is perhaps to be expected as one of the main themes in the play

is Minnie's estrangement within the community. Stress falls repeatedly on the sense that the local women have of her contempt for them and their commonly shared standards. Mrs Gascoigne and Mrs Purdy, representatives of this xenophobic attitude, are typically hostile to the alien elements in Minnie. Their hostility is based on their intimate and unconscious knowledge and espousal of their own values and on a real sense of Minnie's inability or, they would more probably argue, her unwillingness to align herself with those values. The women specifically see a snub in Minnie's 'superior' taste, evidenced, for instance, in her choice of furniture. But one of the most immediate demonstrations of this difference is her use of a different set of speech patterns. It is interesting, in this light, that on the few occasions when Minnie does move into the dialect she is being contemptuous of the influence on her husband of his mother, one of the chief representatives of the communal standards which the dialect expresses. She rails that Luther 'sluthers' through any job, that his mother has 'marded' him up till he's 'mard-soft', that all his mother leaves any woman is the 'orts and slarts' of her sons (226 and 256). As Minnie is thought to scorn habitual ways, it is dramatically apt that in showing contempt for her mother-in-law she should resort to the habitual dialect forms for an expression of that contempt. In showing her scorn she resorts to ways of speech for which she quite possibly has an unconscious contempt, a contempt not only for the dialect but also a system of values concomitant with that way of speech.

At moments of tension there is a shift in the speech of the miners Holroyd and Lambert. When he rows with his wife, Lambert speaks 'with an exaggerated imitation of his son's English' (519), and as the row becomes more vehement his accent becomes 'still more urban. His O's are A's so that "nothing" is "nathing"' (519). The same phonetic shift can be seen when Holroyd pronounces Blackmore's 'calumniating'

as 'calamniating'. In both cases, the third parties who have either precipitated or aggravated the rows, Ernest and Blackmore, provoke in the miners an imitation of their more urban, refined speech and pronunciation. Thus the husbands attempt to compete on an even level not only against the speech patterns of Ernest and Blackmore but also against their slightly superior wives whose aggression is expressed verbally in a battle of words. Lawrence creates and reinforces the intensity of certain dramatic situations by his handling of subtle linguistic variations within the basic dialect.

The dialect is also the source from which much of the liveliness and vitality, the sheer sense of fun in the plays arise. A review of The Daughter-in-Law in performance stresses this point; the effect of Lawrence's dialect spoken out loud on the stage is that the play 'is enriched by a fund of regional humour which springs as much from the exact and vivid dialect as from the characterisation'.¹ One incident from the beginning of A Collier's Friday Night will suffice. Nellie is seething with contempt for her father because of his coarseness and his maudlin self-pity over his damp trousers, yet all, apart from the affronted Nellie, are thrown into fits of laughter at his rejoinder, 'And I wonder how 'er'd like to clap 'er arse into wet breeches' (479). Amusing in its own right, the racy dialect, at this point, also defuses the tension of the dramatic situation in the play itself. Even the superior Mrs Lambert, 'glancing at her irate daughter, laughs also' (480).²

¹Eric Shorter, 'Lawrence Play Shows Skill and Truth', Daily Telegraph, 8 March 1968, p.19.

²Jessie recalls a similar incident which actually took place where the father's blunt colloquialism defused a tense situation:

'He [Lawrence] told us the story of his father bringing home a whole ham and then stopping payment for it each week out of the housekeeping money. "Mother carried on about it week after week," said Lawrence, with a touch of pained recollection in his voice. "At last father could stand it no longer, and when mother began again he turned and look at her, 'Woman, how'd tha feeace' he said, and I nearly felt sorry for him." 'We laughed uproariously, and Lawrence laughed too, a little ruefully. "And did she stop then?" we asked. "Oh, yes," he said, "even mother had to laugh."' (ET 32).

It is not from a sense of inverted snobbery that I claim Lambert with his broad dialect is a more forceful character in A Collier's Friday Night than his college educated son with his 'gift of coloured words' (500).

III

The form of the dialogue, with its seeming reproduction of the redundancy and inarticulacy of actual speech, plays an essential role in the creation of the realistic effect. Yet, in the same way that the insistence on everyday domestic action is not mere documentary and performs an active function in creating the drama of the plays, so it is with the dialogue. Lawrence's dialogue is the use of a technique, a convention to produce the effect of actual speech, not the reproduction of actual speech; 'the imaging of actual speech on paper is imaging and not a transcript of the real thing'.¹

Consider the following piece of dialogue between Mrs Lambert and Nellie from the beginning of A Collier's Friday Night:

MOTHER: Polly Goddard says her young man got hurt in the pit this morning.

NELLIE: Oh - is it much?...

MOTHER: One of his feet crushed. Poor Polly's very sad. What made her tell me was Ben Goddard going by. I didn't know he was at work again, but he was just coming home, and I asked her about him, and then she went on to tell me of her young man. They're all coming home from Selson, so I expect your father won't be long. (475-476)

The situation is that the young girl has just returned from work, and the mother and she chat as they eat their meal. It cannot be denied that this piece of dialogue is inconsequential. The Goddards do not actually figure in the drama and are not even mentioned again. This snippet of conversation is an approximation of the sort of conversation,

¹Randolph Quirk, The Use of English, p. 267.

normal and everyday, we could expect in an equivalent real life situation. Its very inconsequentiality, the awkward logical progression, the shared knowledge between the people of the things talked about which needs no further elaboration or explanation, mark it as such. Linguistically, it shares many of the features of the 'restricted code' of language. This 'restricted code', as opposed to the 'elaborated code' used in formal debate or discussion, tends to be employed in informal situations, amongst the family for example, and is reliant as a means of communication on the context in which it is spoken, on shared knowledge and assumptions understood by the speakers, on facial expression and voice inflection. Thus it has the effect of stressing the speaker's membership of a group, and this is essential for the way Lawrence creates patterns of relationships in the colliery plays. Linguistically such speech is marked by a high proportion of personal pronouns (the sentence beginning, 'I didn't know he was at work again...' is a good example) which necessitates the elimination of confusion by gesture or intonation.

Lawrence clearly creates the impression of everyday speech by imitating features of such speech; at that level it is an authenticating technique and an important factor in the writing of his drama of common life. However, the charge against such a technique which still remains is that, even though it is something of an accomplishment to prevent the meanderings and inconsequential patterns of ordinary speech from being uninteresting, it tends, in its imitation, to contain a high level of redundancy. Granville Barker prevented the dialogue in the first act of The Madras House from becoming boring by creating comedy from it, and prevented it from being redundant by using the dialogue to convey something of the quality of life of the Huxtable family which is one of the purposes of his play.

Lawrence prevents these snippets of apparently trivial conversation, of which the one quoted above is just one of many, from being redundant by using them to build up piecemeal a picture of a specific community in a relatively small mining town which is an important part of the experience the plays convey. All the people mentioned are well known to both mother and daughter, and the system of relationships between Ben Goddard, Polly Goddard, and her young man, and the way the mother elicited the information from Polly is an enactment of how the system of relationships works in that community. It is a system of relationships based on a whole group of people whom we are disposed to accept as having an actual existence within the life of the play from the little we know about them. Gertie and, to a lesser extent, Beatrice function as a physically present ramification of precisely this same system. The girls' chatter about young men and their own boyfriends, who remain shadowy and little known characters in the play, is evidence not only of their own natural interest in courting but also of a very real concern with finding a suitable mate from those available within the community. The quality of life they can expect from a bacon sawyer or a collier who will need 'stinking pit things' (477) washing is of extreme practical importance for them. Indeed, the importance of this fact is explored in the other two plays, The Daughter-in-Law and The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd, where the central problem is created by the fact that the two women are forced to find partners from a limited available source and, to differing degrees, marry ill assorted husbands. Cumulatively these pieces of dialogue establish the cultural and social norms of this particular community against which characters and actions can be appraised.

The dialogue in the scene between Mrs Gascoigne and Mrs Purdy at the opening of The Daughter-in-Law also displays features which can be detected linguistically in real conversation. The dialogue exhibits

features of phatic speech, that which is low in denotative content but is important in establishing and maintaining the polite elements of discourse. Conversational commonplaces whose emphasis establishes a relationship of feeling between the speakers rather than establishes facts such as conventional greetings and inquiries about health, remarks about the weather are examples. The conversation in The Daughter-in-Law is successful not merely because it captures the authenticity of real speech, but because its use of this sort of language helps create the actual drama of the scene.

Mrs Purdy's primary purpose is the delicate task of informing Mrs Gascoigne of Luther's paternity of the child Bertha is carrying. Naturally enough, she prevaricates, dealing largely in phatic conversational pleasantries until a suitable opportunity arises for her to bring up the question of the pregnancy. The conversation centres around enquiries as to Joe's accident, general remarks about the mining company, and the impending strike. All of which help create a sense of the industrial and social setting of the play, but are redundant and ineffective in establishing the fact of the pregnancy. The conversation becomes increasingly strained and general with long pauses as new topics are sought by Mrs Gascoigne who feels obliged to keep the conversation going to avoid embarrassing silences until she is forced to ask the most phatic, redundant question of all, a mere conversational pleasantry: 'An' how have yer all bin keepin'?' (212). This gives Mrs Purdy the opportunity to reply, 'Oh, very nicely - except our Bertha.' All this stretches to two pages of dialogue which is redundant in terms of advancing the action of the play, and superficially it seems to be a mere reflection of the redundancy of everyday speech. But the tensions, the hesitations, the embarrassing halts in the conversation, which persuade us we are listening to something that approximates to real conversation, constitute the method by which Lawrence

creates the drama of the increasing discomfort of the scene out of the apparently documentary.

A scene which offers an interesting parallel to the one in The Daughter-in-Law can be found in Stanley Houghton's Hindle Wakes. Christopher Hawthorn visits his employer, but old friend, the mill-owning Jeffcote, to impart similar information to that which Mrs Purdy had to tell, namely that Jeffcote's son has taken his daughter away for a dirty weekend at the seaside. Again, before they get down to the business in hand there is some prevaricating small talk which establishes something of the history of the two men and of the industry in the area:

I used to come along the river bank on Sundays with the other lads. There were no weaving sheds in Hindle Vale in those days; nothing but fields all the way to Harwood Bridge. Daisy Bank was the first shed put up outside Hindle proper. They called it Daisy Bank because of the daises in the meadows. All the side of the brow falling away towards the river was thick with them. Thick dotted it was, like the stars in the sky of a clear night.¹

However, such material is not used as a technique as it is in Lawrence to build up a sense of community throughout the whole play. There is something too explicit in the way the two men talk at each other in establishing certain facts rather than utilise the phatic, seemingly inconsequential method which Lawrence uses. The conversation between Hawthorn and Jeffcote is strained and a little forced. This, it could be argued, is dramatically fitting, as the workman has to tell his employer that the latter's son has debauched his daughter. But it seems that the awkwardness is on the part of the author putting the speeches in the character's mouths, as is suggested, I feel, by the simile about the stars in the night at the end of the speech. In The Daughter-in-Law, on the other hand the sense of discomfort and embarrassment seems to arise from the characters and serves the purpose of the drama of that scene.

¹HW II, 112.

One other feature which Lawrence incorporates into his drama to create the appearance of real speech is a lack of articulateness on the part of the characters. This points to a major problem of realist fiction as well as drama, the problem, when writing the direct speech of working-class characters, of finding the right pitch to create authentic sounding dialogue and character. Part of the sense of falseness which creeps into Galsworthy's drama is the very fluency with which some of the working-class characters enunciate their problems.

Luther, for instance, is probably the least articulate of the major characters in the colliery plays. His inability to express himself is not just a reflection of a real Edwardian miner's lack of eloquence, nor an example of a character deliberately not saying what he means. It is a demonstration, at certain times, of his inability to come to terms, verbally at least, with his experience. Luther's appreciation of the enormity of the implications of Bertha's pregnancy when he hears of it renders him unable to make much sense verbally, but he is no doubt aware in a very real way of these implications. The scene is comic in effect even though Luther is not a comic figure here nor is the situation itself, as it is presented, particularly comic. There is a comic lack of congruity between the words Luther uses and the event he describes, which is pointed by Joe's sensible practicality and deadpan interjections. Luther's inarticulateness has wider implications in the play, for Minnie's inability to elicit from him adequate verbal communication, when she has little trouble with such expression, produces in her the impression that 'he leaves [her] alone, he always has done' (237). This difficulty is one of the stumbling blocks in their relationship.

The problem with incorporating inarticulateness into drama, where the primary mode of communication is through the spoken word, is that it results in a loss of expression and meaning. Pinero's comment on

the unsuitability of the lower classes to express a certain order of ideas in the drama stems from the assumption that such an order of ideas can only be expressed through the consciously formal discourse of the middle classes. However, in the colliery plays, so much of the dramatic emphasis and significance is invested in the domestic detail and action rather than in the purely verbal expression that the verbal expression, when placed in conjunction with such action, does not necessarily have to be explicit to ensure that there is no loss in meaning.

The last scene of The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd is an obvious example of this. The most powerful emotional effect is created by the interplay of the necessary ritual action, the laying out of the corpse, and Mrs Holroyd's moaning incantation to her dead husband, where the superficial meaning of the words alone is banal and thin, almost incoherent. Commentators on The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd in performance have frequently noted this superficial discrepancy between the actual import of Mrs Holroyd's words and the fact which occasions them - Holroyd's death - yet have remarked on the extraordinary strength and power of the scene to which Mrs Holroyd's words seem the perfect counterpart. The effect of this scene is completely different from the comic incongruity arising out of Luther's inarticulateness.

Her words to her dead husband at the level of speech are only the tip of the iceberg of what she wants to communicate to him, something which is communicated far more deeply by the last office which she performs for him in washing his body. Words and action are fused into a fitting expression for the event. Verbal facility on Mrs Holroyd's part at this juncture would be false both to the drama and the sort of life conveyed. A general point about Lawrence, once made by Catherine Carswell, is particularly illuminating on this point:

The inexpressiveness of the Northern temper, implying, as it does, a distrust of easy verbal expression, was congenial to him just as the so different Latin mentality with its subtle realism was congenial. In the facile intellectualizing of emotion he found evidence of a certain poverty of nature. He saw this at its worse in the Irish and the Americans. Here, however, he was perhaps not more characteristic of the North than of the English working-class generally, whose experience it is to associate true warmth with verbal inexpressiveness.¹

Mrs Carswell here tends to deal in rather broad generalisations, but as a general insight into the effect of the dialogue of the colliery plays her analysis explains much of the sense of authenticity which the plays convey.

¹Catherine Carswell, The Savage Pilgrimage, pp. 67-8.

6. Industry and Community

I

Lawrence's depiction of everyday domestic activity in certain homes, although it may be expressive of personal relationships peculiar to those homes, is also, in some ways, representative of the way of life of a particular community - a mining town circa 1910. Lawrence's plays communicate the experience of living in a certain small community governed by a certain industry. That The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd, The Daughter-in-Law, and A Collier's Friday Night can conveniently be designated colliery plays suggests something of the experience that they mediate. But it must be stressed, Lawrence's depiction of this area of working-class life is not intended to be microcosmic, indicative of Edwardian social, political, and economic institutions, as, for instance, Galsworthy's treatment of working-class life is.

Despite the fact that the action of Lawrence's colliery plays remains firmly within restricted domestic settings, we are made aware of the existence of a surrounding community and industry, and of the pressures and implications of this. In each of the plays, the kitchens portrayed form a central focal point not only for the activity in the house but a focal point whereby we become aware of interconnecting circles of relationships within the surrounding community which build up a composite picture of that community. The continual comings and goings and references in conversation to outside people and events create connections spreading through the immediate community. An explicit spatial relationship is made between events and characters and each kitchen. In A Collier's Friday Night, we become aware of a whole series of relative distances: Gertie runs in from a neighbouring house, Maggie has a walk of some considerable distance from Herod's farm, the

mother goes to market and struggles back with her parcels, the girls go gallivanting about the district. In The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd, we are made aware of the proximity of the pit head from which Holroyd's body is brought, the distance from the pubs where he drinks, and from his mother's house - all measured by the time it takes to walk to and from the various places. In The Daughter-in-Law, there is a clear sense of the intervening distance between Luther's home and his mother's, and particularly of the distance from the pit; the tension mounts at the end of that play as the women wait for the safe return of their family from the confrontation with the blacklegs. Indeed, the very length of time is a register of the distance, and the act of the women listening in the darkness is a powerful evocation of the distance between the mine and the house which has to be covered until the men can actually be heard approaching. There is a similar build up of tension in The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd as the mother and wife await the arrival of Holroyd's body; and, in A Collier's Friday Night, the mother's grievance over her walk back from market and the malicious comments about Maggie on account of the length of her journey from the farm contribute to the drama of that play.

The creation of a surrounding community cannot be merely dependent on us being made aware of the existence of the actual places in the neighbourhood. It depends on the establishment of spatial relationships between those places and the immediate settings of the plays which serve a dramatic function within the plays in the way I suggested above. Also, for the plays to communicate the experience of a living community they must be peopled, not necessarily with characters who actually appear in the plays, but with characters, even if only mentioned, who at least compositely contribute to a network of relationships touching and interacting with each other and with the characters who actually appear in the plays. This effect is most striking in A Collier's Friday Night.

There are over thirty characters who are mentioned individually in the play and who do not appear. This is such an important part of Lawrence's dramatic technique that it is odd that the drama critic B.A. Young should have ~~made~~^{made} such a blunder in charging Lawrence with technical inadequacy as a playwright because he brings everyone on stage whom he mentions in A Collier's Friday Night.¹ The majority of these unseen characters are actually named, and virtually all are individuated in terms of specific personal relationships in the township (for instance, Beatrice's mother and father, and Polly Goddard's young man), or individuated in terms of their social roles (Professor Staynes at the college in Derby, and Agatha Karton and Tommy, teacher and headmaster at the school where Nellie teaches).

Such relationships, made in piecemeal, passing conversation, compositely build up a whole picture of sections of the community. The dialogue I dealt with earlier between Mrs Lambert and Nellie is typical and worth quoting again as I wish to discuss it further:

MOTHER: Polly Goddard says her young man got hurt in the pit this morning.

NELLIE: Oh - is it much?

MOTHER: One of his feet crushed. Poor Polly's very sad. What made her tell me was Ben Goddard going by. I didn't know he was at work again, but he was just coming home, and I asked her about him, and then she went on to tell me of her young man. They're all coming home from Selson, so I expect your father won't be long. (475-476)

Such dialogue with its brief mention of the pit accident functions not only as the presentation of an interrelating network of people in that community, but stresses an important aspect of these plays. That is that they are in fact colliery plays, plays about people who work in specific industry and live in a community whose ways of living and standards are determined by that industry.

Lawrence could quite conceivably have established the network of interrelationships between the inhabitants of the mining town by making Mrs Lambert comment on some hypothetical Mrs Goddard who was expecting

¹See B.A. Young, 'The Daughter-in-Law', Financial Times, 8 March 1968, p.28.

a child, a natural enough conversation between Mrs Lambert, a mother, and Nellie approaching a marriageable age. It is also quite conceivable that a point could be made, by means of passing remarks, about the quality of life in the town - the expectations and attitudes of the women, or their drudgery in perpetual child bearing and raising. All this could have rescued the conversation from redundancy. Yet more than any other playwright of the Edwardian era, Lawrence wrote plays about people who work and are seen to be moulded and partially determined by their work. Nellie's first remarks are about her tiresome day at school, Ernest's are about his work at college, and pervading all the plays is the emphasis that Lambert, Holroyd and Luther Gascoigne are miners. This is in marked contrast to the plays of the society dramatists where there is little sense of the characters having any employment.

The colliery plays are explicitly about life in a mining town and the physical presence of the pit cannot be escaped even in the supposed privacy of the miners' own homes. Each evening the miner brings home the reality of the mine on his body and clothes - 'the stinking pit things'. All three plays show the everyday cleansing ritual, the washing of the miner's back and body. Raymond Williams, describing the cities of the industrial north, comments that

These were cities built as places of work: physically in their domination by the mills and engines, with the smoke blackening the buildings and effluents blackening the rivers; socially in their organization of homes - 'housing' - around the places of work, so that the dominant relation was always there.¹

Lawrence demonstrates visually this dominant spatial relationship. In The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd, the headstocks are visible from her doorstep. By reference we are made aware that the railway line distributing the mine's produce is on Holroyd's doorstep. Lawrence's miners, returning from work in their pit dirt, play a striking variation on the first part of Williams' statement about the pollution by heavy industry - 'the smoke

¹Raymond Williams, The Country and the City, p. 265.

blackening the buildings and effluents blackening the rivers' - for it is the men themselves who are literally blackened by the industry, providing the evidence with their very bodies. This everyday commonplace of Eastwood life, which Lawrence dramatises, is a depiction of a relationship between the workers and the industry far more central than the comparatively sensationalised strike in Galsworthy's Strife.

These men are not miners in an abstract social sense, as Falder is only a clerk in that sense in Justice. What is mediated is an everyday existence which is the common, shared experience of that community. This experience is partially created by an emphasis on the everyday activity concomitant with working in the pit. Luther Gascoigne, after washing and changing, drops his dirty pit clothes in front of the fire; Mrs Purdy, who, we must remember, has come in claim of a paternity suit and has therefore little cause to feel protective towards Luther, immediately stretches the trousers out to dry properly:

Nay, if ter drops 'em of a heap, they niver goin' ter get dry an' cosy. Tha sweats o' th' hips, as my lads did. (233)

In this community, such actions are common to mothers of young men and override what is the primary purpose of her visit.

But to return to the conversation between Mrs Lambert and Nellie. The minor accident which befalls Polly Goddard's young man, the crushing of his foot, is passed over quickly and casually in conversation and then dropped. Its significance being that such minor accidents in this community are sufficiently commonplace to warrant only this level of interest. That men are maimed and physically affected in less dramatic ways by their work is part of the reality of their lives. Lambert limps as one of his legs is shorter than the other, the victim of another such minor accident, it would be reasonable to assume. Holroyd's body is brought in, victim of a more serious accident, but the sort of accident which is no stranger to his mother. This physical aspect of mining,

the effect of the pit accident, shows the most spectacular and easily made relationship between the industry and the men who work in it. However, Lawrence's primary concern is not to make statements about the mining industry in this rather blunt way, which is the intention of Brighouse's The Price of Coal, where the title alone proclaims its tendential aim. Unlike the majority of Edwardian minority dramatists, Lawrence does not exploit such situations to provoke outrage, or anger, or indignation in the audience over the effects of certain industrial phenomena, in this case those connected with a dangerous industry. Lawrence does not present and arrange his material in order to make indictments, he is not that sort of dramatist.

He does not justify the dramatic portrayal of working-class life by providing extractable social themes, which then become the main point of the play. For instance, old Mrs Holroyd's statements towards the end of The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd are incontrovertible about mining conditions

Eh, they'll bring 'im 'ome, I know they will, smashed up an' broke! An' one of my sons they've burned down pit till the flesh dropped off 'im, an' one was shot till 'is shoulder was all of a mosh, an' they brought 'em 'ome to me. (50)

He's never had a bad accident, all the years he's been in the pit. He's been luckier than most. But everybody has it, sooner or later. (52)

The physical reality of Holroyd's death cannot be avoided when his body is brought onto the stage and the women prepare it for burial. Attention is specifically drawn to the tiny details which add to the horror, the need to remove his boots before his body sets, his broken and bloody fingernails as he tried to claw his way out. Yet the dramatic impact is not merely the fact of Charlie Holroyd's death and its actuality brought into the miner's kitchen, but the epiphanic nature of the incident, the catalyst which makes Mrs Holroyd realise her true feelings towards him, and how she was in fact instrumental in driving him from her.

Holroyd's accident is 'as bad is it could be' (52) and must bring

the play to an end and leave us silent. The tragedy is such that it does not provoke us to generalise about the hazards of the mining industry, about 'the price of coal'. Rather, throughout these colliery plays, the big events, such as a disaster of this sort, are not used as the primary focus of interest. Lawrence's is a drama created out of the events of ordinary life. The dangers of pit life, the effects of the maiming, which it is acknowledged no miner can hope to escape entirely, are not unduly dwelt upon. Such facts are merely part of a whole range of experience, but neither should they or could they be ignored. They exist as events which crop up in conversation and from which we can draw our own conclusions about life in the pit, as in the case of Polly Goddard's young man's accident. They are not used as tokens in middle-class statements about industry. Any anger, indignation, or sense of outrage about the state of the industry belong properly to the characters, as in the scene between Mrs Gascoigne and Mrs Purdy near the beginning of The-Daughter-in-Law, or old Mrs Holroyd's stories of what befell her other sons. Such scenes are not written to provoke necessarily the same reaction in the audience. Joe Gascoigne's broken arm is an object out of which comedy can be made, it is not an automatic cue for horror and indignation on the part of a sensitive audience. Within the community, such accidents do not necessarily create horror and shuddering away from a life which the characters see as a natural part of their existence. The attitude towards an accident which has befallen Barker's son in A Collier's Friday Night is indicative of this. He has injured his legs and has just had the splints removed. Naturally enough he doesn't want to return to the pit, but the positive power of pit life is such that his father comments:

'E says 'e shall go farmin' wi' Jakes; but I shanna let 'im. It's nowt o' a sort o' job, that. (487).

Mrs Lambert, despite her middle-class background agrees with him.¹

Lawrence presents the direct effect of the mining industry, but also presents a more subtle and inclusive picture of a way of life, a picture of an overall culture moulded in all sorts of ways by the mining community, the effects of which are as multivocal as the community itself. He creates a far more rounded picture, one that can show the humour and the satisfaction to be found in ordinary life; one, that having no point to prove how badly off and unfair working-class life is, does not have to resort to a distortion of that life and the characters, showing them as wretched people oppressed by their material conditions - a feature of the poor in Galsworthy's drama. A recurrent comment about Lawrence's plays, in contrast to much of his other work which is frequently considered to be strident, concerns their sense of fun and unstrained humour. It is a drama with a positive side to work, a side which is best expressed by Mrs Gascoigne's reaction to the concrete presence of the industry even though she has lost her husband in the pit:

Eh dear, what a dead world it seems, wi' none o' th'
pits chuffin' an' no steam wavin' by day, an' no
lights shinin' by night. (264).

Or, in Mrs Purdy's comment where the bare facts of the matter could be an indictment of a system which is a savage deprivation of central areas of people's passional lives, but the way it is stated is a matter of racy good humour:

I've often laughed about it, an' said I was thankful my
children had all turned out so well, lads an' wenches
as well, an' said it was a'cause they was all got of a
Sunday - their father was too drunk a' Saturday, an' too
tired o' wik-days. (212)

Yet at the same time the plays can contain the starkest tragedy of mining life, for instance, in the ending of The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd.

¹ Lawrence expresses this idea in the essay 'Nottingham and the Mining Countryside': 'My father loved the pit. He was hurt badly, more than once, but he would never stay away. He loved the contact, the intimacy' (P 136).

II

Lawrence's plays are both social and political in the life they portray for, in their representation of that life, they contain the social and political aspects without the overt thesis and tendency common to many Edwardian dramatists. This difference between Lawrence's drama and that of his contemporaries is apparent if we consider the way in which the strike is dealt with in The Daughter-in-Law. Galsworthy's Strife, in 1909, indicated that the industrial dispute was an apt subject for the Edwardian minority theatre. The strike presented a direct conflict between protagonists which, Galsworthy considered, showed 'human nature in the thick of a fight'.² Points could be made about a certain economic system and industrial unrest, and the sympathy of the audience could be enrolled by showing the unfairness of the fight and the hardship suffered by the strikers.

Lawrence's plays also deal with wider industrial issues and could also well have had some topical interest with the occurrence of the rash of strikes between 1910 and 1912, and in particular with the mining strike of 1912. Mrs Hueffer wrote to him in 1912, 'so sorry the plays were delayed. They might have taken quite well, while collieries are in the air'.² It is not certain whether The Daughter-in-Law was amongst the plays to which she referred, but her remark indicates that the nature of Lawrence's colliery plays gave them a topical social reference which was suitable for the stage. Possibly her comment on the plays which follows - that they were 'formless' - is a pointer to the fact that Lawrence did not specifically highlight ^{such} themes as was expected of the progressive minority dramatist. The fact that The Daughter-in-Law was not about the strike remains a problem for certain latter day critics. J.C. Trewin, in a review of the play in 1967, commented, 'The trouble is that the piece

¹H.V. Marrot, The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy, p. 638.

²L 381.

filters away. The Strike might hardly exist'.¹ If we expect Lawrence's play to be a social problem play, then it is true that the piece 'filters away', and the strike, which we then presume the play to be about, is not kept in the centre of our attention. Yet, Irving Wardle, reviewing the same production in The Times, interestingly came up with a completely contradictory response, claiming it was wrong to present the strike as a key concern as he thought the production did.² Whether that particular production concentrated too much or too little on the strike is not really material at the moment. Wardle certainly comes nearer to understanding Lawrence's play when he realises that it is not about a strike in the way that Trewin expected it to be. Yet when Wardle says that the strike is not a key concern of the play, we must beware of dismissing the strike as an unimportant element. If Wardle merely means that the outcome of the strike is not the outcome of the play, or that the story or plot of the play is not about the strike, then he too has failed to realise the important way in which the strike functions. For, although the strike is not what the play is about in the sense of plot and resolution, it forms, along with the other associated industrial issues connected with it, an essential part of the area of experience in the lives of the inhabitants of the mining town which Lawrence depicts, for such issues partially determine their lives.

The very first incident of the play, Joe's broken arm, indicates the nature of the relationship between the industrial issues and the life Lawrence depicts. Whether Joe's accident entitles him to accident pay hinges on a technical point - not on whether his accident happened at work but whether it occurred whilst he was actually working. Rather than suggesting a capricious relationship between man and his work in

¹J.C. Trewin, 'Eastwood Revisited', Illustrated London News, 250 (1 April 1967), p. 31.

²See Irving Wardle, 'Lawrence Play with a Strindberg Touch', The Times 17 March 1967, p.12.

an abstract sense, the incident is an instance of direct confrontation between men and masters. Joe is denied his accident pay and it is immediately assumed to be 'another o' Macintyre's dirty knivey dodges' (208). The context and tone of the mother's comment make it clear that such minor conflict is common, part of the struggle of their lives. It is not the state of the industry and general working conditions which are the main focus of interest. Reference is made to the 'pits that rat-gnawed there's hardly a stall worth havin'; an' a company as 'ud like yer ter scrape yer tabs afore you went home, for fear you took a grain o' coal' (210), and this is of obvious importance to the men who have to work in the pit and of equal importance to their families, for such conditions materially affect the level of wages and the standard of life. But the issue is predominantly mediated domestically, as one that is small in terms of the overall structure of industrial relations, but big for the individual workers involved and their families. What is important about Joe's accident in the Gascoigne home is its financial implications for the family budget; Joe has been denied his fourteen shillings a week accident pay and will have to subsist on his ten shillings a week club money. This experience is strengthened when Mrs Purdy arrives and gives her opinion of the company: 'It's a wonder they let us live on the face o' the earth at all - it's a wonder we don't have to fly up i' th' air like birds' (211). Her view is similarly based on her own sense of personal injustice; she explains,

They've gave my master a dirty job o' nights, at a guinea a week, an' he's worked fifty years for th' company, an' isn't but sixty-two now - said he wasn't equal to stall-workin', whereas he has to slave on th' roads an' comes whoam that tired he can't put's food in's mouth. (211)

There then follows a quick-fire enumeration of various instances of the mining company's niggardliness towards its employees and their families:

MRS GASCOIGNE: Well, that's how they're servin' 'em a' round - widders' coals stopped - leadin' raised to four-an'-eight - an' ivry man niggled down to nothink.

MRS PURDY: I wish I'd got that Fraser strung up by th' heels - I'd ma'e his sides o' bacon rowdy.

MRS GASCOIGNE: He's put a new manager to ivry pit, an' ivry one a nigger-driver.

MRS PURDY: Says he's got to economise - says the company's not a philanthropic concern -

MRS GASCOIGNE: But ta'es twelve hundred a year for hissen.

MRS PURDY: A mangy bachelor wi' 'is iron-men. (211-212)

Collectively it adds up to an expression of the breadth of feeling which results in a strike rather than a discussion of the particular issues which are the direct cause of one.

Such issues are not fully entered into in the play. Lawrence is not concerned with showing a struggle between strike leaders and the leaders of industry, nor a discussion of the rights and wrongs of the strike, nor is he concerned with making general points about industrial disputes. The nature of the exchange between Mrs Gascoigne and Mrs Purdy - the assumed knowledge, the quick understanding and following on from each others' points - show that these are common concerns in this community. Moreover, the exchange shows the very direct effect such industrial issues have on their lives, in such things as Mr Purdy earning a guinea a week and his exhaustion at the end of a day's work, in the effects of the stopping of widows' coals and the rise in the price of leading. The disruption of pay scales by the introduction of coal cutting machinery, the 'iron-men', and an overall view of the economics of the industry is not the concern of these women. It is not that Lawrence thinks the strike and its attendant issues unimportant, but that he does not want to write a play about a strike. Lawrence's play, far more than Galsworthy's Strife, which is about a particular dispute, demonstrates how the lives of the people involved are defined by a more inclusive industrial context (which includes strikes and their causes). It is a drama of everyday concerns, not a

drama of board-room and union meeting.

The strike is treated so that the whole issue is interwoven into the personal affairs of the Gascoigne family; its active importance in the play is the part it plays in the emotional tussle between the Gascoignes. The women's talk of the grievances, and the men's brief mention of the issues involved and the use of blackleg labour do not add up to a cohesive argument on the rights and wrongs of the dispute. We never hear the management's side of the argument so the play deliberately avoids dealing with a comprehensive treatment of the issues involved. In the central relationship of the play, between Minnie and Luther, the argument is part of a larger emotional problem; she rages at her husband:

And you'd be delighted if there was a strike, so you could loaf about. You don't even get drunk. You only loaf. You're lazy, lazy, and without the stomach of a louse. You want a strike. (248)

The men appear to be unconcerned about the domestic financial result of the strike, of how they are to manage to buy their daily needs on the strike pay, a fact which infuriates the economy-conscious women. But Minnie's anger is only nominally caused by that. To her the men's attitude is only a further manifestation of the Gascoigne lads' lack of responsibility and initiative caused by their mother's molly coddling. For the men, Minnie claims, the strike is only a game.

The interrelationship between the industrial conflict and the conflict in the Gascoigne household comes to a peculiar amalgam in the third act when a direct parallel is drawn between the situation of the strike and the blacklegs and the situation of Minnie and Luther when she returns home after her stay in Manchester. Minnie is seen with some bitterness by Luther as having gone on strike domestically, and the idea is extended by Joe who actually goes to engage Lizzie Charley to come in and do the housework and, in effect, play blackleg.

An analogy of sorts exists and is stressed by the characters in the play. But Lawrence is not creating a minor subplot to illuminate or consciously parody the issues of the industrial dispute. What is happening is that the analogy is one that naturally springs to mind in these particular characters. The analogy originates from ideas occurring to the characters themselves and is developed because of Joe's predisposition to a certain sort of humour. It does not serve the structure of the play as a whole in the form of a conventional literary concept such as parody or subplot.

The question of the blacklegs takes on a new dimension when the men actually prevent by force the blacklegs from going down the mine. This is a direct confrontation over the industrial issues and the most clearcut example of the miners' militancy during the whole play. A new seriousness is involved in that the Gascoigne men are likely to get hurt in a way that is more frightening to the women than the daily hazards of work in the pits as the miners not only confront the blacklegs but also run the risk of running foul of the police or even the military who have been brought into the area. Yet apart from the bare fact that the miners go to stop the blacklegs and that they succeed, the issue is mediated in the play mainly in personal terms as the following dialogue illustrates:

MRS GASCOIGNE: Yes, an' men verily gets accidents, to pay us out, I do believe. They get huffed up, they bend down their faces, and they say to theirselves: "Now I'll get myself hurt, an' she'll be sorry," else: "Now I'll get myself killed, an' she'll ha'e nobody to sleep wi' 'er, an' nobody to nag at." Oh, my lass, I've had a husband an' six sons. Children they are, these men, but, my word, they're revengeful children. Children men is a' the days o' their lives. But they're master of us women when their dander's up, an' they pay us back double an' treble - they do - an' you mun allers expect it.

MINNIE: But if they went to stop the blacklegs, they wouldn't be doing it to spite us.

MRS GASCOIGNE: Wouldn't they! Yi, but they would. My lads 'ud do it to spite me, an' our Luther 'ud do it to spite thee. Yes - and it's trew. For they'd run theirselves

into danger and lick their lips for joy, thinking, if I'm killed, then she maun lay me out. Yi - I seed it in our mester. He got killed a' pit. An' when I laid him out, his face wor that grim, an' his body that stiff, an' it said as plain as plain: "Nowthen, you've done for me." (264-265)

From the point of view of a Galsworthian treatment of the industrial dispute in terms of a confrontation between labour and capital, and what the mother says is irrelevant. What is important in The Daughter-in-Law, is that the wider industrial issues are transfused into the personal drama of the Gascoigne family. The issues, even if not dealt with overtly and predominantly, are shown as being part of a whole range of social, industrial, and economic forces which at once define and determine the characters and the drama - the drama of their personal lives.

III

My discussion of industry and industrial issues in the colliery plays demonstrates that the specific industry is largely the *raison d'être* of the town and a primary determining influence. Yet, whilst the industry as an all pervasive primary fact cannot be ignored in these plays, the means of definition are rather more wide. That is to say, characters and situations are defined and assumptions made about them, and a drama created by a whole network of social, moral, and cultural standards of the mining community rather than by the spectacular issues of the industry such as a strike or a disaster.

However, it is fundamentally impossible to separate the sense of industry from the cultural network which the plays portray; because of the dramatic construction the interdependence is too great. One example from The Daughter-in-Law, the question of whether Joe and Luther are butties or not, illustrates the complex interdependence which exists. Neither Joe nor Luther are butties (that is contractors who

hire their own men to work a stall, which they rent from the company, and who are then paid a tonnage price for the coal mined), but are day men paid a daily wage by a butty for their labour. At its most abstract the discussion is a reflection of the organisation of labour in a pit in the Nottinghamshire coalfield in the early years of the century; in a way more directly relevant to the play but still on a general level, it is a statement of concern with status in the social set-up of a mining town; and at its most direct and specific in the drama, it is an irritant factor in the emotional struggle in the Gascoigne family. For Minnie, it is a question of the shouldering of responsibility and ambition in a public and social sense, for in the world of the mine and the mining town the butty was a socially respected man. It also carries with it a clear financial reference of the difference between the dayman's seven shillings a day and the earnings of the butty. In terms of the emotional struggle in the play, Minnie sees Luther's and Joe's disinclination to become butties as just a further example of the lack of backbone caused by their mother, that being her main complaint and source of mortification in her marriage. Thus her emotional tussle with Luther's mother manifests itself in a way which is inescapably interconnected with her implicit concern for social status and her acknowledgement of the social hierarchy of the mining town.

The personal problems which Lawrence presents in his colliery plays are not merely played out in front of a background of the mores of an Edwardian pit town, but are defined by them and partially caused by them. This question of definition is of extreme importance, for the Lawrentian drama does not define its characters and situations in terms of the theatre - creating a drama by conforming to or deliberately reversing the set patterns created by theatrical expectation. Nor does his drama find definition by means of an imposed overlay of social

thesis, which guides our understanding and response to characters and situations. The definition in Lawrence's plays is generated internally by showing in action, in the very drama itself, the creation and working out of pressures and tensions in the interplay between individual characters and expectations created by communal ways of living and thinking.

In A Collier's Friday Night, as I have already suggested, we gain the strongest impression of the day to day life of this community created by the way in which Lawrence includes in his drama, and makes drama out of domestic action. The focal point of the play rests on Lambert, the collier. Even though he is absent from the stage for much of the time, he is a centre point around which most of the main characters in the play range in various attitudes of hostility. Lambert's mode of behaviour is the most clear example of habitual and communal behavioural patterns. His activity and recreation on a Friday night follow a set pattern every week which we can take to be the standard for most miners - from the sharing out of the wages to his drunken return from the pub. Beatrice's tale of her father's behaviour at turning out time from the pub closely resembles that shown in the Lambert household and thus establishes this sense of custom:

Good lack! It's half-past ten! Won't our Pa rave!
 "Yes, my gel - it's turning-out time again. We're going
 to have a stop put to it." And our mother will recite!
 Oh, the recitations! - there's no shutting her up when she
 begins. But any rate, she shuts our Pa up, and he's a
 nuisance when he thinks he's got just cause to be wrath. (515)

Beatrice's comic description does not completely hide the bitterness caused by the men's drinking which underlies her speech. She describes what we can take to be common patterns of the men's drinking habits and the women's reactions to them, which we later see acted out on stage when Lambert returns from the pub.

However, it would be an oversimplification to suggest that Lambert alone represents the habits of the mining community in the family we are shown, and that the hostility felt towards him by the rest of the family is a rejection of those habits stemming from the middle-class aspirations of Mrs Lambert. For Mrs Lambert herself, in her domestic chores and marketing, reflects aspects of the ways of living in the same community; as does Ernest when he bakes the bread; and as does Nellie in her courting. After all, Mrs Lambert is a miner's wife, and Ernest and Nellie are miner's children. All, in differing degrees, demonstrate various aspects of and present a composite picture of one and the same community which includes the habitual behaviour of the miner's wife and children as well as that of the miner himself.

The implications of this cast light on a further aspect of the oversimplification of equating Lambert and his way of living with a community which his family rejects. For, to hold this view would be to imply that the mining community resides only in the miner himself and that the community is static and divided and therefore capable of being rejected by the family, whereas in fact the plays suggest that the community is in a state of flux and is actually in the process of development. The children of the miners with their different circumstances and opportunities, even though they may deliberately move away from what their father is and stands for, still represent a development of that community. Ernest is, in the play, quite deliberately made into an exceptional character, yet the others - Nellie, Beatrice, Gertie, and even Maggie - show a mixture of the old and the new in their generation as it develops rather than rejects the life of the mining town. This sort of development can be shown in the sort of education we can presume that a man in Lambert's position would have received.

The Coal Mines Act of 1842 made it illegal for boys under ten years of age to be employed underground. This piece of legislation

meant that a greater number of young boys attended day school. But it is quite possible that the only education he would have received would have been at a Methodist Sunday school, from which, E.P. Thompson claims, 'very many Sunday school scholars left the schools unable to read'.¹ Morel, Lambert's counterpart in Sons and Lovers, can spell over the headlines of the newspaper, but cannot write much more than his own name.² The effect of the provisions of later educational legislation on the Lambert children is immediately apparent: Nellie is a school teacher and Ernest is in full-time education at the age of twenty-two. The differences in interests between Ernest and his father are stressed by the action of the play; Ernest wants the page out of the newspaper which contains the book reviews, the father hands it over replying, 'Nay, I know nowt about reviews o' books. Here t'art. Ta'e it' (483). The father uses the newspaper for eating off so that he doesn't dirty the tablecloth.

This element of education is very important in the play for it provides a sense of definition, and from it we gain an understanding of the tensions it creates. It is not just a case of the children being on the side of the educated mother against an ill-educated and boorish father. The father is not necessarily hostile to education as such, and the new education that Ernest has received is one of the factors which separates him from his mother. The lines of tension do not just emanate from the educated/uneducated question, but from conflicts between the two generations as new phases in this community. Although Ernest's education immediately creates a considerable distance between himself and the sort of interests and life represented in his father, Lambert is frequently deferential towards his educated son. For instance, he makes no fuss about taking the trouble to hand over

¹E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, p. 415.

²See SL 39 and 456.

to him the newspaper with its book reviews about which he cares or knows nothing, yet he has nothing but shortness with his daughter over the positioning of the table. Lambert may be unreliable when he is drunk and tends to become maudlin and sentimental, but there is some truth in his claim:

What other man would keep his sons doing nothing till they're twenty-two? Where would you find another? Not that I begrudge it him - I don't, bless him... (520)

There is little hostility shown towards Ernest by Lambert's peers even though there is little point of contact between them and the young student. Despite the fact that they assume a condescending attitude and tone with him, they show a genuine interest in him and the paraphernalia of education such as his fountain pen.

Barker's interest in the piano is a further manifestation in this community of the miner's desire for something that is made possible by contact with increased opportunities in education. In his late essay, 'Nottingham and the Mining Countryside', Lawrence claims that The Maiden's Prayer (described by one musical encyclopaedist as 'the most popular of tasteless and sentimental pf. drawing-room pieces ever written'), which Barker attempts to play, was the collier's 'blind, unsatisfied craving for beauty' whether he listened to it performed by one of his daughters or tried to learn to play it for himself.¹ Lawrence, in 1928, saw the miner's attitude towards The Maiden's Prayer as a sign of the miner's instinctive culture as opposed to the educated middle-class culture of his mother. But, in A Collier's Friday Night in 1909, the piano piece is bound up with education which provides new developments for Lambert's mates as well as his children.

Something of Lambert's simple, uncluttered culture is suggested in the play in his delight in simple pleasures - dry and warm trousers and towel, a hot room. His snappishness with his family for disregarding

¹Eric Blom, Everyman's Dictionary of Music, p. 346; P 138.

his desire for these pleasures immediately vanishes as he warms to Gertie who agrees with him about the probable dampness of his trousers after they have been in the front bedroom. But the effect of the play does not allow a nostalgia for the way of life exemplified in Lambert.

The play does not suggest any simplistic split of a community that is passing, represented by Lambert's simple pleasures, including the warmth and companionship of the pub, and a new sort of consciousness stemming from education and mechanisation, which is somehow not community. Lambert's behaviour is frequently brutish, and this fact cannot be escaped no matter how much we sympathise with the cause of such behaviour. The play demonstrates quite clearly the attitude of the rest of the family which provokes him. Lambert's own analyses are in fact the most accurate overtly expressed statements of the situation in the play. For instance, his claim at the beginning of the play,

A man comes home after a hard day's work to folks as 'as never a word to say to 'im, 'as shuts up the minute 'e enters the house, as 'ates the sight of 'im as soon as 'e comes in th' room (482)

is a fair enough comment not only from his point of view but to the outside observer as well. Lambert's deliberate affronts to his family are his natural retaliation to the rejection he feels; small wonder he finds solace in the pub. His customary patriarchal authority which he expects is undermined by his family. His position and social role as father, signified by the 'slight tone of superiority' (487) which he assumes with and is accepted by his peers, is ignored by his family. His fellow butties acknowledge his position in a certain social and domestic hierarchy.

Gertie's desire to be off as soon as she hears Lambert arriving home from work and her subsequent discomfort are not, it seems, so much caused by dislike of Lambert himself, as she can be quite friendly towards him, but more by a dislike of the atmosphere created by the

friction between Lambert and the rest of the family. His truculence with his daughter at the beginning of the play as he drags the table away from her nearer to the fire is not simply an effort to offend her as his deliberately excessive slovenly table manners are. It is part of the weary irritation he feels after his day's labour down the pit, a fact made clear by the stage directions which first describe him:

He is a man of middling stature, a miner, black from the pit. His shoulders are pushed up because he is cold. (477)

The man is cold and tired, he pulls the table up to the fire - what matter if he irritates his daughter? The experience that the play presents of a man of Lambert's age who has worked all his life in the pit - his physical tiredness, his lameness through accidents - suggests deprivation rather than nostalgia. An observation of Richard Hoggart seems pertinent:

I avoid the word 'community'... because its overtones seem too simply favourable; they may lead to an under-estimation of the harsher tensions and sanctions of working-class groups.¹

However, community is the most appropriate word to apply to Lawrence's colliery plays. The experience they mediate does not allow for the sentimentality which Hoggart fears is too readily associated with the word.

Superficially, the strand that produces Ernest comes from his mother. She has had some education, and, at the beginning of the play, seems closest to Ernest's interests, listening to his tales from college and able to take an interest in and participate in the conversation about the death of Swinburne. But, ironically it is this very strand of education that is in the process of separating her beloved son from her. Ernest has acquired a culture of which he can talk to Maggie, but in his very acquisition of that culture he has outstripped his mother's limits; he complains,

¹Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy, p. 80.

Look here: we talked about French poetry. Should you care about that?

No answer.

You know you wouldn't! And then we talked about those pictures at the Exhibition - about Frank Brangwyn - about Impressionism - for ever such a long time. You would only be bored by that. (524)

The play is not simply a case of the mother's culture versus the father's with the children ranged on one side, or a simple story of the rise of a younger generation such as is found in many of the plays of the Manchester school, but shows an evolution within both a community and an individual family, and is understood by the relation of the individual family to the community within the play.

The question of education in A Collier's Friday Night is fully integrated into the play and does not exist in an abstract sense or as a convenient concept around which to build tensions in the family. Education amongst children such as the Lamberts and some of their friends is, for them, as central an experience of living in the mining community as the experience of Lambert and his peers. The two are ineluctably interrelated as the financial reference of Ernest's education makes clear. Ernest's seven-and-six for books he thinks are a waste of time is no mean amount out of the household income. The father's reaction is possibly the most sensible: 'I should non get tem, then. You needna buy 'em unless you like. Dunna get 'em, then' (483). Mrs Lambert's system of values works the other way - Ernest must have the books and Lambert's drinking money is bitterly begrudged him when she receives her twenty-eight shillings housekeeping. Yet, using Sons and Lovers as a guide on this point, when the father hands over twenty-eight shillings for housekeeping he keeps four shillings for himself.¹ On the other hand, his son is engaged in studies Lambert can never understand and demands seven-and-six for Langland and Horace. Under the circumstances, Lambert shows remarkable forbearance, and could reasonably be expected

¹ See SL 27.

to be far more hostile than he in fact is. Education is something which has to be paid for by the sweat of Lambert's brow and can be judged by a financial reference which includes Lambert's earnings and the quality of life measured by the food that the mother can make her housekeeping stretch to.¹ Education cannot be separated from the other elements which make up life in the mining town.

IV

The financial reference which helps to define the position of Lambert and Ernest within the household and the community is far more emphatically marked in The Daughter-in-Law. Much of the conflict in the play is centred around Minnie's inheritance - a sum of one hundred and twenty pounds. This, along with a sense of her alien experience, is sufficient to mark her out as standing apart from the usual standards of the mining community. 'She's a stuck-up piece o' goods as ever trod' (213) is the opinion of Mrs Purdy; and Mrs Gascoigne, with her more colourful language, sees her as 'after a town johnny, a Bertie-Willie an' a yard o' cuffs' (216), as one who was not keen on Luther because 'he wor in collier's britches, i'stead o' a stool-arsed Jack's' (255). Neither Mrs Purdy nor Mrs Gascoigne are entirely correct about Minnie, but the significance of their hostility is that it is the common attitude towards Minnie as defined by the context of the community. Her position is ambivalent in a similar way to Ernest's in A Collier's Friday Night. She has to live in and partially is of the community, yet in many ways she maintains and has acquired attitudes which are alien to it.

At first sight the hostility of the women is caused by the money itself, the very idea of a 'woman wi' money' (214) is sufficient to

¹See also Lawrence's letter to Blanche Jennings where he claims, 'We [teachers] are the nation's servants, and we must live on our mothers, and eat of our father's sweat' (L 54).

earn contempt. But it is not so much the concept of money which is at the root of this feeling, rather that Minnie is seen to have used the money to enable her to distance herself from the concerns and standards of people like Mrs Purdy and Mrs Gascoigne. Her actions show that she seems to be either unaware of the customary closeness and familiarity of bonds within families and in-laws in the mining town, or that she is deliberately flouting them, rejecting what she sees as the stifling intimacy of her mother-in-law which threatens her marriage and relationship with Luther. Her attitude amounts to a negation of a habitual and customary system of relationships between a woman and her mother-in-law. It is part of Lawrence's technique that he establishes such a point as this, almost casually. He gives it no undue stress which is incommensurate with the tone of the conversation he writes. The dialogue which follows shows Luther's challenging acceptance of the standards of behaviour expected of a woman who has married into a family in this community and also Minnie's ignorance or rejection of the same standard indicated by her indifferent response to Luther's inquiry:

LUTHER: You've not been up home?

MINNIE: To your mother's? No, what should I go there for?

LUTHER: Eh, I dunno what ter should go for - I thought tha 'appen might. (224)

Luther's automatic reference to his mother's as 'home' even though he is a married man living in his own house indicates a certain way of thinking about the structure of relationships within a family, and his inability to give a reason why Minnie should visit her mother-in-law suggests that such visits are so habitual, such a normal part of life, that they exist in a structure of relationships which is beyond the level of rational motive for a man like Luther. The customary expectation that members of a family should regularly drop in on each other for no particular reason is re-emphasised later in the play by the fact that Mrs Gascoigne knows that all is not well in Luther's home

merely from the fact that he has not been up to visit her.

The relationship between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is understood by reference to customary and habitual patterns of behaviour within the community exhibited in the play. The very title of the play shows that this relationship is of central importance, and is a primary relationship which must be worked out before the relationship between Minnie and Luther can achieve a firm footing. It is only after a truce, if not a resolution, between Minnie and Mrs Gascoigne has been achieved and Minnie has assumed the upper hand over her mother-in-law as the most important person in Luther's life that she can assume the expected role of a newly acquired daughter in the Gascoigne family. She verbally signifies her willingness to participate in the family intimacy by calling Mrs Gascoigne 'Mother', and by so doing expresses her acknowledgement of the nature of the relationship. Earlier in the play she called her mother-in-law 'Mrs Gascoigne', the formality of which is seen as deliberate standoffishness and snobbery.¹

Minnie's relationship with Mrs Gascoigne is only one example of the variance she is at with the standards and expectations of the community. The variance is ramified by a wideranging, precise and subtle register of attitudes centred around Minnie's money and the limited freedom it gives her to make choices outside the range normally available in the mining community.

Minnie, whilst in service, has acquired 'taste'. which is seen quite clearly by the likes of Mrs Gascoigne and Mrs Purdy as the acquisition of a system of values alien to the ways of living in the mining town. The difference in furnishings between the first act in Mrs Gascoigne's home and those in Minnie's house indicates this gap in attitude. The conscious exposition of the nature of this gap by some of the characters demonstrates this is a principle of definition central

¹The same verbal signification to indicate a shift in attitude occurs at the end of Lawrence's tale 'Fannie and Annie'.

to the structure of the drama. Mrs Gascoigne's reaction to Minnie's choice and the reasons she thinks lie behind the choices are unequivocally hostile:

Well, we goes ter Nottingham, an' she will ha'e nowt b'r old-fashioned stuff. I says: "That's niver my mind, Minnie." She says: "Well, I like it an' yo 'll see it'll look nice. I'll pay for it." Which to be sure I never let her. For she'd had a mester as made a fool of her, tellin' her this an' that, what wor good taste, what wor bad. (217)

Mrs Gascoigne's hostility is not only caused by the specific choice of the furnishings, but also by Minnie's deliberate attempt to usurp the mother-in-law's traditional role by offering to pay herself for the furniture. Mrs Gascoigne's insistence on her refusal of this suggestion, 'Which to be sure I never let her', reaffirms her fulfilment of her ascribed role in front of Mrs Purdy. Mrs Gascoigne is eager to appear to have acted in accordance with the two women's commonly held standards of behaviour.

The system of values ascribed to by Mrs Gascoigne has ultimately little to do with good or bad taste, but purely with practicality, with how things will withstand the necessities and pressures of the actual conditions of the miner's home:

We'll see how it looks i' ten years' time, my lad, wi' th' racket an' tacket o' children. For it's not serviceable, missus. (218)

Mrs Purdy responds with a final verdict - 'Then it's no good'.

It is the necessity of having to get on with everyday life under intransigent economic and social conditions which creates the consciousness informing such attitudes in The Daughter-in-Law. In the system of values ascribed to by the older women, the purchase of the furniture is ill-advised financially as well as in terms of practicality. Good taste costs money, and the furniture bought in Nottingham is overpriced by Eastwood standards.

In stark contrast to the society drama where precise references to money are rarely made, it being an assumption of that drama that most

of the characters are sufficiently wealthy to make no impingement on the quality of their lives, the dominant reference in The Daughter-in-Law is financial. One of the first references to the marriage between Minnie and Luther is built around a financial image:

All she wanted was as much for her money as she could get. An' when she fun as nob'dy was for sale but our Luther, she says, "Well, I'll take it." (215)

This is an expression of Mrs Gascoigne's dislike for the girl and cannot be taken as fair judgement, but the imagery does support an important fact about the marriage. Minnie's possession of one hundred and twenty pounds not only distances her from the community but is also one of the central cogs in her marriage.

Mrs Gascoigne's domination of her son is the primary problem ('How is a woman ever to have a husband, when the men all belong to their mothers? (257)), and significantly, in the heated argument, money imagery pinpoints the essence of the problem:

MINNIE: I had to fetch you, like a mother fetches a kid from school. A pretty sight you looked. Didn't your mother give you a ha'penny to spend, to get you to go?

LUTHER: No; she spent it for me.

MINNIE: She would! She wouldn't even let you spend your own ha'penny. You'd have lost it, or let somebody take it from you. (227)

Mrs Gasoigne's hand has always been on the pursestrings literally as well as metaphorically; Joe is not allowed to lend or give the forty pounds needed to satisfy Mrs Purdy's paternity suit. His mother keeps his money for him and dictates the uses to which it can be put.

It is interesting that Minnie finds Luther especially attractive in his pit dirt for he doesn't 'look nearly such a tame rabbit' (225) then. The visual evidence of the pit emphasises his work role, which is a part of his life separated from his role within the Gascoigne family and his mother's influence. Importantly it also signifies his economic independence from his mother. He labours for his wages which he brings home to Minnie. His mother's domination has left Luther bereft of the

responsibility and forcefulness which Minnie considers to be essential in her husband. The existence of Minnie's inheritance means that he can rely on her in the same way as he submitted to his mother's financial domination. Minnie's task therefore, is to break the hold Luther's mother has over him as well as to break the way he perpetuates the abnegation of responsibility in the relationship with her.

Minnie's disposing of her money, then, serves a dual purpose - it forces financial responsibility onto Luther, and, at the same time, or so she thinks, removes the barrier of her inheritance which stands between her and the community which Luther and the rest of his family represent more fully. Luther will have to provide on his ten shillings a week strike pay, and when that runs out they will both have to live off soup tickets as other mining families have to. But a further definition of the dramatic situation emerges from the relation of this act to the established mode of communal behaviour.

She sees this act as affirming her congruity with the community: 'I'm in the same boat as other men's wives now, and so I must do the same' (261). However, there is an ambivalence in this desire to be at one with the community. The normal course, as expressed by Mrs Gascoigne, is to live on credit until the strike is over, and she sees in Minnie's decision the same sort of snobbery in rejecting customary behaviour as she saw at the beginning of the play. Living on credit was an accepted way for respectable families to manage when money was short during strikes. Minnie's action is taken as a contempt, a snub for Mrs Gascoigne's commonsense standards.

There is a further paradox in the method she uses to be at one with the community, for her action is seen as a frittering away of her money which is directly contrary to the attitudes and standards of that self-same community. It is not only that she has disposed of her

savings which, the commonsense argument of Mrs Gascoigne goes, she may later regret if Luther is ever killed in the pit and she has to raise children alone, but there is also a hostility to what she has spent her money on. In a community where money has largely to be reserved for essentials, Minnie's engagement ring costing thirty pounds is mere extravagance and swank; and her three prints, value ninety pounds, are not only useless pieces of dirty paper, but smack of middle-class good taste, chosen as they are by Mr Westlake, her former employer, who knows about such things and is 'clever'. It is only when the money, or the evidence of it, has gone (Luther destroys the prints unable to express his anger in any other way) that Luther and Minnie can start to work out their true relationship, and Minnie and her mother-in-law can establish a relationship approximating to the expectations of the community.

V

The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd further exploits the technique of utilising subtle differentiations within this social group to bring a subtle and discriminating definition to the play. Lizzie Holroyd, like Minnie Gascoigne, is quite definitely shown to be at variance with the patterns of behaviour and ways of thinking common to the mining community. Mrs Holroyd is acutely aware of the degradation of her life with her collier husband and consciously feels herself to be superior to those she sees living around her. Her present lot makes her extremely sensitive to the possibilities inherent in a different social status within the mining community, represented in the play by the pit electrician, Blackmore.

It is to Lawrence's credit that in creating a drama out of this situation he did not need to overstress this point and make her potential lover the son of the mineowner or even an obviously sensitive and

well-educated man such as Ernest in A Collier's Friday Night.

Working within the limits of the prescribed community of these plays, Lawrence is able to achieve a subtle but clear definition of characters and the drama by exploiting the very fine shades of social differentiation within the mining town. This is in marked contrast to so much of the Edwardian drama which treated this social group as a homogeneous mass of the labouring classes. Blackmore enjoys a social standing which is slightly, but significantly, superior to Holroyd's. His self-mocking comment that the electricians are 'the gentlemen on a mine' (12) indicates the difference on the social scale which is sufficient to represent the possibility of an attractively better life for Lizzie Holroyd. It represents a linking of the social issue with the personal emotional problem in a similar way to the question of whether Luther is a butty or a dayman in The Daughter-in-Law.

Blackmore's comment about the attitude of the other miners towards the electricians, which follows his quip about 'the gentlemen on a mine', is equally illuminating: 'But mine's a lad's job, and I do nothing!' (12). There is a sort of gentility that goes with his higher standing in the pit hierarchy which is sufficient to provoke hostility in certain sections of the mining community. Lizzie's predilection for something better in the mining community than that which is represented by her coal-hewing husband encourages her estrangement from some of the more central areas of that community. Old Mrs Holroyd represents more fully the standards and expectations of the community as Mrs Gascoigne and Mrs Purdy did in The Daughter-in-Law. She diagnoses quite accurately Lizzie's alienation from those standards as being the root of the married couple's^s problem:

Ay, you've a stiff neck, but it'll be bowed by you're my age. (48)

You thought yourself above him, Lizzie, an' you know he's not the man to stand it. (49)

I was always sorry my youngest son married a clever woman. He only wanted a bit of coaxing and managing, and you clever women won't do it. (49)

The mother admits her son's faults but lays the blame on her daughter-in-law's doorstep, on her attitude which has resulted in her incipient affair with Blackmore and her inability to stomach the behavioural norms of the community such as Holroyd's drinking (a natural enough pastime after he's been 'shut up i' th' pit all day' (48)). The drama arises from the tension created by the way in which the two women are placed in differing relationships to central areas of experience in the community. Indeed, there is something of this relationship in all the major female characters of the colliery plays, Mrs Lambert, Minnie, as well as Lizzie Holroyd. Their refusal or inability to behave according to the expected patterns of their husbands in this male dominated colliery society produces the tensions and frictions which the dramas explore.

Lizzie doesn't know who Mr Rigley is or that he butties with Holroyd, nor, more importantly, has she put away the right gear as every miner's wife does for the eventuality of sudden death. She hasn't put by the necessary white shirt and a pair of white stockings, all she has is his white cricketing shirt, 'a cold, canvas thing wi' a turndown collar' (57) which is totally unsuitable. Old Mrs Holroyd, on the other hand, immediately recognises Rigley and has suitable garments ready. Such unforced hints indicate the discrepancy between the two women in relation to the life of the mining community and in so doing provide the definition which is essential to the way in which Lawrence's colliery plays work.

As Lizzie and the mother lay out the body, in this communal action, Lizzie becomes at one with the mother and they are united in their common grief and labour.¹ Lizzie's grief and her induction into this aspect of

¹Interestingly it is the common concern for the safety of Luther and Joe, at the end of The Daughter-in-Law, which helps bring Minnie and Mrs Gascoigne together.

communal experience creates in her a sense of the validity of what the old woman has said, that is, the validity of old Mrs Holroyd's affirmation of commonly held attitudes and values. In Mrs Holroyd's short monologue to her dead husband. she is willing to admit her contribution to making him what he was and recognises that Holroyd was a man whose standards and automatic responses were those of the community into which he had been born and always lived, and as such he was in many ways not accountable for his actions in the way Lizzie had earlier thought he was by expecting him to conform to her standards of behaviour.

VI

The attitudes and frames of mind which inhere in this community and from which is created the definition of the plays are not in any way whimsical but are determined by a recognition of the limited available possibilities and opportunities realised in very precise, concrete terms - food, money, old age, children, household drudgery, accidents, deaths - the ineluctable facts of their lives. The same factors determine the standards of morality which express themselves in The Daughter-in-Law and The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd.

As standards of morality, particularly standards of sexual morality, are such an important feature of much Edwardian drama, it is worthwhile to extract this particular theme from the colliery plays. In one sense there is a resemblance between Lawrence's plays and those of the society dramatists where the sexual mores at work have a direct relationship to the standards of a confined specific social group and function as principles of definition within the drama. However, within this very broad similarity (which may just be the same as saying both sets of plays treat of small, discrete social groups) there are

significant and important differences.

In the preface to Man and Superman, Bernard Shaw's analysis of the treatment of relations between the sexes in the society drama was that such relations were treated in social not emotional terms. The central interest was invested in the conflict between men and women and certain social codes not in the relationship between a man and a woman. The burden of Lawrence's stricture on modern tragedy in his essay on Thomas Hardy is very similar, that 'transgression against the social code is made to bring our destruction, as though the social code worked our irrevocable fate'.¹ Lawrence's colliery plays deal with a community in which relations between the sexes are dependent upon a certain ethical and social code. But the nature of that code and its function within the particular section of society is very different from the nature and function of the code active in the world of society drama, and Lawrence's treatment of the relative importance of the code within the drama as a whole creates a very different emphasis.

The exposition in the first scene of The Daughter-in-Law appears to set out a problem of sexual morality in a manner closely resembling the sort of area frequently dealt with by the society drama: 'It's a matter of a girl wi' child, an' a man six week married' (213). The problem is quite clear - a sexual misdemeanour, which runs counter to established convention, has been discovered and threatens the smooth running of the community which subscribes to those conventions. The action of the play, if it were to follow the society drama pattern, would then deal with attempts to conceal the misdemeanour and/or its eventual discovery and the resolution of the problem. Lawrence's play does not follow this sort of pattern. As the play progresses, it becomes apparent that the conflict with a social code has not been the central problem at all. The pregnancy is revealed early in the play, and after the second act does not figure again. Events concerning the

¹P 420.

pregnancy are not engineered to lead up to a *scène à faire* towards the end of the play. What the play is really interested in is an emotional cog in the relationship between Minnie and Luther far more fundamental than the revelation of Bertha Purdy's pregnancy. This central problem is enunciated quite clearly by Minnie in the third act: 'How is a woman ever to have a husband, when the men all belong to their mothers?' (257).

There is a shift of emphasis in that Lawrence concentrates on the relationship between the man and the woman and not on the conflict with social convention. But it is far from being the case that Lawrence ignores the social context of the morality evident in his plays. Indeed, the morality of the colliery plays is dependent on the conditions of life in this particular community, and this fact is carefully and precisely worked into the fabric of the colliery plays. Mayhew's observation is an apposite reminder of the cause of the difference between the codes at work in the society drama and the colliery plays: 'Morality on £5,000 a year in Belgrave Square is a very different thing to morality on slop-wages in Bethnal Green', and, he could have added if it had happened to concern him, different again from morality on seven shillings a day in a Nottinghamshire mining town.¹ The morality of the colliery plays is relative and utilitarian and makes no pretence to carry with it any ethical justification.

Mrs Gascoigne's comment on Joe's claim that he told the truth about how he broke his arm ('It wor very likely trew enough, lad, if on'y they'd ha' believed it' (209)) sets the tone in which truth and morality are conditional upon circumstance. The morality which Lawrence presents in the colliery plays is expressive of the working-class life he depicts, but it is not instrumental as the morality presented and subscribed to by the society dramatists is. He does not enforce moral and social codes by engineering the plays to

¹ Henry Mayhew, The Unknown Mayhew, p. 47.

demonstrate the dire consequences of behaving at variance to such codes.

The fact that Bertha Purdy has been made pregnant by a man recently married is not a question of ethical right or wrong; neither is it a question of the common concern to maintain the stability of a certain community by keeping up appearances. The morality of the mining community is not based on respectability but on practicality.¹ In the suggestion that the pregnancy can be accounted for by laying the blame on a passing gang of electricians, there is no sense of the almost hysterical threat to ordered society that scandal provokes in the majority of society dramas. There is no attempt to cover up the pregnancy itself (six months in some remote continental spa being out of the question). There is merely an attempt to find the best practical solution for Bertha taking into account Luther's recent marriage. Forty pounds will provide for Bertha and her child and also will act as an inducement for a prospective husband. There is little or no sense of hypocrisy in the financial reference which can pay for breaches of morality. Neither is there a hint of the double standard of morality of the society drama which would exonerate Luther's part in the business but demand Bertha's ostracism from the social group. Bertha's plight in this community demands help not expulsion. The miners' families have to get on with the business of coping with life and cannot afford the luxuries of the niceties of conventional morality. Bertha's predicament is far from being the anathema it would be for a woman in a play by Pinero or Jones, and it is suggested she may, because of her condition, have a positive advantage:

Well, ter my knowledge, them as has had a childt seems to get off i' marriage better nor many as hasn't. I'm sure, there's a lot o' men likes it, if they think a woman's had a baby by another man. (219)

¹This does not mean that there are no arbitrary standards of respectability displayed in The Daughter-in-Law. When Minnie stays with her former employer, a widower, she receives a stony rebuke from her mother-in-law, 'It doesna become thee, methinks' (252).

In the community of the colliery plays, morality concerning relations between the sexes is not based upon standards imposed on life, but itself has to be tailored to cope with the intransigent conditions imposed by life.

The sexual morality of The Daughter-in-Law is quite clearly defined, yet the central interest of the play lies elsewhere - in the relationship between Luther and Minnie. In The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd, the incipient relationship between Lizzie Holroyd and Blackmore is precisely placed in the context of the expected morality of the mining community, and their awareness of that morality subtly affects their relationship. The play is not concerned with presenting people who acknowledge conventional morality, consider breaking it but remain safe within the limits of convention, or who attempt to run headfirst against conventional morality as into a brick wall. There is a greater seriousness in Mrs Holroyd's desire to rebel than there is in much of the society drama. She is driven unwillingly towards Blackmore out of desperation in an attempt to escape from a physically and emotionally insufferable position. Lady Jessica in The Liars, by way of contrast, is a woman merely bored with a prosaic husband and demands the right to flirt whilst maintaining the social and financial security of marriage.

Mrs Holroyd is very conscious that her relationship with Blackmore runs counter to her own and the community's social and moral expectations. Her sense of guilt indicates the strength of the link between her moral sensibility and her sense of what is socially acceptable. She is torn between the necessity of leaving Holroyd and what goes with him and the fact that to do so she must take up a morally irregular liaison with Blackmore. The social expectation that a wife should put up with her husband's behaviour and the moral stricture which condemns adultery would both be offended. Mrs Holroyd finds difficulty in coming to terms with the conflict between what she wants and feels she has to do and

what the social and ethical standards of the mining community tell her is wrong. Her verbal indecision, hesitance and self-questioning in the wooing scene of the second act externalise the inner conflict between present necessity and the effects of the morals of her upbringing and experience. As Frank Marcus said of the production at the Royal Court, 'in her love scene, she is out of her depth and clumsy: it's not like doing the washing'.¹ Mrs Holroyd's awareness of her potential adultery with Blackmore entails a departure from the moral guidelines which order her life and undercuts her confidence in those values.

The story of Clara, one of the bright daisies from Nottingham brought home by Holroyd, has a subtle and frighteningly insinuating meaning for Mrs Holroyd. Mrs Holroyd finds Clara abhorrent, yet Clara represents the result of a marriage to a man similar to Holroyd and also one of the limited possibilities of escape - into vulgar hilarity and tipsiness. Clara's defence of herself is similarly worrying:

An' I've been educated at a boarding school as good as anybody. I can behave myself either in the drawing-room or in the kitchen as is fitting and proper. But if you'd buried a husband like mine, you wouldn't feel you'd much left to be proud of - an' you might go off occasionally. (26)

Mrs Holroyd also knows how to behave fittingly in a drawing-room or kitchen; what then is to stop her 'going off' in the same way as Clara? Mrs Holroyd is aware that she has already made one disastrous mistake in order to escape from an intolerable situation by marrying Holroyd to escape her uncle, and she is on the verge of taking a similar step, this time into both the unknown and immoral by eloping with Blackmore to escape Holroyd. It must be with some mortification that she cannot deny her husband's accusation that the two hussies are as good as she is when both he and she know that Blackmore's attentions are out of place. Mrs Holroyd's predicament is intensified by the very limited opportunities of escape afforded by the nature of the community of which she is a part.

¹Frank Marcus, 'Games and Rituals', London Magazine, 8 (June 1968), p. 92.

The eagerness with which Mrs Holroyd grasps at the straw of reforming her husband whilst he is convalescing from his accident and solving her problems that way rather than by eloping with Blackmore indicates not just her shock at learning the news of the accident but also her uncertainty and fear of offending accepted modes of behaviour. Old Mrs Holroyd's comment on Lizzie's hope,

Well, you can but try. Many a woman's thought the same (52) shows that it is a common and readily accepted communal attitude. Her desire to align herself with accepted and shared habits of behaviour presents itself as a considerably more attractive proposition than the socially and morally irregular elopement with Blackmore

Similarly, Mrs Holroyd's earlier wish that Holroyd were dead is not convenient, possibly clumsy, dramatic structuring to build up and explain the guilt Mrs Holroyd naturally feels at the end of the play when she is confronted by the actuality of Holroyd's death. Within the context of the social and moral values attached to marriage in the community and the wider legality of the marriage laws, such wishes, on Blackmore's part as well as her own, must spring naturally to mind as being the most convenient solution to their predicament; as a widow, her liaison with Blackmore would be bereft of the stigma it is otherwise bound to provoke in the small town.

P.J.Keating's analysis of the handling of morality in literary works dealing with the working class is that frequently judgements of working-class behaviour and attitudes are made vertically from the dominant ideology of the middle classes, either implicitly in the stance taken by the author or by direct comparison with middle-class behaviour within the work itself. In Lawrence's treatment of sexual morality, judgements are not made from the standards of another class; his treatment of his material is horizontal. Judgements are generated internally by precise reference to the standards of the social group

Lawrence depicts. We are not invited to judge the morality of Bertha Purdy's pregnancy, but rather to understand it and the pressures which determine it. Lawrence is not concerned to direct our attention to abstract concerns of contemporary morality through his plays. He is not concerned to endorse or condemn the morality of the dominant class, which engaged so much of the efforts of other Edwardian dramatists, or the morality expressed by the characters in the colliery plays. The drama is created from and defined by judgements made by the characters not judgements made by the reader or explicitly by the author. That Lawrence created the definition in this particular way is the most remarkable achievement of the colliery plays when the commercial theatre at that time was dominated by the anodyne of middle-class conventional morality and the minority theatre tended to define the working man by reference to its own social theses.

7. Conclusion

'The plays are very interesting, but again, formless', was Violet Hunt's criticism of Lawrence's plays in 1912.¹ This sort of comment is fairly predictable when the formal structure of drama in England, whether from the pen of Ibsen or Pinero, was expected to conform to the tenets of the well-made play. It arises from a basic misunderstanding of the nature of Lawrence's drama which has persisted until quite recently. Just as Lawrence's inclusion of the domestic details and rituals of the miner's home has been seen not as an ordering and defining principle but as a documentary, a transcript of unordered reality, so Lawrence's plays have been viewed as formless. To hold such an attitude is to fail to appreciate the form which inheres in the plays through such an ordering principle.

The sense of form in Edwardian drama tended to emanate from two different but linked sources: formal construction, plays with a beginning, a middle and an end; and a structure of received ideas, an overt ideology which informs the plays with a cohesive intellectual order. Lawrence deliberately avoided both the rigidity of construction of the well-made play and the tendency of the social thesis. Lawrence was unable to find an appropriate form in the drama of his contemporaries and found that their form was false to the drama he wanted to write.

The aesthetic and morality of the well-made play in the hands of the society dramatists is inescapably interlinked, a part and parcel of the experience they convey. The experience mediated by the colliery plays is very different from the experience mediated by the society drama and therefore demands a different aesthetic, that is a different way of defining the drama. Lawrence deliberately constructed and gave form to his colliery plays by investing them with the sense of definition which

¹L 381.

I have analysed. Lawrence disguised the treatment of his material in order to achieve an effect which has greater congruity with our experience of the unordered reality of life. Similarly he disguised the construction of his plays so that we should be unaware of an externally imposed sense of form, either the theatricality of the well-made play or the intellectuality of the social thesis. Lawrence's plays are not more real than the plays of his contemporaries, he merely utilised a different convention, a different technique.

He avoided the formal exposition by making the creation of the social and cultural context its own exposition, its own explanation and definition. He avoided the conclusive ending which allowed the audience to go home feeling contented and satisfied at having witnessed Edwardian middle-class morality triumphant, or feeling smug and complacent in feeling that it had performed some social duty in having its own view of the unfairness of the social and economic system confirmed by a Galsworthy. And in so doing he created a drama which mediated a different experience.

It is only when the technique of Lawrence's plays is appreciated, when they are seen as carefully controlled and consciously dramatic works, that they can be hailed as they have been as 'the only really satisfying Naturalist drama in English'.¹

¹Lilian R. Furst and Peter N. Skrine, Naturalism, p. 68.

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