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"ENCLOSED" AND "OPEN" FORMS

IN MODERN ENGLISH DRAMA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines structural patterns in plays by Pinero, Shaw, O'Casey, Eliot, Arden and Pinter, and proposes that there are, in broad terms, two types of play structure - "enclosed" and "open" - which may be usefully differentiated for this purpose. The first type is characterised by its precise articulation of the action within a regularly-shaped, often symmetrical framework, and the second by its juxtaposition of strands of action or thematically illustrative episodes within a comparatively loose framework. It is contended that a polarity between these types of structure is demonstrable in modern English drama and has been a significant factor in its development.

Part One of the study examines Pinero's social dramas and Shaw's disquisitory plays, analysing the contrasting methods of theatrical patterning used by these writers and discussing why they used these methods. Shaw's opposition to the deterministic effect of Pinero's "well-made" structures is emphasised, and his development of a much more fluid technique whereby the play was allowed "to write and shape itself" is considered in some detail. Part Two of the study considers later modifications and developments of the structural approaches exemplified in the plays of Pinero and Shaw. In the first chapter of Part Two, plays by O'Casey and Arden are analysed to show how these writers have used "open" structure techniques, comparable to those of Shaw, to express broadly similar points of view. In the other chapter to Part Two, plays by Eliot and Pinter are analysed to show the contribution of these writers to the development of a new type of "enclosed" play, as precisely articulated as Pinero's but without the explicit causality of the "well-made" play. It is suggested that this type of structure, while basically "enclosed" in character, represents a partial synthesis of "open" and "enclosed" form.

PREFACE

The aims, scope and methods of this thesis are set out in the introductory chapter. Here I wish simply to note several features relating to the presentation of material in this volume, and to acknowledge assistance which I have received.

The nature of this thesis has required a large number of citations from the plays which I discuss. Documentation of these in the text would be wasteful of space; I have, therefore, adopted the practice of noting in parentheses the page numbers of the editions I have used. The editions are described fully at the end of the chapter in which they have been cited. I have also listed all notes at the ends of chapters (see Contents), partly for the sake of presenting a relatively uncluttered text, and partly to facilitate cross-reference between notes. Thirdly, the "scenario graphs" are bound into the text facing the pages where they are first discussed (see Table of Figures). The use of right-hand margins enables the reader to refer easily from them to the discussions.

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Some of the discussion on Pinter and Shaw in Chapters 5 and 3 has appeared in Modern Drama XIV, 37—46 (May, 1971) and XIV, 276—287 (December, 1971).

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INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

Scope and Method

This study sets out to examine structural patterns in plays by some of the most significant modern English dramatists, and proposes that there are, in broad terms, two types of play structure which may be usefully differentiated for this purpose. The first type is characterised by the tightness of its patterning, by its precise and detailed articulation of the action within a regularly-shaped, often symmetrical, structural framework. The second type is characterised by the diversity of its patterning, by its free juxtaposition of strands of action or thematically-illustrative episodes within a comparatively loose framework. We will call the first type of structure "enclosed" and the second "open".

These terms will be used here mainly with reference to structure, but their connotations are also relevant to content. In an "enclosed" play the writer seeks to clarify the essential pattern of the action by the use of a narrow focus of attention and by eliminating peripheral details; in modern drama this type of structure has often been used for plays dealing with the private lives of individuals "enclosed", as it were, by living-room walls. In an "open" play, on the other hand, the dramatic focus is as broad as possible; this type of structure is clearly better suited to the presentation of public conflicts. The terms "enclosed" and "open" also suggest contrasting attitudes to the question of whether men's actions are free or determined, and I hope to provide some evidence for the contention that in modern English drama the use of "open" structural patterns usually reflects a positive view of man and society by the playwright, while the use of "enclosed" structural patterns usually implies a negative view.

The dissertation is in two main parts. Part One consists of two long chapters on structural patterning in major plays by Arthur Wing Pinero and Bernard Shaw. These chapters form the basis of the

dissertation because (1) serious modern English drama effectively begins with the later plays of Pinero and the early ones of Shaw, (2) each of these playwrights in his characteristic work exemplifies one of the broad types of dramatic structure we are considering - Pinero "enclosed" and Shaw "open", and (3) there is a strong correlation between structure, content and authorial viewpoint in the plays of each writer. Although these chapters are full, considerations of length and relevance have made it necessary to analyse some plays in detail and to pass over others with little or no comment. Thus Pinero's early plays are barely touched on in Chapter 2 because they are lightweight in content and less technically impressive than his serious social dramas. Of the latter particular emphasis is given to The Second Mrs Tanqueray, Iris, The Thunderbolt and Mid-Channel on the grounds that these are the best and most influential of his weightier plays. In Chapter 3 emphasis is given to Shaw's disquisitory drama, especially the "Don Juan in Hell" episode from Man and Superman, John Bull's Other Island, Major Barbara, Getting Married, Misalliance, Heart-break House and Too True to be Good. These represent the quintessence of Shavian technique, his mastery of polyphony. In addition some detailed attention is given to Mrs Warren's Profession among the early plays in order that contrasts with Pinero's social drama may be noted, and attention is drawn to two structural characteristics shared by most of Shaw's "Third Manner" plays.

In Part Two the terms "enclosed" and "open" are applied to the analysis of structural patterns in plays by four later English writers. The intention here is not to attempt a full historical account of "open" and "enclosed" structures after Pinero and Shaw, but to demonstrate that the terms can be usefully applied to the analysis of plays by more recent dramatists. One play by each of the four is singled out for

detailed examination and the structural technique of their other major plays is discussed more briefly. Chapter 4 thus considers the "open" structural methods of Sean O'Casey and John Arden, and analyses in detail the patterning of O'Casey's Cock-a-Doodle Dandy and John Arden's The Workhouse Donkey. Chapter 5 similarly examines the dominantly "enclosed" patterning of plays by T.S. Eliot and Harold Pinter, with particular attention being paid to Eliot's The Cocktail Party and Pinter's The Homecoming.

Throughout the dissertation emphasis is placed on the means by which the playwrights impress the structural patterns of their plays on audiences. The most important of these means are the act and scene divisions (signalled by curtains or blackouts and possibly by changes of setting), and the entrances and exits of the characters. In French neo-classical drama entrances and exits were considered so significant that each new entrance or exit (except for incidental ones by servants or functionaries) was regarded as marking the beginning of a new "scène". This is a very useful concept as entrances and exits often signal a change of direction or the introduction of some new element in the action. Here, however, while the concept will be used extensively, such "scènes" will be called sequences to avoid confusion with the standard English usage of "scene" for a formal subdivision of an act, involving a change of setting or a time-lapse in the action.

Analysis of the patterning of sequences in a play is one of the most effective methods of distinguishing between "enclosed" and "open" structures. In the former the sequences are arranged in a precise order and altering this would seriously impair the pattern of the action and possibly make the dénouement invalid. In an "open" play, however, the order of sequences is often not crucial

because many of them provide contrast or additional illustration and are not irreplaceable elements in an interlocking design.

To study the total pattern of acts, scenes and sequences in a given play I have found it useful to represent them in the form of a simple bar graph which will be referred to as a scenario graph. The appearances of the characters are plotted on horizontal bars to a scale based on the pagination of a specified text of the play. Each entrance or exit is further indicated by a thin vertical line drawn from the top of the graph to the horizontal bar representing the character who has just entered or left the stage. Scene and act divisions are marked by thicker vertical lines drawn right through the graph. The scenario graph is, of course, only a rough guide to the comparative duration of the various sequences because their length in terms of pages of text will sometimes bear little relation to performance time. Nevertheless the graph does provide a convenient visual summary of the way in which the playwright has "blocked" his play in terms of its major subdivisions and of the appearances of the characters, and from time to time it clarifies particular features of the playwright's structural technique. Scenario graphs for the principal plays discussed in this study will be found distributed at the appropriate places in the text.

Acts, scenes and sequences are the most obvious subdivisions for the purposes of analysing the structure of a play, but there are also several smaller-scale ones which need to be considered. Not infrequently a sequence will continue for some time during which the action may pass through several phases of development. In Pinero's plays, as will be shown, the point within a sequence where a new phase begins is usually marked by a pause, together (more often than not) with a rearrangement of the physical grouping or positioning of the

characters on stage. Such clearly-marked phases of action within sequences will be referred to as units. Units are a significant feature of the articulation of the action of "enclosed" plays, but they cannot always be defined as easily as sequences because, on the one hand a pause or move need not indicate a new phase of action, and, on the other hand, a new phase may be initiated by a purely verbal cue. Eliot, for example, articulates his action within sequences mainly by the precise control of his verse structure. Nevertheless the concept of the unit is useful provided it is used with caution.

Analysis of the structure of acts and scenes also calls for a term which can be used to describe broad phases of action within them. Such phases may take the form of a series of short sequences, a single longer sequence, or a major subdivision of an especially long sequence comprising all or most of the act or scene. These broad phases will be termed movements. As in music a movement will normally contrast in tempo and tone with the movements which precede or follow it. The term is useful for the structural analysis of both "enclosed" and "open" plays, but it is of particular value for the latter which, as will be shown, tend to be less precisely punctuated by pausation and stage-business.

The effect of these various subdivisions, large and small, is, of course, modified considerably by other aspects of the playwright's stagecraft and therefore must be studied in relation to the indications in his text relating to settings, costumes, props, lighting, sound-effects and grouping. For example, changes of setting or of lighting can give a particular emphasis to act and scene divisions and thus suggest something of the thematic progression of the action; costumes and props may emphasize significant developments in the action; sound-effects may stress particular entrances and exits; and certain

groupings of the characters on the stage may be repeated to emphasise a particular aspect of the thematic patterning. Though these are matters in which individual directors must be allowed considerable discretion, such indications are often as integral to the playwright's concept of the action as the words he gives the actors to speak.

To establish whether a particular play can be properly described as "enclosed" or "open" all of these matters must be studied closely in relation to the text as a whole. The key questions to be answered are "Does the patterning encourage the audience to isolate and focus on the detailed elements of the action?" and "Does the patterning emphasise the juxtaposition of diverse elements in the action?" Clearly these aims are not mutually exclusive, but a play may nevertheless be properly described as "enclosed" if the former aim predominates, or "open" if the latter aim predominates. Each kind of play has its own potential strengths and weaknesses, and analysis of these as they occur will suggest judgements about the playwright's skill and vision. The main burden of this study is to demonstrate the utility of the two postulated types of structure for identifying and contrasting significant technical approaches in modern English drama, but this has not excluded considerations of a critical nature.

The concluding chapter attempts to draw together the principal threads of discussion. Its main concerns are to assess the usefulness of the terms "enclosed" and "open" in the context of this study, and to consider the effectiveness of the analytical tools which have been used. In addition some general conclusions are essayed about the interrelation of attitude, content and technique, both in the work of the selected playwrights and in the development of modern English drama.

PART ONE

Pinero and Shaw

Chapter 2

Arthur Wing Pinero: The "Enclosed" Art of the Well-Made Play.

I

The position of Arthur Wing Pinero (1855-1934) as one of the main pioneers of modern English drama is generally recognised but few critics now rate his plays very highly. Even his once-vaunted constructive skill is now suspect. Professor Allardyce Nicoll in British Drama, for example, while acknowledging the "excellence of construction" of Pinero's serious plays, comments that "we now recognise that the excellence itself is often mechanically rigid."¹ The verdict must be accepted, yet considering the extreme artificiality of the nineteenth-century well-made play from which he learnt his basic methods of plot construction, it is remarkable that his social dramas appear as realistic as they do.

The well-made play as developed by the French playwright Eugène Scribe (1791-1861) was probably the most "enclosed" type of narrative structure ever devised for the theatre. Stephen S. Stanton has outlined the main features of the Scribean well-made play as follows:

- (1) a delayed-action plot whose point of attack occurs at the climax of the story of which it is a part and whose central characters struggle to overcome obstacles (usually to love and marriage); (2) a pattern of increasingly intense action and suspense, carefully prepared by exposition which establishes certain facts for the spectator and causes him to anticipate each significant event (this pattern is supported throughout the play by contrived entrances and exits, letters and other devices for conveying these facts to certain characters while keeping them from others); (3) a teeter-totter [see-saw] arrangement of incidents to create successive ups and downs in the fortunes of the hero caused by his conflict with one or more adversaries and leading to his eventual triumph or failure; (4) the counter-punch of peripeteia or upset followed by scène à faire or obligatory scene ...; (5) a central misunderstanding ... made obvious to the spectator but withheld from the participants; and (6) the reproduction in miniature of the overall delayed-action pattern in the individual acts.²

Not only was the complex structure of the play echoed in miniature in

the individual acts, but it was also repeated within the acts in the principal sequences, each of which, as Maurice Valency has commented, "had its initial situation, its progression, complication, climax, peripeteia, and conclusion, so that it formed an autonomous whole within the total arrangement."³

Governing the whole structure was the dictum that the action must be developed strictly according to the logic of cause and effect. Ernest Legouv  , one of Scribe's main collaborators, stated the rule in the following terms:

Each scene [i.e. sequence] must not only be the logical outcome of the scene that preceded it and be integral with the one that follows it, but it must transmit its own momentum to the next scene, so as to push the piece forward without interruption and in that way reach, stage by stage, the final goal, the d  nouement.⁴

Such a progression could only be achieved by the careful drafting of a scenario before the playwright began to write the play. This, according to Legouv  , was Scribe's great gift:

In our theatrical slang there is a very significant word: num  rotage. It means planning the sequence of scenes. That sequential ordering is not only a kind of classification, it also comprises the development, the accumulating interest of the play. That numbering is the itinerary of the dr  matis personae ... Scribe not only had a talent for num  rotage, he had sheer genius for it. No sooner had the plan of a piece been sketched than the complete materials for the work came to him as if by magic and bestowed themselves in their logical position.⁵

Scribe's genius for num  rotage enabled him to construct a large number of plays which had considerable success with the audiences of his time but which are now of interest only to theatre historians. Everything in his plays is necessarily subordinated to the requirements of the extremely complex plot structure: the content, with its reliance on contrivance and coincidence, is lightweight, and the characters are mere stock types with obvious and predictable

responses. These plays assume, as Francis Fergusson has put it,

a certain very reduced view of human action, of the kind of pleasure best calculated to hold a crowd and of the kind of meaning which anyone at any time is willing to attribute to a picture of human life.⁶

The form, however, underwent some modification in the hands of Scribe's successors. The plays of Victorien Sardou (1831-1908) are somewhat less complex than Scribe's though often highly melo dramatic, while in those of Emile Augier (1820-1889) and Alexandre Dumas fils (1824-95) the number of plot complications is much reduced to allow scope for the presentation of character and the exposition of social problems. Thus by the late 1880's when Pinero turned from the writing of farces and sentimental comedies to serious drama a somewhat more flexible form of the well-made play had been developed. In his social dramas he was to carry much further the endeavour of giving life, weight and credibility to the form while retaining the benefit of its theatrical effectiveness.

The influence of the well-made play on Pinero can be traced from early in his playwriting career. In 1883 the critic William Archer criticised defects in the structure of Pinero's early plays and advised that Pinero "would do wisely to try his hand at one or two adaptations before giving us his next original play," adding that he "would learn much from the analysis and reconstruction of a well-knit French drama."⁷ Pinero took the advice. In 1884 he adapted Ohnet's Le Maître de Forges (as The Ironmaster) and the following year Sardou's Maison Neuve (as Mayfair). Two decades later, at the height of his fame, he indicated that he continued to regard Archer's advice as sound by insisting on the necessity for apprentice playwrights with dramatic talent (which he defined as "the power to project characters, and to cause them to tell an interesting story through the medium of

dialogue"⁸) to develop this into theatrical talent

by hard study and long practice. For theatrical talent consists in the power of making your characters not only tell a story by means of dialogue, but tell it in such skilfully devised form and order as shall, within the limits of an ordinary theatrical presentation, give rise to the greatest amount of that peculiar kind of emotional effect, the production of which is the one great function of theatre.⁹

Even more revealing is a rare explanation from Pinero of how he set about writing one of his own plays¹⁰, a late piece entitled Dr. Harmer's Holiday (1930). The play was based on an incident in which a young doctor was clubbed to death in a disreputable London alleyway. Pinero recalls in his preface that he had heard about the murder while he was a young clerk in a law office, and goes on to say,

What interested me at the moment, and continued to interest me thirty years later, was the problem of a respectable young doctor — the trusted assistant of an older practitioner in the city, if I remember aright — apparently living a sober, honest and cleanly life, who met his end in such an ignoble fashion; and I set myself the task of forging a chain of circumstances, intensifying rather than diminishing the tragedy of his death, which would, granting the premises, account naturally for that desperate, and final, fight for breath in those lone and noisome surroundings.¹¹

This, of course, amounts simply to an application in practice of the principle described by Legouv  . "Granting the premises" the rest is to follow in an unbroken chain. Throughout his career, then, Pinero subscribed to the structural aims of the well-made play, and in the light of his attempt in the social dramas to impart a new seriousness to English drama it is relevant to ask why.

Strange though it may appear at first sight, Pinero's outlook on life as evidenced in his plays was similar to the philosophy underlying the work of French Naturalists such as Emile Zola (1840-1902). W. D. Dunkel, in his biography of Pinero, states:

The prevalent notion that Pinero was Victorian in his

philosophy is utterly false. He had nothing whatsoever to do with Browning's declaration of the Christian faith; nor was he racked with doubt as were Tennyson and Matthew Arnold. Though he posed not at all as a philosopher he had a fixed point of view on life, scientific in its emphasis on cause and effect, strikingly advanced for his time.... Even in his early farce comedies his characters fail to achieve their objectives because of some mistake earlier in their lives. Though they have hopes and sentiments, their judgement, physical condition and limitations of environment eventually bring about frustration, since they are the kind of people they are. Stated in philosophical terms this is determinism. The psychological and physiological factors in their personalities make them thus and so; not fate, not the conjunction of the stars, not the wrath of God.

This, though Dunkel overstates his case, is certainly what Pinero wished to convey. As such, it is strikingly close to the point of view expressed by Zola in his famous manifesto Le Naturalisme au théâtre (1881): "I am waiting for environment to determine the characters and for the characters to act according to the logic of facts combined with the logic of their own disposition"¹³ In his social dramas Pinero attempted to present precisely this, though the environment in which his characters are depicted is very different from that chosen by Zola and the French Naturalists.

Most of Pinero's social dramas are set in the milieu described by Aubrey in The Second Mrs. Tanqueray as "Our little world of St James". The members of this closed circle are a well-to-do middle-class group — the kind of people who had apartments in London, owned a country house in Surrey and rented an Italian villa in the winter. Respectability was the cardinal virtue in this society and a consistent theme arising from this throughout the plays is the "double-standard" of morality for men and women. Though he was critical of the "double standard", Pinero appears to have regarded it as a fact of life, unfortunate but inevitable, with which his heroines had to contend.

In play after play we see Pinero's heroines driven inexorably to the wall through the interaction of their own weaknesses and the prejudices of this society. In The Second Mrs Tanqueray (1893), Paula seeks to escape from an immoral past and finds that she is "cut" by her husband's friends because of her reputation and her manners, that she cannot now stand the company of her former associates, and finally that an affair from her past intrudes so intolerably on her relations with her husband and his daughter that she cannot bear to continue her life. This play was followed by The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith (1895) in which Agnes Ebbsmith endeavours to establish a close but platonic relationship with a married man who has left his wife, but finds, stage by stage, because of his weak character and the pressure applied by his in-laws, that the only way she can retain him is as a kept whore. In The Benefit of the Doubt (also 1895), Theophila Fraser discovers that suspicion of adultery is as damning as fact in the eyes of her family and husband, and is driven to seek comfort from the man with whom she has been unjustly accused. The Gay Lord Quex (1899) can be passed over as a light piece, being simply an ingenious comedy centred on a duel of wits between an apparently wicked lord and a meddling manicurist. However the next play, Iris (1901) returns to the basic theme with its detailed study of the decline and fall of a pampered young widow who finds herself without money and without the strength of character to submit to a life of genteel poverty. Letty (1903) more or less reverses this story by showing in somewhat sentimental fashion how a young office girl with a taste for luxury just manages to escape becoming the mistress of a well-to-do philanderer. In His House in Order (1906) Pinero depicts the plight of a young governess who has married her employer and is persecuted almost beyond endurance by the snobbish relatives of her husband's previous wife.

The Thunderbolt (1908) is the least typical in theme and setting of all the social dramas as it is not about a woman under pressure from society (though there is a character of this sort in the play) but about the greed of a provincial family and the depths to which its members are prepared to sink to gain an inheritance. However in Mid-Channel (1909), the last of the social dramas which need be considered the theme is once again the "double-standard", exemplified by a wife's discovery that though she is prepared to forgive her husband's infidelity he is not prepared to condone hers.

The consistent approach and something of the deterministic outlook claimed by Dunkel for these plays can be detected even in brief summaries. But, as stated before, the structure of the plays is firmly based on "well-made" methods and here Pinero differs radically from Zola. To Zola well-made plotting was intolerably artificial and barred the way to a scientific observation of character. In his view the playwright was faced with an either-or choice:

The two formulas are before us: the naturalistic formula which makes the stage a study and picture of real life; and the conventional formula which makes the stage an amusement for the mind, an intellectual guessing game, an art of adjustment and symmetry regulated after a certain code.¹⁴

Pinero, however, believed that the well-made play, if it was handled with skill and informed by a concern for character and truth, was not only theatrically effective but could through its emphasis on causality convey the pressures exerted by society on the individual.

In accordance with the practice of other writers of well-made plays Pinero made use of scenarios in the planning of his plays. He claimed, however, that for him the scenario was no more than a general guide:

Before beginning to write a play, I always make sure, by means of a definite scheme, that there is a way of doing it; but

whether I ultimately follow that way is a totally different matter.¹⁵

Unlike Scribe, **however**, Pinero did not begin working on a play by drafting the scenario. The first stage for him, he told William Archer, was to get to know his characters:

The beginning of a play to me is a little world of people. I live with them get familiar with them, and they tell me the story.¹⁶

Archer glosses this remark, no doubt correctly, by saying that Pinero "simply meant that the story came to him as the characters took on life in his imagination," but the point is significant. Though he subscribed to the principle of logical sequential construction, Pinero was uneasy about the flat characterisation and mechanical effect which follow from too slavish a reliance on logic. A biographer has recorded him as stating:

Two of the most substantial parts of the fabric which go to make up a fine play are logic and intuition. Without the first you can't construct a play. Without the second you can't write it!¹⁷

It is important, too, to note that Pinero distinguished between theatrical and dramatic purposes. On the same occasion that he claimed "the one great function of theatre" was to "give rise to the greatest amount ... of emotional effect", he also referred to "the dramatist's one great end — that of 'showing the age and body of the time his form and pressure.'"¹⁸ He admitted that the theatrical and dramatic aims were difficult to reconcile, but insisted that the serious dramatist could and should do so:

The art — the great, fascinating and most difficult art — of the modern dramatist is nothing else than to achieve the compression of life which the stage undoubtedly demands, without falsification.¹⁹

The general use of outworn dramatic conventions by English playwrights in the 1880's was one major source of "falsification" with

which Piñero had to contend when he set out to write serious social dramas in a realistic style. He is generally given credit for being the first English dramatist to dispense with asides and soliloquies, but he went well beyond the rejection of these particular conventions in an endeavour to ensure that every detail in his social dramas appeared realistically motivated. In this connection his opinion of the dramatic technique of the Victorian melodramatists is both interesting and revealing:

There are two parts of technique which I may perhaps call its strategy and its tactics. In strategy — in the general laying out of a play — these ... dramatists were often ... more than tolerably skilful; but in tactics, in the art of getting the characters on and off the stage, of conveying information to the audience and so forth, they were almost incredibly careless and conventional.²⁰

His approval of the "strategy" of many of these melodramas gains increased significance from his own observation that "many of them were unacknowledged adaptations from the French."²¹ For him the key to realistic effect in drama was not a new dramatic structure but better tactics. Thus to achieve "compression" (and theatrical excitement) in his social dramas he made use of the main structural devices adopted by the French writers of well-made plays: a ruthlessly single action with the basic problem stated clearly in the first act; a slow and detailed exposition leading into a pattern of increasing action and suspense; a cause-and-effect chain of events building to a major climax at the end of the penultimate act and resolved by the dénouement; and the reproduction in miniature of this pattern in the individual acts and main sequences. But to avoid "falsification" (or, to use a more precise statement by him, to avoid disturbing "the illusion which the modern audience expects to enjoy in the modern theatre"²²) he took extreme pains with his tactics, always seeking to ensure that not only did every detail follow in its most effective

order, but that it was adequately motivated in terms of character, situation and mise-en-scène.

"A play is all details," he once commented.²³ No English playwright (with the possible exception of Pinter) has been more meticulous than he with such matters as ground plans, props, moves, grouping, dialogue orchestration and pausation. He personally directed all the London premières of his plays and had the reputation of being efficient and exacting in rehearsal. According to Hesketh Pearson:

He was mad on details, telling actors exactly how to move, what gestures to make, precisely where and when to stand or sit, how to stress words; and as he knew his plays by heart, there was trouble if an actor changed a word or slurred over a syllable or ignored the punctuation of the text by making too long or too short a pause.²⁴

The charge is echoed by many others including Mrs Patrick Campbell who characteristically mentions in her autobiography an instance when Pinero allowed her to change an item of business in the original production of The Second Mrs Tanqueray as a signal proof of the "good impression" she had made on him.²⁵ But there is no need to go beyond Pinero himself for an admission of Hesketh Pearson's criticism — and a significant defence:

All that we call 'business' is in the printed matter which I carry into the theatre. Why should it be altered when it has all been carefully and even laboriously thought out, every detail of it during the process of construction? The movements of a man and what he has to say are inseparable. Expression is multi-form and simultaneous; to alter one phrase is to weaken all. I try to think of these things beforehand. Rehearsal is not — or certainly should not be — a time for experiment. It is to prepare for the acting together of the players, not for the making of the play.²⁶

This attitude was the keystone of Pinero's realism, for it was above all his unremitting attention to detail and to the careful preparation of effects which usually enabled him to create an illusion of reality in his **social** dramas while patterning the action to achieve the

maximum theatrical impact.

II

Most of Pinero's social dramas are divided into four acts corresponding to clear stages in the development of the plots — "a rhythm of rise progress, culmination and solution" to quote William Archer.^{26a} In The Profligate (1889), Pinero's first attempt at writing a wholly serious play, the acts were given titles to indicate the subject matter of each: (Act 1) 'This Man and this Woman', (Act 2) The Sword of Damocles, (Act 3) The End of the Honeymoon, and (Act 4) The Beginning of a New Life. He discontinued this practice in his later fully-fledged social dramas but continued to design each act as an entity as well as a stage in the action. The four acts of The Second Mrs Tanqueray, for example, could easily be given titles such as (Act 1) The Beginning of a New Life?, (Act 2) Paula's Rebellion, (Act 3) A Face from the Past, and (Act 4) The End of an Experiment. This clarity of function of the acts is, of course, a considerable aid to the audience's comprehension, but the division of the action into such tidy packages carries a danger of artificiality which is liable to be further compounded by the necessity of contriving act clinaxes which impart strong forward thrust to the succeeding action. It is here that the principal structural flaws of Pinero's earlier social dramas are to be found.

In The Profligate every detail of the first three acts is directed to the end of getting the utmost theatrical effect out of the moment when Dunstan Renshaw's guilty past catches up with him. There are all sorts of unlikely coincidences on the way and an almost incestuous economy in the manner the small group of characters are made to interact with each other, but from the opening sequences

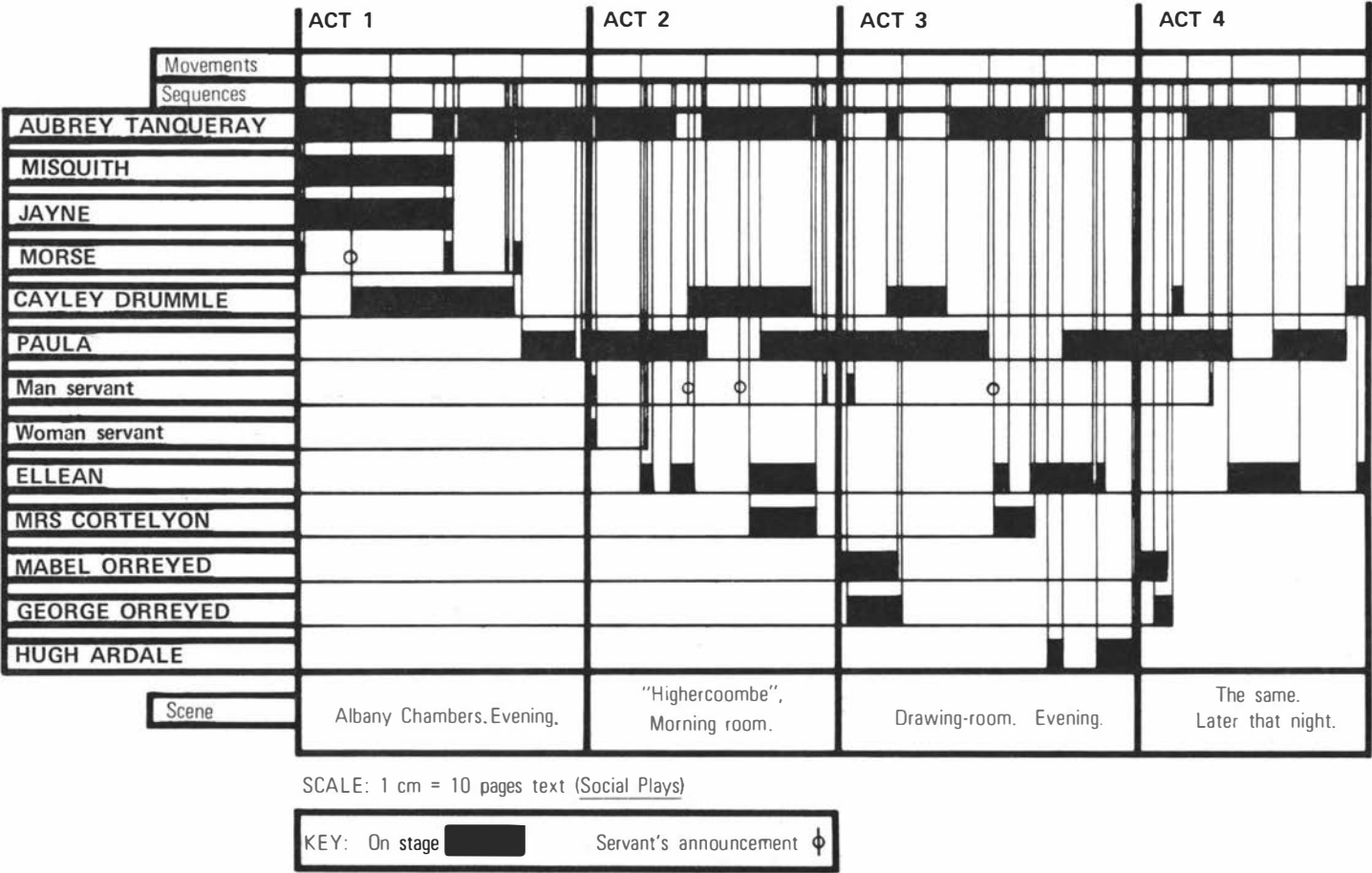
there is never any doubt what the climax will be. However after the climax where the profligate is discredited and his wife is disillusioned the action is effectively over and the last act is merely superfluous melodrama. (The fact that Pinero was asked to supply an alternative ending and did so is an indication of the weakness of this last act and its lack of connection with the earlier action.) The Profligate, in fact, is an excellent example of what is liable to happen when a play is plotted backwards from its climax, a method frequently adopted by writers of well-made plays and wittily ridiculed by Bernard Shaw:

First you "have an idea" for a dramatic situation ... (based on) the manufacture of a misunderstanding. Having manufactured it, you place its culmination at the end of the last act but one, which is the point at which the manufacture of the play begins. Then you make your first act out of the necessary introduction of the characters to the audience, after elaborate explanations, mostly conducted by servants, solicitors and other low life personages (the principals must all be dukes and colonels and millionaires), of how the misunderstanding is going to come about. Your last act consists, of course, of clearing up the misunderstanding, and generally getting the audience out of the theatre as best you can.²⁷

However The Second Mrs Tanqueray, Pinero's next attempt at a serious drama and the one by which he is chiefly remembered, has a much more subtle structure, its action having clearly been conceived in terms of a total process and not simply for the sake of one big scene. In terms of its technique and dramatic effect this play, compared with The Profligate, marks a decisive advance in Pinero's development.

During the interim of some four years between the first performances of these two plays several of Ibsen's most influential works (notably A Doll's House, Ghosts and Hedda Gabler) were staged in London.²⁸ Though he was not attracted by Ibsen's characteristic technique of developing the action by the progressive exposing of past events, Pinero could not help realising that his own plays were

FIGURE 1: Scenario graph of THE SECOND MRS TANQUERAY by Arthur Wing Pinero



shallow and out of date by comparison. He therefore, as Clayton Hamilton has recorded,²⁹ undertook a thorough study of the works of a number of recent European dramatists, especially Alexandre Dumas films. As a result he came to the decision that

a really earnest English play — conceived in accordance with the social intention of Ibsen and executed in conformity with the developed technique of Dumas, films — would stand a chance of achieving at least an honourable succès d'estime in the current English theatre. 30

The enthusiastic reception given to The Second Mrs Tanqueray is now theatre history, and at this distance it is easy to see that much of the play's matter and technique is derivative. From Dumas films Pinero learnt a simplification of the well-made structure and a more natural use of dialogue to depict a social milieu. The sympathetic treatment of a heroine who transgresses social laws was probably also suggested by the same source. The story, as Stephen S. Stanton has pointed out,³¹ is based on Émile Augier's Le Mariage d'Olympe (1855) in which the theme of the attempted rehabilitation of a "fallen woman" is treated with scorn and indignation. The married name of Pinero's heroine probably comes from that of the central character of Augier's play: Pauline, formerly Olympe Taverny. Finally, the influence of Ibsen's Hedda Gabler can be detected in Paula Tanqueray's bitter resentment of the stifling monotony of her marriage. 32

The originality of the play, however, lies not in its subject-matter but in the expert handling of the narration. The appearances of the characters sequence by sequence (see Figure 1) are plotted to give Pinero's story and theme the maximum of theatrical impact, while within sequences stage-business is carefully designed to point and punctuate the action in a manner which appears realistic.

Isolation is an important motif in the patterning of The Second Mrs Tanqueray and this is essentially what the play is about.

The action shows an attempt to escape from the past and indicates that this is impossible because it requires an escape from oneself. Both the principal characters, Aubrey Tanqueray and Paula, start from a condition of emotional isolation and at the outset see, in different ways, their marriage as a means of escape. The widowed Tanqueray after an unhappy first marriage believes he has lost his only child, Ellean, when it appears she has decided to become a nun in the convent in which her mother had had her educated. He therefore is prepared to cut himself off from society to make a new start with a woman of warmer temperament than his first wife. Unfortunately for the experiment his bride-to-be, Paula, is not only seeking to escape from her past of casual love affairs, but through her marriage is expecting to be accepted into respectable society.

The patterning of sequences in Act 1 underlines Tanqueray's withdrawal from society and thereby foreshadows Paula's isolation in the later development of the play. The action begins with his taking leave of two close friends, Misquith and Jayne, whose wives he knows will not permit them to associate with him after his forthcoming marriage. Before they leave, a third friend, Cayley Drummle, joins the party and remains behind after their departure to question Tanqueray more closely. Misquith and Jayne do not reappear in the play, a point criticised by Shaw³³ but rightly defended by William Archer³⁴ and Clayton Hamilton³⁵ as a deliberately calculated effect in the pattern of the play. Drummle, being a bachelor, has more freedom of action than the others, but when Tanqueray is confidentially informed by his manservant that Paula has called to see him (in defiance of the convention that a woman should not go visiting a bachelor unchaperoned, let alone late at night) it is

necessary that Drummle too be got rid of before bride and groom can meet together. Nor is this the end of the process, for at the end of the following extended sequence with Paula (during which he irrevocably commits himself to the marriage) Tanqueray is left briefly alone, and opening a letter which his servant had earlier left for him on the mantelpiece, discovers that his daughter has changed her mind and is going to return to him. This moment in which Tanqueray stands alone on stage holding Ellean's letter emphasises the point that though he can isolate himself socially he cannot isolate himself from his past.

From the beginning of Act 2 to the end of the play the action concentrates on Paula's isolation and her abortive attempts to break out of it. Act 2 begins with a long silence indicative of the failure of the marriage, followed by a quarrel between Paula and Tanqueray at the breakfast table. Tanqueray at least has his letters and Ellean, but Paula is being driven to distraction by the monotony of her new life as society (represented by Mrs. Cortelyon) has failed to call on her and Ellean is hostile. In the subsequent action the introduction of each new character serves only to block off possible escape routes and Paula's isolation is continually emphasised in stage terms. Not only does Pinero indicate by his stage directions that she is frequently separated from the other characters present, but on no fewer than five occasions she is left completely alone.

The reappearance of Cayley Drummle early in Act 2 appears at first to offer Paula a welcome distraction from her boredom. In fact his main object is to persuade Tanqueray to allow Ellean, whom Paula still hopes to win over, to accompany Mrs. Cortelyon on a trip

to Paris. When Mrs Cortelyon at last appears, Paula discovers her errand and reacts with such calculated rudeness that she ruins any chance of being accepted socially by her visitor in future. The point is marked by Paula's standing alone with her back to the departing group. Her response when Tanqueray reappears is to carry out a threat she had made at the beginning of the act to send a letter inviting the Orreyeds, another socially ostracised couple, to stay with them. This letter business effectively "frames" Act 2 as a structural entity and provides a lead into the next act.³⁶

Paula's attempt to escape into her past through the company of former cronies is also a failure. In Pinero's "blocking" of the action the Orreyeds make only two brief appearances (one at the beginning of Act 3 and the other at the beginning of Act 4) and even in the first it is apparent that Paula can no longer bear them. However, the failure of the Orreyeds' visit to relieve her loneliness appears to offer Paula a chance to patch up her marriage which has reached a point where neither partner is speaking to the other. Near the beginning of Act 3 Tanqueray sees her face reflected in a mirror and comments to Drummle "how ill and wretched she looks." (p.130) Thereafter the mirror as a reminder of the inescapable self becomes something of a leit motif in the play. When Drummle informs Paula that he is to leave the following day and wishes aloud that she would make things up with her husband, she confesses that she has been intercepting Ellean's letters to Tanqueray (Ellean, of course, has not written to her) and cannot bring herself to admit this to him. Drummle's reply is to show her her face in a handmirror, saying as he does so, "It's quite time." (p.138) This act spurs Paula to confess to Tanqueray who then attempts to carry the "mirror cure" further by forcing her to recollect the chapter of her past "that relates to the time when you

were — like Ellean" (p.143) and to compare that image with her present one. Paula then collapses in "a paroxysm of weeping" (p.143) a response later ridiculed by Shaw as psychological nonsense.³⁷ However, in terms of the logic of the action some such confrontation was the only possible, though faint, hope of relief for Paula — relief, by coming to terms with, rather than trying to escape from herself. But where, granting Paula's self-reproach, was the action to go from here?

In the event Pinero resorted to an unlikely coincidence to bring Paula's realisation of her isolation (and the third act) to a climax. This is the major structural flaw in the play. As Archer notes in Play-Making, "A coincidence ... which coincides with a crisis is thereby raised to the nth power, and is wholly unacceptable in serious art."³⁸ (By "serious art" Archer meant, of course, realistic art, but the dictum is completely valid here.) The final blow comes as a result of the unforeseen return from Paris of Ellean, now engaged. With persuasion from Tanqueray and because of her own happiness Ellean is at last prepared to accept Paula, and offers to introduce her fiance who has called secretly and is waiting outside. (This, incidentally, recalls the build-up to Paula's entrance in Act 1.) While Ellean goes to fetch him, Paula is again left briefly alone on stage, but this time her solitude underlines a moment of hope before disaster. Then the fiancé enters and by the most unlikely chance turns out to be one of Paula's former lovers. Her last and most hopeful prospect of acceptance is thus arbitrarily closed. The act ends with her once more alone, staring hopelessly at her reflection in the mirror.

In the last act the blocking pattern is broadly one of a series of encounters between Paula and the characters who remain, each

sequence stressing the hopelessness of her position. The first two are with the Orreyeds and with Drumble, and in neither case can she say anything of the disaster that has overtaken her. After another brief sequence in which she waits alone, Tanqueray enters but when Paula confesses her previous association with Ellean's fiancé he is unable to do anything beyond ordering Ellean without explanation to break off her engagement. Ellean guesses the truth and in an emotional encounter with Paula tells her, "It's in your face ... I have always known what you were!" (p.185). This statement (which, incidentally, brings the use of the mirror motif to a climax) finally impresses on Paula the impossibility of escaping from herself and her past. In her last scene with Tanqueray the action virtually comes full circle with his feeble assertion that they can still start afresh, and that by going abroad they can escape reminders of the past because "The world isn't quite as small as all that." Paula's reply sums up the moral of the isolation theme: "Isn't it? The only great distances are those we carry within ourselves — the distances that separate husbands and wives for instance. And so it'll be with us." (pp.190-1) Her suicide, therefore, is integral to the logic of the pattern, death being for her the only bearable isolation.

The Second Mrs Tanqueray, then, is clearly an "enclosed" play structurally and thematically. The action shows the central character to be trapped in a situation from which she cannot escape and the plot is tightly patterned to reinforce this impression at every turn. The introduction of each new character after Act 1 poses a threat to the Tanquerays' marriage and adds another link in the causal chain leading to the play's catastrophe. Ellean unwittingly begins the division between Tanqueray and Paula; Mrs

Cortelyon's attempt to help by taking Ellean to Paris deepens the breach and causes Paula to defy her husband by inviting the Orreyeds; their arrival virtually eliminates all conversation between Tanqueray and Paula thus prompting her to spite him by intercepting Ellean's letters; this action forestalls any warning of Ellean's engagement to Ardale and their return from Paris; and thus a confrontation is brought about which finally wrecks the marriage and Paula's hopes of a new life. The climax, as we have seen, is weakened by the element of coincidence, but it is unfair to over-emphasise this in order to claim, as did Bernard Shaw, that the play is little more than "a scaffold for the situation of a step-daughter and stepmother finding themselves in the positions respectively of affianced wife and discarded mistress to the same man".³⁹ The plot was clearly designed to show stage by stage the unhappy progress of the second Mrs Tanqueray, not just to set up one scene.

In fact when the third act climax is examined more closely it is apparent that Pinero used all his tactical skill to avoid drawing the audience's attention to the more sensational aspect which Shaw highlights in his criticism. In context it is not the event but Paula's reaction to it which is emphasised:

ELLEAN: Paula, this is Captain Ardale — Mrs Tanqueray.

(PAULA rises and turns, and she and HUGH stand staring blankly at each other for a moment or two; then PAULA advances and gives him her hand.)

PAULA: (In a strange voice, but calmly.) How do you do?

HUGH: How do you do?

PAULA: (To ELLEAN) Mr Ardale and I have met in London, Ellean. Er — Captain Ardale now?

HUGH: Yes.

ELLEAN: In London?

PAULA: They say the world's very small, don't they?

HUGH: Yes.

PAULA: Ellean, dear. I want to have a little talk about you to Mr Ardale — Captain Ardale — alone. (Putting her arms around ELLEAN, and leading her to the door.) Come back in a little while. (ELLEAN nods to PAULA with a smile, while PAULA stands watching her at the open door.) In a little while — in a little — (Closing the door and then taking a seat facing HUGH.) Be quick! Mr. Tanqueray has only gone down to The Warren with Mrs Cortelyon. What is to be done?
(pp.158-9)

By leaving the audience to make the initial connection Pinero glosses over his failure to provide adequate forewarning of the previous relationship between Paula and Ardale, and Paula's question, "What is to be done?", which she reiterates throughout the rest of the sequence, directs attention instead to the decision she is to make at the end of the act.

The above exchange is a good example of the way Pinero in his mature social dramas shifts the emphasis from melodramatic event to character. The plots are manipulated, but the manipulation is rarely apparent because of his tactical skill in the subtle 'planting' of details, in the careful releasing of just the right amount of information at the right time, and in the use of entrances, exits and pausation to underline key points.

The opening sequences of The Second Mrs Tanqueray illustrate all these points effectively. The exposition has been attacked by Shaw as "naive"⁴⁰ and defended by Archer as "lifelike" and justifiable because the play "requires an unusual amount of preliminary retrospect"⁴¹ but both miss the point. Though the machinery is plausible the essential facts to be imparted are very few: Aubrey Tanqueray, after an unhappy first marriage the only issue of which was a daughter who is now about to enter a convent, has decided to try to

rehabilitate a "fallen woman" by marrying her. In the exposition, however, Pinero was not aiming to impart this information quickly but to make the leading characters interesting to the audience and to foreshadow the total pattern of the play. And this is what he achieves.

The open sequence (pp 51-57) has three "units" (see Introduction, pp. 4-5). In the first, attention is drawn to the unexplained absence of Cayley Drummle from the small dinner party Tanqueray is giving for his three closest friends. Drummle having failed to turn up by the coffee stage, Tanqueray tells the other two, Misquith and Jayne, that the reason for the party is that this is the last time they will meet in his apartment as he is getting married the following day. Misquith and Jayne stammer out congratulations and the first unit ends with a moment or two of embarrassed silence. This pause, coming on a downbeat, emphasises the unspoken facts that Tanqueray has neither told his friends the name of his bride nor invited them to the wedding. Prompted by this charged silence, Tanqueray states that his marriage is not "the conventional sort of marriage likely to satisfy society", that they should face the fact they may not be able to continue their friendship because of this, and that they should "end a pleasant chapter here tonight, and after start afresh." Jayne accordingly proposes a toast to "The Next Chapter." This toast, appropriately offered with the dregs in the coffee cups, climaxes the sequence and underlines the subject of the play. The third unit is a subdued recapitulation of the situation by Misquith and Jayne, Tanqueray having tactfully removed himself to a desk in the far corner of the room to "scribble a couple of notes." The sequence is brought to a full close by Misquith's pronouncement, "My dear Jayne, speaking in absolute confidence, I have never been

more profoundly depressed in my life."

The second sequence (pp.58-63) begins briskly with the arrival of Cayley Drummle. This, of course, offers the prospect of a solution to the minor mystery of his failure to arrive in time for dinner. Drummle plays on this and on the fact that he has dined on "a bit of fish, a cutlet and a pancake" to lead into a racy account of a summons to old Lady Orreyed's. This account culminates in his announcement that the dowager's son George is now "a thing of the past" because of his marriage to a certain Mabel Harvey. The falling cadence of Misquith's "I'm very sorry" as he crosses to the fireplace points the impact of the scandal, but there is only a fractional pause before Jayne initiates the second unit of this sequence with the audience's question, "Pardon my ignorance — who is Mabel Harvey?" Drummle replies with a satirical portrait of the empty-headed young actress who is now Lady Orreyed, little realising that his entertaining description is upsetting his host. Tanqueray offers the quiet rebuke that "none of us really know anything about this lady", and moves away from the group, ostensibly to continue writing his letters. In the third and final unit of the sequence Drummle continues unperturbed and sums up his conviction that George Orreyed is finished socially by stating, "You may dive into many waters, but there is one social Dead Sea — !" Tanqueray is listening as in the ensuing conversation Drummle develops his metaphor by commenting that for years he has been "sitting, and watching, and waiting....On the shores of that same sea.... For some of my best friends to come up !" These last words clinax Drummle's unconscious torturing of Tanqueray who gathers up his papers from his desk and with "a half-stifled exclamation of impatience" hurriedly exits saying, "I'll finish my letters in the other room if you'll excuse me for five

minutes. Tell Cayley the news." Misquith tells Drummle to close the door and preparations are now complete for the next stage of the exposition in which Drummle (the raisonneur) narrates the history of Tanqueray's former marriage.

The two sequences culminating in Tanqueray's exit form merely the prelude to the exposition proper. They illustrate, however, the main techniques Pinero uses in this and the later social dramas to arouse, maintain and heighten interest: the "chain-stitch" method of linking, whereby a question is posed or a detail is "planted" (either overtly or implicitly) in one sequence to provide a link into the next; the patterning of the material of longer sequences into a number of units (usually three in The Second Mrs Tanqueray) marked by pauses which stress significant lines and ensure that the audience follow each stage clearly; and, for further emphasis, a pointing of the theme by significant touches of stage-business such as the coffee cup toast or the physical separation of Tanqueray from his friends. Every detail is assigned its proper place in the total scheme and nothing is irrelevant, yet at the same time the appearance of naturalness is maintained. This apparently easy economy can be seen, for example, in the way in which Drummle's lateness leads to a description of two characters (the Orryeds) who will provide a complementary illustration of the theme, the description leads to a minor climax which foreshadows the social consequences of Tanqueray's resolution, and that climax (his exit) leads to the next stage of the exposition. The actual content may be slight, but when the skill of this passage is compared with the clumsiness of the exposition in The Profligate the difference is so marked as to make the plays seem to belong to different periods.

In the first act of The Profligate there are, for example, no fewer than thirteen asides and three soliloquies. The first act of The Second Mrs Tanqueray has no conventional asides and the only approach to soliloquy is near the end when Tanqueray reads aloud Elean's short but disturbing letter. Confidences still remained essential to Pinero's plots but in this and later plays when he wanted to have characters speaking without being overheard by others he took care to motivate a convincing space between them. —e.g. Tanqueray's deliberate move near the end of the first sequence to allow Misquith and Jayne to discuss privately what he has just told them. (In some of the later plays however, notably The Benefit of the Doubt, there is an over-reliance on nise-en-scène to accomplish the work of the old conventions.)

Entrances, too, are prepared much more carefully in The Second Mrs Tanqueray than in The Profligate. In the earlier play Pinero relied on the clumsy expedient of setting his first act in a lawyer's office to justify a highly coincidental series of entrances — viz. a young lawyer in love with a girl who that morning is to marry another man, a divorce client who reveals that the groom is his best friend and as much a rake as he, the unrepentant groom, the innocent bride, her brother who has just met an unhappy young woman at a railway station and fallen in love with her, and, finally, the young woman herself who comes seeking legal aid to trace an anonymous seducer who happens to be the groom! By contrast, the coincidence of Drummle's arrival at Tanqueray's supper party with news that closely parallels that announced several minutes earlier by his host passes off much more smoothly because, as Clayton Hamilton has pointed out,⁴² Drummle's entrance has been foreshadowed from the moment the curtain rose

FIGURE 2: Bar graphs showing the comparative lengths of Pinero's main social dramas and the distribution within them of entrances and exits.

THE PROFLIGATE (1889)



THE SECOND MRS TANQUERAY (1893)



THE NOTORIOUS MRS EBBSMITH (1895)



IRIS (1901)



LETTY (1903)



HIS HOUSE IN ORDER (1906)



THE THUNDERBOLT (1908)



MID-CHANNEL (1909)



SCALE: 1 cm = 10 pages text (Social Plays) (Note: The Profligate, which is not included in Social Plays, has been scaled on a word count basis to conform to the scale of the other plays).

and revealed an empty chair at the dinner table.

Pinero's realism, then, was in large measure the result of his carrying to a new extreme the famous dictum of Alexandre Dumas fils that "The art of the theatre is the art of preparations."⁴³ Preparations, however, are liable to take time, and it is significant that to achieve an adequately naturalistic effect and to allow scope for more convincing character portrayal in The Second Mrs Tanqueray Pinero not only used a simpler plot structure (in terms of complications) than in The Profligate but wrote a play which is half as long again. This need to allow himself more space for his new dramatic ends is reflected in the considerable increase in length of his later plays. From The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith to Mid-Channel, none of the later social dramas are much less than twice the length of The Profligate. With the usual intervals between acts (and the sets to be changed are substantial), this would make their running time in excess of three hours, and it would be difficult to stage in their entirety either of the two longest (The Benefit of the Doubt and The Thunderbolt) in under four hours.

With this development went another — a general reduction in the number of sequences in the plays with, of course, a consequent increase in the length of individual sequences (See Figure 2). This too is significant. In an old-fashioned well-made play, as in farce, entrances and exits usually follow in rapid succession. This is necessary as the characters are generally too shallow to command attention for long in their own right. Once again The Profligate provides a useful illustration. Despite its comparative brevity, Pinero required more than eighty sequences to tell its story, the average length of sequences here being only a page and a half in the original Heinemann edition or, put another way, some ten or so short

speeches. These comings and goings help to create the illusion that something is happening (or, more accurately, is about to happen), but as only three sequences reach a length of five pages (and two of these are expository) there is no room for the presentation in depth of either character or relationships. It is not surprising, therefore, that the much improved characterisation in Pinero's later plays was accompanied by the use of fewer but much longer sequences.

III

The middle group of Pinero's social dramas — from The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith to Letty — contain a variety of experiments to reconcile form and content. None of the attempts can be considered completely successful, but they do show Pinero's continuing development as a playwright. Each play provides evidence of his endeavours to remedy the weaknesses of the preceding one and, though this resulted in his reverting temporarily to the rudimentary structural technique of The Profligate in two plays, there are significant improvements.

The key structural problem continued to be that of contriving satisfactory climaxes which clearly develop out of the antecedent action and then led on convincingly to the dénouements. In this respect The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith was a disastrous failure. Until near the end of its third act the action progresses in a logical and effective manner, but the climax in which the heroine throws a bible into the fire and then with sudden remorse thrusts her arm into the flames to rescue it, is not only crudely sensational but totally out of character with what has previously been revealed of her background and beliefs. Bernard Shaw was so incensed at this incident that in

FIGURE 3: Scenario graph of THE NOTORIOUS MRS EBBSMITH by Arthur Wing Pinero



SCALE: 1 cm = 10 pages text (Social Plays)

KEY: On stage Servant's announcement ϕ

his review of the play he described it as "a piece of claptrap so gross that it absolves me from all obligation to treat Mr Pinero's art as anything higher than the basest art of theatrical sensation" ⁴⁴ and even supporters such as William Archer and Mrs Patrick Campbell (who again played the title role) could find little to say in defence.

It is not difficult, however, to see the technical dilemma which prompted Pinero to adopt this business, obviously cribbed from Ibsen's famous scene in which Hedda Gabler burns Lovborg's manuscript. The shape of Pinero's action clearly required a strong gesture of despair from the heroine at this point, but at the same time a firm lead into the final act was also needed. It is also possible to see how the scene fits in with the basic blocking pattern of the play (see Figure 3) in which the appearances of Mrs Thorpe and her brother, the Reverend Amos Winterfield, alternate with those of Lucus Cleeve and the degenerate Duke of St Olpherts in a morality play struggle for Agnes's soul. But while the decline of the relationship between Agnes and Cleeve is dramatised effectively (especially so in Act 2 and the first half of Act 3 where the use of a ball gown as a symbol of seduction and surrender gives a sharp focus to the action), the attribution of a latent religiosity to the heroine at the climax topples the play over into melodrama. Pinero had not fully understood his heroine and the dramatic pattern he invented for her story thus collapses at the point of greatest stress.

After the generally unanimous criticism of the spurious climax in The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith Pinero reverted temporarily to the method of plotting backwards from the climax. Though The Benefit of the Doubt and The Gay Lord Quex are much superior in characterisation and naturalistic effect to The Profligate, these plays like the earlier one are essentially geared to gaining the maximum effect

out of a single climactic encounter. In both the later plays Pinero requires a large number of entrances to set up the climaxes but the greatly increased length of the plays disguises this. The main weakness in each case is the same as in The Profligate: Pinero concentrates so much on the build-up to the climax that the last act by comparison seems to drift until a solution is improvised.

In The Benefit of the Doubt Pinero's decision to use a three-act structure instead of his customary four emphasises the weakness of the final act. The play has a very long, though ingenious, exposition with the characters filtering in by ones and twos to introduce themselves and provide information on the background and continuing progress of the divorce case: "Allingham v. Allingham, Fraser intervening." In the second and longest act a considerable amount of time is devoted to setting the scene for the big eaves-dropping sequence, with, for example, two characters being introduced solely for the purpose of demonstrating the convenient acoustic properties of an off-stage room. However, the length of the play does allow scope for quite a number of extended sequences, the characterisation of the leading figures is detailed and convincing, and the big scene (when at long last it does arrive) is not only exciting but in its final twist illuminates the unconscious motivation of the central character both to herself and the audience. It is a thrilling climax, but thereafter, as William Archer commented in his first-night review the play loses direction:

The third act is technically much less excellent.... Through scene after scene we appear to be making no progress, but going round and round in a depressing circle. There were moments, and even minutes when the patience of the audience was visibly strained almost to snapping — partly, no doubt, because of defects in the acting, but mainly on account of the author's omission to provide us with any point of issue on which to fix our expectations.

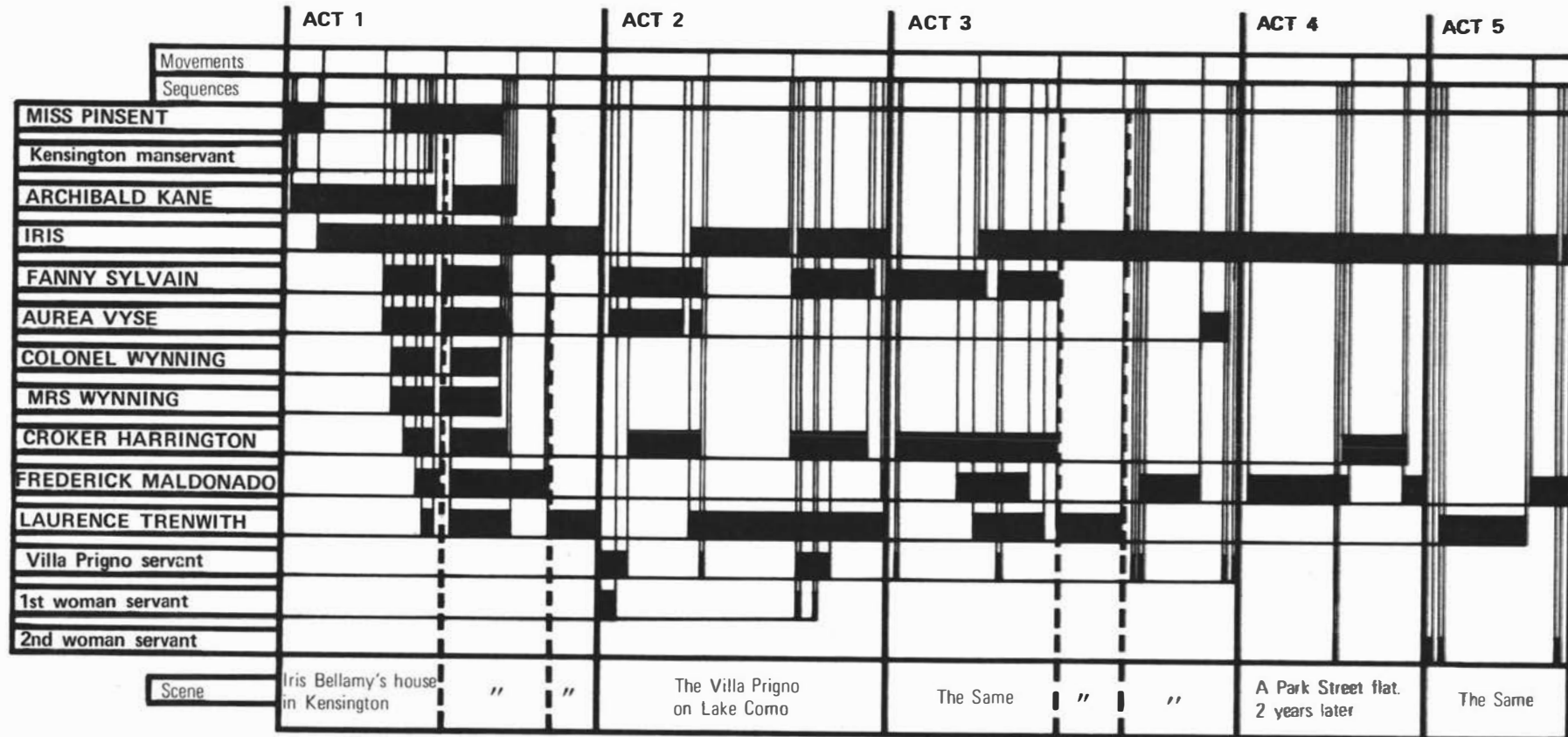
Another factor in The Benefit of the Doubt which steps up both the length of the play and the number of entrances and exits is an element of almost farcical comedy centred round the bumbling intrusions of the pompous Sir Fletcher Portwood. These, along with the banjo-strumming activities of Shafto and Elphick (the two superfluous characters) offer some light relief but clash with the overall tone of the play and contribute little to the main action. The Gay Lord Quex on the other hand is simply a light well-made comedy throughout. It is a kind of holiday piece which s Clayton Hamilton has commented "may be justly described as a piece of 'play-making for the sake of play-making'".⁴⁵ Its first two acts contain over sixty entrances and exits, partly (in Act 1) to exploit the novelty of displaying on stage a manicurist's establishment in full swing, but mainly to prepare the virtuoso battle of wits between the gay Lord Quex and Sophy Fulgarney the manicurist in the celebrated bedroom sequence which occupies the second half of Act 3. This is a superb "sec-saw" scene which, as P. P. Howe amusingly demonstrates in Dramatic Portraits,⁴⁶ progresses through no fewer than five "ups" and "downs" for the heroine before the outcome is resolved. As an example of theatrecraft it is comparable to the "Screen Scene" in The School for Scandal, but its effectiveness is purely the result of technique and there is no fresh illumination of character such as can be found in the climactic scenes of Sheridan's play or The Benefit of the Doubt. Moreover, Howe's criticism that "It takes us two acts to get into the bedroom, and it takes us another act to get out again"⁴⁷ is close to the mark as a judgement on the structure of the play.

After this "holiday" from serious work, Pinero returned in Iris to the concept of making the whole action express a process undergone by the central character. In writing this play Pinero decided to dis-

pense with the four-act structure he normally used and to tell the story over five acts, two of which are further subdivided into three scenes by a quick raising and lowering of the curtain. Undoubtedly his main reason must have been to allow himself sufficient scope to show the gradual process of Iris's decline (the action of the play is spread over several years), but the criticism of a recent commentator that this is "the one play in which he [Pinero] allows character to dominate the play at the expense of construction"⁴⁸ is not completely accurate. What Pinero in fact attempted was to base the construction on the character and her development. The division of the first and third acts into three scenes, for example, is designed to show Iris's inability to make a decision and keep to it, and the shorter length and quicker tempo of the final two acts expresses the acceleration of her fall once she has made the crucial error of drawing on Maldonado's money at the end of Act 3. There is also a strong sense of direction in the sequential patterning which shows that Pinero, far from neglecting construction, had a very clear idea of the overall theatrical shape as he wrote the play.

The central character is Iris Bellamy, at the start of the play a wealthy and good-natured young widow whom Clayton Hamilton has aptly described as "a social parasite — a sort of orchid of a woman who requires, without thinking, that somebody or other will provide her with a comfortable hothouse."⁴⁹ She is the product of a society which encouraged women of her class to be little more than decorative objects, yet condemned and rejected then when they behaved accordingly. As in The Second Mrs Tanqueray the sequential pattern of the play emphasises the isolating of the heroine, but here the process is much more strongly marked by a progressive reduction throughout the play of Iris's friends and male admirers until at the end she is cast out

FIGURE 4: Scenario graph of *IRIS* by Arthur Wing Pinero



SCALE: 1 cm = 10 pages text (Social plays)

KEY: On stage

by the last of them.

Again as in The Second Mrs Tanqueray the "blocking" of Act 1 prefigures the pattern of the play as a whole (See Figure 4). The entire cast of characters (except for a few servants) is presented in the first of its three episodes. The occasion is a dinner party which Iris is giving before she leaves for a holiday in Italy. Apart from Iris's social secretary Miss Pinsent, Fanny Sylvain and her niece Aurea Wyse, and Mrs Wymming, the guests are all male admirers of the hostess. Archibald Kane is a close friend as well as the sole surviving executor of her late husband's estate, Colonel Wymming after many unavailing proposals to her has married, Croker Harrington is an ill-favoured middle-aged admirer with dog-like devotion, Laurence Trenwith is the good-looking but poor young man with whom she is in love, and Frederick Maldonado is a wealthy Jewish financier passionately attracted to her but whom she finds repellent. Iris's problem is to choose between Trenwith and Maldonado — between love without luxury, or luxury without (on her part) love. The catch is that her late husband, knowing her fecklessness, has stipulated in his will that she must forfeit all of his money if she remarries. In Act 1 her vacillating nature leads her first to try to resolve her dilemma by secretly accepting Maldonado (climax of first scene), then later to qualify her acceptance by stipulating that she be his wife in name only (climax of second scene), and finally to take Trenwith with her to Italy and write to Maldonado breaking their engagement (climax of third scene). In terms of the patterning of entrances and exits in this act, Pinero begins by assembling all the characters in the first scene, and in the second has them take their leave one by one until Iris is left alone with Maldonado. The pattern of these two episodes thus fore-

shadows that of the remainder of the play, though at this stage it is Iris who dictates terms. The third scene, comprising the fateful duologue between Iris and young Trenwith, provides the inciting incident for the main action, and is balanced in the overall pattern by duologues between these two in the middle scene of Act 3 and in the final act.

Act 2 is set in Iris's holiday villa overlooking Lake Como on a fine September morning. On a balcony outside are several cages of birds, a significant touch as during the act Iris's friends are equated with them (pp. 294 and 308). Already, however, she has lost one of her "caged birds" when Colonel Wymning married, and much of Act 2 is devoted to foreshadowing the departure of others. Fanny Sylvain is troubled at the possibility of Iris compromising herself with Trenwith and tells Harrington that in such circumstances she and her niece will "drop quietly away." (p. 293) Trenwith too is fretting in his cage and states his determination to seek his fortune in Canada rather than be kept by Iris. The climax of the act, however, is the revelation of an accomplished defection, that of Kane who has absconded after speculating away nearly all of Iris's money, not to mention the savings of her friends. The root cause of these defections, actual or threatened, is Iris's indolence and inability to do other than drift. She should, for example, long ago have appointed a second executor for her estate. The act ends with the reappearance of Maldonado who, in contrast to Iris, is fully capable of making up his mind and getting what he wants.

The setting of Act 3 is the same as for the previous act, but in the first of its three scenes it is now night several weeks later, and the state of the apartment indicates that another departure is imminent. There is now only one birdcage. As in Act 1, the

first scene presents a leavetaking party, but the group is notably smaller and the main departure is that of Trenwith for Canada. Now ~~she has~~ only a small annuity, Iris has become engaged to him. However, she still shrinks from a life in the Canadian outback so Trenwith is to leave alone, establish himself overseas, and return for her in a year or two. At the end of the first scene he leaves, gleefully escorted by Maldonado, to go on board his ship. In the middle scene, however, he has returned at Iris's request to be alone with her through the night before the ship sails in the morning. The dawn is (inevitably) a leaden one and most of Iris's bravado about schooling herself to endure poverty has evaporated by the time Trenwith finally leaves.

With his departure she has lost "the most prized" of her caged birds (p.308) and is now about to be caged herself by Maldonado. A small touch of business at the beginning of the third scene foreshadows this. After telling her manservant that she will leave when she has seen Maldonado (who is to give her a report of Trenwith's sailing), she orders the manservant to put the remaining birdcage in her carriage and tips him with a handful of gold sovereigns which he carries out in the cage. The image of the gold coins in the birdcage exactly sums up Iris's future situation. This touch is then followed up by the most celebrated piece of stagecraft in the play. It is prepared when Maldonado enters and, despite Iris's protestations that she is determined to live solely on her meagre income, forces a chequebook on her to use if she should want any little luxury. No sooner has he left than Aurea Vyse enters and innocently mentions that she has been invited to join Miss Pinsent (whom Iris has been forced to dismiss because of her straitened means) in setting up a small business

if they can find several hundred pounds capital. Iris, without a moment's thought, writes her out a cheque for the whole sum from Maldonado's book, and as she leaves at the end of the act guiltily slips the chequebook into her handbag. The crisis of the play and its resolution are thus expressed through a couple of actions and a single prop.

Act 4 shows Iris two years later set up in a Park Street flat as Maldonado's mistress. Apart from her keeper she now has only one friend left — dog-like Croker Harrington who has also gone down in the world. The act is framed by another symbolic use of props. At the beginning when Maldonado lets himself into the department unannounced Iris asks him for his key which she puts in a vase. Shortly after, Harrington calls and tells Iris (Maldonado having gone into the next room) that Trenwith has returned to London and is trying to find her. She asks Harrington to get Trenwith to call on her that night and though the errand is to Harrington a final humiliation he at last agrees to do so. When, however, Maldonado comes back into the room he discovers in the wastepaper basket the bits of a note which Iris had written for Trenwith but torn up. Unseen by her, Maldonado fits the pieces together, reads the message, and then stealthily recovers his key. The act curtain falls as he leaves the apartment. This business with the key functions on two levels — on the narrative one it is a clever method of preparing for the final confrontation without the use of a single word of dialogue, and on the symbolic level it emphasises, without being too obvious about it, Iris's real position as "Only a bird in a gilded cage".

The fifth and final act is brief. First comes the obligatory scene with Trenwith who can only repeat over and over "I'm very

sorry" (p.414ff.) as, horrified at Iris's confession, he leaves her for good. Then Maldonado, who has of course been eavesdropping, confronts Iris with her double-dealing and orders her to pack her bags and go. As she does so and the curtain falls, Maldonado furiously "sweeps the china and bric-a-brac from the mantelpiece", "overturns the table with a savage kick; then, raising a chair high in the air, ... dashes it to the floor and breaks it into splinters" (p.423). According to William Archer,⁵⁰ Pinero when writing the play had at first intended to end it by having Maldonado throttle Iris, but when he came to the point he realised that this was unnecessary. The structure and sequential patterning had clearly shown the progressive hemming in of Iris until she had nothing left but her cage. Her expulsion from it and its destruction provide exactly the right conclusion.

Although the act structure of the play is unusual for Pinero, the patterning is consistent, and obviously (despite the modified ending) must have been carefully thought out in advance of the actual writing of the dialogue. The play is, in many ways, Pinero's most successful attempt at a synthesis of character portrayal, realistic narrative and thematic patterning. The central character, however, is rather weak to sustain an action of this length and the role proved difficult to cast in the original production of the play. Iris, therefore, did not achieve a very successful run. This is probably the reason that Pinero's later social dramas show a gradual move away from concentrating on a single character towards the involving of a large group in the narrative.

Letty, thematically a companion play to Iris, shows the beginning of this trend. It is a sentimental piece in four acts and an epilogue about the way a young office girl nearly abandons herself

to the degenerate clutches of an indolent philanderer appropriately named Letchmere, but it was saved in performance by a riotous restaurant scene in the third act which involves the entire cast including Letty's girl-friends, their young men, her well-to-do but unpleasant boss (the party celebrates and terminates her engagement to this coarse individual), Letchmere and a number of others. The play's tone is a curious blend of satire, sentiment and subdued melodrama, and there are frequent comings and goings with at times an artificiality of patterning which comes close to undermining the naturalistic detail. In Act 2, for example, there are successive entrances by the young men with whom Letty and her chums associate — a commercial traveller, an insurance salesman and a photographer — each bringing the heroine a plate of savouries and each in turn being asked by her to wait a little longer for money she has borrowed, and in Act 3 the same men go through similar routines in successive sequences to try to get the patronage of Letty's boss. Elsewhere there are subtle touches of detail and some clever foreshadowing of developments, but the play as a whole is unsatisfactory because of its uncertainty of tone and style. Its shape too is awkward because Pinero decided to put the climax (Letty's rejection of Letchmere) at the end of the fourth act and to follow this with a clumsy epilogue showing how a couple of years later the virtuous were quietly prospering and the decadent were slowly languishing. Here the play does lapse into a Victorian sentimentality which Pinero usually avoided in his social dramas. Nevertheless the group scenes generally show skilful orchestration, and Pinero's work on these undoubtedly helped to prepare him for the writing of his next two social dramas in which groups of characters are expertly integrated into interesting and effective single-action narratives.

IV

Pinero's last three social dramas of consequence — His House in Order, The Thunderbolt and Mid-Channel — are his most impressive. They are all cast in the regular four-act pattern and are tightly constructed with strong clinaxes and continuing interest through to the final curtains. In addition, the first two plays present a high proportion of ensemble scenes without in the least obscuring the progress of the plots. There is an economy and ease about all three plays which indicate Pinero's complete control of his material. In this connection it is worthy of note that in each of them the important encounters are developed at some length instead of being broken up by the entrances of other characters introducing new complications. Symbolic touches both in patterning and business, however, are less apparent than in the earlier plays. One reason for this may be that Pinero found that orchestrating the group scenes while keeping a firm hand on the narrative was enough for him to handle, but it is probable that his commitment to realistic effect was the main cause. Audiences by this time had become very conscious of the artificiality of the well-made play, so touches which might emphasise this had to be used, if at all, very sparingly.

The basic reason why Pinero in His House in Order and The Thunderbolt was able to combine ensemble scenes with tight narrative is that in each play he presents the group as an entity — a kind of composite character — rather than as a collection of individuals.

Both groups are, in fact, families. In His House in Order the heroine is pitted against the group antagonism of the Ridgeleys, and The Thunderbolt carries the method to its logical conclusion by making the Mortimer family the protagonist in the action. The

members of each family hunt together like a wolf pack, they generally all come and go together, and when they get their teeth into an outsider they do their utmost to strip him or her to the bone. This tends to reduce the number and extend the length of the sequences of the plays in which they appear. A brief extract of dialogue from Act 4 of His House in Order in which the Ridgeways turn for a moment from their continual worrying of the heroine to having a nibble at the new French governess, gives a representative sample of the way in which these family groups operate:

LADY RIDGELEY. The one discordant note ... was Miss Tony.

GERALDINE. I agree, nother. She was overgowned and overhatted.

LADY RIDGELEY. For a person of her position, atrociously.

SIR DANIEL. Showy. Yes, showy.

PRYCE. If you will engage a foreigner —

(p.415-6)

This technique is quite different from Shaw's handling of group scenes where each character has a distinctive point of view, but as an instrument of satire and as a method of keeping a firm grip on the narrative while exhibiting a large number of characters it works very successfully. Its culmination in Pinero's social drama is in the long, but exciting and lucid, third act of The Thunderbolt. This is perhaps the most gripping act he ever wrote and as such merits a detailed analysis.

William Archer's outline of the plot in his The Old Drama and the New provides a convenient summary of the action up to the end of Act 2:

The Thunderbolt is a study of provincial life. Edward Mortimore has died, it is thought, intestate, and his three brothers and one sister eagerly look forward to taking their equal shares in his very considerable fortune. They learn, to their great surprise, that he left an illegitimate daughter, to whom he seems to have been much attached; and it is still more surprising that he has made no provision for her. Rather to their chagrin, the lawyers insist on taking all possible steps to discover whether a will exists, but there is no trace of any such document. To

the great relief of the family, their unknown relative turns out to be a well-brought-up, high-spirited girl who, though she is deeply grieved to find that her father has forgotten her, declines to accept anything at their hands. Helen Thornhill — that is her name — cannot endure the two elder brothers, but she strikes up a friendship with the youngest, Thaddeus, a struggling music-master, and with his wife, Phyllis. She spends three weeks with them while search is being made for the will; and every day Mrs. Thaddeus seems more nervous and depressed. At last it is decided that intestacy may be presumed, and the family is to have a meeting with the lawyers to arrange about applying for letters of Administration. Just as Thaddeus is starting for this meeting, Phyllis breaks down and confesses to him that there was a will; that she came across it on the night of Edward Mortimore's death, saw that it left everything to a woman she had never heard of, Helen Thornhill by name, and destroyed it ... Here then is the thunderbolt.

51

When the curtain rises on Act 3 only the hard core of the fortune-hunting family is present in the dining-room of the eldest brother, James. They are waiting impatiently for the meeting to begin. The group comprises James, a building contractor, Stephen, editor of one of the town's two newspapers, Ann and Louisa (their wives), and the deceased's only sister, Rose, who now lives in London with her husband, Colonel Ponting, and considers herself socially a cut above the other women. There are tensions within the group (especially between the Mortimores and the Pontings), but they are united in their greed and have all committed themselves to expensive schemes on the strength of their expectations. So has the better-natured Thaddeus, but the patterning of the play thus far has emphasised the fact that he and his wife are regarded by the others as outsiders because of their comparative poverty and, more especially, the fact that Phyllis's father had been a grocer. The action of Act 3 develops this hostility to a new pitch, but at the beginning of the hard core of the family has no idea of the impending disaster. The action of the act is developed in three broad stages: the first is made up of some six sequences as the group waits for the Thaddeus Mortimores and then

decides to start without them; the second in which the thunderbolt falls on the group, consists of one extremely long sequence from Thaddeus's entrance to his exit; and the third (a much shorter one of two sequences) shows the immediate aftermath of the climax and leads into the fourth act.

The first stage (pp.163-188) of the act begins with James, Stephen and their wives at the dining table, angrily commenting on an article in the newspaper published by Stephen's rival. The Pontings impatiently point out that it is time for the meeting to begin and that they are anxious to catch a train back to London so that they can attend a couple of parties that night. The Mortimores promptly accuse them of behaving in poor taste with Edward "only a month in his grave." This bickering, which reflects the tensions within the group and their edginess as they wait for the meeting, is cut short for the moment by the arrival of the lawyers, Elkin and Vallance. In the second sequence, as everyone sits down at the table, the absence of Thaddeus and his wife is angrily noted, and James rings for the maid. She is told to go round immediately to the Thaddeus Mortimores and say that everyone is waiting for them. Her dispatch at this point indicates a neat but unusual piece of "chain-stitching" by Pinero, as she has already called with her message near the end of the previous act just after Thaddeus has heard his wife confess to the destruction of the will. There is thus a time overlap between the two acts — a daring stroke in a naturalistic play of this period — which further underlines the ironic effect of the waiting group's impatience. The maid's departure from James's house is then followed by an extended sequence — during which Thaddeus can be imagined as making his way to the meeting with his disastrous news. This sequence centres on the

newspaper article which was being discussed at the beginning of the act. Rejecting Ponting's attempt to start the meeting without Thaddeus as an affront to his seniority, James decides to ask the lawyers for their opinion of the article and, assisted by interjections from the other Mortinores on the low character of its writer and his wife, reads it aloud. The article suggests that as Edward Mortimore's money came from his brewery, James and Stephen as leaders of the local Temperance League ought either to refuse it or devote it to the temperance cause — a suggestion which they regard with indignation. The lawyers attempt to calm the brothers down, but Rose adds fuel to the flames by maliciously proposing that James and Stephen use part of their shares to build the League "a handsome new hall". They furiously reject this and decide instead to resign from the League, thereby demonstrating the strength of their greed as opposed to their principles. The arrival of another maid with tea and toast emphasises the passage of time and prompts James to ask the lawyers to get the meeting under way without the Thaddeus Mortinores. After confirming that despite diligent search no will has been found, Elkin hands over to the group a statement of the particulars of Edward's estate, and Vallance announces that if they are satisfied that Edward died intestate they may now apply for Letters of Administration. The fortune that the members of the group are seeking (some one hundred and seventy thousand pounds) appears to be within their grasp, but even as Vallance is speaking Thaddeus quietly enters the room.

The following sequence is the longest to be found in Pinero's plays and occupies most of the rest of the act (pp. 188-231). The factual information it contains is already known to the audience from Phyllis's confession in Act 2, a point which Henry Arthur Jones felt ~~weakened~~⁵² the effect of the sequence, but Pinero invests it with

absorbing dramatic interest by having Thaddeus, in order to protect his wife, attempt to take the guilt on himself. There is thus considerable tension as the audience watches to see whether the deception can be maintained, and the punctuation of the sequence by moves, pauses and business is designed to exploit this to the utmost. The patterning also stresses the response of the group as the expected wealth is apparently dashed from their grasp. Like the act, this sequence is developed in three broad movements, and each movement can be further subdivided on the basis of shifts of emphasis (pointed by moves and pauses) into some five units. The first movement of the sequence consists of Thaddeus's false confession and the group's dazed acceptance of it. In the second movement a flaw is detected in Thaddeus's story and the group desperately try to break him down. Finally, in the third movement, a chance remark changes the direction of attack with the result that at the climax not only is Phyllis's guilt revealed but the cause of her action — the group's persecution of her ever since her marriage.

The first movement begins as (Unit 1) "Hearing the click of the lock as Thaddeus shuts the door" (a neat symbolic touch), "everyone turns and glances at him." They note his lateness and ask where his wife is. Thaddeus mumbles that she is unwell, but is saved from further explanations by Ponting who "raps the table with his penholder" to call the meeting back to business. James orders Thaddeus to sit down on the chair next to him, which Pinero, with his usual efficiency of stagecraft, contrives to be the centre chair on the upstage side of the table — the focal position on stage. (2) The meeting proceeds from where it left off, but when Vallance produces a form of the "Oath for Administrators" and states that the intending administrator (James) must make an affidavit declaring that the

deceased died intestate, Thaddeus, "Touching VALLANCE's arm", interrupts saying, "The family mustn't go on with this." The others repeat this incredulously and James demands, "What a'yer talking about?" "After a hurried look round", Thaddeus stammers "There — was a will", and then is driven question by question to his lie, "I — tore it up — got rid of it." This line is followed by silence, "the MORTIMORES and the PONTINGS sitting open-mouthed and notionless." The next unit (3) is broken up by several pauses and interruptions to build tension for the next punch line. The lawyers warn Thaddeus of the seriousness of his confession, but he "makes no response." Invited by Elkin to continue, he slowly begins to tell the story his wife had told him, substituting himself for her in the narration. He mentions that his sisters-in-law had left Edward Mortimore's house on the night of his death, and this provokes a brief interruption as those ladies rise to their feet and are told by Elkin to sit down. The narration continues with the lawyers doing the questioning. Thaddeus states that Edward gave him the keys to his safe so that Thaddeus could fetch some small pieces of jewellery Edward wished to give Phyllis, and then "stops suddenly" and has to be given a glass of water before he can continue. "After a gulp of water" he says that in the safe he found the envelope containing the will, opened it and read its contents. "The MORTIMORES and the PONTINGS crane their heads forward, listening breathlessly" as Thaddeus goes on, "He left everything ... everything — to Miss Thornhill." (4) "There is a slight, undecided movement on the part of the MORTIMORES and the PONTINGS." Elkin asks them to keep their seats. He questions Thaddeus on the form of the will and receives satisfactory answers until Vallance queries whether the will was duly witnessed. Thaddeus mumbles, "I — don't recollect that".

This faint glimmer of hope causes "JAMES, STEPHEN and PONTING to stir themselves" and desperately emphasise the point. Vallance then asks how the will was destroyed, Thaddeus again stumbles but, recollecting what his wife had told him, declares that he tore it up and dropped the pieces over a bridge into the river. To establish the motive Elkin asks whether Thaddeus was acquainted with the law of intestacy at the time and is told by him of a conversation on the subject by the family as they were on their way to visit their dying brother. James reluctantly confirms this. Thaddeus ends by explaining "brokenly" that until the first meeting with the lawyers neither he nor any of the family were aware Edward had a daughter, and that it is because of this knowledge that he cannot now let the deception go on. Elkin closes this long unit by asking, "And we may take it that your present act, Mr. Mortimore, is an act of conscience, purely?" "THADDEUS inclines his head. There is silence again, the MORTIMORES and the PONTINGS presenting a picture of utter wretchedness. The ladies' tears begin to flow." (5) "After a time, speaking with some difficulty", James asks what is to be done. He and the others demand to learn to whom the money now legally belongs. Vallance tries to point out that there is another aspect to consider, but the group insist on being told the law. Elkin, as the deceased's solicitor, then states that he will advise Miss Thornhill to apply to the Court for probate as if the will still existed. "STEPHEN and PONTING fall back in their seats in a stupor, and once more there is silence, broken only by the sound of the women sniveling. ELKIN and VALLANCE slowly proceed to collect their papers." The first movement of the sequence thus ends with Thaddeus's sacrificial lie accepted and the meeting apparently at an end.

The second movement is sparked off accidentally by James who, recovering from this stunned silence, (6) turns upon Thaddeus and "brutally" demands, "Have you — have you told Phyllis — have you told your wife what you've been up to?" Thaddeus replies that he has and weakly claims that this is what made him so late. The mention of Phyllis, however, provokes Rose to rise and declare hysterically that Thaddeus's wife "Managed to get hold of some of the jewelry at any rate." The other women furiously echo this and, in an attempt to pacify them, Thaddeus says that he put all the jewelry back in the safe. Asked why he did this he explains that when he got back to Edward he found him in a state of collapse and was sent off by Phyllis to fetch the doctor. In response to a question from Vallance, Thaddeus adds that Phyllis had taken over nursing that night after the other wives had decided to leave. The lawyers are satisfied, but Thaddeus has made a disastrous slip. (7) James, "Who has been sitting glaring into space" thoughtfully comments, "Hold hard. You didn't go for the doctor", and though Thaddeus stutters out an assertion that he did, Stephen, "Awakening from his trance" recollects that "Phyllis sent the cook for the doctor." Thaddeus tries to cover up by saying that he followed after, but from this beginning the questioning of his movements on the night of Edward's death comes thick and fast. The whole group assist the lawyers by recalling the details of what had happened that night until it becomes clear that Thaddeus could not have had time to go to the hospital with news of his brother's collapse, and this discovery is capped by Stephen's recollection that he had met Thaddeus shortly after his supposed dash for help but not a word had been said of any change in Edward's condition. At the end of this unit, which has proceeded with tremendous pace and a considerable amount of move-

ment from the members of the group, "ANN and LOUISA join their husbands and the four gather round ELKIN and VALLANCE. ROSE stands behind PONTING's chair." There is thus on stage a solid block of accusers bearing down on Thaddeus. (8) Thaddeus attempts desperately to cover up the inconsistencies in his story, but is unable to answer when Vallance suddenly demands, "who let you into the house" that night. Thaddeus, "Starting up from the table" retreats in confusion as the question is repeated and ends up "At the left-hand end of the table, clutching the back of a chair." (The others, of course, are at the right-hand end.) (9) Frantically he insists that "The will's the main point" and that he has everything to lose and nothing to gain by his confession, but this reminder infuriates his relatives who advance on him and are only restrained by the lawyers who concede his argument. They, however, feel that the doubts must be cleared up and suggest that Phyllis be asked to help with this. (10) "THADDEUS pushes aside the chair he is holding and comes to the table" on this alarming proposal, begging that his wife be not dragged into this. The group howl him down derisively and he tries to leave. Elkin, however, persuades him to stay for a minute to listen to and sign the notes Vallance has made of the confession. "With a nod of patient acquiescence, THADDEUS sinks into the middle chair. VALLANCE prepares to read his notes, first making some additions to them." This lull completes the second movement of the sequence.

The final and climactic movement is similar in shape to the previous one. Again the first move comes from James who leans forward across the table and, despite Thaddeus's protests, demands fiercely, "When the devil did your conscience begin to prick you over this? Hey?" This question leads Stephen to comment that up to a couple of

hours ago Thaddeus had shown no concern. Louisa "unconsciously" then provides the key by remarking, "It's Phyllis who's been ill all the month, not Thaddeus." "In the same way" James and Stephen confirm this, then "Struck by the idea which occurs to him, JAMES breaks off. THADDEUS doesn't stir." (12) Now, slowly, the truth begins to dawn. One after the other the members of the group reflect on Phyllis's illness. "There is a further pause, and then THADDEUS slowly turning from the table rises." (13) "In a strange voice" he says that he will not stay to hear his wife insulted, but as he is speaking the others move forward on either side of him. "The movement is made gradually and noiselessly, so that when THADDEUS turns to go he is startled at finding his way obstructed." Elkin now pursues the questioning point by point establishing Phyllis's opportunity to have found and destroyed the will, and then demands, "With an abrupt change of manner," "Mr Mortimore, how is the lock of the safe opened?" "THADDEUS is silent." Elkin repeats the question but Thaddeus can only claim weakly that he has forgotten. The questioning continues but now Elkin directly accuses Thaddeus of having been nowhere near Edward's house on the night the will was destroyed and ends, as Thaddeus again collapses into the centre chair, by asking "Are you sure that the story you have told us, substituting yourself for the principal person of that story, is not exactly the story she [Phyllis] has just told you?" (14) With Thaddeus defeated Pinero now relaxes the pace before the build-up to the final climax. "There is a pause" followed by a quiet exchange between Elkin and Vallance in which they determine to see Phyllis without delay. "Vallance returns to the table and, seating himself, again collects his papers." (15) "Elkin is following him" when James stops him and asks what the law is concerning Phyllis's action. Elkin replies that it is a felony, and, hearing this, the

Mortinores and Pontings savagely chorus one after another their opinion of Phyllis. "Leaping to his feet in a frenzy " Thaddeus shouts the climactic accusation at the group, "You've helped to bring this on her! You've helped to make her life unendurable! You've helped to bring her to this!" Then he makes his way out of the door pitifully asserting over and over, "She's been a good wife to me! ... She's been a good wife to me!"

Although the climax is reached and the mammoth inquisition sequence technically over with Thaddeus's exit, Pinero keeps up the momentum in the last section (pp. 231-240) of the act. James, Stephen and their wives violently express their indignation at Thaddeus's charge, Ponting curses "the woman" again and again. Then, without a break, their thoughts switch to their own predicaments now they have lost title to the money. None gives a thought to any of the others as each bewails his loss. The animosities within the group flare up to boiling point -- especially the ill-feeling between the Mortinores and the Pontings -- and a shouting-match develops which only calms down when "getting to the door, Ponting discovers that ELKIN and VALLANCE have taken their departure." Even now Pinero does not allow a pause, but merely slows the pace as the members of the group realise that the lawyers have left for Thaddeus's house, and then speeds it up again as the group begin to speculate on the possibility of a conspiracy between the Thaddeus Mortinores and Helen Thornhill. This exchange is followed by a brief pause, and then the group decide they must re-unite and follow the lawyers at once. Ann stops for a moment to put on her hat, but the others brook no delay, so " Seizing ANN and pushing her before them, they struggle through the doorway" as the act curtain falls. Pinero thus not only brings off an exciting climax at the end of the mammoth central sequence, but in

the final section of the act propels the action towards the dénouement.

As the foregoing analysis demonstrates, Pinero, by this stage of his career, had thoroughly mastered the art of sustaining an extended, but simplified, well-made structure while appearing to present a credible "slice of life." An important indication of this is that in the earlier social dramas the longest sequences are to be found in the first act expositions, while in the later plays the longest sequences are usually the climactic ones. In the original edition of The Profligate the climactic sequence only occupies a page and a half, and consists mainly of repetitive pleading from the guilty husband which is answered by the single word "Go!" from his cruelly disillusioned wife — who then swoons away as the curtain falls. The sequence was incapable of extension because the characters are so artificial that they can only respond to the situation with the stock melodramatic gestures. The characters of the later plays, though their views generally reflect Victorian social conventions, are much more convincing. Consequently they have a good deal more to say for themselves in comparable situations. Nor is this the result of mere verbosity on Pinero's part, for these long sequences, as we have seen, are as carefully structured and punctuated as the expository sequences of The Second Mrs Tanqueray considered earlier. An analysis of the extended sequence which climaxes the third act of Pinero's last major social drama, Mid-Channel, confirms the extent to which he had matured as a craftsman and in the portrayal of his characters during the two decades which separated the first performance of this play from that of The Profligate.

The climactic sequence of Mid-Channel, (pp. 448-469) unlike that of The Thunderbolt, presents only two characters on stage. As in

The Profligate, it begins with a confession by the husband to the wife that he has had an affair with another woman. This time, however, the wife is equally guilty, though the husband does not know it. The previous action has shown the break-up of the Blundell's marriage and the final stages of the ensuing period of separation, during which Zoe has travelled round Italy accompanied by (and eventually sleeping with) a young admirer called Leonard Ferris, while her husband, Theodore, has consoled himself by living with a Mrs Annerley. Neither of them has enjoyed his or her infidelity and they have both dismissed their temporary partners before being brought together by Theodore's business associate, Peter Mottram for an attempt at reconciliation. The long sequence which follows is again constructed broadly in three movements (Theodore's confession and Zoe's acceptance of it; Theodore's interrogation of Zoe; and the consequences of her confession), and each of these three movements can be further subdivided into four units.

The sequence begins (1) with a silence in which Theodore approaches Zoe who is seated, but each avoids the other's eyes. Theodore hesitatingly branches the subject of reconciliation and Zoe timidly takes from her bag an envelope containing Theodore's latch-key and the note he had written when he left her. She nods assent to his tearing up the letter and offers him the key. He accepts it with thanks as he sits down. A pause marks the end of this unit in which the reconciliation seems formally accomplished. (2) Theodore states that he wishes Zoe to understand exactly what she is offering to take back. He confesses the fact of his affair with Mrs Annerley and asks if Zoe is prepared to forgive this too. She nods, "but with compressed lips" because of her unconfessed adultery with Ferris. She asks Theodore how his affair came about, and he describes the process by

which from brooding on his grievances he had turned to giving parties at his flat and had ended up with the shallow and ultimately intolerable Mrs Annerley. He further admits that lately he has been drinking too much brandy. This unit comprising Theodore's confession ends with "a moment's silence" before Zoe rises and goes to him. (3)

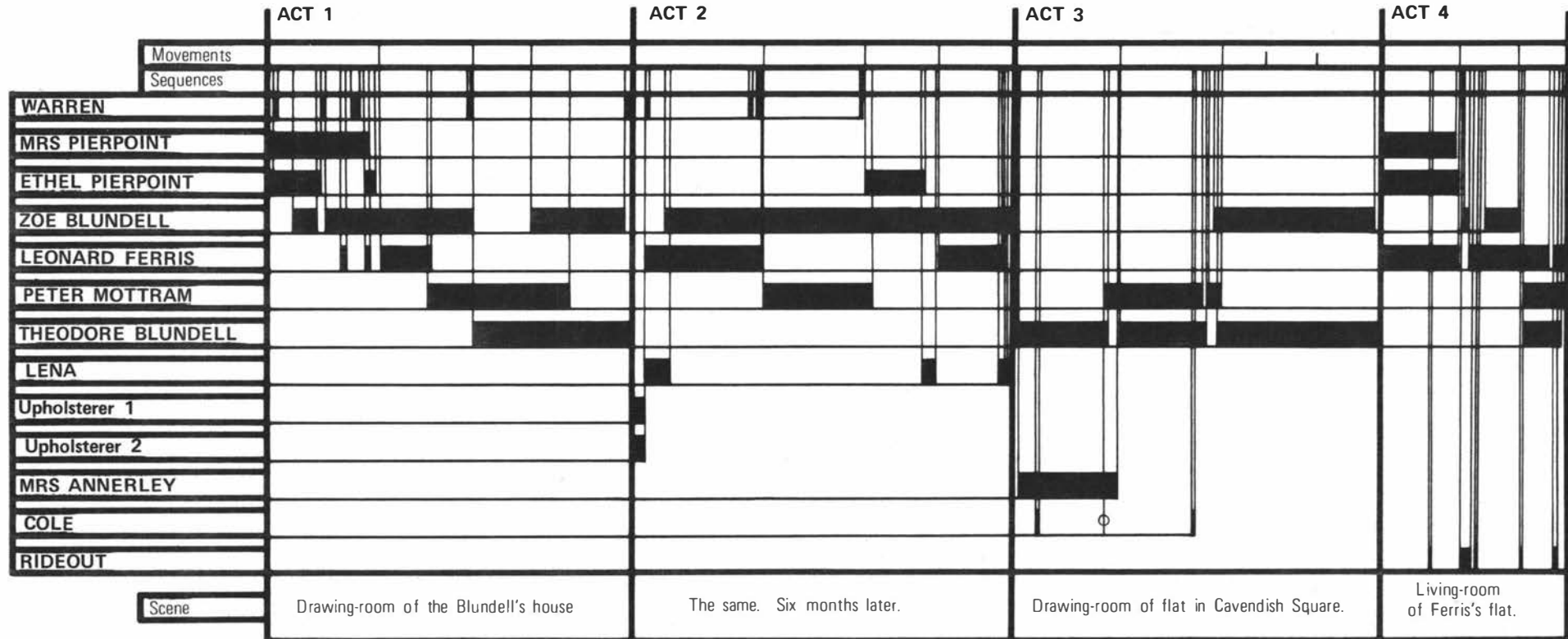
Theodore puts his hands on Zoe's shoulders and attempts to draw her to him, but she shrinks away and nervously states that though she is willing to have him back it must be "simply as a companion ... a friend." Another pause follows. (4) Theodore, misinterpreting Zoe's motivation, moves away "icily" complaining at what he regards as her punishment of him. However he sits down, controls his anger, and "lying at full length on the settee" assumes an air of indifference as he accepts her terms. The end of the opening movement and the subject matter of the next are indicated by the stage-direction, "There is silence between them. She watches him guiltily."

The second movement is initiated when Theodore (5) "Suddenly changes the position of his legs" and "gazing at the ceiling" wonders aloud why Zoe has received his confession so calmly and has not interrogated him more closely about Mrs Annerley. He tells her that he at least has paid her the compliment of resenting the attention Ferris has been paying her recently. (6) There is another pause as "slowly, he turns upon his side that he may face her", and then he comments interrogatively, "I say, that was a pretty disgraceful business — your trapesing about Italy with that fellow ... Hey?" Zoe tries to shrug this off, but Theodore, commenting that he suspects that he is the one who should be dictating terms, motions her to come to him. After a momentary hesitation, she puts on a show of unconcern and obeys the gesture. (7) Theodore makes her sit down and insists, despite her attempt to refuse, that she give him "an account of the Italian affair

from the word go". The pace accelerates as he fires question after question until he forces Zoe to admit that she and Ferris had rooms in the same corridor of a hotel in Perugia. At this point Zoe tries to stop the interrogation and moves away to collect her bag. (8) Theodore follows "so that when she turns they come face to face" and brings the questioning (and the sequence) to a climax with the demand, 'Give me your word that nothing wrong's occurred between you and Ferris'." Zoe is silent and he has to repeat his demand twice before she sits, "staring at him", and says, "I've forgiven you; forgive me." A long silence marks this turning point, and then Theodore moves "dumbfounded" (sic.) to a chair on the other side of the room, and sits.

The third and final movement of the sequence begins with a short unit (9) in which Zoe states "brokenly" that she had sent for Ferris after she had received a letter from him describing Theodore's apparently gay life at the flat. She asks for a drink of water, which Theodore brings, and begs him not to be hard on her. (10) A brief interlude follows in which Theodore attempts to ring Peter Mottram for advice but finds that he has not yet returned to the office. (11) The attempt to contact Mottram reminds Zoe of the warning he had given her and Theodore before their separation that their marriage had reached the dangerous stage of "mid-channel", but she now states that in fact the marriage had been doomed from the very beginning when "we agreed we'd never be encumbered in our career with any — brats of children/" Theodore counters that talking of the past is of no avail as he is not now prepared to live with Zoe "under any conditions", and insists that they should be divorced so that she can marry Ferris. There is a brief pause when Zoe replies that she does not want to do this. (12) The pace quickens again for the

FIGURE 5: Scenario graph of MID-CHANNEL by Arthur Wing Pinero



SCALE: 1 cm = 10 pages text. (Social Plays)

KEY: On stage Servant's announcement ϕ

final unit of the sequence. This consists of a "see-saw" in which Zoe confesses she has broken with Ferris, Theodore bitterly charges that she has come to him as "Mr Lenny Ferris's leavings"; Zoe counters with the claim that Ferris "would give his soul" to marry her (ignoring the fact that she has advised him to marry a younger woman who is in love with him), Theodore states that he will make sure that Ferris does marry her and furiously returns his latch-key for her "new husband", and Zoe flounces out of the room. The curtain falls as Theodore pours himself a large brandy -- a much more plausible and effective touch than the swooning away of the heroine at the comparable moment of The Profligate.

Despite the sequence's length and complexity there is no superfluous detail in it. The business of the giving and returning of the key frames the encounter as a whole (as it does in Act 4 of Iris), while within the sequence moves and pauses mark each shift in emphasis even more precisely than in The Thunderbolt. Together with the patterning of the dialogue this stage punctuation regulates the rhythm so as to obtain maximum effect from the climaxes. Technically the sequence is a superb piece of work, and it is achieved in a manner which is entirely in accord with the psychology of the characters and the logic of the preceding action.

The patterning of the play as a whole (see Figure 5) is equally meticulous. Once again the structure and development of the total action is foreshadowed in the opening act. This is developed in four movements. The first consists of several sequences involving Ethel Pierpoint (a young friend of Zoe's), her mother, Leonard Ferris and Zoe herself. These sequences suggest the uneasy state of Zoe's marriage, establish Ferris's interest in Ethel and hint at his somewhat excessive intimacy with Zoe. The second movement consists of two

sequences centering on Zoe. In the first she makes clear to Ferris that though she would not stand in the way of his marriage to Ethel she could not then retain him among her men friends, a prospect he views with alarm; and in the second sequence Peter Mottram, the play's raisonneur figure, speaks to her of his concern over the threats of separation she and her husband have been making in their recent quarrels. In the act's third movement the focus changes to Theodore who in a long sequence with Mottram tells of his marital grievances and ends with the threat that if he did ever "bang the front door, it'll be once and for all, my friend." (p.336) The act's final movement begins with Zoe entering tearfully to attempt a reconciliation. Mottram departs after delivering a thematic homily comparing the present difficulties of the Blundells to a rough Channel crossing before the quiet waters on the other side are reached. When the couple are left alone, however, the reconciliation soon breaks down and a bitter quarrel ensues which ends with Zoe leaving the room and Theodore ordering the servant to pack his bags.

The action of the remainder of the play is blocked in sections which, except for the final one, correspond to the four movements of the first act. Act 2 corresponds with the second movement. The focus is again on Zoe who during the six months which have elapsed since Theodore walked out has become involved in a guilty love-affair with Ferris. The act consists essentially of four duologues which lead naturally and logically to Zoe's decision to dismiss Ferris and seek a reconciliation with Theodore. The first of these duologues demonstrates the misery and guilt Zoe and Ferris feel now they have become lovers. In the second duologue Mottram endeavours to persuade Zoe to return to her husband, and this is followed by a conversation between Zoe and Ethel in which the latter, not knowing of Zoe's

affair asks for help in regaining Ferris's affections. As a result of these pressures Zoe in the fourth duologue dismisses her lover.

The first half of Act 3, set in Theodore's flat, parallels the main action of Act 2 and recalls the third movement of the first act. Theodore is shown to be as unhappy with his mistress, Mrs Annerley, as Zoe has been with Ferris, and the first major sequence of Act 3 ends with Mrs Annerley's dismissal. This is followed by another sequence between Mottram and Theodore (paralleling the one in the previous act between Mottram and Zoe) in which the family friend endeavours to persuade Theodore that reconciliation with his wife is still possible. The second half of Act 3 consists of the long climactic sequence between Zoe and Theodore which has already been analysed in detail. It, of course, parallels the quarrel in the fourth movement of Act 1.

Act 4, set in Ferris's flat, is brief. The opening sequences of Act 1 are echoed in the first half of this last act which features a small tea-party to celebrate Ferris's sudden engagement to Ethel. However, no sooner have Ethel and her mother left when Zoe appears. After learning from Ferris that he is no longer free to marry her, she is forced to hide in the bedroom when her husband storms into the flat. Theodore's object is to force Ferris to marry Zoe, but she resolves the dilemma which has been created by committing suicide. The final section of this act is the only passage after Act 1 which is not paralleled in the exposition, and thus though the dénouement is plausible, granting the geography of Ferris's flat (which includes a high balcony) and the pressure applied to Zoe there, it does not impress as a necessary consequence of the rest of the action.

Pinero's apologists, with justification, have claimed Mid-

Channel to be his finest serious work. Clayton Hamilton, for example, describes it as

an absolute and faultless masterpiece of structure. It is solidly, compactly built. No material is wasted; every line and every gesture seems to count. Every detail of the piece is nicely related to every other; and many passages produce a three-fold effect — first by immediate interest, second, by reminiscence, and, third, by prophecy.

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Hamilton's praise effectively sums up the attributes of a successful "enclosed" play which, despite the element of contrivance in the final act, Mid-Channel undoubtedly is. But its near-perfect technical finish was not achieved without cost.

The characters are dull and arid, though thoroughly credible, the action is dramatic but constricted, and the total effect depressingly serious-minded rather than tragic.

These limitations may simply be attributed to the narrowness of Pinero's personal vision, but the pressure of his chosen form — the realistic well-made play — emphasised this. Bernard Shaw, in a letter which he wrote after seeing a performance of Mid-Channel at the St. James's Theatre, diagnosed the cause of the play's failure with audiences and implored Pinero to change his approach:

Between ourselves, I greatly dislike the audience at the St. James's Theatre ... They are the very people you are getting at in the play ... The women do not want to be told that they are not wives in any real sense, but only kept women. The husbands who have brought their wives to the theatre because they are afraid of quarrelling if they stay at home, do not want to have the quarrel flung in their faces across the footlights. And as you have no sort of mercy on them and no sort of hope for them, and simply rub their own misery and disgrace into them with the skill and ruthlessness of a scientific torturer, they stay away ... Why do you still ... construct plays? I never construct a play: I let myself rip. I give myself away. That is why I give everyone else away, which after all is the whole purpose of comedy. You are like Ananias: you keep something back. There is not enough fun in Mid-Channel: you bite hard; but you do not let yourself wag your tail. The fun is in you:

it is the divine secret of the merry and charitable heart: but you seem to me to have begun to mistrust it in these later times: I miss Baron Croodle [a character in Pinero's first successful play, The Money-Spinner (1880)] among all these dull, scared, vulgar people who are so fiercely true to their own life and so very false to yours.⁵⁴

But it was too late for an old dog to learn new tricks. Pinero could construct a farce or a serious drama but he could not write a serious farce, let alone let his play rip in the Shawian manner. By Mid-Channel his popularity was clearly declining. It had reached a peak with His House in Order, which with its story of a persecuted woman who renounces an opportunity to humiliate her tormentors, had had enormous appeal and a very long run. The Thunderbolt and Mid-Channel, though more substantial and skilfully plotted plays, offered no such enticement to audience identification, and the public, as Shaw observed in his letter, mostly stayed away. Of Pinero's subsequent plays (and he continued writing then almost up to his death in 1934), only one light theatrical comedy, The Mind the Paint Girl (1912), achieved any measure of commercial success.

His acknowledged influence on the leading playwrights of the time had, of course, declined even earlier — a process which had been considerably accelerated by Bernard Shaw's withering critical reviews of The Second Mrs Tanqueray and The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith. From Pinero's point of view these attacks were doubly unfair: instead of recognising his attempt to dramatise serious studies of characters in conflict with society, Shaw had accused him of writing plays merely for the sake of sensational climaxes; and worse still had successfully branded him as a technically old-fashioned playwright when he was taking great pains to achieve a level of verisimilitude previously unrealised in English drama.⁵⁵

From Shaw's point of view, however, the attacks were necessary. The meticulous patterning of Pinero's social dramas imparted an air of inevitability to their generally pessimistic plots in which upper-middle class mores were presented as unalterable facts of life. Public acceptance of such plays as important works of the "new drama" was a positive hindrance to Shaw's aim of using the stage as a platform from which he could "force the public to reconsider its morals."⁵⁶ In a letter to William Archer, dated 21 August 1893, he commented, "if the future, as Mrs Tank [i.e. Paula in The Second Mrs Tanqueray] says, is only to be the past entered through another gate — why, then, the lethal chamber is the only proper place for us."⁵⁷ As a dramatist who believed himself inspired by the "Life Force", Shaw scornfully rejected the narrow focus and pre-determined structural pattern of the well-made play, and evolved a theatrical technique which by contrast is broad in its focus, complex in its juxtaposition of diverse elements and fluid in its patterning — a technique which can perhaps best be summed up in the single word, "open".

NOTES

All citations in my text from Pinero's plays are to The Social Plays of Pinero, vols. I - IV, ed. Clayton Hamilton (N.Y., 1917-1922), hereafter cited as Social Plays. The citations are followed by parenthetical reference to the page numbers of the appropriate volume of this edition:

Volume I : The Second Mrs Tanqueray and The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith
 Volume II : The Gay Lord Quex and Iris
 Volume III: Letty and His House in Order
 Volume IV : The Thunderbolt and Mid-Channel

1. Allardyce Nicoll, British Drama, 5th ed. rev. (London, 1962), p. 256.
2. "English Drama and the French Well-Made Play, 1815-1915", unpubl. doct. diss. (Columbia, 1955), pp. 41-42. See also Stanton's Introduction to Camille and Other Plays, Mermaid Dramabook (N.Y., 1957), pp. xii-xiii.
3. Maurice Valency, The Flower and the Castle (N.Y., 1963), p. 67.
4. Ernest Legouvé, Eugene Scribe, trans. Albert Vandan, in Papers on Playmaking, ed. Brander Matthews (N.Y., 1957), p. 258.
5. Ibid., p. 258.
6. Francis Fergusson, The Idea of Theatre (Princeton, N.J., 1949), p. 233.
7. William Archer, English Dramatists of Today (London, 1883), p. 288.
8. A. W. Pinero, Robert Louis Stevenson: The Dramatist (London, 1903), p. 6 Hereafter cited as Stevenson.
9. Stevenson, pp. 6-7
10. Apart from his lecture on Stevenson, the only published writings by Pinero on theatre and drama which I have been able to find comprise:

"The Modern British Drama", an address given at a dinner of the Royal Academy, in The Theatre, Vol. 25 (London, 1895), pp. 347-9. Preface to W. L. Courtenay's The Idea of Tragedy (London, 1900).
 "Robert Browning as a Dramatist", Transactions of the Royal Society XXXI (London, 1912), pp. 7-20.
 "The Theatre in the Seventies", in The Eighteen-Seventies ed. H. Graville-Barker (London, 1929).
 Foreword to Two Plays, A.W. Pinero (London, 1930).

Only the last of these contains any specific reference to Pinero's own plays. His reticence in this respect is indicated by the following letter (Brit. Mus., acc. 52586), dated 25th January, 1918:

My Dear Sir,


I am very much obliged to you for your kind letter; but I am a poor hand at talking about my work. I don't think I can add much to what has already appeared in the papers concerning "The Freaks". The little piece is simple in subject and treatment, and has no higher aim than to amuse — which I take to be the

function of the theatre at the present moment.
 There are more ways than one of trying to be
 amusing you will say. I must hope "The Freaks"
 will not be judged as falling into the lowest
 category.

Yours most truly,

Arthur Pinero.

11. A. W. Pinero, Two Plays, p. 6.
12. W.D. Dunkel, Sir Arthur Pinero: A Critical Biography with Letters (Chicago, 1941), pp. 103-4.
13. Emile Zola, Naturalism in the Theatre, trans. Samuel Draper, in Playwrights on Playwriting, ed. Toby Cole (N.Y., 1961), p.6.
14. Ibid., p. 13.
15. Cited in William Archer, Playmaking (London, 1912), pp. 43-44.
16. Ibid., p. 45.
17. Hamilton Fyfe, Sir Arthur Pinero's Plays and Players (London, 1930), p. 255.
18. Stevenson, p. 7.
19. Ibid., p. 30.
20. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
21. Ibid., p. 14.
22. Ibid., p. 27.
23. Cited in Fyfe, p. 255.
24. Hesketh Pearson, The Last Actor-Managers (London, 1950), p. 30.
25. Mrs Patrick Campbell, My Life and Some Letters (London, 1922), p. 69.
26. Cited in Fyfe, p. 255. [REDACTED]
27. Bernard Shaw, Preface, Three Plays by Brieux (N.Y., 1911), p. xxii.
28. According to The Oxford Ibsen, V, ed. J. W. McFarlane (London, 1961), A Doll's House was presented for the first time in London on June 7, 1889, Ghosts on March 13, 1891, and Hedda Gabler on April 20, 1891.
29. Social Plays, I, pp. 19-23

30. Social Plays, I, p. 20.
31. Stanton, Introduction, Camille and Other Plays, p. xxxiii.
32. Paula, of course, lacks Hedda's self control, but at times, notably in the Act 2 sequences with Mrs Cortelyon, displays a comparable vein of bitter sarcasm.
33. Bernard Shaw, Our Theatres in the Nineties (London, 1932), I, p. 45. Hereafter cited as O.T.N.
34. Archer, Playmaking, p. 94.
35. Social Plays, I, pp. 39-40.
36. As a sidelight on the theme of isolation, it is significant that letters in the play point to breakdowns in communication. In Act 1 Paula gives Tanqueray a letter detailing her past career but he burns the letter without reading it, and Ellean's letter to him announcing her return is opened too late. The letter to the Orreyed in Act 2 arises from the breakdown in the Tanquerays' marriage. In Act 3 Ellean's letters to her father from Paris are intercepted by Paula to spite her husband and this prevents them from having foreknowledge of Ellean's return with her fiance. Finally, in Act 4, the note from Ellean's fiance confirms the end of the engagement and underlines the final ruin of the Tanquerays' marriage.
37. O.T.N., I, p. 47
38. Archer, Playmaking, p. 224.
39. O.T.N., I, p. 46.
40. O.T.N., p. 45
41. Archer, Playmaking, p. 94.
42. Social Plays, I, p. 39.
43. Cited in Archer, Playmaking, p. 131.
44. O.T.N., I, p. 63. 
45. Social Plays, II, p. 16.
46. P. P. Howe, Dramatic Portraits (London, 1913), pp. 72-75.
47. Howe, p. 72.
48. John Russell Taylor, The Rise and Fall of the Well-Made Play (London, 1967), p. 70.
49. Social Plays, II, p. 224.

44a. Archer, The Theatrical 'World' of 1898
(London, 1896),

50. Archer, Playmaking, p. 48.
51. William Archer, The Old Drama and the New (London, 1923), pp. 318-319.
52. Cited in Social Plays, IV, pp. 29-30.
53. Social Plays, IV, p. 287.
54. Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters 1896-1910, ed. Dan H. Laurence (London, 1972), pp. 886-887.
55. It is pleasant to note that in his letters to Shaw written some dozen years after these attacks Pinero showed not the least animosity because of them and indeed regarded Shaw with indulgent affection. But the attacks were still remembered by Pinero. In a note to Shaw, dated 15 October, 1910, concerning the refusal of some members of the Dramatists' Club to admit Arnold Bennett to their ranks, Pinero observed, "Some of the fellows object to him on the score of his having written rude things about myself, but I would put it to them that they would be paying me a very poor compliment by blackballing Mr Bennett on that account ... Besides, if that were a sufficient reason for excluding a man how came they to elect ———? But I won't pursue the subject." (Brit. Mus., acc. 50547).
56. From Shaw's statement made before the Parliamentary Committee on the Censorship, 1909, in Prefaces by Bernard Shaw (London, 1934), p. 408.
57. Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters 1874-1897, ed. Dan H. Laurence (London, 1965) p. 402.

Chapter 3Bernard Shaw: The "Open" Art of "Emotionalised Discussion."

I

From the very beginning of his career in the theatre Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) proclaimed his opposition to the prevailing conventions of English drama because in his view these mirrored the false ideals of society and therefore stood in the way of progress, truth and life. He wanted a theatre which instead of confirming prejudices would help to change society by developing its intellectual consciousness, a theatre which would be

a factory of thought, a prompter of conscience, an elucidator of social conduct, an armoury against despair and dullness, and a temple of the Ascent of Man.¹

Formulas, whether of conduct or of theatrical convention, were therefore anathema to him, and none more so than the formula of the well-made play, especially when, as in Pinero's social dramas, it was accompanied by "an air of profound and original thought."² During his three years as drama critic of The Saturday Review (January 1895 to May 1898), Shaw lost no opportunity to expose the shallowness of the content of such plays or the artificiality of their construction, frankly admitting as he did so, "I write plays myself, and ... my school is in violent reaction against that of Mr Pinero."³

What particularly incensed Shaw about Pinero's social dramas was the effect of inevitability which their well-made structures gave to their generally pessimistic plots. Under stress Pinero's heroines may (from a conventional point of view) come to know themselves better, but they are incapable of improving on what they are or of breaking out of the situations in which they find themselves. Similarly, society's "double standard" of morality for men and women is presented as an unalterable (if reprehensible) fact of life. The

"enclosed" structures of Pinero's social dramas were built on such assumptions, and therefore in Shaw's view had to be discredited in favour of a more "open" approach if the theatre was to become the positive social force he wished it to be:

No writer of the first order needs the formula of the well-made play any more than a sound man needs a crutch. In his simplest mood when he is only seeking to amuse, he does not manufacture a plot: he tells a story. He finds no difficulty in setting people on the stage to talk and act in an amusing, exciting and touching way. His characters have adventures and ideas which are interesting in themselves, and need not be fitted into the Chinese puzzle of a plot ... Now if the critics are wrong in supposing that the formula of the well-made play is not only indispensable in good playwriting, but is actually the essence of the play itself — if their delusion is rebuked and confuted by the practice of every great dramatist even when he is only amusing himself by story-telling — what must happen to their poor formula when it impertinently offers its services to a playwright who has taken on his supreme function as the Interpreter of Life? Not only has he no use for it; but he must attack and destroy it; for one of the very first lessons he has to teach a play-ridden public is that the romantic conventions on which the formula proceeds are all false .4.

This statement perhaps begs the question for an "Interpreter of Life" might view life as determined or repetitive and therefore express this theatrically by means of tightly patterned and repetitive plot-structures. To Shaw, however, life was varied open to change and never readily predictable. Prola, an eastern priestess in his late play The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles (1933), speaks for Shaw as well as herself when she comments to her husband, "We are not here to fulfil prophecies and fit ourselves into puzzles, but to wrestle with life as it comes. And it never comes as we expect it to come." As will be shown, this "open" attitude to life is reflected in the varied content of Shaw's plays, in his manner of writing them, and in the considerable range of dramatic forms and patterns which he used or created.

One of the major problems with which Shaw's commentators have to

contend is the enormous scope of his interests; sociology, politics, religion, the arts, philosophy, science — there would seem to be no significant field of human activity which escaped his lively and critical attention and which is not worked into the action of his plays. In this respect he was most certainly an "Interpreter of Life" in a way Pinero with his narrow sphere of interest was not. Historically, a significant part of Shaw's achievement is the extent to which he opened up new subject-matter for the modern English theatre. Looking back on his first decade as a playwright he could claim with justification that whereas "the fashionable theatre prescribed one serious subject: clandestine adultery", he had tried

slum-landlordism, doctrinaire Free Love (pseudo-Ibsenism), prostitution, militarism, marriage, history, current politics, natural Christianity, national and individual character, paradoxes of conventional society, husband-hunting, questions of conscience, professional delusions and impostures, all worked into a series of comedies of manners in the classic manner ...

and culminating in his first "dramatic parable of Creative Evolution."⁵ His later plays display an even more bewildering array of subjects which not infrequently co-exist within a single play.

It was inevitable as time went on that Shaw, in order to handle the increasingly complex interplay of ideas and attitudes he wished to convey in his drama, should depart further and further from conventional dramatic forms and structures. Though his dramatic materials (as distinct from his subject matter and opinions) were drawn to a considerable extent from the stock-in-trade of the popular Victorian theatre,⁶ he endeavoured to give these materials free play so that they might form themselves into new patterns, thereby expanding the existing limits of the drama. Instead of labouring over intricate scenarios in the manner of Scribe and his successors, Shaw's method was simply to "let the play write and shape itself,

which it always does even when up to the last moment I do not see the way out."⁷ Thus the writing of a play to him was, in the first instance, not a craft but an act of faith. As he told his authorised biographer, Archibald Henderson:

My procedure is to imagine characters and let them rip ... but I must warn you that the real process is very obscure; for the result always shows that there has been something behind all the time, of which I was not conscious, though it turns out to be the real motive of the whole creation.⁸

From the outset this unorthodoxy outraged the theatre critics and it became a commonplace for them to assume that his plays were virtually devoid of the rudiments of dramatic structure. Each judgement was initially the result of critical bewilderment at Shaw's ideas and the manner in which they were expressed, for most of his earlier plays are in fact similar in structure to the contemporary types of popular play which they parodied. Much later in his career he commented that "it sometimes strikes me, when I see an early play of my own, that it looks as if I had elaborately constructed it."⁹ This result is hardly very surprising in view of the intensive amount of theatre-going he was doing at the time of writing these plays. As time went on, however, the structural patterns of his plays became increasingly idiosyncratic, and the critics — especially the more old-fashioned ones — became more puzzled than ever. According, for example, to William Archer:

From Man and Superman onwards ... Mr Shaw tended more and more to drop all pretence at dramatic structure, to renounce everything resembling story or situation, and to make his plays consist of what might be called emotionalised discussions ... As time went on, in Getting Married, Misalliance and Heartbreak House, it amused Mr Shaw to pour out his discussions in one breath, not only without any structure, but without any breathing space.¹⁰

"Emotionalised discussion" is a reasonably apt description of

the plays to which Archer refers, and for that matter of the disquisitory genre which was Shaw's distinctive contribution to modern dramatic form. But Archer's concept of structure, as he demonstrates at length in Playmaking, was based on the "enclosed" formula of the well-made play and his criticism of Shaw's mature "open" drama is hopelessly inadequate as a result. Far from lacking story, the disquisitory plays interweave a variety of stories at the same time as they interweave a variety of opinions and attitudes. To achieve this, Shaw could not afford to waste time with the elaborate preparations of the well-made play, which he derided as "superfluous attempts to persuade the audience to accept, as reasonably brought about, situations which it is perfectly ready to accept without any bringing about whatever."¹¹ In his disquisitory plays, therefore, the stories and situations proceed at a speed which must have made them invisible to Archer and accounts in large measure for his charge that the discussions are poured out "in one gush". But this charge, too, is incorrect (except for the technical point that in Getting Married and Misalliance — though not in Heartbreak House — the action is presented as being continuous) because Shaw took considerable pains to orchestrate his "emotionalised discussions" to provide the contrasts in tempo and emphasis necessary for his audience's understanding and enjoyment.

The greater part of this orchestration is to be found in the patterning of the dialogue — an area which is outside the scope of this study — but the manner in which Shaw times and interweaves the appearances of his characters, and his use of stage-business are also relevant to the musical effect of his plays. These matters will be demonstrated later in the chapter, but it is necessary at this point to note a certain ambivalence in Shaw's attitude to

stagecraft. When working on a new play he first of all wrote the dialogue, and only after he had completed this did he concern himself with "the mechanical business of the stage."¹² This he did with great thoroughness but not enjoyment. Henderson cites a typical Shavian comment on this issue:

I can write the dialogue of a long play easily within two months if I stick at it; but it may take me as long or longer, to settle the stage business, which is pure drudgery. I had rather write all the dialogue of Hamlet than decide which side of the stage the ghost enters, or arrange the necessary time for Ophelia to change her dress.¹³

There is a great deal of stage business in Shaw's plays, as his copious stage-directions testify, but it is essentially subservient to the dialogue. The advice he gave to a friend in a letter later published under the title of The Art of Rehearsal indicates his practice, as the director of his own plays:

Never have a moment of silence on the stage except as an intentional stage effect [Shaw's italics.] The play must not stop while an actor is sitting down or getting up or walking off the stage. He must sit on a word and rise on a word; if he has to make a movement he must move as he speaks and not before or after; and the cue must be picked up as smartly as the ball is fielded in cricket. This is the secret of pace and of holding an audience. It is a rule you may set aside again and again to make a special effect ... But as a rule of thumb it is invaluable.

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Where stage business rather than dialogue is emphasised in a Shaw play it usually indicates an element of theatricality and therefore of insincerity in the behaviour of the character responsible. Real conviction on the other hand is marked by an absence of business for then nothing must distract us from the words of the speaker. Thus, as we shall see, Shaw uses business to vary the tempo of the dialogue, but not to punctuate it, and his climaxes, unlike Pinero's, are usually expressed not in actions but in words.

Finally, in this introductory section, it is necessary to emphasise the structural variety of Shaw's drama, a significant reflection of his "open" approach. Whereas Pinero customarily worked within the confines of the four-act framework, Shaw rarely used the same act-structure twice in succession, and during his long career wrote plays of almost every conceivable size and shape. This career, on his own authority, can be divided into three broad consecutive phases: "a juvenile phase, a middle phase, and a Third Manner,"¹⁵ the second being initiated by Man and Superman (1903) and the third by Back to Methuselah (1921). (It is significant, of course, that these two works are his principal parables of Creative Evolution.) The three phases, as Martin Meisel has pointed out, are characterised by the use of typical genres: the plays of the first phase are based on standard types of melodrama and popular play, those of the second are mostly disquisitory plays, and those of the third are generally related to extravaganza; these genres being "respectively emotional, discursive and analogic modes of the drama of ideas."¹⁶ These categories, however, are very broad, and even within phases the majority of plays which are generically related tend to differ markedly from each other in structural appearance.

In the plays of Shaw's "juvenile phase" dramatic interest is centred on the emotional content of the melodramatic plots. These are, for the most part, single-action plays, though their situations are portrayed ironically for the purposes of Shavian satire and a wider context outside the immediate confines of the action is implied. Structurally, these are the most conventional of Shaw's plays, with three-act and four-act patterns predominating. However, there is a marked broadening of scope in the later "juvenile phase" plays and this is reflected in their increased length and expanded

structural forms.

The structural variety of Shaw's middle phase plays, as will be shown, reflects to a considerable degree his experimentation with ways of integrating an increasingly large amount of discussion into the fabric of his drama. The emphasis thus tends to be placed more and more on the interplay of ideas and attitudes and less on the fate of individual characters. The culmination of this development comes with the atmospheric patterning of the encounters and discussions in Heartbreak House. Most of this chapter will be concerned with analysing and discussing the structural patterning of these plays for, although there was fine work to come, they display Shaw's dramatic skill at its highest level and in its most characteristic mode.

Shaw's "Third Manner" works are even more varied in structure than the plays of his middle phase, but at times (and especially in the plays written after 1932) the dramatic focus is weak. In some cases, notably Back to Methuselah, the panoramic scope of the work is too vast for Shaw to handle with full control; in others the confusions of the post-war world with which he was attempting to grapple contribute to a certain vagueness in form and direction; and an inevitable, though remarkably delayed, loss of creative energy as he grew older cannot be ignored. But even though the incidental patterning of these plays is at times haphazard or excessively digressive, analysis of their broad structural outlines reveals Shaw's essentially "open" approach, a continuing attempt to point a way through the muddle of the present to a more positive and hopeful future.

II

The most apparent feature of the structural "blocking" of Shaw's first plays - collectively titled Plays Unpleasant and Pleasant - is their compactness. Except for the last of the "pleasant" plays, You Never Can Tell (1897), they are all fairly short and use a minimum of entrances and exits to tell their stories and make their points. Shaw only requires 53 entrances and exits (including those of the waiter, the porter and the parlourmaid) in the three acts of Widower's Houses (1892), 56 entrances and exits in the four acts of The Philanderer (1893), 47 in the four acts of Mrs Warren's Profession (1893), 56 in the three acts of Arms and the Man (1894), a mere 38 in the three acts of Candida (1894), and 20 in the long one-acter, The Man of Destiny (1895). You Never Can Tell, which in its four acts exceeds the playing time of any of the earlier plays by half as much again and uses nearly double the number of sequences (86), may be regarded as a prelude to the more complex structural patterns which were to follow in the Three Plays for Puritans and, more especially, in plays such as Misalliance and Heartbreak House.

From the beginning, of course, Shaw's characters are never at a loss for words and there was no necessity for their author to concoct a rapid succession of comings and goings merely to create and maintain interest. The characters have ideas and points of view to express which are interesting in themselves. But this is not to justify the critics' chorus which greeted Widower's Houses (and was subsequently repeated on the appearance of virtually each new Shaw play) that it was "merely a lecture" or a "pamphlet in dramatic form."¹⁷ Widower's Houses may not

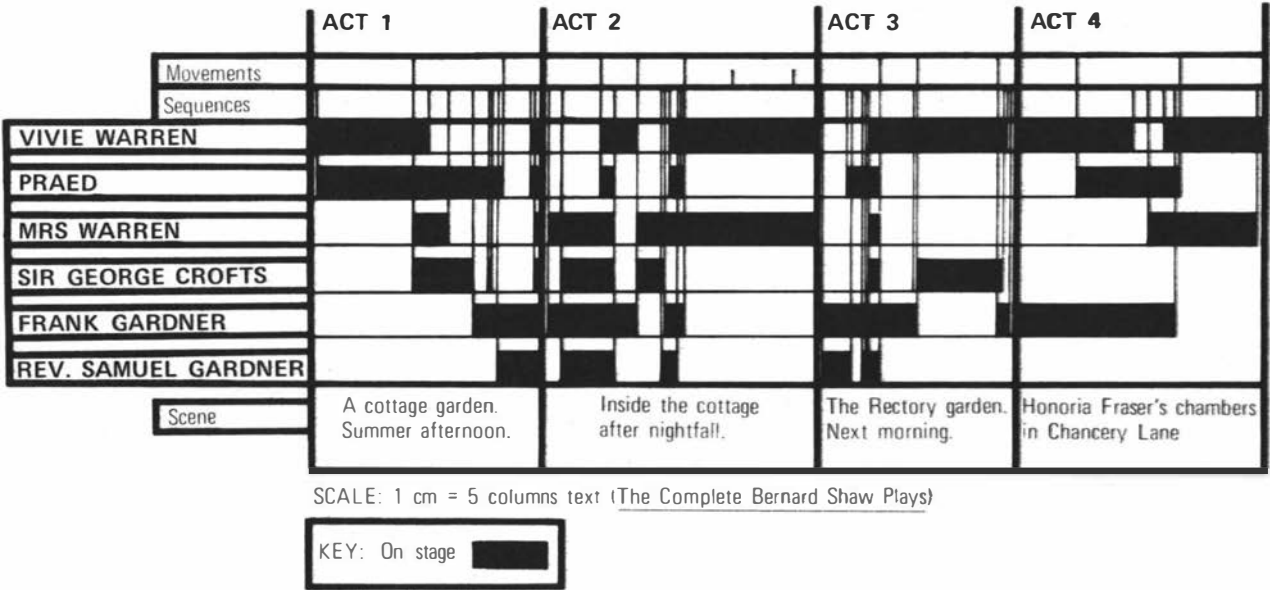
be quite the immaculate well-made structure envisaged by William Archer, Shaw's erstwhile collaborator on the play, but with the exception of one or two episodes such as Blanche's assault on her maid, each sequence advances the story and there is an effect of grim inevitability in the way young Trench is made first to realise the distasteful source of his unearned income and then become a willing accomplice of Sartorius, the slum landlord. Shaw, in fact, was thoroughly justified in his reply to the critics that Widower's Houses

is a propagandist play - a didactic play - a play with a purpose; but I do not therefore claim any special indulgence for it from people who go to the theatre to be entertained. I offer it as a technically good, practicable stage play, one which will, if adequately acted, hold its proper audience and drive its story home to the last word.

18

Despite Shaw's refusal to be hemmed in by Archer's "Rhine-gold" plot, and his insistence on following "his natural way ... to imagine characters and spin out a story about them," there is little that can be described as "open" about the play beyond the fact that Shaw wished through the force of his unpleasant story "to induce people to vote on the Progressive side at the next County Council election in London."¹⁹ Though the action of the play is divided neatly into three acts on the basis of the time-honoured formula of "Boy meets Girl; Boy loses Girl; Boy gets girl after all", the total effect is

FIGURE 6: Scenario graph of MRS WARREN'S PROFESSION by Bernard Shaw



scourfully parodistic. The lovers are incapable of escaping from the corrupt world in which they find themselves and in the grimly ironic "happy ending" willingly join the ranks of the deliberate exploiters of the system. Shaw's own criticism of the play is valid - "that the disillusion which makes all great dramatic poets tragic has here made him only derisive."²⁰

In Widowers' Houses and most of the other plays of his "juvenile" phase Shaw was able to make use of the stock devices and typical structures of the various types of popular play then in vogue and, at the same time, ridicule the conventional ideas they normally expressed. Mrs Warren's Profession is a good example of this and in the context of this study merits some detailed discussion and analysis because it was written late in 1893 as a deliberate riposte to The Second Mrs Tanqueray²¹ which earlier that year had been acclaimed, to Shaw's annoyance, as initiating a new era in serious English drama.

Like Pinero's play, Shaw's is in four acts. The exposition is as deliberate as Pinero's and there is a comparable use of a raisonneur figure (Praed) to drop hints about the murky past of the title figure. The first act ends with a confrontation between Mrs Warren and a former lover; the second with a confrontation between Mrs Warren and her daughter during which the mother's guilty trade is revealed; and the third with a situation which outdoes that of Pinero's climax - instead of "a step-daughter and step-mother finding themselves in the positions respectively of affianced wife and discarded mistress to the same man,"²² the heroine and her young man find themselves (so it appears) in the positions respectively of daughter and son to the same father! All of these "Pinerotic" (pace Shaw) situations, however, are ironically deflated: the former lover (now a clergyman) is

tongue-tied with embarrassment, the "fallen woman" vigorously defends her past, and though the heroine does not marry the young man neither of them is unduly concerned about the claim that they are brother and sister. Shaw thus "has his cake and eats it": the structure of the "Pinerotic" social drama helps him to build strong climaxes, while his deflation of its typical situations emphasises his refusal to be circumscribed by conventional ideals and beliefs.

Despite surface similarities in subject-matter and form, Mrs Warren's Profession and The Second Mrs Tanqueray express diametrically opposed attitudes, a fact which is apparent when the structure of Shaw's play is examined more closely. In Pinero's play the fate of the principal characters seems determined largely by the unfortunate (for them) timing of events. If, for example, Tanqueray had known earlier that his daughter was going to return to him, he probably would not have married Paula. If Ellean had chosen another fiancé, or if Paula had had adequate warning of her engagement, the play would probably not have ended with Paula's suicide. But in Shaw's play the characters are made of sterner stuff. Mrs Warren neither collapses with shame nor gives up her profession when Vivie discovers it, and Vivie rejects Frank's proposal of marriage not because of the revelation that they might be half-siblings, but because she values her independence more than Frank's feckless charm. There is never any prospect that any of Shaw's characters will commit suicide: they react to the events of the play but at its end are carrying on in much the same manner as they were at the beginning. Thus though the events of the play follow in logical order, the order is not a necessary one. The ending would not have been much different had the discoveries of the play been arranged differently.

In explanation -- though not justification -- of the critics'

charge that Shaw was writing "dramatic pamphlets" rather than plays, it may be admitted that he wrote his plays to put across ideas, and made his characters more than usually eloquent for this purpose. From the outset he customarily used fewer sequences in his plays and developed the encounters between his characters much more fully than, for example, Pinero did until his final social dramas.²³ The simplicity of the scenario graph for Mrs Warren's Profession (Figure 6) reflects this, and is typical of Shaw's early plays. The discussions, however, are never generalised, but express the personal concerns and emotional interplay of the characters. Analysis of the confrontation between Mrs Warren and her daughter at the end of the second act of Mrs Warren's Profession illustrates this point and provides a useful example of Shaw's handling of an extended "discussion" sequence at this stage of his career.

The sequence is foreshadowed early in Act 1 when Vivie informs Praed that she is determined to remain independent of her mother and to follow a career as an actuary. Although she has been "boarded out all her life" (p.279) and thus has no idea that her mother makes a living running brothels, she is aware that her mother has something to hide and tells Praed that she will if necessary use the advantage this gives her to get her own way. The threatened conflict does not come about, however, until well into the second act when she and her mother are left alone together for the first time in the play. The sequence which follows is the longest in Shaw's three "unpleasant" plays, and on stage runs for over twenty minutes. For the purpose of analysis it can be divided into three "movements", but unlike the major sequences in Pinero's social dramas in which successive movements are divided by means of emphatic pauses, there are no clear breaks between them. Shaw's method is to modulate from the emotional mood of one

movement to that of the next by means of bridge passages, and the same musical technique is apparent within the movements. Instead of Pinero's logical punctuation driving each point home, there are continual variations in rhythm which provide the necessary contrasts while conveying the ebb and flow of the conflict in an unbroken line.

In the opening movement (pp.308-9) Vivie deliberately sets out to provoke her mother, criticising Mrs Warren's unpleasant business partner, Sir George Crofts, and calmly stating that it would be pointless for her and her mother to live together as they have nothing in common. When Mrs Warren takes the bait and angrily demands, "Do you know who you are talking to, miss?" Vivie takes her question literally and replies coolly, "No. Who are you? What are you?" From this point Vivie ruthlessly follows up her advantage until her mother, reeling before the attack, is forced to admit that she has no idea who Vivie's father was. The cut and thrust of the dialogue is superbly handled, but even if every word of this were in an unintelligible foreign language an audience would be able to follow the essential progress of this part of the sequence through the stage-business and the tones of speech used by the characters. This fact can be readily demonstrated by detailing the stage-directions for the passage, indicating the speakers by capital letters and the omitted dialogue by ellipses:

MRS WARREN resigning herself to an evening of boredom now that the men are gone... She sits at the table ... VIVIE rising to fetch more books ... She throws the books on the table rather roughly ... MRS WARREN galled by Vivie's indifference ... VIVIE quite unmoved ... She sits down and opens a book ... MRS WARREN staring at her ... VIVIE ... MRS WARREN ... VIVIE cutting a page of her book with the paper knife on her chatelaine ... MRS WARREN ... VIVIE indulgently ... MRS WARREN puzzled, then angry ... Violently ... Vivie works on, losing no time and saying nothing ... She looks at Vivie again. No reply ... Another pause ... Muttering ... Again raising her voice angrily ... VIVIE looking across at her without raising her head from her

book ... MRS WARREN rising breathless ... VIVIE ... MRS WARREN ... VIVIE putting aside her books with cool decision ... Looking critically at her mother ... She holds out her wrists.

MRS WARREN after looking at her helplessly begins to whimper ... VIVIE springing up sharply ... MRS WARREN, piteously ... VIVIE ... MRS WARREN appalled ... VIVIE ... MRS WARREN distracted, throwing herself on her knees ... VIVIE ... MRS WARREN ... VIVIE determinedly ... MRS WARREN ... VIVIE ruthlessly ... Shivering with disgust ... MRS WARREN ... Vivie's eyes fasten sternly on her mother as the significance of this flashes on her. VIVIE slowly ... Thoughtfully ... Mrs Warren buries her face in her hands.

In this passage it can be seen that Shaw uses virtually every trick in the book to convey the progress of the conflict and make it theatrically exciting — changes in pace, in tone, and in the relative positions of the characters; contrasts in volume; *pausation*; "eye-work"; and expressive touches of business. In fact the business is overtly theatrical to emphasise the artificiality of the scene and, in particular, the falsity of Mrs Warren's role as the heartbroken mother.

Pinero, had he been writing the sequence, would probably have emphasised the moment in which Mrs Warren's guilty secret is exposed by following it up with a long significant silence, but Shaw merely slows the rhythm of Vivie's speech, and then as Mrs Warren buries her face in her hands in apparent contrition has Vivie tell her not to be hypocritical. Without a pause Vivie takes out her watch and says, "Well that is enough for tonight. At what hour would you like breakfast?" The cold-bloodedness of this horrifies Mrs Warren, but Vivie continues the treatment by pulling her resolutely to her feet and telling her to go to bed. When Mrs. Warren passionately declares that she will not be able to sleep, Vivie replies calmly "Why not? I shall". This coolness incenses her mother who

... suddenly breaks out vehemently in her natural tongue — the dialect of a woman of the people — with all her affect-

ations of maternal authority gone, and an overwhelming inspiration of true conviction and scorn in her.

Thus in the course of some half-dozen brief speeches Shaw reverses the roles of the characters and modulates from the opening movement of the sequence into the middle one (pp.309-15). A "Pinerotic" breakdown has been averted through Shaw's refusal to allow his characters to behave according to conventional expectations, and the tone of the action is transformed from simulated emotion to passionate conviction. Vivie sits down "with a shrug, no longer confident", and after a couple of lead-in speeches Mrs Warren "plants her chair further forward with brazen energy, and sits down". For the next ten minutes this grouping of mother and daughter seated facing each other across the table is held unchanged while Mrs Warren outlines and vigorously justifies her career. Technically Vivie is the "feed"²⁴ for her mother in this movement, but her reactions are important both for sustaining the drama and because she acts as a surrogate for the conversion of the audience to Mrs Warren's point of view. It is worth commenting therefore that except for a couple of references to Mrs Warren's manner of speech the sparse stage-directions in this section all refer to Vivie's reactions — " ... now thoroughly attentive ... grinly ... vividly interested by this time ... more and more deeply moved ..." — until the climactic moment when "fascinated, gazing at her" she exclaims, "My dear mother; you are a wonderful woman: you are stronger than all England." The essential point, however, is that for the duration of Mrs Warren's justification, the emotional centre of the play, Shaw abandons all "stage tricks" so that nothing will distract the audience from the argument.

Although Vivie's exclamation is the climax there is no underlining of it by pausation. Instead the dialogue again continues

but in a quieter manner, with Mrs Warren commenting, in reply to a question from Vivie, that she "was never a bit ashamed really." She then "stretches herself lazily, thoroughly relieved by her explosion, and placidly ready for her night's rest". This action initiates the short final movement (pp. 315-316) in which mother and daughter, all passion spent, appear to be affectionately reconciled. The stage directions which follow, however, hint at the spurious nature of the reconciliation and suggest that a different view of things will prevail later:

VIVIE: I believe it is I who will not be able to sleep now. (She goes to the dresser and lights the candle. Then she extinguishes the lamp, darkening the room a good deal.) Better let in some fresh air before locking up. (She opens the cottage door and finds that it is broad moonlight.) What a beautiful night! Look! (She draws aside the curtains of the window, The landscape is seen bathed in the radiance of the harvest moon rising over Blackdown.)
MRS WARREN (with a perfunctory glance at the scene) Yes, dear; but take care you don't catch your death of cold from the night air.

After this clear indication of Vivie's lapse into sentimentality, Shaw allows the sequence to end in an ironically tear-jerking manner with Vivie taking her mother in her arms and kissing her and Mrs Warren responding by blessing and embracing her daughter, while "instinctively looking upward for divine sanction." The curtain falls on this affecting tableau.

From the above analysis it can be seen that Shaw's stage-business is extremely important to the effect of the sequence, but that it often operates simultaneously on an emotional and an ironic level. In the opening movement there is a great deal of business which builds up theatrical excitement but also emphasises theatricality (as, for example, when Mrs Warren throws herself on her knees), and in the final movement theatrical lighting effects and business are used to simultaneously play on and mock at the audience's desire for

a sentimental ending to the conflict. In the crucial central movement, however, Shaw relies on dialogue alone to bring home the passionate conviction of the ideas and emotions expressed by Mrs Warren. The absence of business here is a sign of sincerity, though it must be admitted that it makes this long passage a testing one for actress and audience alike.

Arms and the Man, Shaw's next play, features in its first act an extended encounter in which the heroine's romantic ideals about warfare are contrasted against the realistic view of the experienced soldier, but this is developed in terms of action rather than discussion in the remainder of the play which, as Professor Eric Bentley has pointed out, makes use of a Scribean comic plot.²⁵ Structurally the play is neat and compact, but never flagging in interest or comic invention as the fairly complex triangular relationships of the characters are manipulated to a happy conclusion. Candida is even neater in form, being by well-made standards the most perfectly proportioned of all Shaw's plays.²⁶ The unities of time, place and action are all strictly observed, and each of the three acts presents a clearly-defined stage of the conflict of Marchbanks and Morell for Candida. This time as Shaw uses only 36 sequences to tell his story the main encounters are quite substantial in length. As in Mrs Warren's Profession, however, the discussion is always personal and expresses the emotional interplay of the characters. The wider thematic concern of attitudes to love and marriage is implicit in the action; it is not the subject of generalised debate.

There is, however, a significant moment near the end of Candida when a formal discussion is threatened. After the men have placed their bids for her, Candida says (smiling a little), "Let us sit and talk comfortably over it like three friends" (p.591) In fact what follows is not a discussion but a long speech from Candida, but the cue (borrowed from Ibsen's A Doll's House²⁷) is an indication that Shaw was wanting to expand the discursive element in his plays. That, however, the time was not ripe for him to attempt this on a major scale is suggested by a letter which Ellen Terry wrote him on August 30th, 1897:

Well, I've seen Candida, and it comes out on the stage even better than when one reads it. It is absorbingly interesting every second, and I long for it to be done in London. Even the audience understood it all ... Only one thing struck me at the time as wrong. Towards quite the end of the play to say "Now let's sit down and talk the matter over." Several people took out their watches and some of them left to catch a train, or a drink. And it interrupted the attention of all of us who stayed.²⁸

Whether or not such reactions played any part in Shaw's calculations, the remaining full length plays of his "juvenile phase" are more notable for action than discussion. They are, however, on a larger scale than the earlier plays, and in this and other ways show his drama becoming more expansive and "open", both in form and spirit. You Never Can Tell, as Martin Meisel has observed, is related in subject-matter to The Philanderer but "was conceived as a humanization of Farce rather than as an invidious exploitation of its atmosphere."²⁹ The later play does not ignore the darker side of its character-relationships but transcends this by a lightness of touch which never allows ill-temper in the characters to get out of hand, and involves them all willy-nilly in a comedic dance of life epitomised by the Harlequinade of the last act. Though You Never Can Tell is much longer than any of his earlier plays, Shaw uses nearly double his normal allowance of entrances and exits so as to maintain a brisk pace and deftly interweave his "eight (major) parts, all immense"³⁰ in a manner which is indeed (as its author claimed) "tout ce qu'il y a de plus Shawesque."³¹

The Devil's Disciple and Caesar and Cleopatra are on a panoramic scale, the former being based on Adelphi melodrama and the latter on historical epic. The Devil's Disciple is in three acts, but five different settings are required as the action moves from the reading of the will to the eleventh hour rescue from the gallows. Caesar

and Cleopatra is written in the classic manner in five acts (and two prologues), and if performed in full requires nine changes of setting, to say nothing of special lighting effects to suggest the passing of time within scenes. Both these plays are principally designed to display the unconventional virtues of their Shavian heroes in a succession of stock or quasi-historical situations. This is also the motive behind Shaw's portrayal of the adventures of Lady Cicely Waynfleet in Captain Brassbound's Conversion which, though somewhat more discursive than its companion plays, is equally exotic in its settings and melodramatic in its incidents.

These last four plays of Shaw's first phase thus exhibit an expansion of the range and scope of his drama. Though the emphasis is on the central characters — especially in the Plays for Puritans — there are many ensemble scenes in which he was able to display his gifts as a "master of polyphony."³² These gifts and his sense of stagecraft were to be exercised to the full in his "middle phase" during which he brought into being his own unique dramatic genre, the disquisitory drama.

III

The centrality of discussion to Shaw's nature drama needs no corroboration: it has long been a critical commonplace. Shaw provided his own explanation and justification in the chapter entitled "The Technical Novelty In Ibsen's Plays" which he appended in 1912 to the second edition of The Quintessence of Ibsenism. There he claims that Ibsen in the last act of A Doll's House introduced

a new technical factor in the art of popular stage-play making ... This technical factor in the play is

the discussion. Formerly you had in what was called a well-made play an exposition in the first act, a situation in the second, and unravelling in the third. Now you have exposition, situation and discussion; and the discussion is the test of the playwright ... The discussion conquered Europe in Ibsen's Doll's House; and now the serious playwright recognises in the discussion not only the main test of his highest powers, but also the real centre of his play's interest.

33

This, of course, is a distortion of Ibsen, a dubious historical assertion, and even a gross simplification of Shaw's own approach. But he brings his remarks closer to his own drama when he goes on to say:

The disadvantage of putting the discussion at the end was not only that it came when the audience was fatigued, but that it was necessary to see the play over again, so as to follow the earlier acts in the light of the final discussion, before it became fully intelligible ... Accordingly we now have plays, including some of my own, which begin with discussion and end with action, and others in which the discussion interpenetrates the action from beginning to end.³⁴

The final clause of this quotation comes close to a definition of Shaw's disquisitory drama, with the proviso that in its fully-developed form the discussion actually becomes the action.

It is necessary at this point to note Eric Bentley's observation that "there are broadly two types of discussion in Shavian drama.... discussion as an emanation of conflict between persons.... (and) the discussion of problems for their inherent interest."³⁵ The former is more usual on the stage and, as Professor Bentley remarks, Shaw was an expert at it. But his development of a form of drama in which "nothing was more important than the discussion itself"³⁶ (although this does not imply that conflict between characters is of no significance) represents the quintessence of his technique and is, therefore, of greater interest here. How did Shaw contrive to make this extreme form of drama theatrically viable? This, from

the point of view of his "blocking" and stagecraft, is the question which we must now attempt to answer. To do so, however, it is necessary to discuss the form as it evolved from its beginnings in Man and Superman to its culmination in Heartbreak House.

Shaw's first substantial experiment with disquisitory drama (the term will be restricted to the more extreme of the two types of discussion referred to above) was the "Don Juan in Hell" interlude which occupies most of the third act in the published text of Man and Superman. Though the thematic content of the interlude (a discussion centred on the need for the "Superman") complements that of the rest of the play (a demonstration of the helplessness of man when pursued by a female representative of the Life Force!), the interlude has no overt bearing on the overall plot and can with some justification be regarded as an independent work. Considered as such it is the most uncompromising of Shaw's disquisitory plays — a pure drama of ideas in which there is virtually no physical business because the characters are presented as incorporeal beings in the void of the Shavian hell. As Don Juan says to the newly-arrived Dona Ana, "Here we have no bodies: we see each other as bodies only because we have learnt to think about each other under that aspect when we were alive; and we still think in that way, knowing no other." (pp.637-8) Until the final moments of the interlude, the sparse amount of "stage business" indicated in the text is devoted to emphasising this incorporeality, and is therefore almost impossible to represent adequately on stage: Don Juan "seated, absurdly enough on nothing" (p.632) Dona Ana's instant transformation from an "old crone" in a "coarse brown frock" (p.633) to a "magnificently-attired" handsome young woman (p.638), her vanishing before her father as "a living statue of white marble" comes from the void walking "with a feather-like step" (p.641), her instant reappearance when she hears mention

of her husband's name (p.642), and the Devil's rising into the scarlet halo which precedes him. Quite apart from considerations of length, it is not surprising that the interlude is normally omitted from performances of the main play, and that when it is staged as an independent work it is usually presented in the form of a reading. As its "stage-directions" clearly indicate, it was written not for an actual theatre but for a theatre of the mind.³⁷

Though "Don Juan in Hell" is hardly a practicable stage work, it was a seminal one not only as an expression of Shaw's philosophy but in its technique. The characters may be incorporeal but the verbal action, though it appears to develop freely, is not without structure. There is a formal exposition in which Don Juan briefs Dona Ana on the essential nature of this version of hell, and then the other two characters of the drama are each in turn introduced. The debate which follows, though it ranges widely over human institutions and experience, has a clear central topic: whether or not there is a creative purpose behind evolution. The argument is developed in three broad sections (though the fluidity of Shaw's technique makes the joins almost invisible): in the first, Don Juan and the Devil state their opposing view on earth, heaven and hell; in the second, Don Juan expounds on the way the Life Force uses sex and marriage to further its purpose; and the final section brings the discussion to the point where the characters must choose between heaven and hell, between acceptance or rejection of the Life Force.

It is this question of choice which ultimately gives the discussion dramatic point. Without it the Statue would merely be a source of occasional (though much-needed) comic relief, and (more seriously) Dona Ana simply a conventionally-minded "feed"; for, though the Devil is given his due at times (notably in his marathon speech on the

destructiveness of mankind), Don Juan has vastly more than his fair share of the talking. The crucial decision dramatically is Dona Ana's as the others are already committed (though the Statue wavers for a moment), and it is her moment of truth that gives the interlude a crisis and a dénouement. Significantly, after having been conspicuously absent during the debate, stage-business reappears at this point:

THE DEVIL. This way Commander. We go down the old trap (he places himself on the grave trap.)

THE STATUE. Good. (Reflectively) All the same, the Superman is a fine conception. There is something statuesque about it. (He places himself on the grave trap beside the Devil. It begins to descend slowly. Red glow from the abyss.) Ah, this reminds me of old times.

THE DEVIL. And me also.

ANA. Stop! (The trap stops.)

THE DEVIL. You, Senora, cannot come this way. You will have an apotheosis. But you will be at the palace before us.

ANA. That is not what I stopped you for. Tell me: where can I find the Superman?

THE DEVIL. He is not yet created, Senora.

THE STATUE. And never will be probably. Let us proceed: the red fire will make me sneeze. (They descend.)

ANA. Not yet created! Then my work is not yet done. (Crossing herself devoutly) I believe in the Life to Come. (Crying to the universe) A father! A father for the Superman!

She vanishes into the void; and again there is nothing: all existence seems suspended indefinitely.
(pp. 688-9)

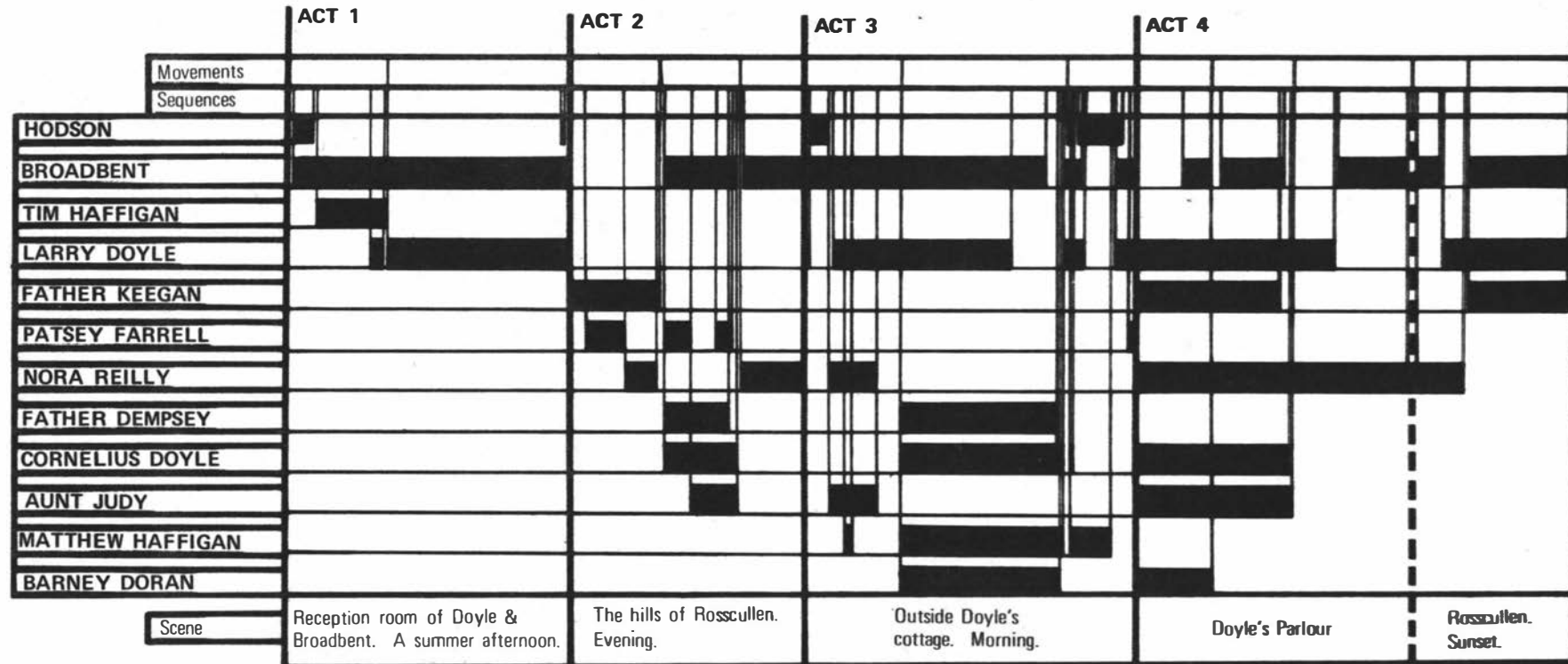
Shaw here is doing more than having a tilt at the melodramatic stage-business of Mozart's opera; the descent of the Statue and the Devil by its theatricality is an emblem of their evasion of reality (Shaw's definition of hell) and helps to impart a sense of urgency to Dona Ana's decision; while her vanishing into the void signifies, by

contrast, a genuine apotheosis into the realm of the spirit.

One final point about the "Don Juan in Hell" interlude is worth noting here: the fact that in the context of Man and Superman it is presented as a dream. (The fact that it is John Tanner's dream provides some justification for the loquacity of his alter ego, Don Juan.) The effect of interpolating the dream interlude into the main play is to imbue what would otherwise be an almost farcical love-chase comedy with cosmic significance. Shaw's final stage-direction, "Universal laughter." (p.733), following Tanner's attempt to cover up his capitulation to Ann by a lengthy speech proscribing conventional wedding festivities, is the perfect ending to the complete work. Within the interlude the use of the dream convention enabled Shaw to transcend the temporal limitations of conventional comedy, to put distracting details at a distance, and to concentrate on the essential issues of human existence as he saw them. It is not surprising therefore that Shaw continued to use dream scenes as a means of opening up the implications of the realistic action in many of his plays. At times, indeed, in Shaw's later drama, it is not easy to tell whether the action is to be taken as dream or reality.

There is much about dreams, but no specific dream scenes or dream structure in Shaw's next major play, John Bull's Other Island (1904). Emotionally this is a complex work for on the one hand Shaw castigates his countrymen as feckless dreamers through the mouth of Larry Doyle, the anglicized Irishman, and on the other he gives conviction to the mystic insight of the defrocked priest, Father Keegan. The action progresses from wittily exposing the illusions of the English about the Irish to a powerful expression of Shaw's ambivalent feelings about his homeland. Thus the Round Tower of

FIGURE 7: Scenario graph of JOHN BULL'S OTHER ISLAND by Bernard Shaw



SCALE: 1 cm = 5 columns text (Complete Plays)

KEY: On stage

Rosscullen, which dominates the setting in Act 2 and in the final scene, is a symbol both of spurious romanticism and a "finger... pointing ... to God". (p.933)

Structurally the play is deceptively simple: a loose succession of conversations and encounters held together by the occasion of the visit of the English businessman, Broadbent, and his partner, Larry Doyle, to the village in which the latter spent his youth. As Max Beerbohm commented in his review of the premiere performance at the Royal Court, "The greater part of the action is talk: and the talk is often not relevant to the action, but merely to the characters and to things in general."³⁸ The conversations and encounters take place in a series of scenes which succeed each other almost haphazardly, and yet Shaw somehow manages to continually surprise and to progressively deepen his revelation of the real nature of Ireland and its relationship with England. As every idea is illustrated by the actions or demeanour of the characters there is seldom the effect of formal debate. The one major exception to this informality is the pivotal episode at the beginning of Act 3 when a cross section of the inhabitants of Rosscullen come together to find themselves an alternative parliamentary candidate. Elsewhere stage-business is generally used for incidental pointing, but here (pp. 955-971) it plays an important structural role.

The scene is set in the garden of Larry's father's cottage where there is a rather motley and inadequate selection of things for the group to sit on. Father Dempsey, the village priest, takes the central chair and Barney Doran, the miller, and Larry's father seat themselves on chairs on either side of them, while Broadbent sits on an unsteady rustic bench on the left and Matthew Haffigan, an old peasant who has only recently become owner of his farm, has to make

do with an upturned basket on the right. This leaves Larry Doyle with nothing to sit on so he stands behind Broadbent's bench. The grouping thus emphasises Father Dempsey's role as chairman of the informal selection committee, and balances the businessman against the peasant while giving Larry, the prospective candidate, a position from which he can dominate the discussion.

After the members of the group have taken up these positions the meeting proceeds through (unusually for Shaw) three clear stages. In the first, Larry is asked if he has thought of going into politics but is unable to reply for a while as the meeting nearly breaks up in disorder when Haffigan rises in anger at a suggestion that land may be given to labourers, and is only brought under control when Father Dempsey also rises, and threatens to leave. This flurry of argument (accompanied by movement) illustrates the thin-skinned pettiness of the new landlords and thus builds up to and justifies the diatribe which follows from Larry in which he declares he has no intention of representing Haffigan and his like, and roundly condemns every prejudice Haffigan stands for. At the end of this outburst there is a pause while the others "stare at him dumbfounded", Father Dempsey states that Larry will not be the member for Rosscullen but that there is more in his head "than the comb will take out", and Larry replies that he had better retire and leave the committee to find another candidate. "He ... goes away ... amid dead silence, all turning to watch him until he passes out of sight round the corner of the house."

After this hiatus the meeting begins its second stage in which, following another little squabble among the committee, Broadbent, seeing his chance, puts himself forward as a candidate. Though he begins orating to the others while still seated on his bench, he

soon rises "so as to address them more imposingly" and thus stands dominating the group from almost the same position as Larry had previously. This repetition of grouping, of course, underlines the parallel structure but contrasted content of the two sequences. Though in the key of platitudinous rhetoric as opposed to Larry's passionate invective, Broadbent too ends with a climactic peroration and then departs to allow the committee to deliberate. Haffigan gives him an "(westruck) 'Good morning, sir'", the rest echo this, and then the committee "watch him vacantly until he is out of earshot." With his departure the meeting enters its final phase, a short one, in which the members of the committee, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, come to the conclusion that Broadbent might do. They then go their different ways, Father Dempsey leaving first, and for a moment the stage stands empty, thereby marking the technically self-contained nature of the episode within the more loose-knit fabric of the rest of the play.

Stage-business here provides an appropriate frame for the episode; it is not, however, a significant method for illustrating the detailed progress of the action which is essentially verbal. Once Larry, for example, is in full cry there is no distracting business until he has finished having his say. This, as we have seen, is typical of Shaw's use of stagecraft in his earlier plays — time and again he uses business to help build up to an important discussion or statement, but then business is dispensed with until the talking (or a complete stage of it) is over. There is just enough formality in the selection-committee episode to enable Father Dempsey to hold the meeting together and allow an open interchange of contrasting attitudes to the central policy matters discussed — the rights and obligations of the new landlords, and

the relationship between Church and State. The framework here is very shaky, however, and after the meeting disperses no similar scene recurs in the play.

Two more aspects of Shaw's stagecraft in John Bull's Other Island require brief mention because although they do not relate specifically to the disquisitory mode they do reflect Shaw's "open" viewpoint. The first is his use of something approaching a split-scene technique in the first scene of Act 4, which takes place in the parlour of Cornelius Doyle's house. On one side of the room Barney Doran is telling a group of friends the story of Broadbent's ill-fated attempt to deliver by car a pig belonging to Haffigan, while on the other side Father Keegan listens acily as he plays backgammon with Nora Reilly. The setting has no physical division between the two groups (such as Brecht uses in the wedding scene of The Caucasian Chalk Circle) but Shaw makes the emotional division clear in his stage-directions:

There is a strong contrast of emotional atmosphere between the two sides of the room. Keegan is extraordinarily stern; no game of backgammon could possibly make a man's face so grin. Aunt Judy is quietly busy. Nora is trying to ignore Doran and attend to her game.

On the other hand Doran is reeling in an ecstasy of mischievous mirth which has infected all his friends. They are screaming with laughter, leaning on the furniture and against the walls, shouting, screeching, crying. (pp.979-80).

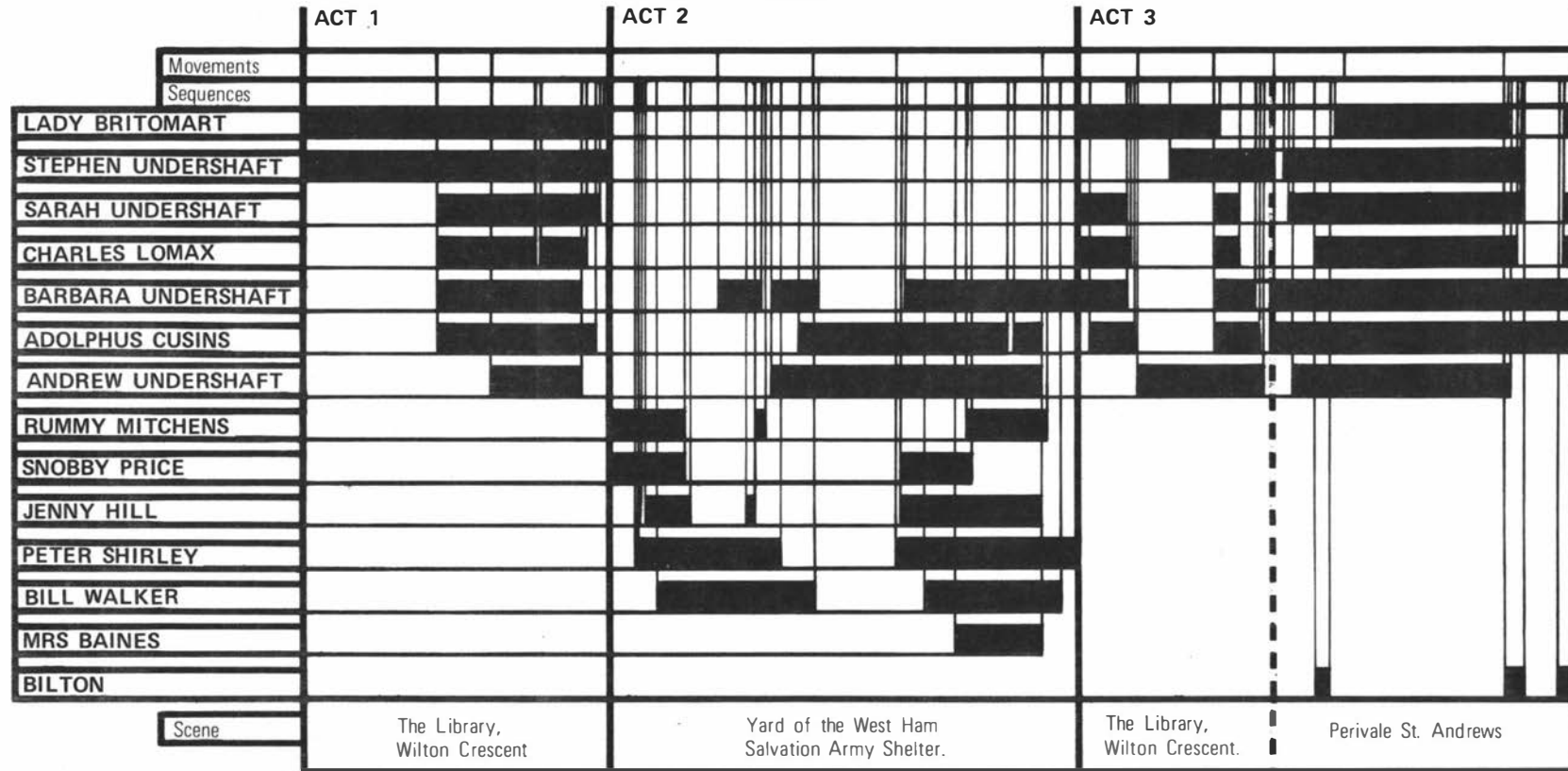
Here, as Margery Morgan has noted,³⁹ Shaw has used his stage picture to simultaneously represent two sides of the Irish peasants' predilection for laughter. Their sense of the comic is seen as both a healthy antidote to the general harshness of their lives and as an indication of their lack of feeling for others. Keegan's puritanical mysticism is also implicitly held up for judgement by this scene as he is far more concerned about the fate of the pig than the destruction of the villagers' property during the incident. But

Shaw himself makes no judgements; he simply sets up the scene, presents the contradictions, and allows the audience to draw their own conclusions.

The other "open" feature of Shaw's stagecraft in the play concerns the preponderance of outdoor settings. There are many of these in his later plays, but most of the settings in the earlier ones are interiors. (In passing, however, it may be observed that Shaw's interiors nearly always offer a view of the outside — a fact of some thematic significance.) In John Bull's Other Island the outdoor settings reinforce the nature mysticism of Keegan⁴⁰ and underline his contempt for Broadbent's plan to transform Roscullen into a "Garden city" complete with tourist hotel, library, Polytechnic, gymnasium, cricket club, golf links and (perhaps) an art school. Both Keegan and the timeless landscape dominated by the Round Tower appear to mock Broadbent's "foolish dream of efficiency" (p.1018) but its realisation (as Keegan admits) may nevertheless be a necessity for Ireland. Again the audience is left to decide — the question is strongly put at the end of the play, but the answer, like the landscape, is open.

In Major Barbara (1905) the "Garden city" is not projected but realised on stage. It is presented as unequivocal achievement, but the ambivalence is of a different order from that pertaining to Broadbent's project. There is no question of the superiority of Perivale St. Andrews to the alternative environment presented — the West Ham salvation shelter. But the contrast between the material achievement of Undershaft's "almost smokeless town of white walls, roofs of narrow green slates or red tiles, tall trees, domes campaniles, and slender chimney shafts" (p. 157) and the means which

FIGURE 8: Scenario graph of MAJOR BARBARA by Bernard Shaw



SCALE: 1 cm = 5 columns text (Complete Plays)

KEY: On stage

have enabled its creation is equally stark. The structure of the play is calculated to project this fundamental paradox as sharply as possible.

The basic structural pattern of Major Barbara is the most ruthlessly schematic to be found in Shaw's drama. The play is not without "open" features (as analysis will show), but its formal patterning is tight and firm. "Exposition, situation and discussion", the simplistic new formula Shaw attributed to Ibsen, more or less sums it up. The basic blocking shows up clearly on the scenario graph (Figure 8): the central roles of Undershaft, Barbara and Cusins; the simple structure of Act 1 building to the entry of Undershaft and ending with a progressive exodus of characters after Undershaft has exchanged challenges with Barbara; the more complex pattern of Act 2 with its central discussion between Undershaft and Cusins flanked by action sequences in which Barbara battles for the soul of Bill Walker; the transitional nature of Act 3, scene 1; and the massive discussion which dominates the final scene.

In the blocking of the first act there is a simple (and after the opening expository sequence) rapid build to Undershaft's arrival. The ensuing sequence is developed sufficiently for his estranged family and the audience to gain an initial impression of his paradoxical personality, and then the challenges are exchanged which set up the action and pattern of the remainder of the play:

UNDERSHAFT. May I ask have you ever saved a maker of cannons?

BARBARA. No. Will you let me try?

UNDERSHAFT. Well, I will make a bargain with you. If I go to see you tomorrow in your Salvation Shelter, will you come the day after to see me in my cannon works?

BARBARA. Take care. It may end in your giving up the cannons for the sake of the Salvation Army.

UNDERSHAFT. Are you sure it will not end in your giving up the Salvation Army for the sake of the cannons?

BARBARA. I will take my chance of that.

UNDERSHAFT. And I will take my chance of the other. (They shake hands on it.) Where is your shelter?

BARBARA. In West Ham. At the sign of the cross. Ask anybody in Canning Town. Where are your works?

UNDERSHAFT. In Perivale St. Andrews. At the sign of the sword. Ask anybody in Europe. (p.91)

The last two speeches of this rhetorical exchange do more than foreshadow the principal settings of the second and third acts; they point to an expansion of the action far beyond the comfortable surroundings of Lady Britomart's house in Wilton Crescent.

Ironically this is seen in the total pattern as being situated metaphorically between the salvation shelter and the cannon works. Barbara from her secure base in Wilton Crescent may minister charitably to the needy in the shelter, but Wilton Crescent itself depends on charity proceeding from the cannon works. And the ramparts overlooking Perivale St. Andrews, as Barbara comes to realise, offer a clearer view of reality than the grimy enclosing walls of the shelter, let alone those of "an artistic drawing room." (p.183)

After the issue of the challenges the first act is brought quickly to a close with a comic but significant dispute between Undershaft and his wife over the method of conducting family prayers; Lady Britomart's commands to her daughters and their young men are defied as one after the other they follow Undershaft out of the room until in the end even Lady Britomart capitulates and only her stiff-necked son Stephen refuses to join his father. This series of exits anticipates the eventual winning over of all the members of the family to an acceptance of Undershaft's trade — with the irony, however, that the two who hold out longest here, Lady Britomart and Stephen, capitulate most easily in the final act.

The second act, the longest in the play, juxtaposes two actions:

Barbara's attempt to win Bill Walker's soul, and Undershaft's "purchase" of the Salvation Army. Shaw later commented, half-humorously, that the act "was a play in itself" and claimed that "regarded in that way, it may be said to be the most successful of all the author's plays."⁴¹ Despite the central discussion sequence between Undershaft and Cusins, which foreshadows the dénouement of the act and of the play as a whole, action predominates. The behaviour of a whole new group of secondary characters is used to demonstrate Shaw's view of the ineffectiveness of the Salvation Army's methods, and key points are made or reinforced by vivid touches of stage-business — notably those involving Undershaft's pennies, Bill Walker's sovereign, Undershaft's cheque and Barbara's badge. Stage-business also underlines the climax of the act when Undershaft brazenly joins the Salvation Army Band with his trombone playing "a marching version of the Wedding Chorus from Donizetti's Lucia de Lammermoor as the heartbroken heroine repeats Christ's last words on the cross."⁴²

In the third act however, after the brief transitional scene at Wilton Crescent has cleared the way, physical action comes almost to a halt and, with all the members of the family gathered together on a landing overlooking Undershaft's cannon works and model town, a long discussion follows in which the central issues are brought to a head. The discussion is, to a considerable extent conducted in abstract terms but it is nevertheless integral to the development of the plot. As Martin Meisel has observed,

... the schematized movement of Major Barbara culminates in, first, Barbara's conversion from Christianity, and, second, equally important, her conversion to the Gospel of Andrew Undershaft. Her fall is only the prelude to her redemption so that we have, not a discussion tacked on to an action, but an entire action treated first in one key, with an

interest in persons and events dominating discussion, then in another key, with an interest in discussion dominating persons and events.⁴³

In the published text, once the characters are in position and the discussion is under way, Shaw specifies only half a dozen moves or items of business to give visual relief. In practice, of course, a producer would be obliged to add to these, but, as in the "Don Juan in Hell" interlude, Shaw relies on the strength of his dialogue to hold his audience. For the dramatic resolution of the discussion, however, he changes the visual focus effectively by having everyone but Barbara and Cusins withdraw, and only when Cusins has told his decision to Barbara and she (like Dona Ana) has emotionally "gone right up into the skies" (p.185) are the other characters brought back for the almost child-like flurry of movement and energy which ends the play.

Barbara and Cusins have their say in this third act discussion and their decisions suggest a possible but implausible solution to the central paradox of the play. Logically the question of whether power can be harnessed for the common man by the religious salvationist and the liberal intellectual is left open, but emotionally the discussion leaves an emphatic impression that Undershaft will have his own way and that the amoral power represented by Perival St Andrews will prove too strong for the neophytes. Shaw admitted as much in a letter to Gilbert Murray:

As to the triumph of Undershaft, that is inevitable because I am in the mind that Undershaft is in the right, and that Barbara and Adolphus, with a great deal of his natural insight and cleverness, are very young, very romantic, very academic, very ignorant of the world. I think it would be unnatural if they were able to cope with him.⁴⁴

More than even Don Juan in Hell, Undershaft dominates this discussion; despite Barbara and Cusins's new awareness of reality and their brave

resolutions the open ending of the play is therefore less than convincing.

The third act discussion of Major Barbara is not only "the test of the playwright", it is a considerable test of the powers of concentration and endurance of the audience as well. Letters to Gilbert Murray and J. E. Vedrenne written by Shaw shortly before the play went into rehearsal strongly indicate his concern about the final act and the urgent need for revision rather than mere cutting,⁴⁵ but writing to Eleanor Robson after the original run of six matinees at the Royal Court Shaw expressed a sadistic glee at the strain he had been imposing on his audiences:

Even my cleverest friends confessed that the last act beat them; that their brains simply gave way under it ... The audience suffer horribly; they are pained, puzzled, bored in the last act to madness; but they sit there to the bitter end and come again and again.⁴⁶

Perhaps out of consideration for such suffering, Shaw reverted in his next play, The Doctor's Dilemma (1906), to the method of interspersing discussion throughout the narrative, thereby making it more digestible. In an unsigned programme note for a New York production in 1915, he described the play as

not only an artistic study of medical manners and morals, but an exact record of an actual discovery in serum therapeutics. It is also a sermon, a tragedy, a comedy of manners and a romance. And it is these things, not in alternate sections, with comic relief following serious interest, and serious interest preceded by emotional scenes; it is all the things it is, all the time. Its various qualities are inseparable and inextricable and simultaneous.⁴⁷

This description is not unduly exaggerated. In the first four acts discussion on medical manners and morals is interwoven with the personal drama of Ridgeon's dilemma by the use of what amounts to a chorus of medical practitioners who comment (from their varying points of view) on the medical and moral problems of the Dudebat

case as it develops stage by stage. Their absence from the final act reduces the end of the play to an ironic epilogue, but taken as a whole The Doctor's Dilemma maintains a deceptively easy balance between disquisitory drama and personal play.

In Getting Married (1908), however, Shaw threw down the gauntlet in earnest to the many critics who dismissed his plays as being "all talk." In an interview drafted by Shaw for the Daily Telegraph prior to the opening of the play, he roundly declared that Getting Married was to be his

revenge on the critics for their gross ingratitude to us, their arrant Philistinism, their shameless intellectual laziness, their low tastes, their hatred of good work, their puerile romanticism, their disloyalty to dramatic literature, their stupendous ignorance, their susceptibility to cheap sentiment, their insensibility to honour, virtue, intellectual honesty, and everything that constitutes strength and dignity in human character ...

... You remember 'A Dream of Don Juan in Hell', at the Court. You remember the tortured howl of rage and anguish with which it was received in the Press ... Well, this time the 110 minutes of discussion will be stretched out to 150 minutes. There will be no costumes by Mr Ricketts, nothing but a bishop in an apron. There will be no music by Mr Theodore Stier or Mozart or anyone else. There will be nothing but talk, talk, talk, talk, talk — Shaw talk. The characters will seem to the wretched critics to be simply a row of Shaws, all arguing with each other on totally uninteresting subjects ... The whole thing will be hideous, indescribable — an eternity of brain-racking dullness. And yet they will have to sit it out.⁴⁸

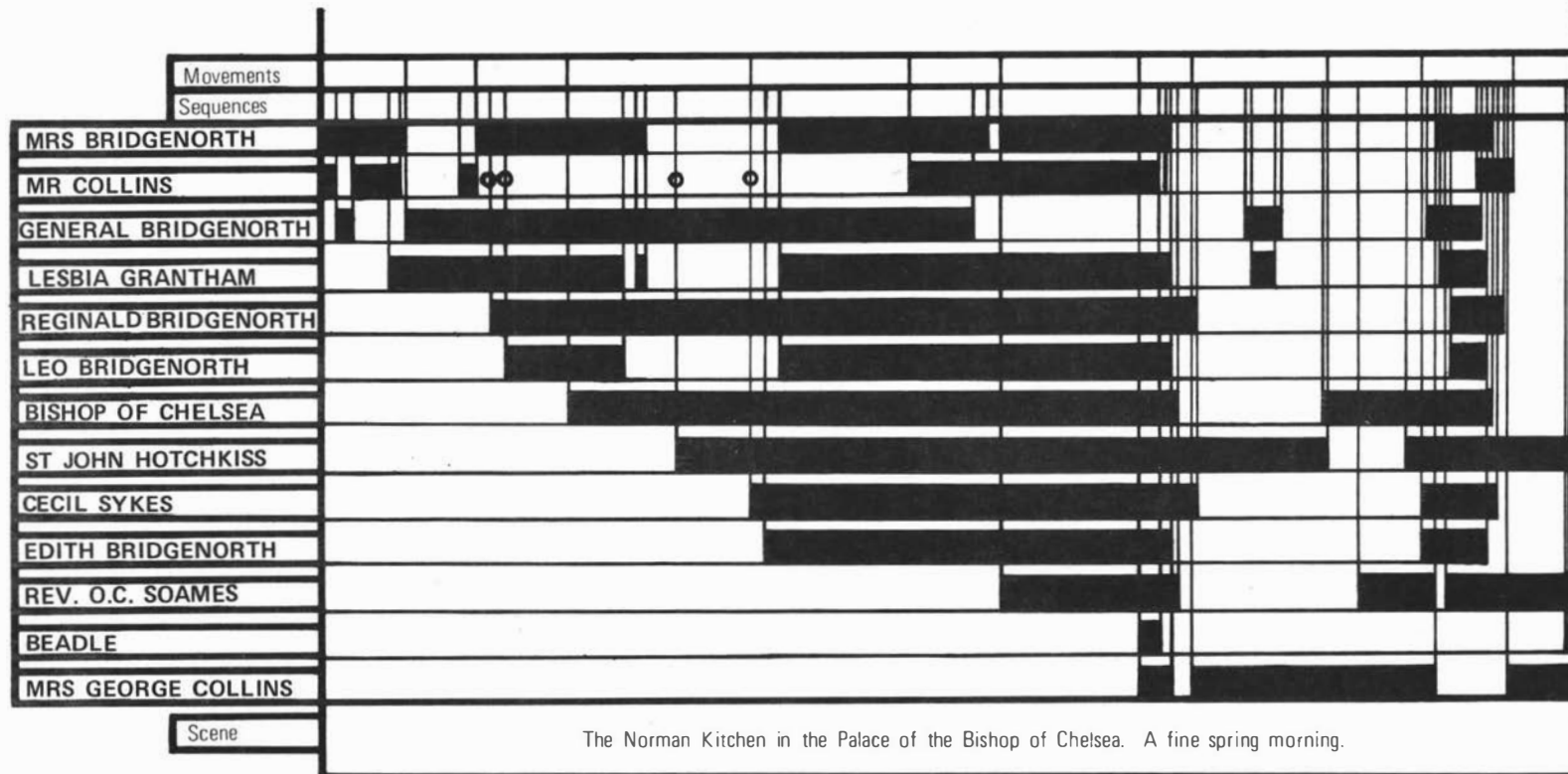
Shaw, however, had his tongue firmly in his cheek. Though Getting Married is indeed in the disquisitory mode throughout, this "instructive conversation in one piece" (to quote his draft sub-title) is in fact as carefully structured in terms of entrances, exits and stage-business as of dialectic. Paradoxically this first full-length disquisitory play is thus more theatrical than some of

the extended discussion sequences in his earlier plays. This is even more true, though in a somewhat different manner, of Misalliance (1910) and Heartbreak House (1918). These three plays may be taken as representing the quintessential Shavian disquisitory drama, and as such deserve detailed discussion and analysis in a section to themselves.

IV

Getting Married is the purest example of a discussion play in the Shavian canon (excepting, perhaps, the "Don Juan in Hell" interlude), being entirely devoted to an examination of the subject summed up in the title. Though it does have a plot (several, in fact) this is of secondary importance for in this play, as Professor Bentley puts it, "the ideas are now becoming more dramatic than the events".⁴⁹ The patterning of the play therefore is primarily designed to clarify not the plot but the progress of the discussion. Each of the characters represents a clearly-defined attitude to the institution of marriage. Shaw's basic strategy in the first half of the play is simply to feed these characters in progressively one by one until he has represented on stage a whole catalogue of objections to marriage as conceived by the Church of England in 1908. This build-up culminates in a discussion by the whole group aimed at drawing up a civil contract which would overcome their objections, but the attempt ends in stalemate with the group unable to agree on a single article. At this point the deus ex machina Mother-Earth figure of Mrs. George is introduced. She is used not merely to guide the other characters to solutions based on emotional realities but to express a mystical view of sex which transcends marriage. After this the central plot issue is rapidly resolved with the announce-

FIGURE 9: Scenario graph of GETTING MARRIED by Bernard Shaw



SCALE: 1 cm = 5 columns text (Complete Plays)

KEY: On stage Announcement

ment of the marriage in a registry office of the young people, and in a final gentle coda which thematically complements Mrs. George's vision of the momentary glory of sexual ecstasy Soames, the religious ascetic, expresses the need for "Christian fellowship" in the relations of men and women.

The sequential patterning of the play (see Figure 9) combines logical clarity with sufficient flexibility to avoid a purely mechanical effect. Though the overall pattern of the main part of the play is that of a cumulative series of entrances there is some variation in the groupings of characters, as some of them leave the stage from time to time during the build-up to reappear later on. Thus at one point the women withdraw temporarily leaving the three Bridgenorth brothers on stage emphasizing, as Margery Morgan has pointed out, "their representative characters: the three estates of Church, Army and Landed Gentry."⁵⁰ Rhythmically, too, there is variety. For example, Reginald and Leo make their entrances in rapid succession; there follows a longer sequence in which the truth about their divorce is revealed; and then the Bishop enters to initiate another sequence of moderate length taking the implications of Leo's viewpoint a stage further. Such variations give life to the pattern making it seem more like a growth than a mechanical progression.

When the order and methods of introduction of the characters are examined more closely this overall impression of the structure of the play is confirmed. Considered as a series of viewpoints the characters arrive in an order in which each new arrival contrasts with or complements the previous one. On stage at the beginning of the play are two people each of whom has been married for many years; the Bishop's wife is contented, the greengrocer is

resigned. The subsequent arrivals can be schematised as follows: a sentimental middle-aged bachelor, a determined old maid; a middle-aged husband who is being divorced, the young wife who is divorcing him; the Bishop, a philanderer; the groom, the bride; and finally two characters who present opposite and complementary views of the subject which transcend all the others: a chaplain who has taken vows of celibacy and a woman of "experience". The effect of this methodical progression, however, is modified in two ways: the views and facts revealed by the characters are often surprising, reversing the audience's expectations, and the full implications of the viewpoints of certain of the characters are held back for the final stages of the play.

After the opening pair (who necessarily introduce themselves) each entrance is carefully prepared and usually announced in advance, but the methods of preparation vary considerably. The General is simply announced and his hapless pursuit of Lesbia the middle-aged old maid revealed in the conversation which follows between him, Collins the greengrocer and Mrs. Bridgenorth the Bishop's wife. This serves as preparation for Lesbia who shortly after enters unannounced and greets her sister. The next new arrival, Reginald Bridgenorth the divorcee, is preceded by a panic-stricken argument when the respectable Bridgenorths learn that he is proposing to come to the wedding of the Bishop's youngest daughter. No sooner have they decided emphatically that he must not be admitted than he is announced. His determination to stay is followed by more consternation when almost immediately the arrival of Leo who is divorcing him (supposedly for adultery and assault) is also announced. (This pair of entrances is an excellent example of Shaw's comic technique of expediting confrontations which in a well-made play would be

held back as long as possible.)

By contrast the Bishop's entrance is quieter as he is called from his off-stage study to deal with the complications which have arisen. There is a fairly long interval before the next arrival, St. John Hotchkiss, is announced. His entrance, however, has been prepared as he is the young man Leo is proposing to marry when her divorce from Reginald is complete, but there is a slight surprise when the audience learns that he is also acting as best man for Cecil Sykes, the groom. It has already been revealed that the bride has locked herself in her room to read a pamphlet, and when in due course Hotchkiss discloses that the groom too has locked himself in his bedroom to read a book anticipation is high for the next pair of entrances. The first, announced by Collins, is that of the groom clad reluctantly in his wedding clothes, and his entrance is followed by that of the bride who bursts in wearing only a dressing-jacket and petticoat.

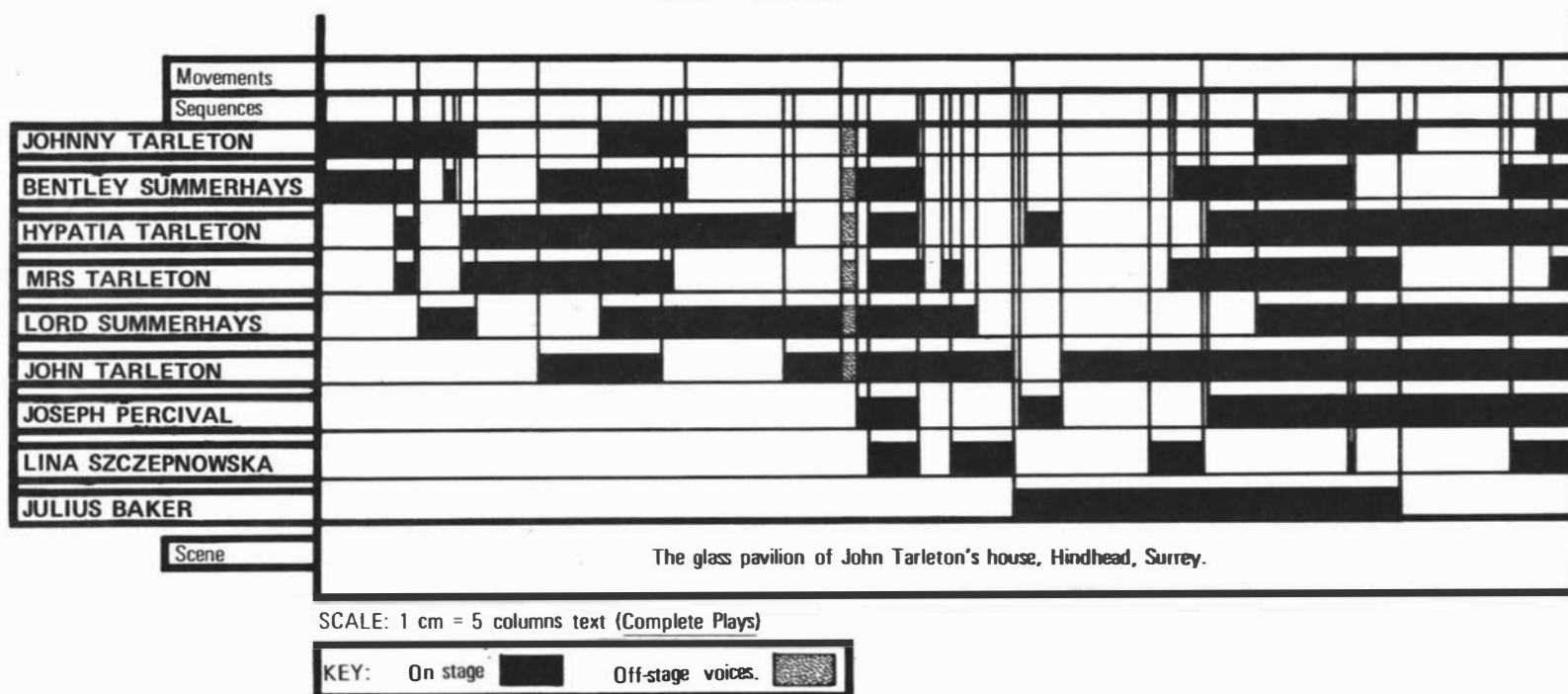
The entrances of the final two characters are given more deliberate stress emphasising the particular importance of these figures to the discussion. Sonnes, the religious ascetic, is called in to assist with the drawing up of the contract after the Bishop has described him in a full-length verbal portrait of the type often found in Restoration comedy. But the full treatment is reserved for the Mayoress, Mrs. George, who has not only been the subject of detailed discussion as early as the third sequence of the play and has been fetched by the General bearing the Bishop's ring but is given a grand entrance being announced by Collins in his alderman's robes and preceded by the imposing figure of the municipal Beadle "in cocked hat and gold-braided overcoat, bearing the borough mace" (p.622)

This is the culmination of a series of entrances in which Shaw has used every trick of the playwright's craft to vary the emphasis and point the significance of each fresh arrival. To quote Margery Morgan again, "In a play where little else happens, appearance on stage is established as an event."⁵¹

Mrs. George's arrival brings to an end the public debate about the problems of marriage and in the last third of the play she sets about dealing with the characters' problems (including her own) not on a communal basis but one by one. There thus follows a series of sequences involving only one or two characters and Mrs. George at a time, until the whole group (but minus Mrs. George) is brought together briefly for the announcement of the marriage of Edith and Sykes. After this the group again disperses, Hotchkiss and Mrs George come to an extra-marital (but Platonic) accommodation, and the play ends with the audience's attention focussed on the solitary and celibate figure of Soames writing tranquilly.

The final third of the play lacks the methodical patterning evident earlier, but in the long sequence which precedes Mrs. George's entrance the task of formulating a marriage contract which will satisfy everybody is shown to be a logical impossibility. The pattern has to be broken up in order that solutions and compromises based on emotional realities may be worked out for each of the individuals concerned. Theatrically the rapid dispersal of the assembled group by Mrs. George after her grand entrance is likely to seem anti-climactic, though her prophetic trance (which Professor Bentley has aptly described as the musical climax of the play ⁵²) is yet to come. The essential point for this discussion, however, is Shaw's refusal to be trapped in his own structure. The openness of the play does not lie merely in his juxtaposing varied points of view and giving each of them fair play,

FIGURE 10: Scenario graph of MISALLIANCE by Bernard Shaw



but in his refusal to gloss over irreconcilable differences for the sake of completing a formal pattern.

In Misalliance it is difficult to detect any patterning whatever. It is not even easy to say what it is about. Though its dialogue and eccentric characters are extremely entertaining, the play seems unsatisfactory if considered strictly as a disquisitory drama because there is no clearly-defined central topic. The title suggests that the play's subject is the mismatching of young people epitomised in the action by the obviously ill-considered engagement of the intelligent but immature Bentley and Hypatia "the glorious young beast". On the other hand the Preface implies that the real subject is misunderstandings of parents and children and in fact this is an important topic of discussion in the play. But there are many others: middle-class snobbery, colonialism, socialism and the class war to name only a few. The real subject of the play, however, is none of these topics, but talk itself. As Hypatia impatiently exclaims,

It never stops: talk, talk, talk, talk. That's my life. All the day I listen to mamma talking; at dinner I listen to papa talking; and when papa stops for breath I listen to Johnny talking. (p.176)

The sequential patterning of the play underlines the all-pervading uncertainty of direction manifested by the characters. Encounters occur in an haphazard fashion; the characters group, drift apart and regroup in different combinations according to the whim of the moment rather than any conscious design.⁵³ (See Figure 10) At the centre of the play are two incidents which reinforce this impression of an arbitrary alogical action: the aeroplane which crashes into Tarlton's glass pavilion as if in answer to his statement that his daughter "wants adventure to drop out of the sky," (p.185) and the concealment in "the Capitalist's portable

Turkish Bath" of "a ludicrously incompetent Socialist rebel."⁵⁴ None of the three characters who are introduced into the play by these fantastic means is able to restore a sense of purpose to the other characters, not even Lina Szczepanowski, "the twentieth-century goddess of the machine"⁵⁵ who has something of the same function here as Mrs. George in Getting Married. She is able, however, to achieve a little tidying up of relationships in the last brief sequences of the play when nearly all the characters gather together to see her off, and, even more significantly, to bring about a lull (probably temporary, but enough to get down the curtain) in the conversation:

MRS. TARLTON. Is there anything else?

TARLTON: Well I — er (he addresses Lina, and stops).

I — er (he addresses Lord Summerhays, and stops).

Well, I suppose — er — I suppose there's nothing more to be said.

HYPATIA (fervently) Thank goodness! (pp. 252-3)

As the discussion in the play is directed to no particular end it is not surprising that Shaw's stage-business is used not to clarify the structure of the talk but to provide relief from it. Nearly all the characters are frustrated by the social atmosphere and this is why they are so ready to leap at the chance of an anorous diversion — Hypatia with Lord Summerhays and then with Percival the pilot (despite her engagement to Bentley), and all the men with Lina. This is also the reason why from time to time the talk is interrupted by violent physical activity. In the very first sequence Johnny Tarlton threatens Bentley with a beating for impertinence and Bentley "throws himself on the ground uttering piercing yells" (p. 150) to summon help from Mrs. Tarlton and Hypatia. When Bentley is taken away and petted by these two Johnny is left choking with rage

until the entrance of Bentley's father, Lord Summerhays, who sums up the situation immediately, hands him a china punch-bowl and invites him to smash it. "Johnny, with a stifled yell, dashes it in pieces, and then sits down and nops his brow." (p.152) Later in the play (as already noted) the crashing of the aeroplane comes almost as if in answer to prayer, Hypatia vigorously molests Percival and "dashes off in pursuit" (p.208) when he bolts in the face of her advances, and Julius Baker ("the ludicrously incompetent Socialist rebel") who has been watching this scene from his hiding-place in the Turkish Bath attempts to vent his various frustrations by threatening to shoot Tarlton, and is only prevented from doing so by the timely arrival of Lina who skilfully disarms him.

The spell which Lina casts on all the men arises from the fact that she is not a talker but a woman of action, being a member of a family of acrobats at least one of whom must put his or her life at risk each day to uphold the honour of the clan. This is why she has flown in the aeroplane with an incompetent pilot and why she disarms Baker in a manner decidedly dangerous for a lesser mortal. In the final stages of the play she gives the overweight Tarlton a workout in the gym (off-stage) and when Bentley throws his final fit she simply lifts his upper half "from the ground; dives under him; rises with his body hanging across her shoulders; and runs out with him." (p.233) Throughout the second half of the play her physical daring and prowess thus supply a significant contrast to the interminable talking of the other characters.

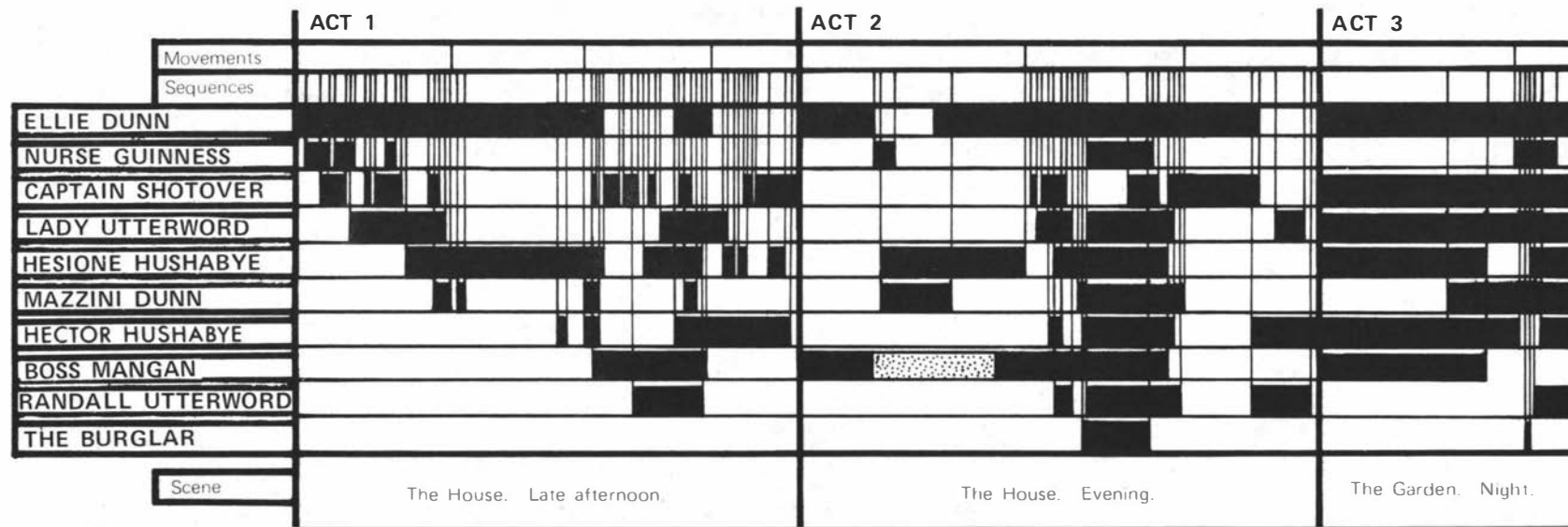
Ultimately (and perhaps with hindsight) it may be said that Misalliance is indeterminate in form because the society it depicts was indeterminate in purpose, and has no real ending because at the

date it was written (1910) the fearful consequences of the fecklessness of that society had not yet occurred. Whether or not Shaw intended this amorphousness of form is perhaps debatable (though it would seem likely), but his capacity to let his subconscious direct his pen enabled him when the crisis came to write a play in which alogical plotting coheres into a uniquely expressive emblematic structure.

The emblematic nature of the setting for Heartbreak House has always been clear. The room "built to resemble the after part of an old-fashioned high-pooped ship with a stern galley" (p.59) represents, as many commentators (including Shaw) have pointed out, the English ship of state which its cultured leisured crew allowed to drift until it was driven on to the rocks of the Great War. (As an aside it is worth noting that the settings of Getting Married and Misalliance are also emblematic. Bishop Bridgenorth's "very spacious and clean and handsome and healthy" (p.547) Norman kitchen stripped of Victorian clutter, is, as A. M. Gibbs has pointed out,⁵⁶ emblematic of the bishop's concept of marriage. Tarlton's glass pavilion provides a hothouse environment for its occupants:⁵⁷ its artificial and fragile nature is strongly emphasized by the shattering of the adjacent greenhouse when Lina's aeroplane crashes into it.) The musical quality of Heartbreak House is another critical commonplace and is any case clearly indicated by the subtitle description of the play as a fantasia. What does not appear to have been fully realised, however, is that the rhythmic pattern of sequences in the play is in itself also emblematic.

The play has the unreal atmosphere and movement of a dream, or, rather, of a twilight zone between sleeping and waking where the

FIGURE 11: Scenario graph of HEARTBREAK HOUSE by Bernard Shaw



SCALE 1 cm = 5 columns text (Complete Plays)

KEY: On stage  Hypnotised 

distinction between dream and reality is unclear from moment to moment. The brittle dialogue is charged from time to time by weird incantations, cries of anguish and mysterious drumming in the sky. Characters doze off fitfully throughout the play which begins amid the gathering gloom of early evening and journeys into night until at last the sea of darkness which surrounds the house is lit up by "the glare of fires and the blinding flash of explosions."⁵⁸ Above all, this sensation of living nightmare is conveyed by the play's irregular sequential rhythm — a pattern of agitated bursts of activity alternating with longer and longer periods in which movement almost ceases. This pattern is vividly indicated by the scenario graph (see Figure 11) which strongly resembles the cardiogram of a dying organism. A closer examination of the patterning of entrances, exits and business act by act confirms that Shaw has indeed thus recorded the heartbeat of Heartbreak House.

For the purposes of analysis Act 1 may be said to consist of four movements. The first begins quietly with Ellie, the young visitor to the house, waiting alone and dozing off over her Shakespeare, but the initially sleepy atmosphere is soon dispelled by a kind of Mad Hatter's tea party in which cups of tea are handed round and snatched away, characters exit and enter precipitately (except for Nurse Guinness whose placid ministrations counterpoint the staccato outbursts of Captain Shotover), and identities and relationships are wilfully confused. There are no fewer than twenty-one exits and entrances in this opening movement which continues until the tempo slows down temporarily for the long duologue between Ellie and her hostess Hesione. It is a distinctly odd exposition even for Shaw:

although an extraordinary amount of background and biographical detail is given, what is important is not the matter of the exposition but its manner. This is clearly expressive of the disorder of the house itself. As Lady Utterword, a fellow sufferer with Ellie, puts it:

Oh this house, this house! I come back to it after twenty-three years; and it is just the same: the same luggage lying on the steps, the servants spoilt and impossible, nobody at home to receive anybody, no regular meals, nobody ever hungry because they are always gnawing bread and butter, and, what is worse, the same disorder in ideas, in talk, in feeling. (pp. 65-6)

The second movement, Ellie's long talk in which she tells Hesione of her hopes and fantasies, provides a still centre for the act and throws the previous activity into sharp relief. Her illusions and this period of quiet are rudely shattered, however, by the shock entrance of Hector, her dream lover who is revealed as Hesione's husband, and soon after this another flurry of comings and goings, the third movement, gets under way. Characters arrive in rapid succession and are introduced to each other over and over again until the absurdity of the social charade is manifest even to them:

MRS HUSHABYE (introducing) Mr. Mazzini Dunn, Lady Ut— oh, I forgot: you've met. (Indicating Ellie) Miss Dunn.

MAZZINI (walking across the room to take Ellie's hand, and beaming at his own naughty irony) I have met Miss Dunn also. She is my daughter. (He draws her arm through his caressingly.)

MRS HUSHABYE. Of course, how stupid! Mr. Utterword, my sister's — er —

RANDALL (shaking hands agreeably) Her brother-in-law, Mr. Dunn. How do you do?

MRS HUSHABYE. This is my husband.

HECTOR. We have met, dear. Please don't introduce us any more. (pp. 93-4)

After this the characters disperse one after the other and leave

Hector and Lady Utterword together for the first of the several duologues which with the final trio between Shotover, Hesione and Hector comprise the fourth movement of the act. In these sequences, which are strongly expressive of the frustrations of the principal members of the family, the tempo slows and darkness falls on the house. However, the tempo is not ~~even~~, but fitful with embarrassing interruptions (especially for Hector) and ominous overtones.

Taken as a whole, Act 1 has a frenetic quality. There are more entrances and exits in it than in the whole of Getting Married and almost as many as in the entire span of Man and Superman, and there are also nearly 150 stage directions indicating moves and business, some of them complex, in addition to the entrances and exits. Apart from contributing to the unreal atmosphere, this activity serves to emphasise the fact that the characters are refusing to face up to what they are⁵⁹ and are trying to conceal their lack of purpose by rushing about. This is borne out by Ellie's analysis in Act 2 of the conduct of the most staccato of all the characters, the owner of the house, Captain Shotover. She tells him:

I thought you were very wise, and might help me. Now I have found you out. You pretend to be busy, and think of fine things to say, and run in and out to surprise people by saying them, and get away before they can answer you.

And Shotover admits the charge:

It confuses me to be answered. It discourages me. I cannot bear men and women. I have to run away. I must run away now (he tries to). (p.145)

Act 2 for the most part is much slower in pace. The house is shrouded in darkness, the curtains are drawn, and the action is pervaded by disillusion, despair and a sense of stasis.

Structurally, the act has three movements: the first and the last consist of duologues and trios while the central movement involves all the characters. The first movement (which lasts for nearly half the act) centres on the exposure and humiliation of Boss Mangan who for much of the time lies in an hypnotic trance, able (as it transpires) to listen but powerless to move. Mangan's trance emphasises the prevailing moral inertia which deadens the reaction of the characters to the most appalling confessions. The movement is rounded off by a short choric coda in which the members of the household and the principal guests reappear one by one to gaze at the trapped and miserable Mangan, "the latest thing in this menagerie." (p.131)

Then, suddenly, "a fall of furniture is heard from upstairs; then a pistol shot, and a yell of pain." (pp. 131-2) This is the cue for the second movement of the act, which begins with the most agitated flurry of movement so far in the play. The characters rush about frantically in response to the crisis caused by the burglar, but this sudden physical activity again underlines their incapacity to act positively and effectively. Until the arrival of Shotover, who makes short work of his former boatswain, they prove themselves quite unable to cope with the simple moral crisis forced on them by the burglar's crude attempts at blackmail. The incident provides them with some excitement, but once the crisis is over the chronic heartbreak of the characters manifests itself again and most of them, finding the atmosphere of the house intolerable, rush out into the night.

But the act is not yet over. The tempo slows down again for a final movement which stretches the length of the act almost beyond

bearable limits. Essentially the movement consists of contrasting sequences between Ellie and Shotover, and between Randall, Hector and (later) Lady Utterword. Ellie finds something of peace and consolation in Shotover's company (despite her disillusion when she discovers his reliance on rum), but there is no peace in the following sequences, only exhaustion after Randall has expended the remnants of his energy in a tired display of childish jealousy.

The feeling of claustrophobia which prevails throughout Act 2 is lifted in the third and final act which is set in the garden outside the house. The futility of the characters is thereby shown in a cosmic perspective as they are seen to be (to quote some earlier words of Shotover) "beneath the dome of heaven, in the house of God." (p.88) All sense of struggle and all pretence have now ceased. Rhythmically speaking, time seems to stand still. Structurally, this final act consists of a single movement terminated by a short, violent and seemingly arbitrary coda. In the long stretch of discussion from the opening of the act until the first bomb falls the only entrance is the gentle one of Mazzini in dressing gown and pyjamas, and the only departure is when Hesione drags off Mangan to "talk poetry ... under the stars." (p.174) There is little movement on stage either — merely a sudden flurry when Mangan threatens to strip himself physically as well as morally. The crew of the emblematic ship of state have given up all semblance of activity and their captain dozes while the ship drifts idly on a sea of talk.

Then out of the blue the calm is shattered and there is a final burst of frenzied but futile activity when the moment of shipwreck comes as if in answer to the prediction Shotover makes a few seconds earlier:

HECTOR. And this ship we are all in? This soul's prison we call England?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. The captain is in his bunk, drinking bottled ditchwater; and the crew are gambling in the forecastle. She will strike and sink and split. Do you think the laws of God will be suspended in favour of England because you were born in it? (p. 177)

Sound, lighting, entrances, exits, actions and dialogue are orchestrated to build up the following crescendo which gives the play its climax and, very nearly, its dénouement as well.

Sound and lighting provide the first cue: simultaneously "a dull, distant explosion" is heard and the light on the flagstaff goes out. Nurse Guinness runs in to announce that the police have rung ~~the~~ house to order the blackout, whereupon Hector "dashes into the house" to turn the lights back on. The burglar hurries from the house seeking shelter frantically as the flagstaff lamp lights up again, Nurse Guinness (his wife) contemptuously shoves him toward it, and then, when "another and louder explosion is heard", he "rushes away frantically into the gloom" almost colliding with Hesione "emerging panting from the darkness." Ellie and Hesione "throw themselves into each other's arms in wild excitement" "The light increases" as Hector inside the house turns all the lights on and tears down the curtains while Randall comes "running in in his pyjamas distractedly waving a flute." Then, his task completed, Hector returns, "striding across to his former place" crying, "There is not half light enough. We should be blazing to the skies."

The build-up is now complete and Shaw allows a momentary lull in activity to fasten attention on the group around the flagstaff awaiting destruction. They stand still, turned away from the house, looking up and listening as the "magnificent" drumming in the sky

increases. Then:

A terrific explosion shakes the earth. They reel back into their seats, or clutch the nearest support. They hear the falling of shattered glass from the windows.

It is not the end however. A bomb has fallen on the gravel pit exploding the dynamite Shotover has stored there and killing Mangan and the burglar who had unwittingly sought shelter amongst it. Nurse Guinness, exulting "in hideous triumph" at the death of her husband, "runs away to the gravel pit, laughing harshly" while the others reflect on the dead and wait their turn "in silence and intense expectation." But the raid is over. "A distant explosion is heard", then no more. The survivors sit down in disappointment, Shotover "goes asleep;" and only the thought that the zeppelins will return the following night consoles Ellie and Hesione. The curtain falls to the quavering sound of Randall playing "Keep the Home Fires Burning" on his flute.

The ending of Heartbreak House is an impressive example of "total theatre"; sound, sight and sense are orchestrated with masterly skill to complete the pattern of the play. This pattern is not logical or symmetrical, but rhythmic and emotional. Nowhere in the play is it stated that England is at war and that a bombing raid is imminent, but the aimless existence of the inmates of the house, though initially amusing, develops into a pattern which leads appropriately and perhaps inevitably to the violent ending. As Shaw himself observed:

The house is not Heartbreak House at first: the fly walks into the parlour with the happiest anticipations, and is kept amused until it gets fixed there as by a spell.

Then the heartbreak begins, and gets worse until the house breaks out through the windows, and becomes all England with all England's heart broken.⁶⁰

Despite the dark overtones the pattern is essentially an open one. The characters, though hardly naturalistic, remain distinct and they are juxtaposed throughout the play so that their voices and attitudes contrast sharply one against the other. (This is true even of the final coda where it would have been only too easy to subordinate character to theatrical effect.) Atmosphere and setting give the play unity, but it is important that though these become claustrophobic after a while, the move into the garden in Act 3 opens them out again and at the same time enlarges the symbolic implications of the action. Finally, the positive aspects of the ending should be noted. Though Shaw noted in his preface that "those who do not know how to live must make a merit of dying,"⁶¹ only Mangan and the burglar, the two who are most fearful for their lives, are destroyed. The others (to paraphrase Captain Shotover) look for danger, horror and death that they might feel the life in themselves more intensely⁶² and as a result are spared to face the future.

Shaw told his official biographer, Archibald Henderson, that Heartbreak House "began with an atmosphere and did not contain a single word that was foreseen before it was written."⁶³ Through his intuitive genius Shaw translated that atmosphere into a theatrical experience with a strongly contrasted and expressive rhythmic pattern. A concern for rhythm not only of dialogue but of stage effect can be seen throughout the Shavian canon but it is most apparent in the full-length disquisitory plays and reaches its highest level of expressiveness in Heartbreak House. In Getting Married, for the most part, the sequential patterning reflects the logical build up of contrasting viewpoints on the central subject, even though eventually the play demonstrates the logical impossibility of reconciling them.

With Misalliance Shaw moved from the analysis of a particular problem to a portrayal of a society which talked too much, and his occasional use of violent stage business here reflects the need of that society to find some escape, however temporary, from its boredom. There is not, though, a clear rhythmic and sequential pattern, perhaps because the society of the play did not know where it was going. By 1917 when Shaw completed the third play of the "trilogy"⁶⁴ it had found out, and the bitter process of discovery helped shape the play. In Heartbreak House atmosphere and rhythm are of the first importance, for it was through Shaw's openness to the atmosphere of the times and his gift of rhythm that he was able to create a theatrical pattern uniquely expressive of the nightmarish final hours of the English ship of state as it drifted towards and crashed on to the rocks of the Great War.

V

Shaw's "Third Manner" works portray his recovery from something approaching despair. He himself had been one of the inhabitants of Heartbreak House, and now considered that his melioristic exhortations and Fabian polemics had been exposed by the war as little more than contributions to the house's window-dressing:

When you spent a Friday to Tuesday in it you found on the shelf in your bedroom not only the books of poets and novelists, but of revolutionary biologists and even economists. Without at least a few plays by myself and Mr. Granville Barker, and a few stories by Mr. H. G. Wells, Mr. Arnold Bennett and Mr. John Galsworthy, the house would have been out of the movement.⁶⁵

Heartbreak House dramatised a society's realisation of its futility; the play's preface expresses the bitter pessimism Shaw felt in the wake of the war which that society had failed to prevent. What hope could there be for it when its fecklessness had permitted this

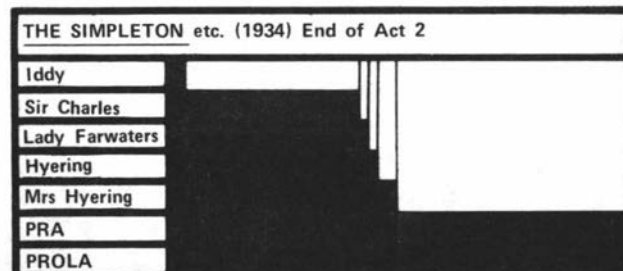
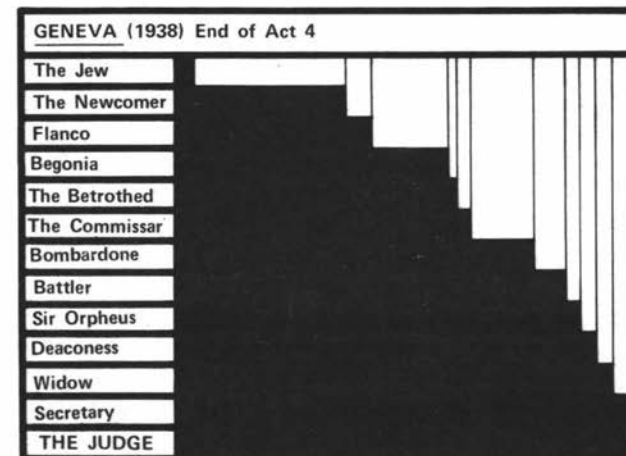
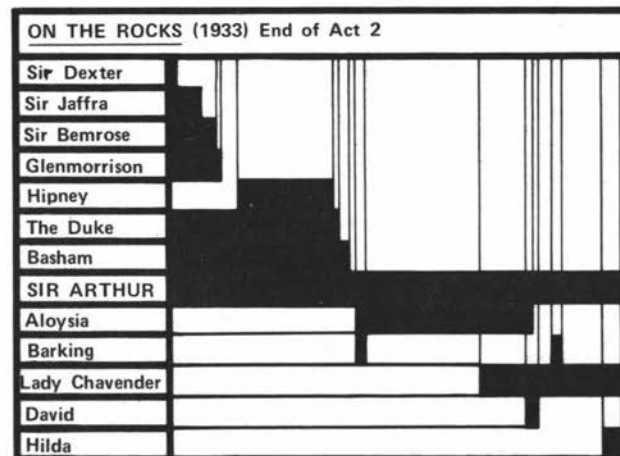
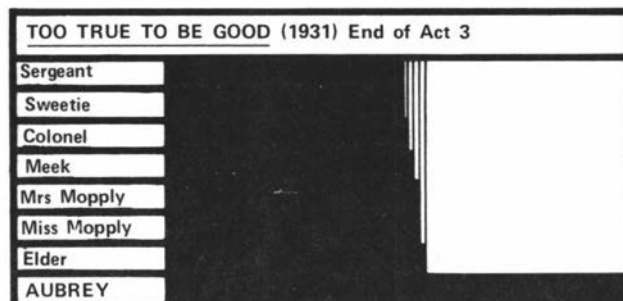
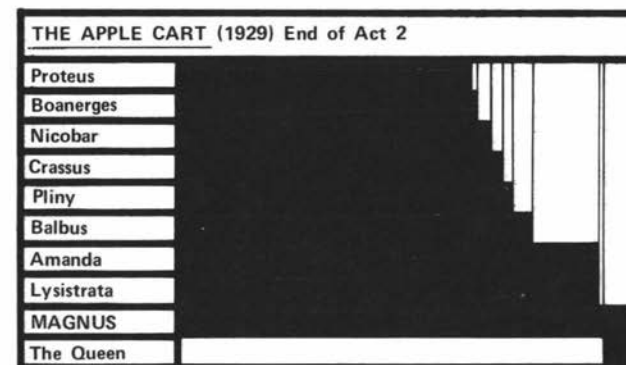
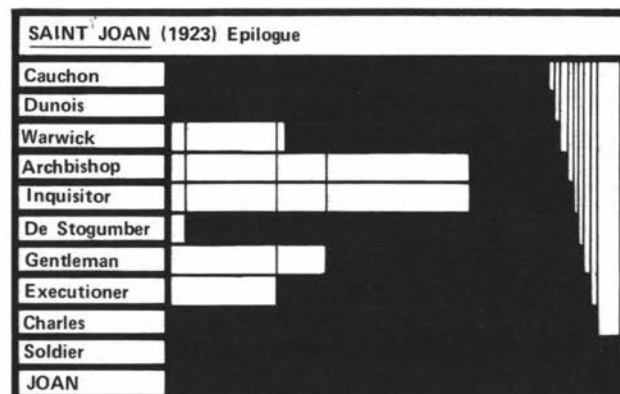
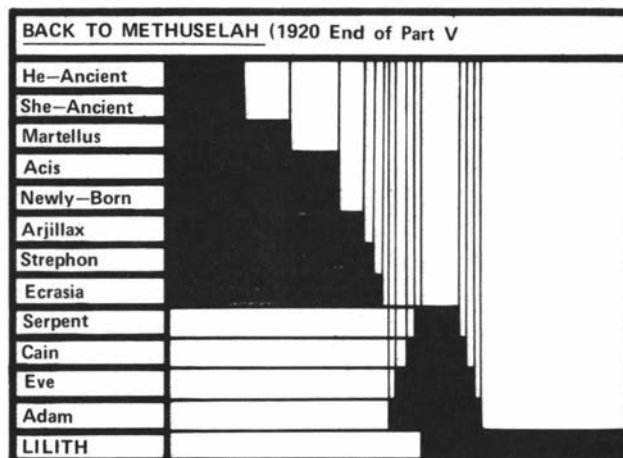
mass slaughter in which "the young, the innocent, the hopeful expiated the folly and worthlessness of their elders?"⁶⁶ What credence could be given to the "progress of civilisation" when

the impact of physical death and destruction, the one reality that every fool can understand, tore off the masks of education, art, science and religion from our ignorance and barbarism, and left us glowing grotesquely in the licence suddenly accorded to our vilest passions and most abject terrors?⁶⁷

And yet Shaw did not give up. The experience of the Great War marked but did not maim him as a writer. Most of his "Third Manner" works present visions of judgement, and yet the judgements are always provisional. The dilemmas and confusions of the present are shown but the future is left open. Nearly all of these plays express Shaw's response to the chaos of the postwar world and dramatise the efforts of characters who try to create some order or find some meaning in the midst of it. In Back to Methuselah the representatives of the Life Force, in Saint Joan the heroine and in The Apple Cart the king, have the centre of the stage, but in the later plays the emphasis is usually on groups of characters who are adrift in the confusion — hence the unpredictable nature of much of the action. Thematically and structurally the "Third Manner" works are open, though the later ones raise the problem of how open a play can be before it loses coherence.

In terms of formal structure these plays would appear to have little in common. The "Metabiological Pentateuch" of Back to Methuselah exhibits in itself a variety of forms. It begins with a short play in two acts, follows this with two long discussion pieces each in one act, then has an unevenly-weighted three-act "tragedy", and ends with a massive one-act play which includes a masque-like interlude and an epilogue spoken by the characters from

FIGURE 12: Graphs showing the "dispersal endings" of Shaw's major "Third Manner" plays.



SCALE: 1 cm = ½ page text (Complete Plays)
except On the Rocks where 1 cm = 1½ pages text.

KEY: On stage

Part 1 of the cycle. And so with the plays which followed: Saint Joan (1923) is 'a chronicle play in six scenes and an epilogue'; "The Apple Cart (1929) has two acts — the first much longer than the second — divided by an interlude; Too True to be Good (1932) is in three acts, each succeeding one being longer than the last; On the Rocks (1933) is in two acts, the second being half as long again as the first; and "The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles (1934) has a prologue in three scenes followed by two acts, the second of which is in two scenes. A comparable variety of forms can be seen in the final plays.

It might seem, therefore, that the structures of many if not most of these "Third Manner" works are merely accidental and therefore not worth serious critical attention. This, however, would be to ignore Shaw's capacity to let the form of each play discover itself. It must be admitted that this process was more successful in some plays and less in others (especially the later plays when his creative energy was diminishing), but analysis of the "Third Manner" plays will usually reveal the appropriateness of form to content. Though there is space in this chapter for detailed analysis of only one of these plays the claim may be substantiated in part by noting two structural features which most of them have in common. The first is a symbolic patterning of scenes emphasised by the use of emblematic settings, for in contrast to the major disquisitory plays of Shaw's middle period most of these plays are multi-scened. The second is a characteristic ending in which the dispersal of characters one by one creates a strange kind of fading effect (see Figure 12). Both these features are present in Back to Methuselah and brief discussion of their effect in the pentateuch and some of the plays which followed it will help to

illuminate the emotional vision of Shaw's "Third Manner" before Too True to be Good is analysed in detail as a characteristic work of this final phase.

VI

Taken in order, the eight settings of Back to Methuselah provide a kind of visual synopsis for the cycle's demonstration of its argument that man's political immaturity is an unavoidable consequence of his present brief lifespan and can only be overcome by responsible longevity. The settings point the progress of Shaw's parable of Creative Evolution by "contrasting stuffy interiors with the wide-open spaces of God's creation."⁶⁸ In the pentateuch there is a progression from exterior settings to interiors as man's lifespan and mental horizons contract, and then a return to exterior settings as man lives longer and perceives more clearly. The vision of the shortlived is literally shown as bounded by walls, but the Ancients of Part V wander freely over the hills and mountains and have no need of shelter.

In Part I the significance of Adam's refusal to face the burden of eternal life is pointed visually by the move from the primeval beauty of the Garden of Eden with its glade, tree, many-coiled serpent "glowing with new colours" (p.344) and "thick bed of Johnswort" (p.340) to the kitchen garden of the Mesopotamian oasis. In this latter setting the "fallen" Adam delves while Eve spins. They live lives of almost suburban domesticity in a log hut, and their garden plot is fenced off from the desert by a thorn brake. Part II of the cycle is set several years after World War I in Franklin Barnabas's "well-furnished, spacious study." (p.378) The brothers Barnabas blame the war on the immaturity of Europe's leaders and preach the

gospel of responsible longevity as the only possible salvation of mankind. Their perception is greater than that of their contemporaries but it is limited to political concerns. This is neatly suggested by the setting which, though an interior, has broad window seats that "overlook Hampstead Heath towards London". In Part III by contrast the futuristic interior of "the official parlour of the President of the British Isles" (p. 439) in the year 2170 A.D. has no windows. Instead the "end wall is a silvery screen nearly as large as a pair of folding doors," a massive television screen aptly described by Margery M. Morgan as "a variant of the Platonic mirror that man can turn on all things in the illusion that he is the creator of everything it reflects."⁶⁹ Science has not increased man's perception, it has only given him new toys to play with.

The first act of Part I V sees a return to the open air. The year is 3000 A.D. and the setting "Burrin pier on the south shore of Galway Bay in Ireland, a region of stone-capped hills and granite fields." (p.491) The island of the saints has become the first country of the long-lived, and the pier is a landing place for pilgrims from the nations of the shortlived. One of the latter, an Elderly Gentleman dressed in stuffy Victorian garb, sits alone on a bollard "with his head bowed and his face in his hands, sobbing." He is an anachronism in this land, and is stared at in astonishment by one of the longlived, "a woman in a silk tunic and sandals, wearing little else except a cap with the number 2 on it in gold." The Elderly Gentleman's death from "discouragement" (and by implication the eventual passing of all the shortlived) is thus foreshadowed before a word is spoken.

With the setting of the second act of Part IV "A courtyard before the columned portico of a temple" (p. 531), the walls

close in again. As the action makes clear, however, the temple is not for the benefit of the longlived, but is merely a suitably impressive setting for the "lunnery" the shortlived expect when they consult the oracle. Thus the move inside the temple in Act III is to be associated with the credulity of the shortlived who, significantly, are separated from the image of the oracle by "an abyss" (p.533). What the shortlived actually see is really a projected image of one of the longlivers dressed up as a pythoness for the occasion — the temple is, in fact, merely a glorified cinema!

By Part V, set in the year 31,920 A.D., the shortlived have long vanished from the earth. The physical setting for this final play combines elements suggestive of the settings of Parts I and IV: as in the Garden of Eden there is a sunlit glade, and as in the second and third acts of Part IV there is a temple. The return to the glade suggests that as with "In the Beginning" we are witnessing the youth of beings endowed with the prospect of near-eternal life, while once again the temple (here the skene for an open-air theatre like the Grecian ones of the fourth century B.C.) is a symbol of illusion and innaturity, being the plaything of the youths and maidens during their brief adolescence. Love, art and beauty may be the highest ideals of shortlived people, but in Shaw's vision of the future, "As Far as Thought can reach", the pursuit of such ideals is merely a childish prelude to the real business of life — the profound and endless contemplation of the universe. Thus at the very end of Part V with the falling of darkness on the glade and the ghostly reappearance of the first-born and Lilith, their progenitor, Shaw suggests the ultimate setting which his Ancients seek to inhabit and inform — the infinitude of space.

This ending requires additional comment because, as noted earlier, it is the prototype for the endings of most of the "Third Manner" plays. It consists of a kind of fading effect as the characters disperse or disappear one by one, and exemplifies Shaw's thematic "openness" by emphasising the unfinished nature of the action. Here the dispersal ending is used twice — to "fade out" the action of Part V and then, in a more ghostly fashion, to do the same for the epilogue. As night falls the characters who have been on stage during Part V disperse. " The two ancients go away severally, she into the grove, he up the hills behind the temple." (p.625) Martellus, who has outgrown the ideals of romance and art soon "passes away gravely into the grove" to study mathematics (the first stage of developing into an Ancient), while the remaining youths and maidens troop into the shelter of the temple by ones and twos, innocents as yet at the very beginning of their lives. "It is now quite dark." (p. 627) Then, "A vague radiance appears near the temple and shapes itself into the ghost of Adam." He is followed by the shades of Eve, Cain, the Serpent and, finally, Lilith. Before vanishing again into the night each pronounces a verdict on what they have seen. The Serpent is satisfied that man has at last chosen wisdom, Cain vanishes superseded but unrepentant, Eve departs, pleased that her "clever ones have inherited the earth" and is followed by Adam grumbling that he can make nothing of the latest generation. But Shaw does not rest content with coming full circle, for there still remains Lilith's great speech withholding her final judgement on mankind and stressing that all the audience have seen during this immensely long work amounts to no more than an instant in eternity. Thus the form of the ending reinforces Lilith's triumphant message:

"Of Life only there is no end."

Saint Joan is structurally the most straightforward of Shaw's later plays, its narrative being based fairly closely on historical documentation.⁷⁰ The chronicle form of the play is emphasised by the settings which provide the backgrounds for a series of animated (and disquisitory) tableaux on the career of the heroine. Thematically the use of interior and exterior scenes have similar implications to those we have noted in the settings of Back to Methuselah. Scene 1 uses an interior setting: "a sunny stone chamber on the first floor of the castle" (p.81) of Robert de Baudricourt. Robert's mental horizons are as limited as those of any of the shortlived, but the spring sunshine which comes through the opened mullioned thirteenth-century window is a harbinger of the fresh thought of the Maid waiting at the door below. There is no sunlight, however, to relieve the atmosphere of courtly intrigue and defeatism which prevails for most of Scene II. The setting is "An end of the throne room of the castle (at Chinon, in Touraine), curtained off to make an antechamber" (p.97) and the makeshift nature of the partitioning aptly suggests the Dauphin's political impotence. Scene III is set in the evening out of doors "on the south bank of the silver Loire" (p.117) and it is here, of course, that the miraculous "wind-change" takes place in the spirits of the despondent French forces. Scene IV then moves inside "A tent in the English camp" (p.124) to indicate the beginnings of the alliance of feudal and ecclesiastical forces which will attempt to destroy Joan before the beliefs she stands for destroy them. The Scene V setting of "The ambulatory of the cathedral of Rheims, near the door of the vestry" (p.141) underlines the fact that Shaw is here emphasising not Joan's achievement in bringing about Charles's

coronation but her desertion by those she has ~~aided~~ now they have no further use for her. Scenically the beginning of her martyrdom is suggested by the pillar before which she kneels for it "bears one of the stations of the cross." The final scene of historical action is appropriately set in "A great stone hall, arranged for a trial-at-law." (p.156) Ironically it is "a fine sunshiny May morning" (as in the opening scene two years earlier), but though the further end of the hall "is open to the courtyard through a row of arches," the "court is shielded from the weather by screens and curtains." The screens which attempt to shut out the sunlight parallel the way the members of the court attempt to shut out their natural feelings of compassion in the cause of abstract justice. In the end, therefore, the daylight which penetrates into the hall is reddened by "the glow and flicker of fire." (p.185)

But, of course, Shaw was not prepared to let his play end like this. In the Epilogue, presented as a dream of "Joan's Dauphin, now Charles the Victorious, aged 51," (p.190) Shaw (as in the epilogue of Back to Methuselah) not only recalls his principal characters to give their verdicts on what has happened but projects forward in time to suggest the unfinished business of the play. Emotionally, the most powerful impact of this scene comes at the end when the shades of Joan's former friends and foes (together with the emissary from the twentieth century) one by one withdraw in consternation at her suggestion that she rise from the dead and come back to them "a living woman." (p.206) It is possible to argue, as T. R. Henn does, that "to extend the tragedy in time and space in order to perceive the comedy is to remove at a stroke the possibility of a full tragic response," ⁷¹ but catharsis was never

one of Shaw's dramatic aims. In his view "the true tale of Saint Joan is a tale with a glorious ending."⁷² Joan's cry, "O God that madest this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to receive Thy saints? How long, O Lord, how long?" should therefore not be played as the final lament of a rejected world-betterer but as a challenge to the audience to consider whether they are more enlightened than Joan's persecutors.

The Apple Cart, Shaw's next major work, shows him dealing explicitly with the petty rivalries and short-sighted manoeuvrings of contemporary politicians.⁷³ Dramatic unity comes from his reliance on a strong central character and a well-defined plot issue: whether King Magnus can withstand the concerted attempt of his ministers to destroy his political influence. The outcome of his conflict remains in doubt until the very end, so, though much of the action consists of discussion sequences every bit as circular as the central one in Getting Married, dramatic interest is sustained.

Overall, as Frederick P. MacDowell has pointed out, the play has a form resembling that of an hour-glass.⁷⁴ There are two acts consisting essentially of ensemble cabinet scenes in which Magnus is pitted against his ministers, and separating these acts is an interlude involving only the king and his mistress Orintha. (The interlude, incidentally, contributes nothing to the plot but is valuable for relief and for the opportunity it gives for Shaw to display Magnus exercising his intelligence in a more private sphere.) But though the basic form of this play is very different from those of Saint Joan and the plays of the pentateuch, his use of scenic symbolism and his ending are comparable with what we have noted in the previous "Third Manner" works.

The first act setting is an interior: "An office in the royal palace" (p.281). It is here that the prime minister Proteus and his unruly cabinet present Magnus with the ultimatum of the gag or abdication, and, though the king brilliantly plays off one cabinet minister against the other and frequently succeeds in sidetracking the discussion, at the end of this long scene he is able to do no more than gain several hours' respite before he announces his decision. The interlude provides a visual contrast with the previous setting — the luxury and (comparative) privacy of the boudoir instead of the formality of the office. The second act, however, takes place in the open air on the terrace of the palace. Early in the act Magnus explains to his queen that this is a deliberate tactical move to subdue his cabinet.

Well, I think that the open air and the evening light will have a quieting effect on them. They cannot make speeches at me so easily as in a room. (p.351)

The open air setting also helps to put the conflict in its true perspective. In the enclosed office setting of Act 1 it appeared that the power struggle between Magnus and his ministers was all that mattered. Now in Act 2 the audience learns of a much more serious threat than any to the status of individuals — the prospect that the USA, backed by the mammoth capitalistic combine, Breakages Ltd., will silently absorb Britain and the Commonwealth. Thus though Magnus cleverly defeats the cabinet at the end of the play, he realizes that his victory is hollow. A great deal of time and energy has been wasted but the real battles have not even begun to be fought.

Shaw again uses a dispersal ending (though here with a difference) to emphasise his message. After Magnus has played his winning trump (his threat to abdicate and enter parliament himself!)

Proteus the Prime Minister tears up his ultimatum and departs in a black rage, followed one by one by the male members of his cabinet. Some of them are disillusioned while others are philosophical, but none comprehend the real danger which threatens the country. The women ministers, especially Lysistrata, do understand and remain a little longer to comfort Magnus, Lysistrata regretting that as Magnus will remain king he will not be able to lead the House of Commons against Breakages Ltd. Then the ladies also depart. Magnus is left alone plunged "in deep thought" until the Queen returns and ignoring his protest that he has "something very big to think about," (p.374) drags him away like a little boy to have his dinner. The great constitutional crisis is thus at a stroke reduced to the status of a childish quarrel!

The remaining "Third Manner" plays, with the exception of Too True to be Good, may be passed over with only a brief mention. They have some good things to offer, but compared with Shaw's earlier work tend to be too rambling and discursive. There is a slackening of energy in the writing — too often speeches and sequences go on long after they have made their point, and wit declines into facetiousness. Shaw himself confessed in a letter to Mrs St. John Ervine written in 1934:

My bolt is shot as far as any definite target is concerned and now, as my playwriting faculty still goes on with the impetus of thirty year's vital activity, I shoot into the air more and more extravagantly without any premeditation whatever.⁷⁵

Due allowance must, of course, be made for his customary exaggeration, for, whether intuitively arrived at or not, the actions of most of these plays do revolve around identifiable subjects and generally progress in an identifiable direction. But too often both

structurally and in the dialogue the writing meanders self-indulgently.

On the Rocks will do as a case in point. It has a clear enough subject, the Depression, but Shaw's contempt for the futile bumbblings of English politicians in the face of this crisis led him into the theatrical error of centring discussion and action on a weak protagonist. The first act shows the Prime Minister, Sir Arthur Chavender, under the illusion that he is governing England while in fact he is drifting with the tide like everybody else. The satire here is rather tedious and heavy-handed (Chavender is little more than a caricature figure, beating his brows, complaining of mental strain and mouthing platitudes), but the act and the sequences which comprise it are reasonably brief. In the second act Chavender appears a changed man, thanks to a spell of several weeks at a Shavian sanatorium where he has exercised his mind reading the works of Marx and Lenin. With the reported announcement that he is going to carry out a full-scale programme of nationalization, there arises the likelihood of an interesting conflict when Chavender comes face to face with the representatives of the various factions and vested interests in the country. But Chavender has a curiously passive role in the long discussion that follows. This consists of three movements. In the first the spokesmen for the vested interests (with the exception of the Diehard Conservative, Sir Dexter Rightside) in a series of long speeches each endorse Chavender's scheme because some aspect of it (they ignore the others) is advantageous to them. Then a delegation representing, in effect, the working class (whom the scheme is essentially designed to help) reject it utterly because they will be denied the right to strike. In the final movement of

the discussion the spokesmen of the vested interests in another series of long speeches withdraw their support and themselves until at the end Chavender is left alone in his office. Shaw's satiric point is clear enough but it is tediously presented.

The action is effectively over at this point, but the play continues on a while longer until in the final sequences there is the prospect of marriages: between Chavender's son and a wrong-headed but vigorous young woman from the worker's delegation, and between his daughter and a young aristocrat with Marxist views. Here Shaw is no doubt suggesting that through such marriages the Life Force may engender a future generation of leaders with more moral fibre than the present one. In the meantime, however, the curtain falls to the sound of a crowd of unemployed in the street below singing "England Arise" "to a percussion accompaniment of baton thwacks." (p.736) The ending is suitably ironic but it takes an unconscionably long time in coming.

Thematically, On the Rocks passes judgement on the English political system, though the sentence is suspended and the possibility of some kind of reprieve is left open. The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles (1934) and Geneva (1938), Shaw's League of Nations play, threaten the final judgement of mankind without quite carrying it out. This is pointed by the dispersal pattern endings. In the later play the knotty problem of how to end the trial of dictators by the powerless International Court is solved by an announcement that the earth is doomed because it has jumped its orbit. Accordingly the accused and the accusers hasten off, each in characteristic fashion, to make the most of their last few hours. At the end only the judge of the court and the secretary of the League remain in the room.

The orbit-jump proves a false alarm deliberately put out to save the court from delivering an unenforcible verdict, but its effect has been to extend the scope of the play's debate from immediate to ultimate judgements.

In The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles the notion of dispersal endings can be applied literally. An angel announces the Day of Judgement, saying:

The lives which have no use, no meaning, no purpose, will fade out. You will have to justify your existence or perish. Only the elect shall survive. (p.825)

Reports soon pour in of the sudden disappearance of parliamentarians, stockbrokers, professors, scientists, socialites and so on, while on the tropical island where the play is set four children representing Love, Pride, Heroism and Empire, the products of a symbolic marriage between East and West, also fade away. Eventually only Pra and Prola, the oriental priest and priestess who had co-operated with the Europeans in the eugenic experiment, remain on stage. But Prola refuses to despair at the failure of their plans, stating that "the future is to those who prefer surprise and wonder to security." (p.840) The play ends with the invocation, "All hail, then, the life to come!" Though the story of The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles may be, to quote Shaw himself, "openly oriental, hieratic and insane,"⁷⁶ its ending shows clearly that Shaw in his mid-70's, despite the confused and troubled age in which he was living, was as open to life as he had ever been.

VII

Too True to be Good in many ways sums up the leading characteristics of Shaw's "Third Manner" drama. Lacking a strong central character or a well-defined plot goal, the play seems to go where it

wills with a blatant disregard for the laws of probability. And, to anticipate, this is its point. Too True to be Good expresses Shaw's feelings about the post-war world and the post-war generation: that there no longer appeared to be any tenable laws, any reliable authorities, or even any probability beyond the probability that whatever happened would be unexpected. This outlook is similar to that of modern Absurdist drama, but with one crucial difference — the tone is often one of elation. The old certainties had gone and as a result, Shaw implies, Life offered new challenges to the young and the adventurously-minded.

In his preface Shaw states that "the main gist and moral of the play is not, as usual, that our social system is unjust to the poor, but that it is cruel to the rich."⁷⁷ But the theme of the misery of the rich in Too True to be Good merges into a wider one — that of the hazards of the new freedom of the post-war generation. As the discussions of the play make clear, the Great War had undermined, and in some cases swept away altogether, the old standards and beliefs, and for a while the sense of release was heady and exciting. Like the freedom conferred by unearned income, however, its pleasures were transitory. Shaw's extravaganza in its tone and structure captures the exhilaration of a generation throwing off the old restrictions, but after a while becoming uncertain and troubled how it is going to manage without them.

There are strong similarities between this play and Heartbreak House. Both are fantastical in structure, tone and setting; both seek to capture the mood of a generation; and both are ensemble works with lively individual characters but no protagonists. In the earlier play this is because the Heartbreakers have dissociated them-

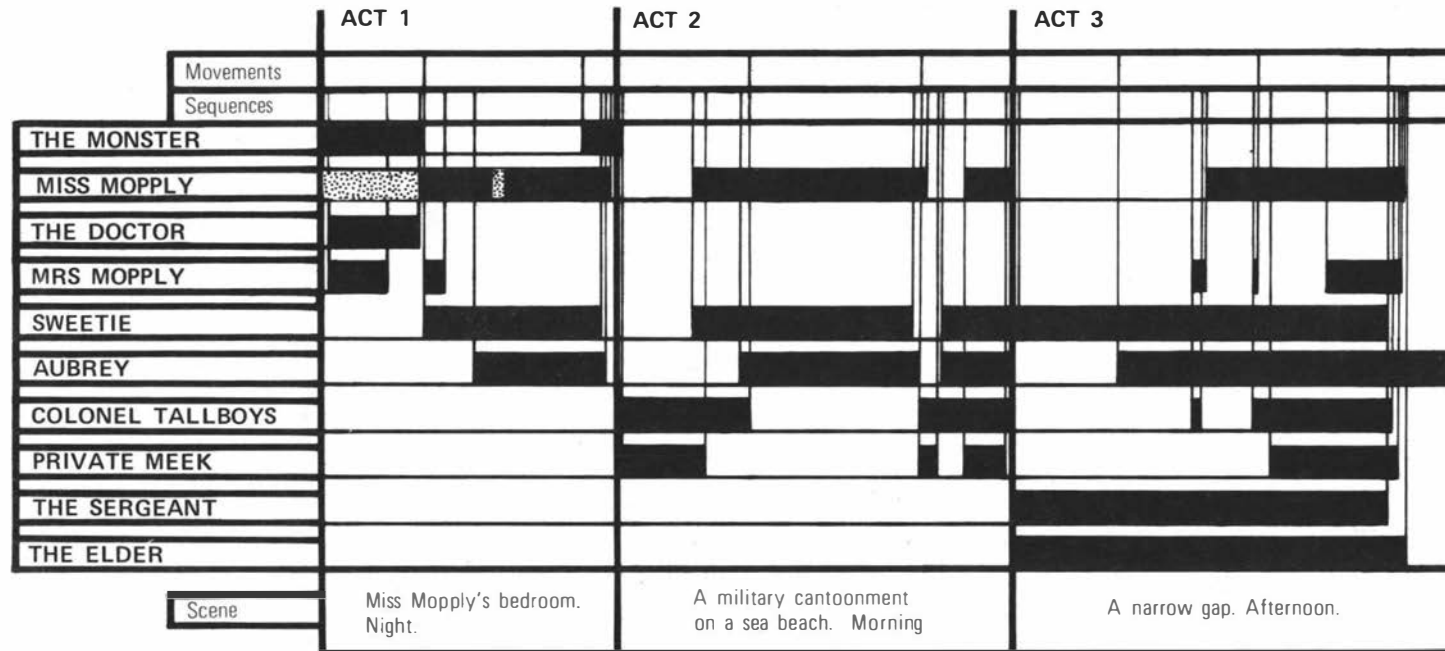
selves from the business of government; in the later play because the characters are living in a climate of moral anarchy and do not know what they really want. The worlds of both plays therefore seem unreal, and it is probably significant that Shaw appears to present the action of each play within a dream framework — Ellie being the dreamer in Heartbreak House and the patient, Miss Mopply, in Too True to be Good.⁷⁸ In neither case is Shaw specific about this — reality and dream seem to merge in a way that makes them virtually indistinguishable. Both dreams (if this is what they are) begin happily. Ellie, nodding over her Othello, is in a romantic haze; Miss Mopply on her sick-bed suddenly acquires a new sense of well-being;

Oh, this is ridiculous. I'm dreaming. It must be that new sleeping draught the doctor gave me. But it's delicious, because I'm dreaming that I'm perfectly well. I've never been so happy in my life. Go on with the dream, Pops. (p.448)

But after a time (sooner in Heartbreak House, later in Too True to be Good) the tone darkens. Miss Mopply, pursued by the figure of her over-possessive mother in the final act of the second play, exclaims "my dream has become a nightmare" (p.508), a cry which would not have been out of place from Ellie. In neither play is there any clear indication at the end that the "dream" is ended, but both girls seem strengthened (hardened, even) by their experience and therefore better equipped to cope with reality.

One or two other broad similarities in the structure and movement of the two plays are worth noting before the later one is analysed in detail. Both plays have fast-moving first acts which are full of surprises (T.E. Lawrence aptly described that of Too True to be Good as "Mozart-Shaw"⁷⁹); the second acts, apart from a sudden burst of action, consist of disquisitory duets and trios;

FIGURE 13: Scenario graph of TOO TRUE TO BE GOOD by Bernard Shaw



SCALE: 1 cm = 5 columns text (Complete Plays)



and the third acts are expertly-orchestrated long discussions involving a full ensemble of characters. There is, too, a move from claustrophobic interiors in the first acts to exterior settings designed to provide a wider symbolic perspective for the ideas which are being expressed. As will be demonstrated, however, this last feature is much more evident in the later play.

The scenario graph for Too True to be Good (Figure 13) illustrates several distinctive aspects of the play's basic blocking pattern. This is essentially one of expansion. Scenically this is pointed by the move from the confined sickbed in Act 1 to the beach and grotto settings of the subsequent acts, but the graph illustrates two other features of some importance. After the opening sequences which establish the primary symbol of the play (the sickbed with, of course, the patient in it), significant new characters are introduced in pairs in each of the three acts: the nurse and the burglar in Act 1, Colonel Tallboys and Private Meek in Act 2, and the sergeant and the elder in Act 3. This expansion of the dramatis personae is accompanied by an increase in the length of the acts: Act 2 is half as long again as Act 1, and Act 3 is half as long again as Act 2. Finally it may be noted that not until the latter half of Act 3 are all the principal characters assembled together on stage. There is thus a cumulative effect about the total pattern (prior to the ultimate dispersal of the characters and the burglar's final sermon) which is integral to Shaw's conception of an action which was to begin farcically and become increasingly serious. As he explained in a programme note to the 1932 Malvern Festival production:

When people have laughed for an hour, they want to be serio-comically entertained for the next hour; and when that is over they are so tired of not being wholly serious that they can bear nothing but a torrent of sermons.

My play is arranged accordingly. 80

Act 1 of Too True to be Good takes place late at night in "one of the best bedrooms in one of the best suburban villas in one of the richest cities in England." The door is "carefully sandbagged lest a draught of air should escape underneath" and the window is carefully sealed, "every ray of moonlight excluded by closed curtains and a dark green spring blind." (p.429) The first movement of the act is centred on the patient, Miss Mopply, "a young lady with an unhealthy complexion... asleep in the bed." Paradox is built into the action from the outset for alongside her sits a nan-sized microbe suffering dreadfully from measles caught, it claims, from Miss Mopply. As the following sequences make abundantly clear, Miss Mopply's "illness" is purely the result of self-centred indolence combined with the ministrations of a ridiculously over-protective mother. The monster acts as a satiric commentator while Mrs Mopply bludgeons the doctor into prescribing an unnecessary inoculation and then, when she leaves the room to fetch the night-nurse, informs him that he should be struck off the register. Convinced that Mrs Mopply has driven him mad, the doctor exits prophesying that "someday somebody will fetch her a clout over the head" (p.438). The monster then wanders away behind a screen, leaving the patient alone.

Miss Mopply's awakening initiates the second movement — and, metaphorically, provides its subject. "She snatches angrily at the electric bell which hangs within her reach and presses the button repeatedly." Mrs Mopply reappears with the nurse who quickly sends her away and then "opens the curtains and raises the blind, admitting a flood of moonlight." She unfastens the sash and throws it right up." (p.440) It soon becomes clear that the nurses' actions have an ulterior purpose, but their symbolic effect apropos the patient is no

less significant. From this point the action moves rapidly with paradoxical developments coming thick and fast. The nurse turns out to be the accomplice of a burglar whom she admits through the window; Miss Mopply bounds out of bed and lays both the intruders flat when they attempt to steal her necklace; the burglar reveals himself to be a clergyman and then persuades Miss Mopply to steal her own jewels and run away with him and his accomplice. Finally, the monster — miraculously transformed from "a bloated moribund Caliban" into "a dainty Ariel" (p.453) — bounds into bed and announces that "The play is now virtually over; but the characters will discuss it at great length for two acts more." (pp.455-6) Throughout the act, authority and probability are thus tossed aside with gay abandon, the effect being one of joyous release.

The setting for Act 2 contrasts completely with that of the previous act. The curtain rises on

A sea beach in a mountainous country. Sand dunes rise to a brow which cuts off a view of the plain beyond, only the summit of the distant mountain range which bounds it being visible. An army hut on the hither side with a klaxon electric horn projecting from a board on the wall shows that we are in a military cantonment. Opposite the hut is a parti-coloured bathing pavilion with a folding stool beside the entrance. (p.457)

In the shadow of a palm tree "sits a British Colonel in a deck chair, peacefully reading the weekly edition of The Times, but with a revolver in his equipment." Before long the nurse, the burglar and Miss Mopply, now disguised respectively as a French countess, her gentleman friend and her native servant, emerge from the bathing pavilion. The setting can therefore be interpreted as an ironic emblem of the British Empire between the world wars: on the fringe of some alien territory two temporary structures satirically symbolising Power and Pleasure are juxtaposed against each other,

and both are erected on sand.

The action of Act 2 (for despite the Monster's threat there is some) confirms this impression. Though Colonel Tallboys appears "every inch a commanding officer" and is under the impression that he is such, everything is in fact run by the ubiquitous Private Meek, an affectionate portrait of T. E. Lawrence.⁸¹ The conflict between Tallboys and Meek is introduced in the opening movement of Act 2 and resolved in its third and final movement when Meek effortlessly assumes authority to deal with a tribal raid and Tallboys decides to turn his full attention to painting watercolours. Thus this strand of the plot again underlines the premise of the play that the old authorities are no longer valid. Structurally the two movements sandwich a long central one containing some of the discussion threatened at the end of Act 2 by the monster. The participants are the erstwhile nurse, burglar and patient, and their discussion (though some of it takes the form of long speeches and statements delivered in turn) revolves around two main topics: the boredom of pleasure-seeking and the alarming sexual freedom of the post-war generation.

Act 3 is set in a weird landscape, presumably further along the coast. Shaw's description reads:

A narrow gap leading down to the beach through masses of soft brown sandstone, pitted with natural grottoes. Sand and big stones in the foreground. Two of the grottoes are accessible from the beach by mounting from the stones, which make rough platforms in front of rude architecture and giving them fancy names. The one on the right as you descend the rough path through the gap is taller than it is broad, and has a natural pillar and a stone like an altar in it, giving a Gothic suggestion which has been assisted by knocking the top of the opening into something like a pointed arch, and surmounting it with the inscription SN PAULS. The grotto to the left is much wider. It contains a bench long enough to accommodate two persons, its recesses are illuminated rosily by bulbs wrapped in pink paper; and some scholarly soldier has carved above it in Greek characters the word ΑΓΑΠΗΚΑΡΕ, beneath which

is written in red chalk: THE ABODE OF LOVE, under which again
some ribald has added in white chalk, NO NEED TO WASTE THE
 ELECTRIC LIGHT. (p. 492)

The two contrasted grottoes on either side of the "harrow gap" recall in a curious way the army hut and bathing pavilion which were similarly juxtaposed in the previous setting, but this time the rough-hewn brown sandstone shapes suggest survivals from a bygone age. The probability is that the grottoes in fact represent the remnants of the religious and moral beliefs of pre-war Europe, for each is occupied by a character whose bent, in a Shavian sort of way, indicates this: "Sn Pauls" by the fanatical elder whose faith in a universe governed by Newtonian physics has been shattered by Einstein's theory of relativity, and "The Abode of Love" by a serious sergeant preoccupied with puzzling out the value of the Bible and The Pilgrim's Progress in the wake of the Great War. Just as the symbolic grottoes form the background to the scene, the moral and philosophical perplexity of these two older characters provides the background for the discussion during this act. The central question for everyone here is the one quoted from The Pilgrim's Progress by the sergeant and repeated by the elder, "What must I do to be saved?"

This final act is therefore more serious in tone than the previous ones. The younger people have learnt that freedom without responsibility is not enough, and the older ones (including Tallboys and Mrs Mopply) that their beliefs have proved inadequate. Shaw's strategy here is to bring the generations together (using means which are as arbitrary as the rest of the action) so that tentative arrangements can be made about the future. Though he described the act as "a torrent of sermons" (indeed the original subtitle of the

play was "A Collection of Stage Sermons by a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature"⁸²), each new entrance is calculated to surprise the audience and change the focus of attention. Thus in the opening sequence when Sweetie the nurse finally manages to stop the sergeant's sermonising by getting him to kiss her, the elder (who has been watching them unobserved from his grotto) suddenly bursts into the scene with a fanatical diatribe. He in his turn comes unexpectedly face to face with the burglar who nonchalantly greets him as his son and then takes over the stage for a bitter attack on his upbringing and a blatant confession of his criminal activities. This completed, there is another shock as the patient's mother, Mrs Mopply, appears pursuing Colonel Tallboys through the gap and along the beach. They disappear from sight for the moment but are followed by Miss Mopply who stays to lament her inability to shake off her mother.

The turning point of the act comes when Mrs Mopply and the colonel return, and the latter, driven to distraction, "turns at bay, and brings down his umbrella whack on poor Miss Mopply's helmet."

(p.513) It is the fulfillment of a prophecy made early in the play by the doctor, and though initially it horrifies everyone present (except the colonel) this outrage against accepted standards of decorum clears the air for a realistic appraisal by the characters of what they must now do with their lives. There is one more shock entrance as Meek arrives on his motorbike with "a noise like that of a machine gun ... (which) increases to shattering intensity as it approaches." (p.514) He functions as a modern deus ex machina in smoothing out arrangements for the decisions which the characters now make. The colonel (honoured with a K.G.B. of Meek's contriving,

and supplied by him with adequate stocks of watercolour paints) decides to return to England; the sergeant and Sweetie pair up to see what might come of a union between his "top storey" and her "ground floor"; and Mrs Moppy, returning to the scene of her assault a changed woman, agrees to join forces with her daughter (whom she no longer recognises) to found a sisterhood of women whose object will be to "clean up this filthy world and keep it clean." (p.511)

Of the original trio of young people, only Aubrey, the burglar-clergyman, remains incorrigible. Throughout the play he has indulged his passion for impromptu sermonising, and at the end he incites another of Shaw's dispersal endings by giving tongue yet again. One by one the other characters steal silently away as Aubrey's gift takes possession of him and he preaches on and on, bereft of faith or affirmations, until he is enveloped in fog and darkness. The temptation, of course, is to view this ending as an emblem of Shaw's own predicament after a lifetime of dramatic preaching. However, in a final note to the play he makes it abundantly clear that the ending was written in a spirit of conscious self-parody and that his sympathies were not with the rascally preacher but "the woman of action." (p.528) Though he himself could not point the way out of the moral anarchy of the post-war world, he believed that the younger generation might find a path through "the narrow gap" symbolised in his setting, the gap between disillusionment and despair.

VIII

There is no doubt that Shaw's influence on the drama of his contemporaries and successors was profound. Pinero, with Henry Arthur Jones and others, pioneered a worthy endeavour to re-establish drama as a serious art form in England, but Shaw was the revolutionary who, virtually single-handed, swept aside the prevailing conventions and created a genuinely "new drama". Without his plays, inspiration and support it is doubtful whether the efforts of Grein, Vedrenne and Granville-Barker would have come to much, and even after World War I Shaw in his sixties and seventies continued to lead the way though there were few left to follow him. The full extent of his influence is incalculable, but some general comments relating to his broad influence on structure in modern English drama are required to conclude the first part of this study and lead into the second.

That Shaw's essential contribution was to "open up" English drama is surely beyond doubt. Though he always took account of practicalities, he consistently opposed arbitrary restrictions on forms, attitudes or ideas. As we have seen, his critical demolition of the "serious" well-made play was motivated as much by conviction as expediency — a fact which goes some way towards explaining the effectiveness of that particular campaign. Shaw did not put a stop to the writing of well-made plays, but after Pinero few English playwrights attempted to use the form for anything more weighty than detective thrillers and drawing-room comedies. A significant exception whose work will be discussed in Part Two was T. S. Eliot, but, like Shaw in his early plays, he parodied the form and combined it with other structural methods.

The well-made play is not, however, the only type of "enclosed"

dramatic structure. Other forms of tightly-patterned single-action drama are possible, especially if an overt cause-and-effect pattern ceases to be mandatory. When, indeed, causal linking is abandoned, playwrights may well feel the need to compensate for its absence by emphatic patterning and "punctuation" of the action. Freed from the chains of causality such plays are likely to be more open to various interpretations than a well-made play, but their structures tend to be more symmetrical and thus become self-enclosed. As will be demonstrated in Part Two, this has happened in the plays of Harold Pinter.

Perhaps inadvertently, Shaw had some influence on this development too, though he saw himself as a dramatic story-teller rather than a pattern-maker. Some comments on music in his essay entitled "The Sanity of Art" are relevant here:

...the moment you try to make an instrumental composition follow a story, you are forced to abandon the decorative pattern forms, since all patterns consist of some form which is repeated over and over again, and which consists in itself of a repetition of two similar halves ... a story does not repeat itself, but pursues a continuous chain of fresh incident and correspondingly varied emotions.⁸³

Drama is not as limited as music in this respect, but tight plotting (as in Pinero's social dramas) undoubtedly inhibits the invention of "fresh incident and correspondingly varied emotions" — hence Shaw's distaste for the well-made play. As we have seen, however, in many of Shaw's plays the narrative element is subordinated to a free-wheeling interchange of views, and when in his central disquisitory plays and later extravaganzas talk threatens to overwhelm action it would seem only a short step to negating the possibility of meaningful action. In fact, as has been shown by analysis of the structures of Heartbreak House and Too True to be Good in

particular, Shaw was warning his audiences against such a view. Nevertheless, the apparent undermining of causality embodied in these plays anticipates the moral climate which was to find its ultimate expression in Waiting for Godot.

Shaw's personal belief in the existence of a Life Force seeking to know itself through its creations prevented him from ever subscribing to the belief that there was "Nothing to be done."⁸⁴ The idea of the Life Force underlies his drama and was the basis of his "open" approach. His plays are far from being shapeless, but they are full of surprises and if these happen to disrupt a pattern which appears to be forming (e.g., in the latter part of Getting Married) this, from the Shawian point of view, is all to the good. As Prola the priestess comments near the end of The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles, "I tell you this is a world of miracles, not of jig-saw puzzles. For me every day must have its miracle, and no child must be born like any child that was ever born before." (p.835), Shaw's plays exemplify this belief.

Shaw was not, however, a playwright who ignored the practical realities of the theatre of his time though he constantly sought to extend the possibilities of what could be achieved with the physical resources available to him. He had, perforce, for the greater part of his career to write plays suitable for staging in proscenium theatres in which "pictorial scenery was supplanted as to indoor scenes by the building and furnishing of real rooms on the stage."⁸⁵ The effect of this was to discourage the staging of plays requiring more than a single setting to each act. It therefore was not until the later years of his career that he was able to experiment much with multi-scene forms, and even then limitations in the design and

facilities of theatres (to say nothing of the conservatism of audiences) restricted him. In an article entitled "Playhouses and Plays", published in 1926 in the New York Herald Tribune, he noted:

The cinema has restored to the stage the dramatic form used by Shakespeare: the story told with utter disregard for unity of place in a rapid succession of scenes, practically unlimited in number, uninterrupted by waits and just as short or long as their dramatic interest can bear. In this free, varied, continuous manner, almost anyone who can tell a story well can also write a play. The specific ingenuity needed to force the story into the strait waistcoat of three or five acts with one unchanging scene in each is no longer needed.⁸⁶

What the cinema had achieved in scenic flexibility he expected would in time be emulated by the live theatre. "No theatre," he prophesied, "is more likely to be generally useful in the future unless its stage is so constructed that it can present a play in fifty scenes without a break."⁸⁷ Such a stage was not available to him, but a number of his later works (including Farfetched Fables, written at the age of 92) anticipate the multi-scened episodic forms favoured by a number of contemporary playwrights including John Arden.

It is not, however, necessary for a play to be multi-scened for its structure to qualify as "open". Shaw, as has been demonstrated in this chapter, used "open" structural methods throughout his long career despite the fact that, scenically-speaking, his own practice varied from "the ultra-classic to the ultra-operatic"⁸⁸ — from plays such as Misalliance where the action is continuous within a single setting, to others such as Back to Methuselah where the unities are thrown to the winds. When, however, he does focus on a microcosm, as in Heartbreak House, he does so in a manner which emphasises the variety of personalities and points of view which it contains. This

is also true, as we shall see, of the crowded microcosms portrayed in the plays of Sean O'Casey.

In his monograph on Shaw, Professor Eric Bentley has justly noted that

Shaw's handling of ideas is "of the theatre" most obviously because he so well knows how to confront spokesmen of different outlooks. To this task Shaw brings his unequalled gift of sympathising with both sides. He once said that he has no soul because, Proteus-like, he can see the world only through the creatures he creates each of whom differs from the other. This is not a matter of fair-mindedness merely. It is a matter of a particular mentality, a particular way of observing life.

82

This fascination with the myriad possibilities of life can also be clearly seen in the drama of Sean O'Casey and John Arden. It is the hallmark of the "open" playwright.

NOTES

All citations in my text from Shaw's plays are to The Bodley Head Bernard Shaw Collected Plays with their Prefaces, vols. 1 - 6, ed. Dan H. Laurence (London, 1970 - 1973), hereafter cited as BHBS. The citations are followed by parenthetical reference to the page number of the appropriate volume of this edition:

- Volume I : Widowers' Houses, The Philanderer, Mrs Warren's Profession, Arms and the Man, Candida, You Never Can Tell.
- Volume II : The Devil's Disciple, Caesar and Cleopatra, Captain Brassbound's Conversion, Man and Superman, John Bull's Other Island.
- Volume III : Major Barbara, The Doctor's Dilemma, Getting Married.
- Volume IV : Misalliance.
- Volume V : Heartbreak House, Back to Methuselah.
- Volume VI : Saint Joan, The Apple Cart, Too True to be Good, On the Rocks, The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles.

The edition of Shaw's plays which has been used for the scenario graphs is the one-volume The Complete Plays of Bernard Shaw (London, 1965).

1. "The Author's Apology," Our Theatres in the Nineties, I, p.vii. As in the notes for the previous chapter this collection will be cited as OTN.
2. "Mr. Pinero's New Play", OTN, I, p.60.
3. Ibid. p.65.
4. "Preface to Three Plays by Brieux," Collected Prefaces of Bernard Shaw (London, 1934), p.205.
5. "Preface to Back to Methuselah," BHBS, p.337.

6. Martin Meisel's Shaw and the Nineteenth Century Theater (Princeton, 1963) documents this statement very fully.
7. "Postscript after Twenty-Five Years to Back to Methuselah," BHBS, p.685.
8. Henderson, The Table-talk of G.B.S. (London, 1925), pp.76-7.
9. "How Shaw writes his plays," Sheffield Daily Telegraph, August 15, 1934. Cited by Archibald Henderson in George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century (N.Y., 1956), p.748.
10. The Old Drama and the New (London, 1923), pp. 352-3 and 354-5.
11. OTN, II, p.83.
12. Cited by Hesketh Pearson, Bernard Shaw - His Life and Personality (London, 1961), p.282.
13. George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century, p.749.
14. "The Art of Rehearsal: a Private Letter to an Irish Colleague in Response to a Request for Advice and Information" (N.Y., 1928). Reprinted in Directors on Directing, eds. Toby Cole and Helen Chinoy (London, 1964), p.197.
15. Cited by Hesketh Pearson, C.B.S. A Full-length Portrait (N.Y., 1942), p.196.
16. Meisel, op. cit., p. 443.
17. From newspaper criticisms cited by Shaw in "Appendix I of the 1893 Preface to Widowers' Houses," Collected Prefaces, p.675.
18. "1893 Preface to Widowers' Houses," BHBS, I, p.44
19. Ibid, p. 46.
20. Ibid, p. 45.
21. Shaw makes this point specifically in a letter to William Archer, dated 30 August, 1893. See The Collected Letters of Bernard Shaw, 1874-1897, ed. Dan H. Laurence (N.Y., 1965), p.403.
22. OTN, I, p.46.
23. None of Shaw's first five full-length plays contain more than sixty sequences, and this figure is rarely exceeded in his later full-length plays.
24. As Shaw remarked in a letter to Ellen Terry, dated 10 August, 1897: "The real difficulty in that scene is not Mrs Warren's talking but Vivie's listening." Collected Letters, 1874-1897, p.795.

25. See the full discussion of this by Professor Eric Bentley in "The Making of a Dramatist," G.B. Shaw: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. R. J. Kaufmann (New Jersey, 1965), pp. 57-66.
26. William Archer, despite his low opinion of Shaw's dramatic craftsmanship, regarded Candida as "beyond all doubt a little masterpiece -- something very like a model of construction and development." (The Old Drama and the New, p. 347)
27. See G. B. Shaw "The Quintessence of Ibsenism" in Major Critical Essays (London, 1932), pp. 138-9.
28. See Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw: A Correspondence, ed. Christopher St. John (London, 1931), p.248.
29. Meisel, Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theater, p.254.
30. Letter to Mrs Richard Mansfield, 8 June, 1897. See Collected Letters 1874 - 1897, p. 718.
31. Ibid.
32. Shaw writing about himself in a letter to William Archer, 23 February, 1893. See Collected Letters 1874-1897, p. 383.
33. Major Critical Essays, p. 135.
34. Ibid., pp. 138-9.
35. Eric Bentley, Bernard Shaw (London, 1950) p. 118.
36. Ibid.
37. Shaw makes this point unambiguously in his Epistle Dedicatory to Man and Superman:
 "... if any gentleman points out that neither this epistle dedicatory nor the dream of Don Juan in the third act of the ensuing comedy is suitable for immediate production at a popular theatre we need not contradict him. Napoleon provided Talma with a pit of kings, with what effect on Talma's acting is not recorded. As for me, what I have always wanted is a pit of philosophers; and this is a play for such a pit." BHBS, II, p.518
38. The Saturday Review, 12 November, 1904.
39. Margery M. Morgan, The Shavian Playground (London, 1972), p.124.
40. See Morgan, op. cit., p.129.
41. "Facts about Major Barbara," The Sun, New York, 26 December 1915. BHBS, III, p. 194.
42. Bernard F. Dukore, Bernard Shaw, Director (London, 1971), p.119.

43. Meisel, op. cit., p. 294.
44. The letter is dated 7 October, 1905. See Collected Letters, 1898-1912, ed. Dan H. Laurence (London, 1972), p. 566.
45. The letters are dated, respectively, 1 and 2 October, 1905. See Collected Letters, 1898-1910, pp. 564-5.
46. Collected Letters, 1898-1910, p. 588
47. See BHBS, III, p. 439.
48. Ibid., p. 665.
49. Bernard Shaw, p. 128
50. The Shavian Playground, p. 177.
51. Ibid.
52. Bernard Shaw, p. 134.
53. Margery M. Morgan in The Shavian Playground (p.195) states that the play is organized "into a succession of episodes (in duologue), each terminating in an incident which brings other characters on stage for a choric interlude," these being "Mechanical features of the Greek form." The influence of Greek dramatic form is clear enough, but Miss Morgan overstates her case. As the scenario graph demonstrates, Shaw's blocking of the play is much more informal than she claims. There are several duologues which are followed by "choric interludes," but there are a number of other duologues which are not - to say nothing of various sequences involving three and four characters.
54. A. M. Gibbs, Shaw (Edinburgh, 1969), p.58
55. Bentley, Bernard Shaw, p.157.
56. Shaw, p. 52.
57. See Margery M. Morgan's The Shavian Playground (pp. 191-2) for comparative discussion about this setting and the conservatory setting of Act 1 of Granville-Barker's The Madras House.
58. Morgan, op. cit., p. 200.
59. This is underlined by Mazzini's sententious remark after the rush of introductions, "How little it tells us after all! The great question is not who we are but what we are." (BHBS, V, p. 94)
60. "Bernard Shaw on Heartbreak House", Sunday Herald, London 23 October 1921. See BHBS, V, p. 184.
61. BHBS, V, p. 22.

62. See BHBS, V, p. 146.
63. Archibald Henderson, George Bernard Shaw : Man of the Century, p.625.
64. The thematic similarities between the plays are discussed by Eric Bentley in Bernard Shaw, pp. 133-140.
65. "Preface to Heartbreak House," BHBS, V, p.15.
66. Ibid, p. 22.
67. Ibid, p. 28.
68. G. Wilson Knight, in The Golden Labyrinth (London, 1962) p.353, makes this point generally about Shaw's settings but does not consider specifically how Shaw uses such contrasts to point the thematic development of his plays.
69. Morgan, op.cit., p. 229.
70. Henderson comments in George Bernard Shaw : Man of the Century (pp. 601-2), "Shaw disclaims the real authorship of Saint Joan. He asserts that it was written by Joan herself. He says 'I have done nothing but arrange her for the stage.'" In fact, Henderson notes, Shaw did follow closely the contemporary reports of the trial and the rehabilitation unearthed by Quicherat.
71. T. R. Henn, The Harvest of Tragedy (London, 1963), p. 246.
72. See Henderson, op. cit., p. 600.
73. Meisel notes in Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theatre (p. 407) that "Proteus is recognisably Ransay MacDonald and Boarnerges is recognisably John Burns." The list could, no doubt, be easily extended.
74. See "The Eternal Against the Expedient: Structure and Theme in Shaw's The Apple Cart," Modern Drama, II, 2 (September 1959), p. 111.
75. Cited by Gibbs, op. cit., p. 111.
76. Ibid.
77. BHBS, VI, p. 400.
78. See C. B. Purdon, A Guide to the Plays of Bernard Shaw, p. 261 and p. 290.
79. In a letter to Charlotte Shaw, dated 9 January, 1932. Cited by Stanley Weintraub in Private Shaw and Public Shaw (London, 1963), p. 213.
80. BHBS, VI, p. 532.

81. Lawrence's advisory role in the writing of the play is fully discussed in Private Shaw and Public Shaw. In the letter referred to above in note 79 he comments very perceptively on the structure and stagecraft of the play despite his professed ignorance about such matters.
82. Weintraub, op. cit., p.220.
83. Major Critical Essays, p. 300.
84. Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot (London, 1956) p. 9.
85. Letter by Shaw in Joseph Harker's Studio and Stage (London, 1924), p. 188. Cited by William A. Armstrong in "Shaw: Playwright as Producer", Modern Drama VIII (February 1966), p. 361.
86. Bernard Shaw, "Playhouses and Plays " New York Herald Tribune, November 14, 1926. Reprinted in Shaw on Theatre, pp. 179-180.
87. Ibid p. 180.

88. Bentley,

88. Ibid.
89. Bentley, p. 151.

PART TWO

O'Casey and Arden

Eliot and Pinter

Chapter 4

Sean O'Casey and John Arden: Variations on "Open" Form.

I

Bernard Shaw's claim that the theatre has its own apostolic succession¹ is borne out by the drama of Sean O'Casey (1884-1964) and John Arden (b.1930). Though each of these later playwrights has his own distinctive stance and manner, they may be reckoned among the foremost of Shaw's spiritual heirs. Both, like Shaw, are unmistakably "open" playwrights: full of vitality, interested and involved in a wide range of public issues, rebellious against restrictive conventions whether of life or art, and thoroughly original in their use of dramatic techniques. Their plays, even when the subject matter and tone border on tragedy, seem crammed with life, and if at times their structures appear confused or the individual details too simplistic the sheer energy of the writing usually more than compensates for such flaws.

The sense of spiritual kinship between O'Casey and Shaw is, not surprisingly, especially strong. After O'Casey left Ireland they became firm friends and staunch defenders of each other's work.²

Among the many tributes O'Casey paid Shaw, the following is typical:

That was the great man's first attribute — his deep-felt Irish nature; his winsome wit, his ready laugh that had always in it a faint, at times full and fierce, chord of anguish, heard easily by the quick ear and felt as easily by the understanding heart; the spirit of divilment in him, his relish for an argument; his ready rebellion against all quiet submission that surged around every sham creed outworn, wearing away the brightness in the souls of those who cried out their firm or faked belief in them.³

Apart from stylistic details, this passage might equally well have been written by Shaw about O'Casey.

Their careers had a good deal in common. Both grew up in Dublin

Protestant families, both became voluntary exiles from Ireland and wrote most of their plays in England, both attacked capitalism and the "Establishment", and although they both rejected orthodox Christianity (and orthodox anything else for that matter) a strong sense of moral and even religious crusading underlies their writing. Both were late starters as playwrights but continued writing until the end of their long lives, both vigorously attacked the commercial London stage for its shallowness and especially its pseudo-realism, and, to end a potentially much longer list of comparisons, both soon abandoned naturalism and experimented with various "open" forms culminating in individual types of symbolic fantasy.

Of course there were differences too. The poverty Shaw experienced during his Dublin childhood was genteel compared with O'Casey's bitter struggle for existence.⁴ Equally significant is the fact that Shaw left Dublin at the age of twenty and established his literary reputation entirely in England. O'Casey did not leave Dublin until he was in his mid-forties, by which time he had acquired a reputation as a naturalistic Irish playwright which was to dog him for the rest of his life. Shaw was free to experiment and develop in his own way, even though the standard critical view of him was that he was an unpredictable eccentric who could not be taken seriously. O'Casey, however, in seeking to develop his art had to battle against his Dublin reputation and the charge that by leaving Ireland he had cut himself off from the source of his inspiration.

These differences obviously contributed markedly to the differences in tone and emphasis between the two playwrights. Shaw in his writing, whether plays or criticism, usually has a light touch even when his intention is thoroughly serious, and, furthermore, is always

willing to play devil's advocate. There is plenty of laughter in O'Casey but strong anger as well, and there is never any doubt about his sympathies. Far from apologising for the raucous derision with which he attacked what he regarded as repression or stupidity, he gloried in it by adopting the persona of the Green Crow:

Some Latin writer once said, "If a crow could feed in quiet, it would have more meat." A thing this Green Crow could never do: it had always, and has still, to speak and speak while it seeks and finds its food, and so has less meat than it might have had if only it had kept its big beak shut. Never mind: many have listened to its caw, some listen still...⁵

O'Casey's fierce pride and aggressive individualism made him a "loner" all his life. He refused to conceal the seamier side of the Easter Week uprising in The Plough and the Stars and aroused the fury of the Dublin audience and press; he refused to gloss over the Abbey Theatre's rejection of The Silver Tassie and effectively cut himself off from his native stage; he refused to pander to the naturalism-and-water commercial theatre he found in London and found himself virtually without a theatre at all. This characteristic lack of tact is also apparent in what John Gassner has referred to as the "ill-timing" of a number of the post-Dublin plays:

The Star Turns Red came out in 1940 during the Soviet-Nazi pact when Communism's stock had dropped sharply in the Western world. His milder Red Roses for Me, a recollection of the Dublin Transport Worker's strike of 1913, appeared in 1942 when a flare-up of conflict between labour and capital was too dangerous to the war effort to be tolerated. On the surface, Cock-a-Doodle Dandy is indiscreetly uncomplimentary to the Church of Eire. Perhaps the chief example of poor timing was the appearance of Purple Dust, an uproarious travesty on the British, when England was enduring the blitz and facing Hitler alone.⁶

Shaw, on the other hand, realised that "Truth telling is not compatible with the defence of the realm"⁷ and made no attempt to have Heartbreak House staged until after the Great War. O'Casey's refusal to make

such concessions is one of the main reasons why his post-Dublin plays, despite their vitality and originality, have been given few professional productions in England and Ireland.

Arden's career to date offers some interesting parallels. Like Shaw and O'Casey most of his plays have had a rough handling from most of the newspaper critics, and like O'Casey he has not shrunk from public disputes with theatre managements. Though Arden describes himself as "shy and diffident"⁸, he apparently has something in his temperament of the stubbornness and pugnacity commonly associated with Yorkshiremen. These qualities (reinforced by the militancy of his Irish wife and collaborator, Margaretta D'Arcy) have recently been demonstrated by his public protests over the alleged refusal by managements (notably the Institute of Contemporary Arts which presented The Hero Rises Up in 1968, and the Royal Shakespeare Company which staged The Island of the Mighty in 1972) to allow him an adequate voice in the production of his own plays. His distrust of managements is also apparent in many of his published statements and interviews. In 1964, for example, he commented in a newspaper article:

It is becoming more and more clear to me that it is impossible for workers in the British theatre ever to finish their job properly.... Once a play has passed into the hands of a company, the pressures of time and money will combine to ensure that it will be presented in a manner so slapdash and unconsidered, that if it were a ship to be put to sea or a building to be lived in, a prosecution for dangerous negligence would inevitably follow.⁹

Though plays by Arden have been presented by most of the major subsidised companies in Britain (including the Royal Court, the Glasgow Citizen's Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre) he has, therefore, tended in recent years to write for community, amateur, and fringe groups. Whether he will cut himself

off completely from the major companies as O'Casey did from the Abbey only time will tell. But like Shaw and O'Casey before him, he is likely to follow his own path regardless of either hostile criticism or well-meaning advice.

Before comparing O'Casey and Arden's attitudes to drama and dramatic technique it is worth noting that both playwrights have publicly stated their admiration of the other's work. Arden has listed O'Casey in a Tulane Drama Review interview with half a dozen modern European playwrights whose work has had an impact on him;¹⁰ O'Casey in the last essay he completed before his death in 1964, "The Bald Primaqueera", singles out Arden as the only one of the new generation of English playwrights worthy of wholehearted praise. O'Casey's essay is an attack on the life-denying negativism of the new English playwrights who in his judgement were dedicated to propagating "the last gospel according to Artaud."¹¹ Pinter and David Rudkin, for example, are compared as follows:

Rudkin works barehanded; Pinter wears gloves so that not even a finger-print is deposited in the writing. Rudkin roars like any sucking dove. Prim Pinter is genteel, he rarely shouts, but uses the voice like the sibilant purr of a Siamese cat, ready to change to the dangerous hiss of a snake at any minute. His quicker dialogue ... is like the hammering of a woodpecker's beak against the trunk of a tree! His slower tense is like the tap tap tap of the stick of Tiresias. Pinter doesn't behead his personae non gratae with a hayfork! [This happens to a character in Rudkin's Afore Night Come.] He pulls them to pieces in his pauses; the one kills with a shout, the other in a silence.¹²

After observing that none of the new avant-garde playwrights appeared to like people, plants or animals, O'Casey turns with evident relief to Arden:

Arden, of course, writes about a workhouse donkey, but he isn't one of the avant-garde and doesn't deal only with nonsense and savagery. Indeed, it seems to me that

Serjeant Musgrave's Dance is far and away the finest play of the present day, full of power, protest, and frantic compassion, notwithstanding that, on its first presentation, it was scowled and scooted from the theatre by most of our intelligent and unintelligent drama critics. I wonder why! What dazzling Freudian id or idiom swept this rejection into them, making them reject the denunciation of war's horrors, and led them to embrace the plays which despise and hate life.¹³

No doubt as O'Casey wrote this tribute he remembered the Abbey's rejection of his own anti-war play, The Silver Tassie, but it is also clear that in this final essay he was saluting a kindred spirit.

Both O'Casey and Arden have advocated in their public statements and endeavoured to practice in their plays an art which is at once public and poetic. Rejecting a claim by Kingsley Amis that the theatre is "a conceited and inconsiderable place where good writers are destroyed by the world", Arden commented in a 1964 TLS article entitled "Poetry and Theatre":

The example of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, and others shew that it was once possible for poets to adapt their work either for private circulation or for public performance without diminution of its quality ... Aristotle said that the heroes of tragedy should be princes and governors, upon whose actions the fate of society hung, and, granted the changes in social organisation since his time, I think that this is a rule that still holds good ... Poetic commitment ... must be applied to a vision of the world in action which can be conveniently represented by actors on a stage ... Thus the workings of politics, the exposure of social evils, the manners of a particular section of society, may all have a place (and a sincerely felt place) in a play which is not basically about them at all. They are all themes of public import and may serve to publicly illustrate the poet's prime preoccupation, the celebration of his Muse and her part in his personal world.¹⁴

Against this passage may be set two from essays by O'Casey:

There is a lot to be said for the opinion that all, or most, of the older greater works, if not loaded, are strongly tinted with social significance; that they comment on and often condemn, the activity and manner of their time, In England alone, from Chaucer and Langland up to Auden and T.S. Eliot the life we have lived, religious, civil and political, and the life we live, have been examined and commented on according to the period in which the life was lived and the works were written. The thinker, the playwright and the

poet have shared in the struggle for the rights of man; and if they didn't wield a sword at least they carried a banner.¹⁵

and:

Be the effort a success or failure, I aim, as I have always aimed, at bringing emotion and imagination on to the stage, in the shapes of song, dance, dialogue and scene; each merging with the other as life does; for life is never rigid ...¹⁶

The difference between O'Casey's more militant stance and Arden's more exploratory one is obvious from these quotations (many more along similar lines could be quoted), but both writers are nevertheless invoking the same general ideal of drama based on the same tradition.

A distaste for the picture-frame stage and naturalism¹⁷ is common to both playwrights. O'Casey's attacks on these conventions was full-throated and uncompromising:

And now the stage has become a picture-frame, a fourth wall, a lighted box in which the actors and actresses hide themselves as much as possible from the people ... Again, the picture-frame stage has driven speech from the stage, and the next step will bring actors to the playing of plays in dumb-show. Already they are among the whisper-and-I-shall-hear boys. They have lost the power to raise their voices, and indeed, taking most of the plays we have on the stage now, it is just as well that the dialogue should be reduced to a mutter. But it is strange that a man should be allowed to raise his voice, and should feel no self-consciousness when he does so at a street corner, on a public platform, in the solemn House of Parliament, or even in the House of God; but no man must be allowed to raise his voice on the stage.¹⁸

Arden has been less aggressive on this topic — perhaps because his contemporaries have been writing more interesting and varied plays than the drawing-room comedies of Coward and Lonsdale which aroused O'Casey's ire¹⁹ — but he has plainly stated his preference for the open stage time and again. The following comment from his introductory note to The Happy Haven is typical:

The unsatisfactory organization of the English theatre in

general and the archaic design of its buildings continually hamstringing any attempt on the part of dramatists and directors to open out the conventions of the drama; and I must record my gratitude to Bristol University and its Department of Drama [which staged the original production of The Happy Haven] for making it possible to prove to myself that the leanings I have long had towards the open stage and its disciplines were justifiable in practice as well as in theory.²⁰

Arden's success in opening out the conventions of the drama — in large measure a matter of reviving the use of pre-naturalistic dramatic conventions — will be considered further in a later section of the chapter, but, in passing, it is worth noting his agreement with O'Casey on the subject of the "whisper-and-I-shall-hear boys." He has, for example, on several occasions expressed his disapproval of T.S. Eliot's attempt to merge verse with naturalistic-sounding dialogue, maintaining that theatre-poetry (like all the other elements in a vital theatrical production) must "be strong, and hard at the edges."²¹

With Shaw, O'Casey and Arden must be reckoned among the most ambitious of modern English playwrights for they seek in their work for a restoration of the drama as a public art celebrating the complexity and multiplicity of life. All three playwrights have drawn freely on traditional modes and conventions in creating their own distinctive varieties of "open" play. Two further passages by O'Casey and Arden merit quotation to emphasise this point and preface an examination of the particular structural methods used by each.

O'Casey:

The new form in drama will take qualities found in classical, romantic and expressionist plays, will blend them together, breathe the breath of life into the new form and create a new drama. It will give rise to a new form of acting, a new form of production, a new response from the audience; author, actors and audience will be in communion with each other — three in one and one in three. If a play is what

it ought to be it must be a religious function, whether it be played before a community of thousands or a community of ten. Gay, farcical, comical or tragical it must be, not the commonplace portrayal of the trivial events in the life of this man or that woman, but a commentary of life itself. This is the main thing to be done if the drama of today is to be in the mainstream of the great drama of the past. To achieve this, the veneration of realism, or, as Archer called it, pure imitation must cease, and imagination be crowned queen of the drama again.²²

and Arden:

The essential artificiality of the public stage will become apparent again ... People must want to come to the theatre because of the artificiality, not despite it ... I am pleading for the revival of the Poetic Drama, no less.²³

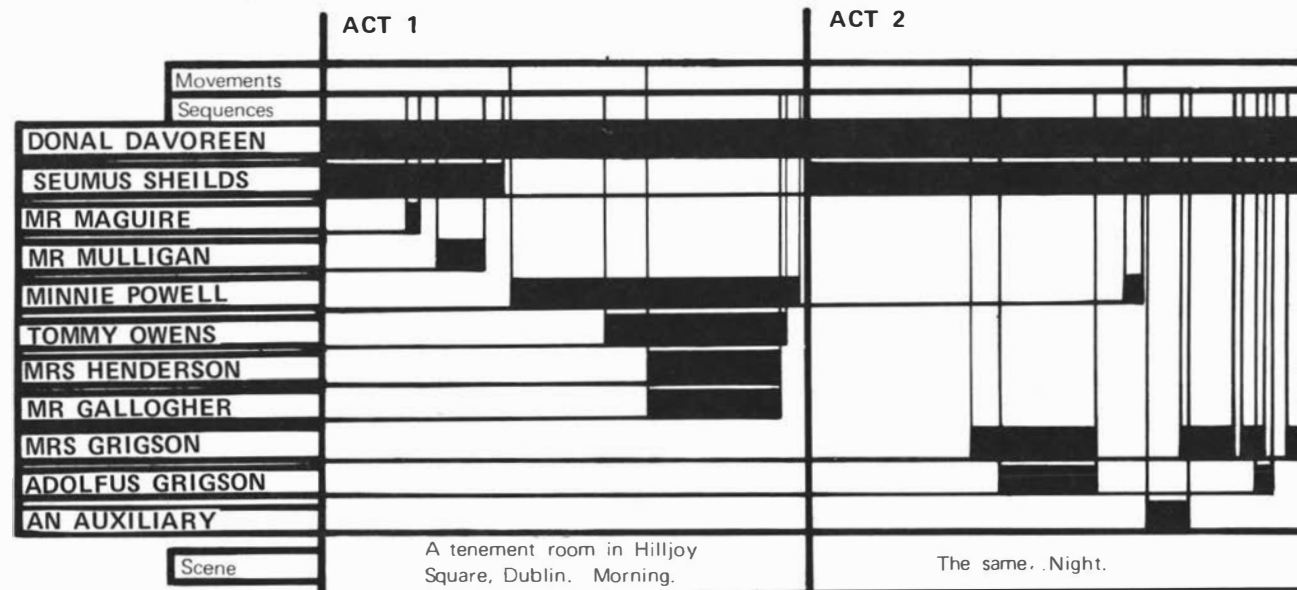
II

Whatever else may be questioned about the drama of Sean O'Casey, the "openness" of his approach to playwrighting is beyond dispute. Even the Dublin plays — The Shadow of a Gunman (1923), Juno and the Paycock (1924) and The Plough and the Stars (1926) — show a progressive reaching-out to widen the range and scope of the action portrayed. This is apparent in terms of structure as well as of style and content.

David Krause notes in his full-length study, Sean O'Casey: The Man and his Works:

The extent to which O'Casey gradually mastered the disciplines of dramatic form can be seen in the development of his craft with each succeeding play. At the beginning, in The Gunman, he probably had more genius than talent — a daring and original insight into the tragi-comic life of his characters, but a rather cautious and conventional approach to the form and development of the action. He confined his characters to a single set in a tenement room, using only two acts both of which are constructed in similar patterns of inter-linking episodes ... If anything there is probably too much similarity in this recurring pattern of action within the confines of a nineteenth-century box-set; too much unity in the sense that the repetitive pattern of both acts has a tendency to become

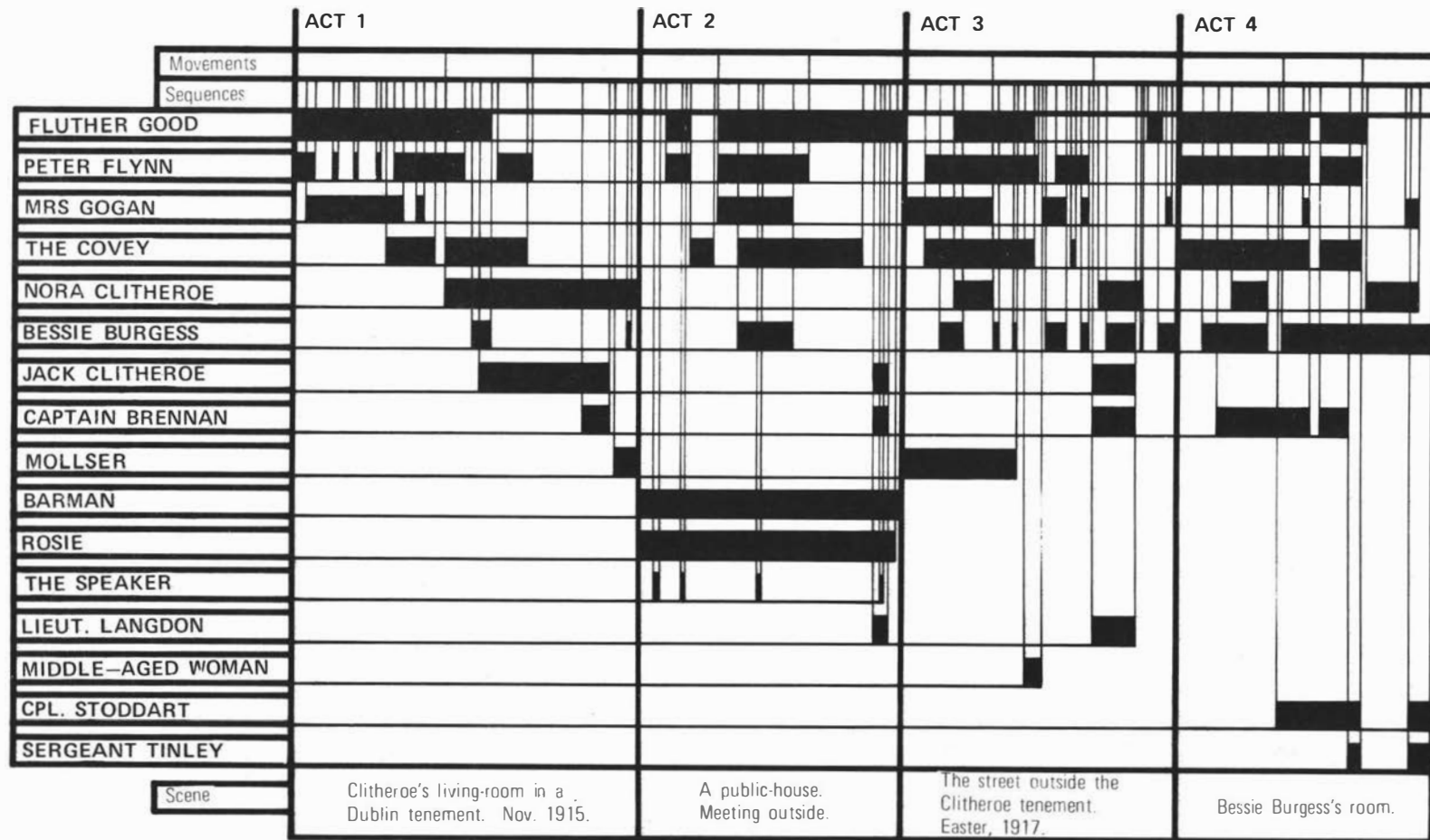
FIGURE 14: Scenario graph of THE SHADOW OF A GUNMAN by Sean O'Casey



SCALE: 1 cm = 5 pages text (Collected Plays)

KEY: On stage

FIGURE 15: Scenario graph of THE PLOUGH AND THE STARS by Sean O'Casey



SCALE: 1 cm = 5 pages text (Collected Plays)

KEY: On stage



mechanical. There is, to be sure, a vigorous and varied movement in the play, but it arises from the propulsive life of the characters not the conventional arrangement of the form.²⁴

In Juno and the Paycock Krause notes O'Casey's "re-location of the main plot in the comic characters" (a feature which was to become something of a trade-mark in many of the later plays) and his use of "the more flexible three-act structure" which allows the audience to "see the Boyles in contrasting moods, struggling and roistering in tragi-comic conflict with each other and their friends."²⁵ The Plough and the Stars, however, marks the culmination of this stage of O'Casey's career:

It is in The Plough that O'Casey achieves a firm control of his craft. Structurally he allows himself a more flexible use of time place and action — The Gunman covers two days in one set and two acts, Juno covers two months in one set and three acts, The Plough covers six months in four sets and four acts. The interaction between the characters is more complex, and since we see them in a greater variety of moods and situations, the individuals stand out in sharp relief against the tragi-comic panorama.²⁶

A comparison between the scenario graphs for The Gunman and The Plough (Figures 14 and 15) reveals at a glance the increasing complexity of O'Casey's structural technique. The jump from twenty to over a hundred sequences is proof enough, but more important is the way the playwright in the later play varies the appearances of his basic ensemble of eight major characters to change the focus of attention and avoid the simple mechanical linking of episodes which Krause rightly criticises in The Gunman. (A good example of this increased technical sophistication is the way in which O'Casey punctuates the expository conversation between Fluther Good and Mrs Gogan at the beginning of Act 1 by the comical series of entrances and exits of Peter Flynn "dhressing himself up in his canonicals"

for the "Great Demonstration".) A more extensive use of off-stage voices and sound-effects in The Plough together with a somewhat increased use of characters who make only one or two appearances (though the Barman and Rosie who provide the continuity in Act 2 are too important to be dismissed as supernumeraries) obviously contribute to the impression that we are watching a whole society at war. The key to this effect, however, is the handling of the basic ensemble — and especially the comic quartet of Fluther Good, Peter Flynn, Mrs Gogan and the Covey. Another factor, of course, is (as Krause notes) the increase in the number of settings, but as O'Casey like Shaw, was obliged to write for proscenium theatres where the rule was no more than one setting to an act, this particular progression could not go on indefinitely. O'Casey was therefore obliged to adopt other means in order to expand the scope of his drama still further.

What these were to be is strongly suggested in The Plough by the use of expressionistic elements such as "the silhouette of the Speaker with his passionate rhetoric flashing intermittently through Act 2"²⁷ to suggest the fanatical, impersonal patriotism behind the Easter Rising. Denis Johnston was virtually alone among critics at the time of the play's original production in seeing which way O'Casey was going:

... it is becoming increasingly clear that as a realist he is an imposter. He will tell you the name and address of the person who has made each individual speech in any of his plays but we are not deceived ... His dialogue is becoming a series of word-poems in dialect, his plots are disappearing and giving place to a form of undisguised Expressionism under the stress of a genius that is much too insistent and far too pregnant with meaning to be bound by the four dismal walls of realism. It will be interesting to see how long he will try to keep up so outrageous a pretence.

Some two years later O'Casey confirmed Johnston's insight with the nakedly expressionistic second act of The Silver Tassie (1928) and after this never returned to the naturalistic style for a full-length play. The scope of his ambition and his desire to break new theatrical ground are apparent in his comments in his autobiography on the genesis of The Silver Tassie.

He would show a wide expanse of war in the midst of timorous hope and overweening fear; amidst a galaxy of guns; silently show the garlanded horror of war ... And he would do it in a new way. There was no importance in trying to do the same thing again, letting the second play imitate the first and the third the second. He wanted a change from what the Irish critics had called burlesque, photographic realism, or slices of life, though the manner and method of two of the plays were as realistic as the scents stealing from a gaudy bunch of blossoms.²⁹

Even though the effectiveness of the second act in the context of the other three comparatively naturalistic acts has been a matter for debate ever since the play was written,³⁰ O'Casey's change of manner was now unmistakable. However, as Krause has noted, he "did not become a doctrinaire Expressionist" or "construct a theory of drama to explain his experiment. He had found a new form, not the ultimate form of drama, and he reshaped it and modified it according to its function in the symbolic second act."³¹ Non-realistic stagecraft predominates in his subsequent plays but expressionism is only one of the styles he fuses with others to achieve, ultimately, a new form of comic fantasy.

The post-Dublin plays are experimental and differ widely in their detailed technique, but they do have a number of broad features in common. To quote Krause again, O'Casey "in all his plays uses multiple plots in a loosely unified form, mingling comic and tragic themes, farcical and melodramatic incidents, and playing them against each other in ironic counterpoint."³² In later plays, however,

unity is achieved less through plot and character than by the use of various symbolic devices and patterns. All these plays have a central symbol which inspires or sums up their action. These symbols supply the titles and are usually present in the action as props, scenery, sound effect or as a character.³³ The titles of The Silver Tassie and Red Roses for Me belong to ballads which are sung in the plays and also refer to important props, "the star turns red" in the sky on Christmas morning as the workers fight on against the Fascists, "the drums of Father Ned" sound out to encourage the young people preparing for the Tostal, and the "cock-a-doodle dandy" cuts his capers in Marthraun's house and garden. These title-symbols inform the action of their plays, they do not enclose it — except very broadly in Within the Gates where the Park presents in microcosm the life and world outside the gates.

In addition to the title-symbols, progressive modifications in the settings often underline the emotional patterns of the plays. This technique is used in Juno and the Paycock where the living-room of the Boyle's tenancy is first seen to be sparsely and poorly furnished, then vulgarly over-furnished and decorated, and finally stripped of nearly everything. In the symbolic plays such scenic comment is given greater stress. Religious iconography silently and ironically comments on each of the four acts of The Silver Tassie: in Act 1 it takes the form of the "altar" displaying Harry Heegan's football medals and the cross-spar of the troop-ship mast seen through the centre window above the "altar"; in Act 2 the setting is a ruined monastery with a figure of the Virgin and a damaged life-sized crucifix to one side while at the back "in the centre where the span of the arch should be, is the shape of a big howitzer gun" (p.35)

— the new god; in the hospital setting of Act 3 is another statue of the Virgin and each bed has suspended over it "a chain with a wooden cross-piece" (p.57) to enable weak patients to pull themselves into a sitting posture; and finally in Act 4 over the football-club festivities which the crippled Heegan can only watch hang three long lanterns which "suggest an illuminated black cross with an inner one of gleaming red." (p.80) In Purple Dust the great room of the Tudor-style Irish mansion in which the effete English businessmen, Stoke and Poges, hope to live as country squires is progressively demolished by their Irish workmen even as it is cluttered up with more and more imported antique furnishings. But the most spectacular modification of a setting in these plays is in Oak Leaves and Lavender where Dame Hatherleigh's great room changes into an emblematic factory to suggest the transformation of England by the Second World War.

A related type of scenic modification which O'Casey used in a number of the symbolic plays is based on diurnal, seasonal or climatic progressions. Nature was important to him and he exploited the pathetic fallacy shamelessly. In Within the Gates the device is used in an extreme form with the four scenes of the play being arranged into a combined seasonal and diurnal cycle; the first scene takes place "On a Spring Morning", the second "On a Summer Noon", the third "On an Autumn Evening" and the last "On a Winter's Night." (p.116) Though the action of the play shows a progress into darkness with the Young Woman dying at the end of the play, the cyclic pattern suggests that the life and beauty which she represents (and which are emphasised in the final scene by her dance with the Dreamer) will return. The pattern, however, overshadows

the rather abstract characters so that the play projects less life, in fact, than O'Casey's earlier "realistic" drama. In the later comic fantasies his use of such patterns is simpler and less obtrusive. The three acts of Purple Dust, for example, contain a progress into winter paralleling the impinging of reality onto the businessman's dreams of an aristocratic return to Nature. Act 1 is set on "an autumn morning, crisp and fair", (p.3). Act 2 on "a cold and misty morning", (p.46) and Act 3 is punctuated by "the sounds of falling rain and swishing winds." (p.83). Similar patterns appear in Cock-a-Doodle Dandy and The Drums of Father Ned.

Although they share the broad structural features which have been outlined, the symbolic plays can be divided into one or other of two categories according to tone and subject-matter. The first group, the political moralities, include Within the Gates (1933), The Star Turns Red (1940), Red Roses for Me (1942) and Oak Leaves and Lavender (1946); the second group, the comic fantasies, comprise Purple Dust (1940), Cock-a-Doodle Dandy (1949), The Bishop's Bonfire (1955) and The Drums of Father Ned (1959).³⁴ Generally critics sympathetic to O'Casey regard the fantasies more highly. Though all the plays share the same general theme — the conflict between the forces of repression and those who strive for a fuller and more joyful life — the moralities tend rather blatantly to classify the characters as good or bad according to whether they support communism or capitalism. In the fantasies this political bias is less apparent (though those in authority, notably the priests, generally come off badly) and, more importantly, a spirit of comical satire informs the symbolism. Audiences will accept much more from a playwright when he makes them laugh than when he lectures — a point which Shaw always bore in

mind but which O'Casey sometimes forgot. In none of his plays, however, is the comic spirit so vividly present and in charge of the action as in Cock-a-Doodle Dandy. Here O'Casey's dramatic vision and methods combined to create an action which follows its own unique rules but which is eminently effective and theatrical.

III

Cock-a-Doodle Dandy was O'Casey's favourite, and he thought this best play.³⁵ David Krause has aptly described it as "a fantastic extravaganza, a satiric parable which celebrates man's freedom and joy in the life-sized image of a dancing bird out of the beast-fable tradition."³⁶ The play also conveys a fierce denunciation of the killjoy influence of the priesthood on Irish society. Between 1911 and 1947, as Professor William Armstrong has noted in an introduction to the play, the population of Eire decreased by 150,000 and many of the emigrants were young men and women who left "to escape the repressive influence of the type of parish priest who restricts the hours of dances and the number of occasions where members of the opposite sex may meet."³⁷ This, in brief, is the background to the main conflict of the play: a semi-allegorical struggle between the forces of repression and joy — the former led by the bigoted Father Domineer, and the latter symbolized by the enchanted Cock which, in O'Casey's words:

dances and crows, rousing up commotion among the young and the souls zealous for life, and consternation and hatred among those who demand denial and the necessity to keep the mind well within the dark; rousing up controversy between the courageous and all who are afraid of others and equally afraid of themselves.³⁸

The form of the play, however, enables it to transcend its application to social conditions in mid-century Ireland. Writing

about Cock-a-Doodle Dandy in a New York Times article prior to the play's American premiere in 1958. O'Casey claimed:

The play is symbolical in more ways than one. The action manifests itself in Ireland, the mouths that speak are Irish mouths; but the spirit is to be found in action everywhere; the fight made by many to drive the joy of life from the hearts of men; the fight against this fight to vindicate the right of the joy of life to live courageously in the hearts of men.³⁹

This is true. The symbolic setting, the folk-tale quality of the characters, the fantastical nature of the incidents, and the "open" structure which freely juxtaposes comic and tragic elements, all combine to give the work universality.

The origins of O'Casey's fantasy form go back to a sketch which he wrote in 1923 and which was staged at the Abbey Theatre less than six months after The Shadow of a Gunman, his first naturalistic full-length drama. Entitled Kathleen Listens In, this "Political Phantasy in One Act" poked fun at the Irish factions which were still at loggerheads after the partition of the country and the establishment of the Free State of Eire. The first-night audience, according to the playwright,

received it in dead and embarrassed silence, and it was the one and only play ever produced in the Abbey that did not receive even a single handclap. Like the Arabs, the audience folded their tents (minds) in the night, and silently stole away.⁴⁰

Perhaps because of this, O'Casey did not bother subsequently to include the piece in his collected plays, but in 1961 he gave permission for it to appear in the Tulane Drama Review and wrote a brief introductory note to emphasise that the existence of the play proved that the "phantasy" form had been active in his mind "before the 'major' realistic plays were written, tho' most critics maintain that the fantasy began after I left Dublin."⁴¹

In Kathleen comic fantasy is used for the purpose of political allegory. The action is neatly summarised in a sympathetic review which appeared in The Irish Statesman on October 6th, 1923:

It is unnecessary to explain a play where the heroine is Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan, and the characters are a Free Stater, a Republican, a businessman, a farmer, a labourer. The mordant idea of the play is found in the spectral Gaelic League, under the figure of a feeble old man in kilts — who receives solemn homage from the actors, whenever he appears, but is voted a nuisance and a lunatic when his back is turned. The climax of the comedy is reached when at the height of the shouting for Cathleen's suffrages the Boundary Question stalks by playing on a big drum the appropriate air.⁴²

The farcical incidents which make up the piece might appear now to be without rhyme or reason, but in fact they parallel the contemporary quarrels and events fairly closely. The point that O'Casey was trying to make through comedy was that the brawling of the suitors was threatening to drive Kathleen (Ireland) out of her mind and wreck the Free State house barely after the Houlihans had acquired the freehold.

For the most part similarities between Kathleen and Cock-a-Doodle Dandy are general rather than particular. The form of the later play, though its episodic appearance relates it to the earlier one, is obviously much more complicated and there is nothing in Kathleen to correspond with the animating spirit of the Cock. As for the background of Cock-a-Doodle Dandy, O'Casey has stated that

almost all the incidents are factual — the priest that struck the blow, the rough fellows man-handling the young, gay girl, the bitter opposition to any sign of the strange ways of a man with a maid, the old, menacing fool, full of false piety, going round inflicting fear of evil things on all who listen to him; and, above all, through the piety, through the fear, the never-ending quest for money.⁴³

Here, however, he is dealing with more universal issues than in the earlier play and these "factual" incidents are primarily illustrative

of a theme rather than an allegorical revamping of historical events. Nevertheless allegory of a kind was still intended as the striking correspondence between the settings of the two plays makes clear. Both of these specify a garden, backed by a low wall with a gate in it,⁴⁴ and part of a house with an outside door and upstairs windows visible. The symbolic status of each establishment is underlined by flagpoles in the gardens from which fly the Irish Tricolour. In Kathleen the house belongs to the archetypal family of O'Houlihan (Miceawl, Sheela and, of course, Kathleen) and represents the newly formed Free State. Significantly its upstairs windows are broken and further damage is inflicted inside the house during the play. In Cock-a-Doodle Dandy Michael Marthraun's almost identical house is stated to be situated in Nyadnanave, which Krause points out "means in Gaelic, Nest of Saints and ... also contains the ironic pun, Nest of Knaves."⁴⁵ Professor Armstrong goes a step further and suggests that the name "may also be a wry comment on the traditional description of Ireland as 'the land of saints and scholars.'"⁴⁶ Be that as it may, the house and garden (backed now by Marthraun's "lucrative bog") clearly represent Ireland some twenty-six years after the political squabbles satirised in Kathleen. Though the conflict in Cock-a-Doodle Dandy has a wider and more general application, O'Casey was evidently concerned here to show that Ireland was once again in danger of destroying itself.

The central characters of the play (leaving aside the symbolic figure of the Cock) are Michael Marthraun and Sailor Mahan — yet another of the pairs of quarrelsome "oul' butties" in the O'Casey canon. They are the local capitalists in Nyadnanave. Mathraun has acquired two hundred acres of peat bog by marrying his second

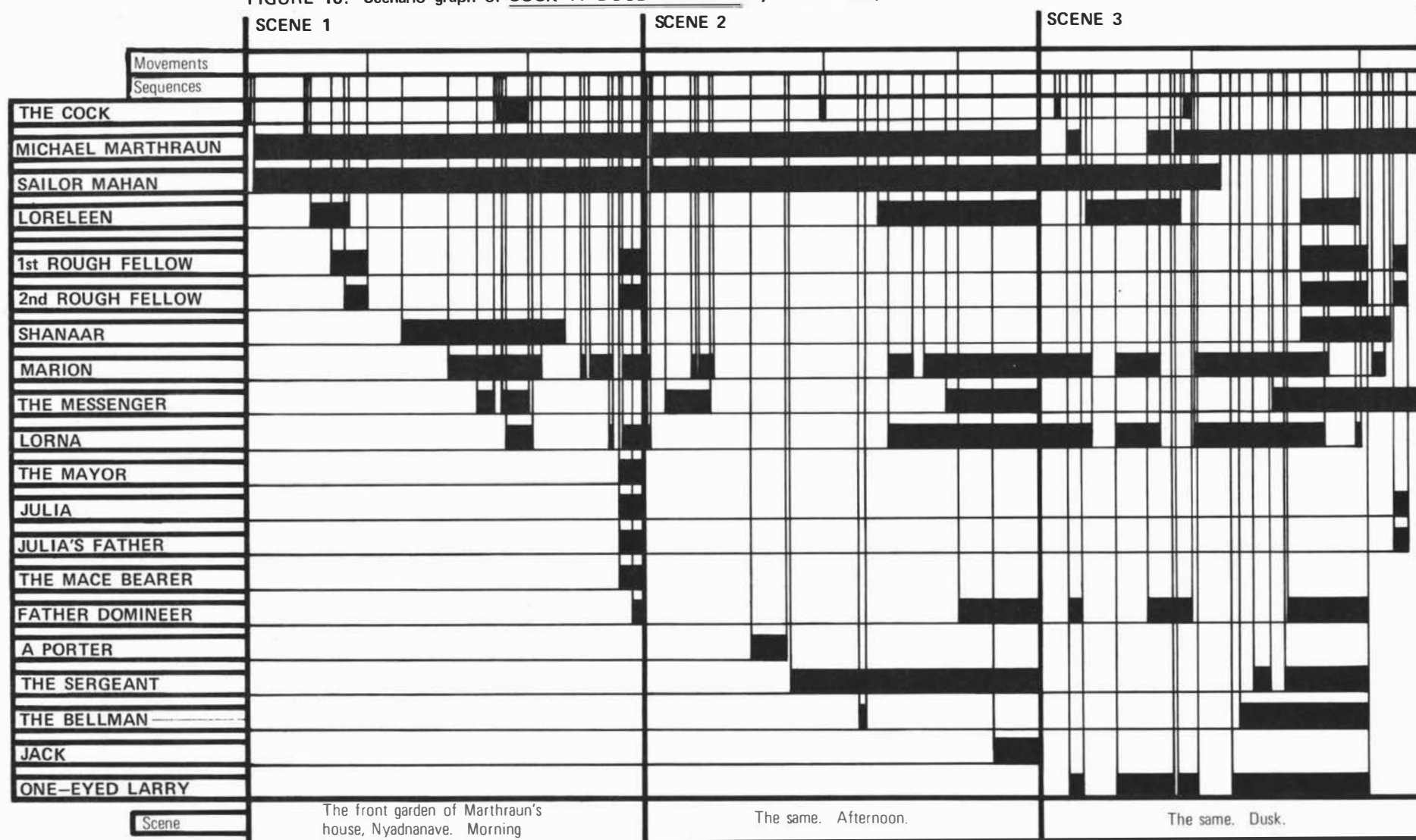
wife Lorna, and has not only become well-to-do through exploiting this dowry but has been made a Councillor and a Justice of the Peace. Nahan has also become wealthy through the bog as he owns the fleet of lorries which carry the turf to town. Both men are middle-aged but are quite different in appearance and temperament. Michael is "well over sixty years of age, clean-shaven, lean, and grim-looking", while Mahan "is a little over fifty, stouter than his companion, and of a more serene countenance ... There is, maybe, a touch of the sea-breeze in his way of talking and his way of walking" (p.122). They are central to the play in two different ways. They remain on stage together for most of the action and thus have a choric function. But they also function as a kind of dual morality protagonist, for the main action of the play is, in effect, a struggle for their souls (though there is little hope for Michael's) between the opposing forces of joy and fear. In addition, they have a third role — that of providing much of the comedy as they are the principal butts of the Cock's pranks.

Most of the other characters can be quickly classified as belonging to one or other of the two camps in the struggle. The followers of the Cock include Loreleen, Michael's daughter by his first wife Marion the maid, Robin Adair the Messenger, and, as she gathers courage, Lorna. The folk ballad origin of the characters of Marion and Robin is obvious, and it seems likely that the name of Loreleen, the character most closely identified with the Cock, is derived from the siren of the Lorelei. All of these characters wear costumes in which green and red, the colours of life, are prominent, and the Cock himself has "bright-green flap-like wings" and a "big crimson crest flowers over his head." (p.122) The

agents of Father Domineer include Shanaar and One-Eyed Larry, the 1st and 2nd Rough Fellows (though at their first appearance these two show a potential for blarney), the Sergeant, the Bellman and the Porter. The dying invalid Julia and her father must be reckoned simply as victims of the clerical establishment, but, of course, in a sense this applies to virtually all the characters.

Structurally the play has a simple framework which allows plenty of scope for comic improvisation and the juxtaposition of thematically-telling incident. The action is divided into three long "Scenes" of approximately equal length. The first takes place in the morning, the second around mid-day, and the third at dusk. This, as we have seen, is a familiar O'Casey pattern which here, of course parallels the progress of the village into spiritual darkness. The play begins with the Cock dancing in the morning sun and ends with the last of his followers walking into exile. Within the scenes the organisation is episodic, a succession of illustrative incidents any one of which, according to Robert Hogan in The Experiments of Sean O'Casey, "almost could have another incident substituted for it."⁴⁷ Hogan's "almost" is necessary, however, for two reasons. There is, as we shall see, a principle behind the fantastic happenings in the play: the Cock ~~works~~ through the power of the imagination, ridiculing the secret fears of his enemies by translating them into ludicrous reality. This principle provides the succession of episodes with a kind of comic logic. The other general point to be made about the arrangement of the episodes is that O'Casey has contrived it so as to build an effect of increasing comic and emotional intensity, and in Scene 3 the structure becomes more complex with strands of action interweaving and overlapping.

FIGURE 16: Scenario graph of COCK-A-DOODLE DANDY by Sean O'Casey



SCALE: 1 cm = 5 pages text (Collected Plays)

KEY:

On stage



The scenario graph of the play (Figure 16) illustrates how O'Casey has "blocked" the appearances of his characters to achieve this sense of development. The centrality of the roles of Michael Marthraun and Sailor Mahan is apparent, both being on stage almost continuously until their paths diverge in the final scene. The episodic linking in the first two scenes (cf. Figure 14) is also clearly suggested by the graph as each new major sequence sees the commencement of a new episode. Generally in the larger-scale patterning of the scenes, several successive episodes may be considered as a group to comprise a movement. (Most of these movements begin and end with a cock crow or the actual appearance of the Cock.) The increase in theatrical impact of the successive episodes in Scenes 1 and 2 is suggested by the increase (generally speaking) in the number of characters on stage as each scene progresses. The largest groupings come in the final sequences and are accompanied by a sharp change of tone. In Scene 3, however, the "blocking" becomes much more complex as episodes involving different characters are interwoven into the structure of the first movement rather than presented in a simple linear manner. The greatest concentration of characters in Scene 3 comes about three-quarters of the way through, and then in the final movement the play has a dispersal ending similar in structure to those of Shaw's "Third Man" works but more bitter in tone. For the finer points of O'Casey's structural methods in the play, however, we must now turn to the text.

O'Casey's main concerns in Scene 1 are to establish the opposing forces in the conflict and the mechanism by which the fantasy is animated. It is obviously significant that the first figure to appear is the Cock and the last is Father Domineer. The Cock's

appearances in the play, except for one longer one, last for only a few seconds at a time as he is, strictly speaking, not a character but a force, the moving spirit behind the fantastic japes and transformations which take place. His initial dance in Marthraun's garden establishes this:

Some little distance away, an accordion is heard playing a dance tune, and, a few moments after, the Cock comes dancing in around the gable of the house, circles the dignified urn, and disappears round the farther end of the gable-end as the music ceases.

He is of a deep black plumage, fitted to his agile and slender body like a glove on a lady's hand; yellow feet and ankles, bright-green flaps like wings and a stiff cloak falling like a tail behind him. A big crimson crest flowers over his head, and crimson flaps hang from his jaws. His face has the look of a cynical jester. (pp.121-2)

Introduced before any of the characters have appeared, the Cock's presence in the play justifies the way in which the fearful imaginings of characters such as Michael Marthraun take on ridiculously visible forms. Dialogue and stage-business are intimately linked in the patterning of the fantasy for literary metaphor is thus likely to become dramatic fact at the drop of a hat — quite literally as will be seen later!

After the prelude of the Cock's dance, the first movement of the play gets under way when Michael Marthraun and Sailor Mahan come into the garden, each carrying a chair from the house. They virtually camp in the garden for all of this scene and the next, as Michael is too scared to remain in the house where he can hear strange whispers, "whispers good for neither soul or body." (p.123) It is evident that these whispers proceed from his own sexual fears which have been aroused by the return from London of his grown-up daughter, Loreleen. Michael states that he doubts that he is her father and that he dreads meeting her, then goes on to confide in

Mahan that:

Since that one come back from England, where evil things abound, there's sinister signs appearin' everywhere, evil evocations floatin' through every room ... there's always a stern commotion among th'holy objects of th'house, when that one, Loreleen, goes sailin' by; an invisible wind blows th' pictures out, an' turns their frenzied faces to th' wall; once I seen th' statue of St Crankarius standin' on his head to circumvent th' lurin' quality of her presence; an' another time, I seen th'image of our own St. Pathrick makin' a skelp at her with his crozier; fallin' flat on his face, stunned, when he missed! (p.124)

Another of Michael's hallucinations, arising from the same source, is his belief that he has seen horns sprouting from the head of his young second wife, Lorna, as she sat looking at her face in her mirror. Sailor Mahan, being a more broad-minded and better-balanced individual, is at first sceptical of all this. Nevertheless, Michael's hysteria is catching, and with the Cock around it is not long before these sexual imaginings take on forms which can be perceived by the audience and in due course even by Mahan.

At first the manifestations are aural. They begin with Michael pointing to Lorna's window and commenting:

Up there in that room she often dances be herself, but dancin' in her mind with hefty lads, plum'd with youth, an' spurred with looser thoughts of love. (As he speaks, the sounds of a gentle waltz are heard, played by harp, lute, or violin, or by all three, the sounds coming, apparently, from the room whose window is above the porch. Bitterly) There, d'ye hear that, man! Mockin' me. She'll hurt her soul if she isn't careful. (p.125)

Mahan does not comment directly on the music so it is an open question whether he hears it. He and the audience could perhaps imagine that it comes from a gramophone, but in fact Michael's reference to Lorna as "plum'd with youth, an' spurred with looser thoughts of love" suggests that the Cock is obligingly laying on the sound effects.

The lusty cock crow which coincides with Loreleen's entrance

shortly after this is similarly cued. Michael has just gone into the house to fetch a bottle of whiskey which he hopes will soften Mahan up for a business discussion about a wages increase which their workers are demanding, when he reappears suddenly, "his mouth twitching, his voice toned to fear and hate", to announce that Loreleen is coming down the stairs. He begs Mahan to sit down and ignore the girl, and when Mahan asks him if he is in his right mind replies "Ay, am I sure; as sure as I am that a cock crows!" Thereupon, "A cock ^{suddenly} crows lustily as Loreleen appears in the doorway of the porch." (p.127) The crow suggests the close identification of the Cock and Loreleen (she wears a "saucy hat ... its shape suggestive of a cock's crimson crest") and thoroughly alarms Michael. Mahan, however, does not hear it and Michael, when he realises this, tries to cover up by claiming that he has heard nothing either.

The second episode, thus introduced, illustrates an important theme which complements the play's main one of the conflict between bigotry and joyousness: the corruption of men's souls brought about by "the never-ending quest for money."⁴⁸ It is here that Sailor Mahan is most at risk; he is no bigot or killjoy like Michael but he does share his greed. Its corrupting power is demonstrated in two ways in this movement: by the quarrel between Michael and Sailor Mahan over which of them should bear the brunt of paying the extra wages demanded by their workers, and by the behaviour of two of the latter—the 1st and 2nd Rough Fellows. Loreleen's presence during the quarrel between Michael and Mahan silently points out how money-grubbing causes men to turn their backs on beauty and joy. This is then emphasised more forcibly when the two Rough Fellows enter. In turn each strides into the garden pushing Loreleen

aside, then stops when he realises her beauty and suggests that she wait for him until he has finished speaking to his boss. Loreleen, however, replies ironically, "I'm not good for decent men. The two old cronies will tell you a kiss from me must be taken undher a canopy of dangerous darkness." She kisses a hand to them and goes out the gate. The Rough Fellows threaten Michael and Mahan with strike action unless the old men give them the extra shilling they are demanding, and only then turn to follow Loreleen. However, as they do so they see "A cloud closin' in on her, flashes like lightning whirlin' round her head, an' her whole figure ripplin'" as (off-stage) she appears to turn into "a fancy-bred fowl", and "The crow of a cock is heard in the distance." (p.132) Taking this as a warning "of what th' Missioner said last night that young men should think of good-lookin' things in skirts only in th' presence of, and undher the guidance of, old and pious people", the two Rough Fellows hurry fearfully away in the opposite direction. The evil alliance between money and bigotry is thus shown to corrupt both the young and the old in Nyadnanave.

The second movement begins with a continuation of the argument between Michael and Mahan, and the arrival of the old religious fanatic, Shanaar. O'Casey describes this character as seemingly "'a very wise old crawthumper', really a dangerous old cod." (p.119) His wisdom is really a mixture of bog Latin and superstition, but he is regarded by Michael with great respect. Hearing that Mahan has been unmoved by Michael's talk of evil forces, Shanaar begins to tell stories of how birds had led pious men to damnation, and does so with such conviction that soon all three men are actually hearing the cries of the birds and the sobs of the damned. When asked by

Michael what he would do if "a hen goes wrong", Shanaar replies:

The one thing to do, if yous have the knowledge, is to parley with th' hens in a Latin dissertation. If among th' fowl there's an illusion of a hen from Gehenna, it won't endure th' Latin. ... She busts asundher, an' disappears in a quick column of black an' blue smoke, a thrue ear ketchin' a screech of agony from its centre!

His boast is immediately followed by a sudden outburst:

A commotion is heard within the house; a loud cackling, mingled with a short sharpened crow of a cock; the breaking of delf; the half-angry, half-frightened cries of women. A cup, followed by a saucer, flies out through the open window, over the porch, past the heads of the three men, who duck violently, and then crouch, amazed and a little frightened. (p.138)

Marion the maid rushes to the door crying out that some bird is going berserk inside the house: "It's sent th' althar light flyin'; it's clawed th' holy pictures; an' now it's peckin' at th' tall-hat!"

(This last detail is the most dreadful outrage to Michael for the tall-hat is the symbol of his official status and respectability.⁴⁹ Its replacement causes a great deal of commotion in Scene 2.) The men are all too scared to help Lorna who has barricaded herself under the bannisters. Instead Michael orders Marion to fetch Father Domineer, but as she turns to go she runs straight into the arms of the post office Messenger, Robin Adair. He kisses her and then, as the commotion inside increases, dashes into the house while Shanaar sends up a fervent prayer in his best bog-Latin which provokes a climactic outburst:

The head of the Cock, with its huge crimson comb, is suddenly thrust through the window above the porch, and lets out a violent and a triumphant crow. Shanaar disappears behind the wall, and Michael and Mahan fall flat in the garden as in a dead faint. (p.142)

Then there is silence, and with some puffs of blue-black smoke (but no "bustin' asundher") Robin reappears leading the Cock which follows meekly at the end of a green ribbon. Robin explains to

Lorna who is still fearful that there had been no danger and if she had given the Cock her hand instead of throwing saucers it would have led her "through a wistful and wonderful dance." Lorna is not convinced but Marion looking admiringly at the bird declares: "Sure, he's harmless enough when you know him", thus prompting the key line from Robin:

Just a gay bird, that's all. A bit unruly at times, but
conthrollable be th' right persons. (p.144)

He urges the Cock (paraphrasing a poem by Yeats),⁵⁰ "Go on comrade, lift up th' head an' clap th' wings, black cock, an' crow!" Thereupon the Cock lets out "a mighty crow which is immediately followed by a rumbling roll of thunder." Then Robin leaves with the Cock, both doing a jaunty goose-step.

This episode of course, brings the fantasy and its significance out into the open. The Cock represents a healthy urge which if "a bit unruly at times" is "conthrollable be the right persons." Obviously Michael and Shanaar are not among these, and Sailor Mahan has now been infected by their fear. Lorna, too, is frightened as yet, but Robin and (with his help) Marion clearly have the right attitude. Behind the riotous and fantastic comedy which has been expertly stage-managed by O'Casey is not only a clear point of view but some shrewd psychology.

The final movement of Scene 1 consists of two starkly contrasted episodes. The men come warily back into the garden and Lorna calls Marion into the house to help tidy up. Before she goes in Marion directs a few well-chosen words of ridicule at the men for their cowardice, and Shanaar, before he too departs, warns Michael to order Marion to dress more modestly "for th' circumnabulatory nature of a woman's form often has a detonatin' effect on a man's idle thoughts."

The remainder of the episode ironically illustrates this sentiment. Michael and Mahan begin to flirt with Marion when she brings in the whiskey bottle and while she goes out again to fetch the soda the two old men exchange complimentary remarks about her, the most significant being Mahan's enthusiastic claim, "I'd welcome her, even if I seen her through the vision of oul' Shanaar — with horns growin' out of her head." Marion reappears on this cue with, of course, horns actually sprouting from her forehead. The men do not see them, however, until they slyly ask for a kiss and Marion orders them to "Up an' take it, before yous grow cold."

They rise from their chairs, foolish grins on their faces, settle themselves for a kiss, and then perceive the change that has taken place. They flop back onto the chairs, fright and dismay sweeping over their faces ... their hands folded in front of their chests, palm to palm, as if in prayer. (p.151)

"Marion looks at them in some astonishment", being unaware of her horns, but Michael and Mahan are too frightened at this manifestation of their guilty consciences to pursue their dalliance any further.

The second episode of this final movement involves the sending off of Lorna's invalid sister Julia on a pilgrimage to Lourdes. There is neither comedy nor fantasy here, merely a bleak and melancholy sham as the dying girl's relatives and the village dignitaries assemble to see her off on her hopeless quest for a miracle. Saros Cowasjee in his monograph on O'Casey claims that this incident (which is completed at the end of the play) and the one involving Father Domineer which ends Scene 2 have no proper place in the play's structure and no real purpose beyond allowing O'Casey "to have a thrust at the clergy and to ridicule Catholic faith in saints and miracles."⁵¹ Though O'Casey did indeed regard belief in such miracles as a delusion,⁵² the charge of ridicule can be ruled out as

Julia's disillusionment is treated with compassion. What is implicitly criticised here is not the Catholic faith but the fact (according to O'Casey) that in Ireland it is overshadowed by a distrust and fear of life. Thus the episode, though only tenuously linked into the rest of the plot,⁵³ is relevant thematically. The melancholic disbelief which underlies the strained and surface optimism with which the procession sets out, contrasts strongly with the joyousness which Father Domineer and his followers are so determined to suppress, and prefigures the atmosphere of desolation which prevails over Nyadnanave at the end of the play after they have succeeded.

When the curtain rises on Scene 2, "the sunshine isn't quite so bright and determined" and the garden is empty, "all, apparently, having gone to see Julia away on her long, long journey." (p.156)

In a few moments, however, the opening movement begins when Lorna and Marion come back talking despondently about Julia's chances as they go into the house. Then Michael and Mahan return and sitting down at the table with the unopened whiskey bottle quickly get involved in an argument about whether, as Sailor Mahan puts it,

Th' skipper aloft an' his glitterin' crew is goin' to bother their heads about a call from a tiny town an' disthric thryin' hard to thrive on turf [compared with] ... th' piercin' pipin' of th' rosary be Bing Bang Crosby an' other great film stars. (p.157)

Robin Adair hurries in and tries to ask the pair a question, but is ignored by them until he paraphrases a remark by Mahan and states that "Honour be th' clergy's regulated by how much a man can give!" This heresy infuriates Michael who declares, "With that kinda talk, we won't be able soon to sit steady on our chairs" — only to have his immediately collapse under him. Mahan is rash enough to repeat

the sentiment, and a second later he too comes crashing to the ground. It is clear that the Cock is at work again so it is no surprise when Robin reveals that he is looking for the bird which he suspects has come this way. Pausing only to kiss Marion, he hurries off in pursuit when he hears its triumphant crow in the distance.

Shanaar has alerted the whole village to the dreadul danger in its midst and the Civic Guard is out scouring the countryside for the Cock. Michael and Mahan decide to stay out of harm's way in the garden, but even there they are not immune. During the next three episodes they are terrorised by the Cock's comic japes. First the whiskey bottle won't pour and then it turns red-hot. A Porter arrives bearing a new tall-hat for Michael, but announces that while he was bringing it, "someone shot a bullet through it, east be west!" Another shot goes through the hat while the Porter is speaking and he dashes off in a panic moments before the Sergeant appears with a rifle. The Sergeant fearfully tells how he has shot at the Cock three times and how the first two bullets passed clean through the bird without harming it. At the third shot, however,

a flash of red lightning near blinded me; an' when it got light again, a second afther, there was the demonised Cock changin' himself into a silken glossified tall-hat! (p.171)

A few seconds later this fantastic incident is reversed on stage, for as Michael and Mahan draw away from the perforated hat, the Sergeant demonstrates how he had raised his gun, and —

The garden is suddenly enveloped in darkness for a few moments. A fierce flash of lightning shoots through the darkness; the hat has disappeared, and where it stood now stands the Cock. While the lightning flashes, the Cock crows lustily. Then the light as suddenly comes back to the garden, and shows that the Cock and the hat have gone, Michael and Mahan are seen to be lying on the ground, and the Sergeant is on his knees as if in prayer. (p.172)

The business is uproarious farce, but it is significant that every time the Cock appears Michael and Mahan do a prat-fall. One of his principal functions is to mock their inflated sense of self-importance, which, of course, is also why the attempt to shoot him appears merely to puncture the tall -hat.

The second movement begins in a more subdued manner with the three men cowering in the garden, unable to calm their nerves because the whiskey bottle is still enchanted. They are frightened still further by the appearance of the Bellman (traditionally employed not only for crying the news but for pronouncing incantations to keep away elves and hobgoblins⁵⁴). He passes by loudly ringing his bell and shouting:

Into your houses all! Bar th' doors, shut th' windows!
Th' Cock's comin'! In th' shape of a woman! Gallus, Le
Coq, an' Kyleloch, th' Cock's comin' in th' shape of a
woman! Into your houses, shut to th' windows, bar th'
doors! (p.175)

However this ominous warning does not forebode more mischief but a magical sea-change of atmosphere, for it is now time to show the beneficent quality of the force which the Cock represents. Michael begs Mahan to sing a shanty to bolster their flagging spirits, and the old sailor does so in a voice which quavers occasionally, As he sings,

A golden shaft of light streams in from the left of the road, and, a moment afterwards, Loreleen appears in the midst of it. She stands in the gateway staring at the three men squatted on the ground. (p.177)

Despite the fear in Sailor Mahan's voice it is as if his sea-shanty with its imagery of ships and spices, palm-trees and pirates has recalled a world of romance alien to the narrow little community. Loreleen's magical entrance thus introduces the climactic episode of the scene, a vision of life not as joyless repression but as an

enchanted dance.

Dramatic tension in this episode comes from the resistance of Michael to the vision. Loreleen pretends that the men are practising their singing for the fancy dress ball that night and calls Lorna and Marion from the house to join the entertainment. Lorna is dressed as a gypsy, Marion as a gay Nippy, and both come forward into the golden glow which now encompasses Mahan and the Sergeant as well. Only Michael stands out against the light, shouting bitterly about the destruction of his tall-hat. He is, however, told by Lorna that the hat was delivered safely more than an hour ago and Marion proves the truth of this by offering it to him "noble in its silken glossiness." (p.180) He is still too afraid to touch it, but Lorna pours from the whiskey bottle for the girls who offer up a toast to "Th' Cock-a-Doodle Dandy" and persuade each of the men in turn to drink. "A look of delightful animation" (p.182) comes onto the faces of Mahan and the Sergeant, and "a reckless look" steals over Michael's as he grabs the glass from Marion and drinks greedily. Robin appears on the pathway outside "playing softly a kind of^a dance tune" (p.182) on his accordion. The magical power of the drink causes Michael first to offer double the wage increase demanded by Mahan's drivers (Mahan with equal generosity says he will not take a penny from Michael), and then to put the tall-hat on his head and lead Marion into the dance. This is built to a climax by an imaginative use of stage-craft:

As Michael puts his arm around her waist, the ornament on her head rises into a graceful curving horn, but he does not notice it. At the same time, the Sergeant, having put an arm around Lorna, moves in the dance too. As he does so, the ornament on her head, too, becomes a curving horn, but he does not notice it. Then Mahan goes over stealthily to Loreleen, who is watching the

others, and stabs her shyly in the ribs with a finger. She turns, smiles, takes hold of his arm, and puts it round her waist. Then the two of them join the others in moving around to the beat of the music, the cock-like crest in Loreleen's hat rising higher as she begins to move in the dance. After a few moments, the dance quickens, the excitement grows, and the men stamp out the measure of the music fiercely, while the three women begin to whirl around them with ardour and abandon. While the excitement is at its height, a loud, long peal of thunder is heard, and in the midst of it, with a sliding, rushing pace, Father Domineer appears in the gateway, a green glow enveloping him as he glares down at the swinging dancers, and as a lusty crow from the Cock rings out through the garden. ^{loud} The dancers, excepting Loreleen, suddenly stand stock still, then fall on one knee, facing the priest, their heads bent in shame and some dismay. Loreleen dances on for some few moments longer, the music becoming softer, then she slowly ends her dance to face forwards towards the priest, the Messenger continuing to play the tune, very softly, very faintly now. (pp.183-4)

This, as Professor Armstrong has pointed out, is the turning-point of the play for Loreleen and the women "are on the point of humanising them (the men) when Father Domineer enters and breaks the spell."⁵⁵

The final movement of the scene sees an abrupt change in tone and subject-matter. The priest's bitter condemnation of the dancing and Michael and Mahan's abject repentance follow naturally on the termination of the dance, but immediately after comes the second of the incidents to which Cowasjee and others have taken exception. Father Domineer suddenly turns his attention to the matter of one of Mahan's lorry drivers (a man not previously mentioned in the play) who is apparently living in sin, and orders Mahan to dismiss him. Mahan demurs, but then the lorry driver himself enters and the priest takes up the attack directly. When the driver refuses to give up his woman Domineer loses control of himself and

in an ungovernable burst of fury... lunges forward, and strikes the Lorry Driver swiftly and savagely on the side of the head. The man falls heavily; lies still for a moment; tries feebly to rise; falls down again, and lies quite still. (p.188)

The man, of course, is dead. The scene then ends quickly with the

priest protesting that he had only intended "to administer a rebuke" and claiming in extenuation that he has "murmured an act of contrition into the poor man's ear", to which Robin replies (playing very softly), "It would have been far fitter, Father, if you'd murmured one into your own."

This, although based on a true incident, is a savage episode and one cannot blame Irish Catholics for objecting to it. It is also tactically clumsy because of the lack of preparation and the stylistic jump from Domineer's entrance in the manner of a pantomime villain to the stark realism which follows. The shock is hard for an audience to take. Nevertheless in the patterning of the play the episode, or something like it, is necessary. Krause puts the point well when he comments, "this brutal act of violence ... indicates that Nyadnanavery can be ruthless as well as ridiculous. The satiric sport continues in the final scene, but the comedy is now darkened by tragic implications."⁵⁶

The change of tone is immediately apparent when the curtain rises on Scene 3:

It is towards dusk in the garden now. The sun is setting and the sky shows it. The rich blue of the sky has given place to a rich yellow, slashed with green and purple. The flagpole stands black against the green and yellow of the sky, and the flag, now, has the same sombre hue ... the house has a dark look, save where a falling shaft from the sun turns the window above the porch into a golden eye of light. (p.190)

The "golden eye of light" in the surrounding gloom suggests, of course, the dwindling potential for joy which yet remains in Michael's house but is to be finally extinguished there in the course of the scene. The capture and humiliation of Loreleen marks the exact point at which this happens, for afterwards there are no magical jests to relieve the bleakness of the events which end the play. Up until this point,

however, the Cock gives his enemies quite a run for their money.

As was noted earlier, the blocking of this final scene is more complex than the earlier two. In Scene 2 comic business, especially with the enchanted whiskey bottle, is developed over several episodes, but Scene 3 makes use of a more complicated technique of overlapping incidents and encounters, together with a more rapid succession of entrances and exits, as the action accelerates towards the climax. After the climactic episode in which Loreleen is banished, however, the pace of the action slows down for the final series of departures which is interrupted only by the melancholy return of Julia before the last of the Cock's followers, Robin Adair, goes after the others and Michael Marthraun is left alone on stage.

For some time from the beginning of the scene "the sounds of drumming, occasionally pierced by the shrill notes of a fife, can be heard" and Lorna reveals in the opening speech that all the police and the soldiers are out hunting for the Cock, "with th' bands to give them courage." (p.190) The tempo of the onstage action is slow at first. Michael has gone with Father Domineer to fetch bell, book and candle to exorcise the house, leaving Mahan sitting at the table miserably totting up the figures of his expected losses now that the workers are on strike and his best lorry driver is dead. Illogically he blames the Cock for his troubles, and on cue the bird

suddenly glides in, weaving a way between Mahan at the table, and Lorna, circling the garden and finally disappearing round the gable end of the house; the dance tune softly keeps time with his movements. (p.191)

Neither Lorna nor Marion, who are also present, see the Cock, and its appearance to Mahan alone may be taken as foreshadowing the attempt he makes shortly to have a rendezvous with Loreleen.

Now O'Casey begins to juxtapose sequences relating to several

plot strands and groups of characters. Michael enters with Father Domineer and his assistant, One-eyed Larry, and they go inside the house to purge it of its "evil influences". Mahan, Lorna and Marion remain in the garden, and a few moments later "The roll of a drum is heard and a great boo-ing." Marion rushes to the wall and exclaims that Loreleen is running towards them, "hell for leather." "Loreleen ... dashes through the gateway to Lorna, who catches her in her arms. Clumps of grass and sods of turf, and a few stones follow Loreleen in her rush along the road." While Father Domineer is preparing his exorcism within the house, a witch-hunt, for which he is largely responsible, is building up outside. Lorna and Marion dash down the road to give the villagers a piece of their minds, thus leaving Loreleen in the garden with Sailor Mahan.

Having established an angry mood of mob violence in the surrounding countryside and foreshadowed a bitter conflict within the house, O'Casey allows a brief interlude in the fragile peace of the garden. The old sailor, partly out of sympathy for the girl and partly out of desire for her, offers to give her money to flee the country if she will meet him that night in the Red Barn. Though he claims his "sails of love are reefed at last", he goes somewhat stiffly through a series of acrobatic movements as he speaks "to show Loreleen the youthfulness of his old age." These actions, like the conversation which they counterpoint, "though not done in a hurry, are done quickly as if he wanted to say all he had to say before any interruption." (p. 195) After a long period of uneasy collaboration with Michael, Sailor Mahan is now going his own way, but time has almost run out for him.

Mahan's proposal is still unresolved, however, when the proceedings inside the house erupt into noisy confusion; It is a repeat of the eviction episode in Scene 1, but with Father Domineer taking the

place of the Messenger the damage and destruction is on a vastly greater scale:

The house shakes; a sound of things moving and crockery breaking comes from it; several flashes of lightning spear out through the window over the porch; and the flag-pole wags drunkenly from side to side. Marion and Lorna appear on the pathway outside the wall, and hurry along into the garden just as One-Eyed Larry comes running out of the house, his face beset with fear ...

One-Eyed Larry (excitedly). It's startin' in earnest! There's a death-struggle goin' on in there! Poor Father Domineer's got a bad black eye, an' Micky Marthraun's coat is torn to tatters! (p.196)

This is merely the beginning of the battle, a "death-struggle" which though presented in comic terms clearly suggests an Irish Armageddon. One-Eyed Larry gives a running commentary as "The house shakes worse than before, and seems to lurch over to one side." (p.197) His words build to a frenzied climax in which the real nature of the conflict is made manifest:

It's now or never for them an' for us. They're terrible powerful spirits. Knocked th' bell outa me hand, blew out th' candle, an' tore th' book to threads! Thousands of them there are, led be th' bigger ones — Kissalass, Velvet highs, Reedabuck, Dancesolong, an' Sameagain. Keep close. Don't run. They might want help. (Screeches like those of barn owls are heard from the house, with the "too-whit, too-who" of other kinds, the cackling of hens, and the loud cawing of crows. Frantically pushing his way to the back of the others) Oook! Let me get back, get back! The house shakes again; the flag-pole totters and falls flat; blue and red lightning flashes from the window, and a great peal of thunder drums through the garden. Then all becomes suddenly silent ... (p.198)

There is a suspenseful pause before Lorna sees something coming from the house and all the watchers (except Loreleen who has been calm and unperturbed throughout) race for the shelter of the garden wall. Only their heads appear above it, as Father Domineer and Michael limp from the house, battered and begrimed but elated. The priest claims victory and tells the women to go in and tidy the house, apparently oblivious of the fact that it has been all but destroyed and that the

Irish flag lies in the dust.

But in fact the battle is not over yet. Hearing from Michael that Loreleen reads "evil books", the priest furiously orders them to be brought from the house for burning. Copies of Voltaire and "Ullisississies, or something" are produced, but Loreleen snatches them away and runs off down the road. The men are suddenly powerless to move their limbs, and the Cock "springs over the wall, and pirouettes in and out between them as they stand stuck to the ground." The Sergeant appears and in attempting to point his gun at the Cock menaces in turn Michael and Mahan. The scene suddenly goes dark as

two squib-like shots are heard, followed by a clash of thunder... The returning light shows that Father Domineer is not there; that Michael and Mahan are stretched out on the ground; and that One-Eyed Larry is half over the wall ... (p.202)

This sudden reversal ends the first movement of the scene. Father Domineer has been carried off by the Cock and Michael and Mahan accidentally shot by the Sergeant, though miraculously the bullet (bigger than a cigar) has done them no harm. (The realistic justification for this rout of the representatives of righteousness is, no doubt, Loreleen's escape with the heretical books.) However, the Cock's triumph is only temporary. Though Mahan, after a final quarrel with Michael over the wages issue, sets out to help Loreleen, word soon arrives that the priest has been rescued.

The final stage of the fantastic battle comes with the raising of a magical wind. Michael is blown all over the garden but Lorna and Marion are unaffected by the blast. A cumulative series of entrances by Father Domineer's allies, each desperately battling against the gusts, emphasises the build to the final climax. The first to arrive is One-Eyed Larry. He is blown along the road and into the garden ("holding on tensely to the waistband of his trousers") shouting that

Father Domineer has been "snatched from the claws of the demon Cock, an' carried home safe on th' back of a white duck!" In revenge, he claims, the Cock has

raised a fierce wind be th' beat of his wings, an' it's tossin' cattle on to their backs; whippin' th' guns from th' hands of Civic Guard an' soldier, so that th' guns go sailin' through th' sky like cranes; an' th' wind's tearin' at the clothes of th' people. It's only be hard holdin' that I can keep me own trousers on! (pp. 206-7)

In a moment the Bellman is blown in, ringing his bell and holding onto his waist-band, as he shouts for everyone to take cover from the Demon Cock which is "rippin' th' clouds outa th' sky, because Father Domineer was snatched away from him, an' carried home, fit an' well, on the back of a speckled duck! " A furious argument over the colour of the duck breaks out between One-Eyed Larry and the Bellman,⁵⁷ and then the Sergeant is blown in minus his trousers and with his face therefore "almost convulsed with fear and shame." (p.208) He adds to the confusion by announcing that the priest was saved by a barnacle goose, and then is sent by Michael into the house to put on a pair of his trousers. Now Robin the Messenger arrives, softly playing his accordion and unaffected by the wind which has increased to a gale but disturbs nothing in the garden except the other men who again "grip their waist-bands and begin to make sudden movements to and fro, as if dragged by an invisible force." (p.210). Finally the Sergeant comes from the house (wearing to Michael's fury his "best Sunday black" trousers) but is immediately caught up by the wind and, like the others, battles desperately to preserve his respectability. The panic is at its height when Father Domineer appears at the gateway.

A gust of wind, fierce and shrill, that preceded him, declines into a sad wail, and ceases altogether, leaving a sombre silence

behind it. Father Domineer's hair is tossed about; he has a wild look in his eyes, and he carries a walking-stick to help him surmount the limp from the hurt he got when he was warring with evil spirits.

Father Domineer (stormily). Stop where yous are! No hidin' from the enemy! Back to hell with all bad books, bad plays, bad pictures, and bad thoughts! Cock o' th' north, or cock o' th' south, we'll down darry doh down him yet. Shoulder to shoulder, an' step together against th' onward rush of paganism! Boldly tread, firm each foot, erect each head!(p.211)

The magic wind is thus revealed as, in reality, the self-induced hysteria of the priest and his followers. The only way of abating it, therefore, is by means of a scapegoat, and one is now provided. The comedy is over as, led by Shanaar, the two Rough Fellows drag in Loreleen.

She is in a sad way. Her hair is tumbled about; her clothes are disarranged; her bodice unbuttoned, and her skirt reefed half-way up, showing a slim leg, with the nylon stocking torn. One of the Rough Fellows is carrying her hat with its cock-like crest in his hand. A blood-stained streak stretches from the corner of an eye half-way down a cheek. Her face is very pale, and intense fright is vividly mirrored in it. She is dragged by the arms along the ground by the men, led by Shanaar, to where the Priest is standing. (p.212)

She has been caught in a car with Sailor Mahan trying to put his arm around her. The crowd has pelted Mahan back to his home, while the Rough Fellows have man-handled her to the Priest (stealing in the process the five pounds which Mahan had given her to get out of the country). Fortunately Robin is on hand to prevent further physical harm coming to Loreleen, but Father Domineer (who ignores the theft) rains down curses on her head, then orders her to trudge into banishment without money or fresh clothing. She does not go alone:

As Loreleen reaches the gate, Lorna runs out of the house. She is wearing a dark-red cloak, and carries a green one over her arm. She has a fairly large rucksack strapped on her back.

Lorna (calling as she runs out of the house). Loreleen! (Loreleen halts but does not turn her head.) Loreleen, I go with you! (Lorna shoves Father Domineer aside at the gate-

way, 'nearly knocks Shanaar over, and hurries to Loreleen, Draping the green cloak over Loreleen's shoulders) I go with you, love. I've got a sthrong pair of shoes in the sack you can put on when we're free from th' Priest an' his rabble. Lift up your heart, lass: we go not towards an evil, but leave an evil behind us! (They go slowly out together.) (p.217)

Loreleen's banishment concludes the second movement of the scene and, in effect, brings the conflict of the play to an end. The brief final movement has, therefore, something of the nature of an epilogue. Father Domineer leaves, telling Michael as he goes, "th' demon is conquered—you can live peaceful an' happy in your own home now." But the home is wrecked and Michael's wife and daughter have left him. Shanaar acts as a Job's comforter while, in counterpoint, the Messenger plays softly on his accordion and sings:

Oh, woman gracious, in golden garments,
Through life's dark places, all glintin' go;
Bring man, in search of th' truth tremendous,
Th' joy that ev'ry young lad should know. (p.218)

Despite her love for Robin, Marion now decides to follow the other women because "a whisper of love in this place bites away some of the soul!" Shanaar then makes a furtive exit when he sees Julia being brought back on her stretcher. Thus only Robin and Michael remain in the garden as she is silently carried in, "covered with a rug, black as a winter's sky ... its sombre hue ... enlivened only by the chalk-white face of the dying girl." In contrast with her departure, there are no crowds or dignitaries to greet her now. The Messenger gives her what he comfort he can, and then, after she is carried away, takes up his accordion and follows after his love, playing and singing softly as he goes. The young and lively are leaving Ireland, and only the dying or the dead in spirit remain.

This, as Krause remarks, "is not a very joyous conclusion for a play about joy."⁵⁸ It does not, however, negate the "openness" of

O'Casey's outlook. Like Shaw in Heartbreak House, O'Casey is offering a grim warning of the consequences of negativism (here deliberate rather than involuntary) at the same time as he passionately affirms his positive values. The ending, therefore, should not be taken literally as expressing a view of hopelessness and pessimism. In fact the last words that the audience hears from the stage are those of the Messenger's love song which, even in exile, will continue to be sung. Of far greater significance than this detail, however is the enchanted Cock whose Dionysiac presence dominates the play and whose triumphant crow calls the tune of most of the action.

Technically, perhaps, the play may not appear quite as "open" as some of O'Casey's other works (such as The Plough and Within the Gates) where the episodic patterning is "blocked" more in terms of the whole ensemble of characters. Here for most of the action the two "oul' butties" hold the centre of the stage imparting a considerable measure of linear continuity; and, moreover, the nature of the conflict tends to polarise the characters into two broad groups. Nevertheless the structure does draw attention to a variety of characters with different attitudes and shades of opinion, and the episodic patterning enables O'Casey to make sudden shifts in tone and subject-matter which emphasise various facets of the central conflict. If, superficially, the struggle between the opposing sides appears to be too much of a black and white affair, a closer look at the text reveals a number of clearly marked distinctions between the degrees of innocence and culpability of the various characters. By his unique interweaving of fantasy and reality and his use of a rich variety of contrasted character types, O'Casey turns Marthraun's house and garden into a microcosm which is representative not merely of Ireland

but of everywhere the forces of freedom and repression join in conflict. For these reasons Cock-a-Doodle Dandy is undoubtedly an "open" play in structure as well as spirit.

Finally it should be noted that O'Casey's style of symbolic fantasy, though original in conception and execution, owes a good deal to the traditional forms and ingredients of comic theatre. David Krause has drawn attention to a number of these which may be detected in the play:

The fantastic village of Nyadnanave, that Nest of Knaves and Quacks, was conceived with something of the irreverent mockery that led Aristophanes to ridicule Athenian mythology when in The Birds he created Nepheloccygis, that Cloud-Cuckoo land which is literally and figuratively, for the birds. O'Casey's bedlam of hocus-pocus miracles and prat-falls follows the traditional antics of the music-hall and circus theatre, the low comedy of Plautus and Shakespeare and Boucicault. Religious quacks like Shanaar and One-eyed Larry have their secular counterparts in Plautine and Jonsonian comedy. Irish buffoons like Marthraun, Mahan, the Sergeant, the Bellman and the Porter, can be found in Boucicault, and they have their Anglo-Saxon counterparts in Shakespeare. In fact, all these traditionally comic devices and characters have been reshaped and recreated with the mark of O'Casey's originality: his theatrical instinct for uninhibited fun, his mock-heroic deflation of the pompous and the absurd.⁵⁹

To these elements from popular theatrical traditions must be added those from ballads, folk song and dance and local mythology which are similarly worked by O'Casey into the fabric of the play. Only one contemporary playwright has demonstrated a comparable capacity to draw copiously from such a variety of traditions and stamp the finished work with the unmistakable mark of his own outlook and personality. That playwright is, of course, John Arden.

IV

What I am deeply concerned with is the problem of translating the concrete life of today into terms of poetry that shall at the one time both illustrate that life and set it within the historical and legendary tradition of our culture.⁶⁰

This statement from "Telling a True Tale" an essay written by John Arden in 1960, is a key one for the understanding of his dramatic aims. Each of the elements in it is important and needs to be considered separately (as well as, finally, in combination) in order to appreciate the special quality of his "open" technique. These elements, to restate them a little more fully and in a slightly changed order, are: Arden's concern with the "concrete" (i.e. public) issues of today; his use of the hard-edged techniques of traditional forms (especially the various types of popular and traditional ballad, but also medieval, Elizabethan and Victorian theatrical forms); and his employment of this material and these forms not for the purpose of propaganda but for "the celebration of his Muse and her part in his personal world."⁶¹

Although the form, style and settings of some of Arden's plays may disguise the fact, virtually all his plays relate to significant contemporary issues and events; The Waters of Babylon (1957) was "partly a satire on MacMillan's Premium Bond Scheme";⁶² Live Like Pigs (1958) "was based on something which happened in Barnsley ... when a council house was given to a family of squatters";⁶³ "one of the things that set off Serjeant Musgrave's Dance (1959) was an incident in Cyprus";⁶⁴ The Happy Haven (1960) is about the treatment of old people in institutions; The Workhouse Donkey (1963) deals with the politics of Arden's home town, Barnsley (the chief constable controversy being "based upon a row they had in Nottingham a few years ago"⁶⁵);

Arden's reading of "Conor Cruise O'Brien's book about Katanga"⁶⁶ provided the impetus for Armstrong's Last Goodnight; and (to move to a more recent play) The Ballygombeen Bequest (1972) is specifically concerned with the contemporary political troubles in Northern Ireland "because we [Arden and Margaretta D'Arcy] were living next door and saw it happen and wanted to help."⁶⁷ The same contemporary consciousness permeates the apparently remote historical subject-matter of The Business of Good Government (1960), Left-Handed Liberty (1965), The Hero Rises Up (1969) and The Island of the Mighty (1972). As Professor John Russell Brown has commented:

Behind Arden's simple, strong and active figures lies a concern for general problems of contemporary society: pacifism, public welfare, health service, management, public images and personal values, political expediency, work, intellectualism, protest, and so forth. In writing a play, Arden is concerned to illustrate attitudes and explore a problem.⁶⁸

Arden's exploratory attitude to his subject-matter needs to be stressed. Although his political sympathies have become more overtly left-wing in recent years⁶⁹ he has for the most part maintained a scrupulous critical detachment in his treatment of the characters and situations in his plays. This, as John Russell Taylor has pointed out, has frequently confused and upset audiences and theatre critics:

His work would be perfectly easy for audiences if he attacked morality; that would be shocking (even now, since conventions still rule when convictions have flagged), it would be 'provocative', and most important of all it would imply by categorically rejecting certain standards that these standards nevertheless existed - there would still be clear, dramatic blacks and whites, even if they did not always come in the expected places. But instead, and much more puzzlingly, he recognizes an infinitude of moral standards, all with their claims to consideration and all quite distinct from the individuals who hold them and try, more or less imperfectly, to put them into practice.⁷⁰

Commenting on these observations, Arden has stated:

This is just the way my mind naturally runs. I always resent plays in which the audience is brought in by the author to take one side of the argument. I feel that the extremely involved problems that we are up against today — war, sex, or whatever — are so complicated that you can't just divide them up into black and white. It is the job of the playwright to demonstrate the complexity, to try to elucidate it by the clarity of his demonstration.

71

Writing plays for Arden is, therefore, not so much a matter of providing himself with a public platform from which he can promulgate his ideas as a means by which he can discover and, to some extent, crystallize them:

All the time I find I am writing, partly indeed to express what I know, feel, and see, but even more to test the truth of my knowledge, feelings and vision. I did not fully understand my own feelings about pacifism until I wrote Serjeant Musgrave; nor about old age until I wrote The Happy Haven. Even yet, both plays seem to leave much unresolved about the questions they raise. I see myself as a practitioner of an art which is both Public and Exploratory. The exploring is done in public and is therefore full of danger.⁷²

Arden's usage of traditional poetic and theatrical techniques, together with historical settings in many of his plays, has been of the utmost importance to his aim of demonstrating and elucidating "the complexity ... by the clarity of his demonstration."⁷³ The direct, concise narrative technique of the ballad, where "the colours are primary", the characters are seen "at moments of alarming crisis, comic or tragic", and the "action goes as in Japanese films — from sitting down everyone suddenly springs into furious running with no faltering, intermediate steps"⁷⁴, imparts a quality of immediacy to his handling of dramatic action. Ambiguity in his plays comes not from the blurring of details but from the juxtaposition of sharply-contrasted images. Professor Brown has noted how, for example, each new character enters in a manner which

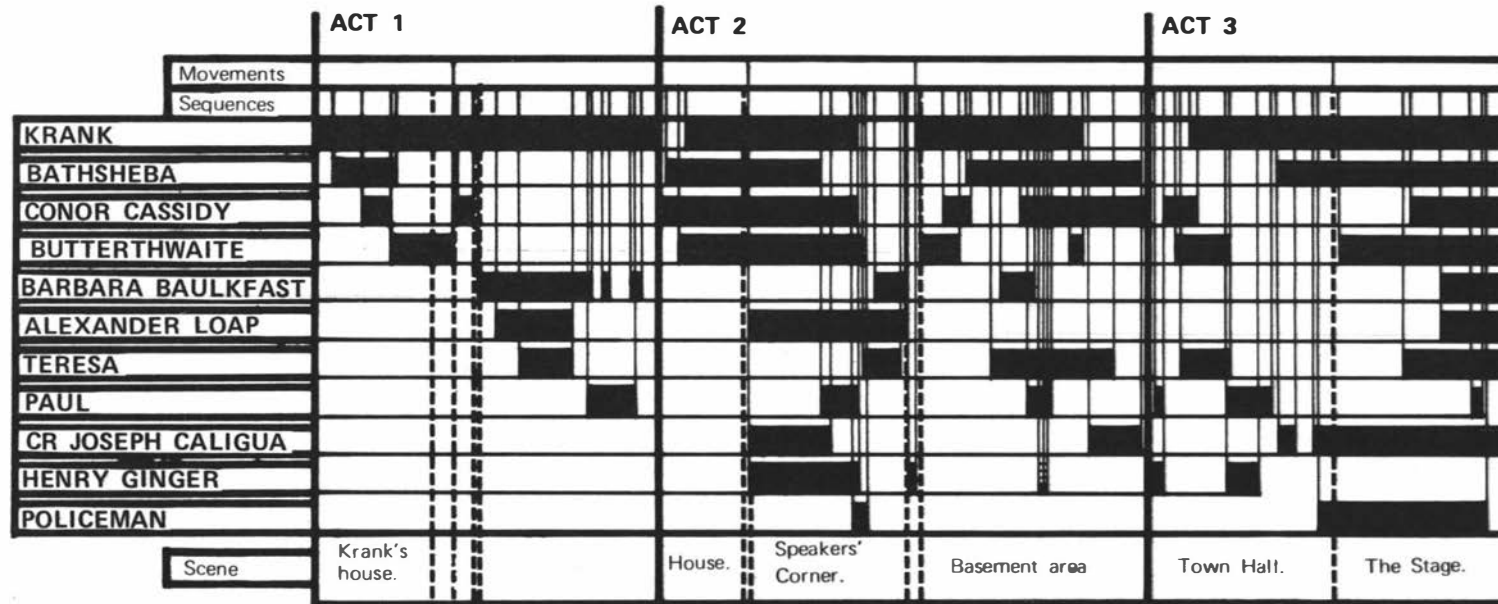
instantly defines him:

In Arden's plays ... entries are bold, explicit, efficient. The dramatist's job seems to be that of bringing a new figure on stage, labelled clearly and functioning directly. Each new character is there in his own right speaking and acting, as well and as efficiently as he can, on behalf of some notion or idea as conceived by the author.⁷⁵

This is essentially what happens in ballads. whether folk, street, or music-hall, and it is also the practice in many traditional forms of drama, including Plautine farce, moralities, humours comedy and melo-drama. Shaw and O'Casey among modern playwrights introduce their characters in a similar manner. On the other hand, the method is alien to naturalistic drama which, more often than not, is primarily concerned with the study of character rather than the portrayal of action.

Arden's characters waste no time on introductions because they have much to do in a short time. Here again his reliance on "open" staging techniques drawn from various presentational forms of theatre and drama is important. Though he carefully suits the nature of the staging to the particular style and period of the individual plays, the variety of theatrical techniques he has called on for the rapid juxtaposition of characters, scenes and incidents is astonishing: "groove and shutter" scenery in The Waters of Babylon, the "exploded house" setting in Live Like Pigs, Elizabethan "open" staging in The Happy Haven and (in a more complex manner) The Workhouse Donkey, medieval mansions in Armstrong's Last Goodnight, and Brechtian title-cards or projections for the scenes in The Hero Rises Up, are merely some of the most striking presentational devices used. In addition, characters frequently address the audience directly, either in song or speech, and in a number of the plays (notably The Waters of Babylon, The Happy Haven, The Workhouse Donkey, Armstrong's Last

FIGURE 17: Scenario graph of THE WATERS OF BABYLON by John Arden



SCALE: 1 cm = 5 pages text (Penguin edition)

KEY: On stage [Black bar] Ginger crosses above the stage [Grid of small squares]

Goodnight , Left-Handed Liberty and The Island of the Mighty)

principal characters are used as presenters of much of the action.

This use of presenters and direct address serves to bridge the .

gap between stage and auditorium, and also helps to provide continuity for the many scenes and episodes in a typical Arden play.

As the foregoing comments suggest, the structures of Arden's plays are both varied and complex. These qualities, indeed, go a long way toward explaining why none of the major plays ~~has~~ been well received by critics and audiences at its first showing. However, certain general features in the "blocking" patterns do tend to recur. A brief discussion of the "blocking " of three of the plays — The Waters of Babylon, Serjeant Musgrave's Dance and Armstrong's Last Goodnight — will serve to indicate some of these recurring structural features before The Workhouse Donkey is analysed in detail as a characteristic example of Arden's "open" form of drama.

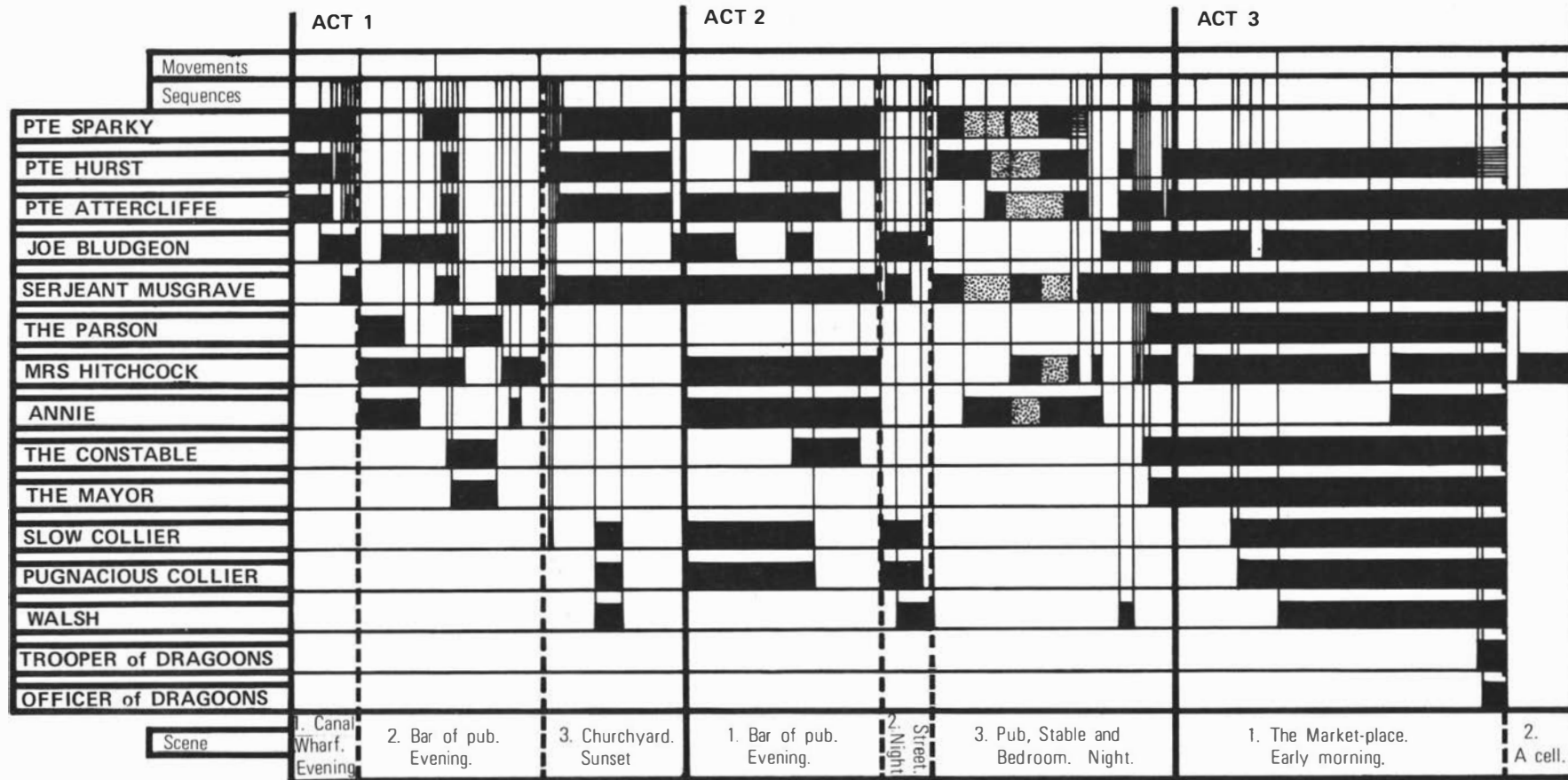
The Waters of Babylon (see Figure 17), the first of Arden's stage plays to be produced, illustrates several typical features of his theatrical patterning in a fairly extreme, if comparatively rudimentary, form. Though the list of characters is short (compared with those for many of the later plays), the play has a peculiarly fragmented quality which arises partly from the sharp contrasts in personalities and motivations between each of the characters, and partly from the extremely episodic nature of the action. Some half-dozen different locations are required in the course of the play, together with several short linking episodes which are scenically neutral. Arden's suggested use of the "groove and shutter" technique of scene-changing and his practice of often having characters remain on stage during the changes keeps the action going,

but does not disguise the episodic character of a play in which each character contributes his own sub-plot. Frequently, indeed, the staging is designed to emphasise the variety of plots, interests and attitudes which are conflicting with each other. Notable examples of this are the Speaker's Corner scene with Caligua, Loap and Henry Ginger simultaneously orating from their stands, and the basement scene in which Krank's mistresses descend on him one after another while Paul sets up his bomb factory and Henry Ginger walks silently back and forth across the stage above.

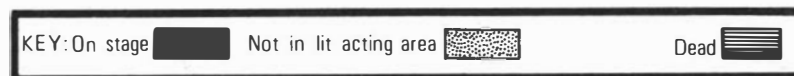
The fragmented quality of the play is not, however, indicative of structural incompetence on Arden's part, even though it does make the action(s) difficult for the audience to follow. It is, in fact, expressive of the personal vision and experience of the central character, Sigismanfred Krankiewicz (Krank), who leads a double life as pimp and architect. This fact immediately results in a sharp contrast between the two basic movements of Act 1, the first set for the most part in his lodging house-cum-brothel and the second in the architect's office. The problem of keeping a protagonist's Je_kyll and Hyde existence in motion would be enough for most playwrights but Arden complicates matters further by raising the spectre of a previous career of Krank, thereby involving him not only in personal problems but in municipal and political ones as well. Thus, though Krank acts as the presenter of much of the action he is quite unable to control it. His personal philosophy is summed up in a speech he makes (violently) to an activist compatriot:

The world is running mad in every direction.
It is quicksilver, shattered here, here, here, here,
All over the floor. Go on, hurtle over it,
Chase it, dear Paul. But I choose to follow
Only such fragments as I can easily catch,
I catch them, I keep them such time as I choose,

FIGURE 18: Scenario graph of SERJEANT MUSGRAVE'S DANCE by John Arden



SCALE: 1 cm = 5 pages (Methuen edition)



Then roll them away and follow another.

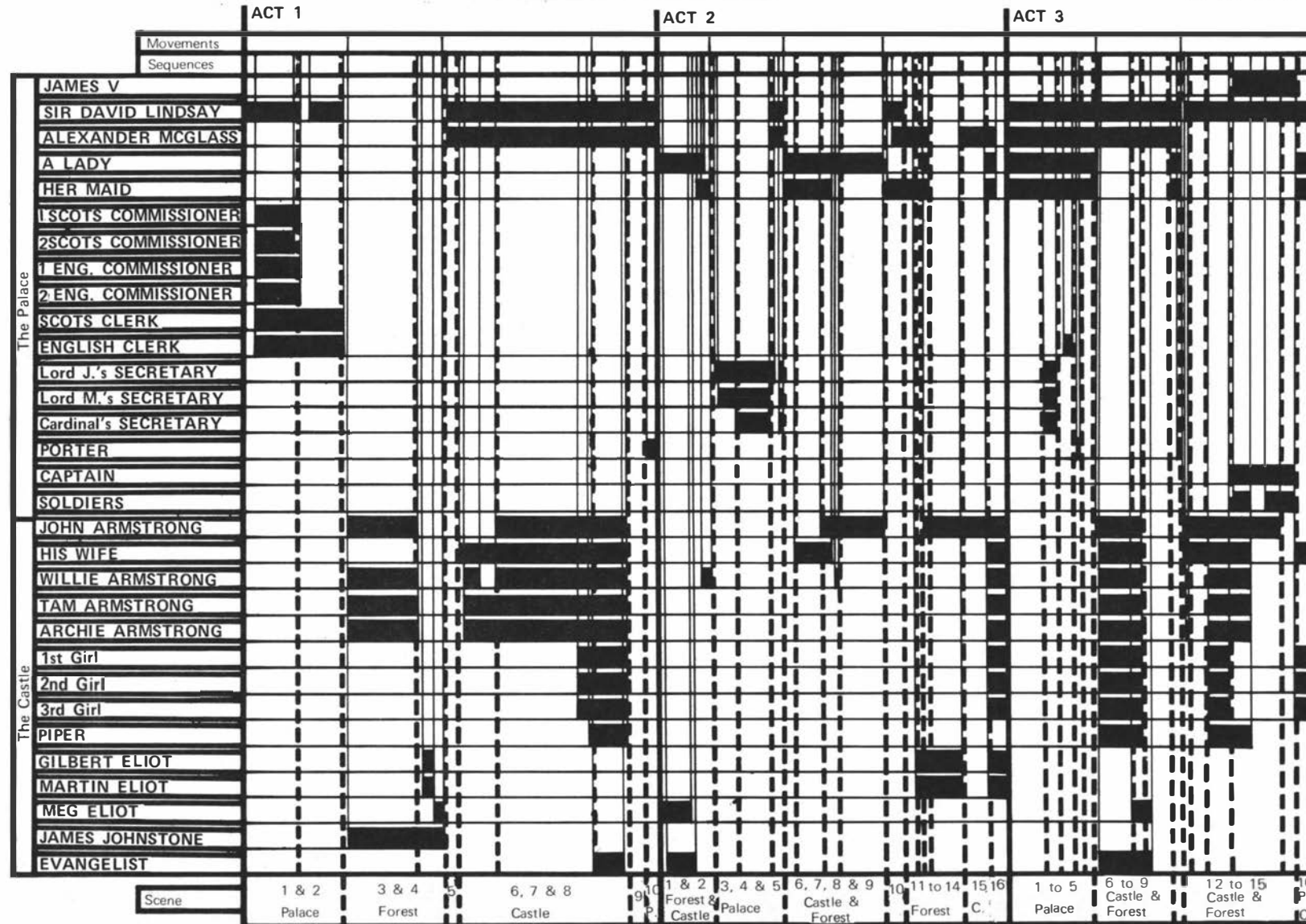
Is that philosophy? It is a reason, anyway ... (p.81)

Ultimately the structure of the play, however, ironically negates this claim. In the final movement of Act 3 the proliferation of conflicting plots, personalities and interests results in a scene of riotous confusion which is eventually resolved only by the accidental shooting of Krank. For the first and only time in the play, the disparate characters achieve a measure of unanimity as they sing a four-part round over the corpse of the protagonist.

In Serjeant Musgrave's Dance the "blocking" pattern (see Figure 18) is similar in overall shape but more sharply schematised. Here the list of characters, though longer, clearly subdivides into a number of groups rather than remaining a motley collection of individuals. These groups include the deserters led by Musgrave, the women (Mrs Hitchcock and Annie), the local authorities (the Mayor, the Parson and the Constable), the colliers led by Walsh, and, at the end of the play, the Dragoons. Within the groups (except for the last which merely restores law and order) characters are differentiated by their temperaments and attitudes (the three colliers for example, are labelled respectively slow, pugnacious, and earnest), but the collective identity of each group nevertheless remains clear throughout the play. This is reflected in the scenario graph by the number of shared entrances and exits, and is also apparent in the grouping patterns indicated by the stage-directions. Only the bargee, Crooked Joe Bludgeon who functions in the play as a satiric commentator and agent provocateur, does not naturally belong to any group but sides with each in turn, depending on where he spies the main chance.

FIGURE 19: Scenario graph of ARMSTRONG'S LAST GOODNIGHT by John Arden

SCALE: 1 cm = 5 pages text (Methuen edition)



The three acts of the play are subdivided into eight clearly-defined scenes. Here, unlike The Waters of Babylon, there is no linking of scenes by characters remaining on stage during the transitions (except for the epilogue scene at the end of Act 3), but a sharp cutting from one scene to the next.⁷⁶ In Acts 1 and 2 the scenes alternate between dark, cold exterior settings (a canal wharf, a graveyard, a street at night) and the comparatively warm setting of the pub bar. This alternation reflects the basic contrast between Musgrave's hard, fanatical logic and the "life and love" of Mrs Hitchcock and Annie. In the final scene of Act 2 this contrast is further emphasised by the division of the stage "into two distinct acting areas" (p.56) which enables the audience to simultaneously observe Musgrave's nightmarish outbursts in his bedroom and the encounters between Annie and the soldiers in the stable. As in The Waters of Babylon, the action of the play culminates in the third act with a big scene involving the entire cast and set on and around a public platform. (In contrast to the night scenes of Act 1 and 2 where Musgrave's purpose remains mysterious, it is significant that this scene takes place in the clear light of early morning.) Here again the protagonist's plans go awry, partly from accidental causes but mainly because of the conflicting attitudes represented on stage, and a precarious unanimity (here celebrated by a chain dance around the central platform) is achieved among the characters because of his last-minute defeat. However, in this play Arden adds a quiet epilogue (the prison scene) in order that the paradox between means and end exemplified by Musgrave should remain firmly in the minds of the audience when they leave the theatre.

Armstrong's Last Goodnight (see Figure 19) is on a grander,

more panoramic scale than The Waters of Babylon and Serjeant Musgrave's Dance. It requires a massive cast (some thirty characters plus extras), but this divides obviously into two basic groups, the Court and the Borderers, though there are conflicting factions and individuals within each. The text divides the action into three acts with a grand total of forty-two scenes, but the "scenes" refer to significant entrances and exits rather than to changes of locale. Scene shifting is, in fact, avoided entirely by the use of simultaneous mansions. These represent the Palace on stage left, the Castle on stage right and the Forest (the dark and tangled region where treacherous deeds are committed by members of both sides) in the middle. In the three basic movements of Act 1 Arden presents separately and in turn episodes set in each of these locations, but in the following acts he frequently makes use of two of them, and occasionally all three, simultaneously. As he himself has claimed⁷⁷ and the "blocking" pattern in some measure confirms, this is the best constructed of his major plays. The method of staging allows an easy continuity between scenes, and, at the same time, the effects of juxtaposition and counterpoint which his dramatic vision demands.

Armstrong's Last Goodnight thus combines the best structural qualities of Babylon and Musgrave and has the additional advantage of an evenly-balanced conflict between two dissimilar but well-matched antagonists: Lindsay of the Palace and Gilnockie of the Castle. Significantly, the action of the play ends as it begins⁷⁸ with a treacherous murder in the Forest (Gilnockie setting up the first murder, and Lindsay the second), followed by a brief epilogue spoken from the roofs of the Castle and the Palace.

There is a further aspect of Arden's structural technique which

cannot be detected or illustrated by the use of scenario graphs but which is of fundamental importance in the patterning of his plays. This is a matter of poetic instinct rather than of rational planning, his equivalent of what Shaw referred to as the "something behind ... [which] turns out to be the real motive of the whole creation."⁷⁹

Arden has described this aspect of his work by an analogy:

The ancient Irish heroic legends were told at dinner as prose tales, of invariable content but, in the manner of their telling, improvised to suit the particular occasion or the poet's mood. When, however, he arrived at one of the emotional climaxes of the story such as the lament of Deirdre for the Sons of Usna or the sleep-song of Crainne over Diarmaid, then he would sing a poem which he had by heart and which was always the same. So in a play, the dialogue can be naturalistic and "plotty" as long as the basic poetic issue has not been crystallized. But when this point is reached, then the language becomes formal (if you like, in verse, or sung), the visual pattern coalesces into a vital image that is one of the nerve-centres of the play.⁸⁰

The significance of this analogy for Arden's structural technique is further clarified by a comment he made during an interview about the writing of Serjeant Musgrave's Dance:

I had three main visual images — the big market place scene, the scene with the soldiers in the stable at night, and the soldiers' arrival in the town. I find these almost 'given' scenes — from the 'muse' if you like — then the intellectual work comes in fitting them together: in finding out which characters are supposed to be in which scene, and how the scenes join up, I reach the hard-work-process of putting them together. This, of course, may result in the alteration of the original conception — indeed it usually does. I have always been surprised at the amount of my original play which has been retained from the draft I sent out. Sometimes I feel that a good deal more could have been changed.⁸¹

This use of visual and poetic images frequently imparts an underlying, almost subconscious, level to the structure and meaning of Arden's plays. The images tend, in fact, to be drawn from the rich store of 'British' folk tales, myths and legends which fascinates him and informs much of his work. Thus, for example, images in

Serjeant Musgrave's Dance suggest the influence of the medieval Mummer's Play of Plough Monday, traditionally "a mime slaying of winter",⁸² and Musgrave's dance itself may well imply "a grotesque parody" of the Christian equivalent of this ritual — the Crucifixion.⁸³ Behind the contemporary themes and the extremely complex "blocking" pattern of The Workhouse Donkey, a similar mythic substructure operating through the force of "vital images", may be detected opening out still further the meaning of the play.

V

Arden's stated aim in The Workhouse Donkey was to

...set on the stage the politics, scandals, sex-life and atmosphere of Barnsley, as I remember shocked Conservative elders talking about it in my youth, and — while avoiding libel actions — to deal with local personalities in a raucous Aristophanic manner that would develop a poetic intensity from its very looseness.⁸⁴

Although many of the characters and certain key incidents are derived from the town's past, he considers the play to be a modern one:

I mean when it comes down to local politics, I would say that this is fairly accurate: somewhat simplified in order to squash it on to the stage. If one was writing a novel, one could get much more what you might call contemporary detail, but basically speaking you take a town like Wakefield or Pudsey or Barnsley or any of those, they're run by councillors who are mostly elderly men; the Labour Parties are pretty conservative up there; they've been based on a kind of Trade Union backing and there's also a pretty strong non-conformist attitude to life, and it's all a sort of a hangover from the nineteenth century. I may have exaggerated slightly for the purposes of the play but I don't think that I've given a false picture.⁸⁵

The nineteenth-century flavour of the town nevertheless assisted him to create a more effective microcosm with sharper and broader contrasts than would have been possible had he selected, for example, one of the new, artificially-created, industrial towns in the Midlands. Even Barnsley, however, proved difficult to compress into manageable

bounds for the stage and Arden confesses in his introduction to the play, "My chosen subject-matter proved both labyrinthine and intractable..."⁸⁶

The overall structure of The Workhouse Donkey is derived from Jonsonian comedy (as are those of several other Arden plays including The Happy Faven and Live Like Pigs). Arden openly acknowledges the debt:

It's based on the sort of Jonsonian type of comedy in which you get a fairly large cast, a contemporary theme with social comment in it and then an elaboration of plot which is not realistic but fantastic, ending up in a sort of classical shape to the play — you know, the various threads of the plot culminating in a big scene at the end, for instance, in which everyone's exposed, and the use of verse to give an extra dimension to the goings-on.⁸⁷

The influence of Jonson is clear enough in these respects, but when the structure of The Workhouse Donkey is compared with that of Bartholomew Fair (which Arden has mentioned as a model for the staging of his play⁸⁸), Jonson's overall frame can be seen as inherently possessing a social dimension of meaning which Arden's does not. The structure of Jonson's play recreates the movement of the fair and thus functions effectively as an emblem of society when imbued with the spirit of saturnalia. As one commentator has put it, the play is, "Like the fair itself, the symbol of the spirit of festivity, of joyous participation in the physicality, folly, and interrelatedness of all men."⁸⁹ Barnsley has much less coherence and force as a microcosm; it is merely a comparatively self-contained community with a distinctive flavour. Instead of Jonson's movement from booth to booth with the overall setting providing a symbolic context for the action of each scene, Arden has to move his action from place to place within his town and, in a much more piecemeal fashion, seek to build up a web of relation-

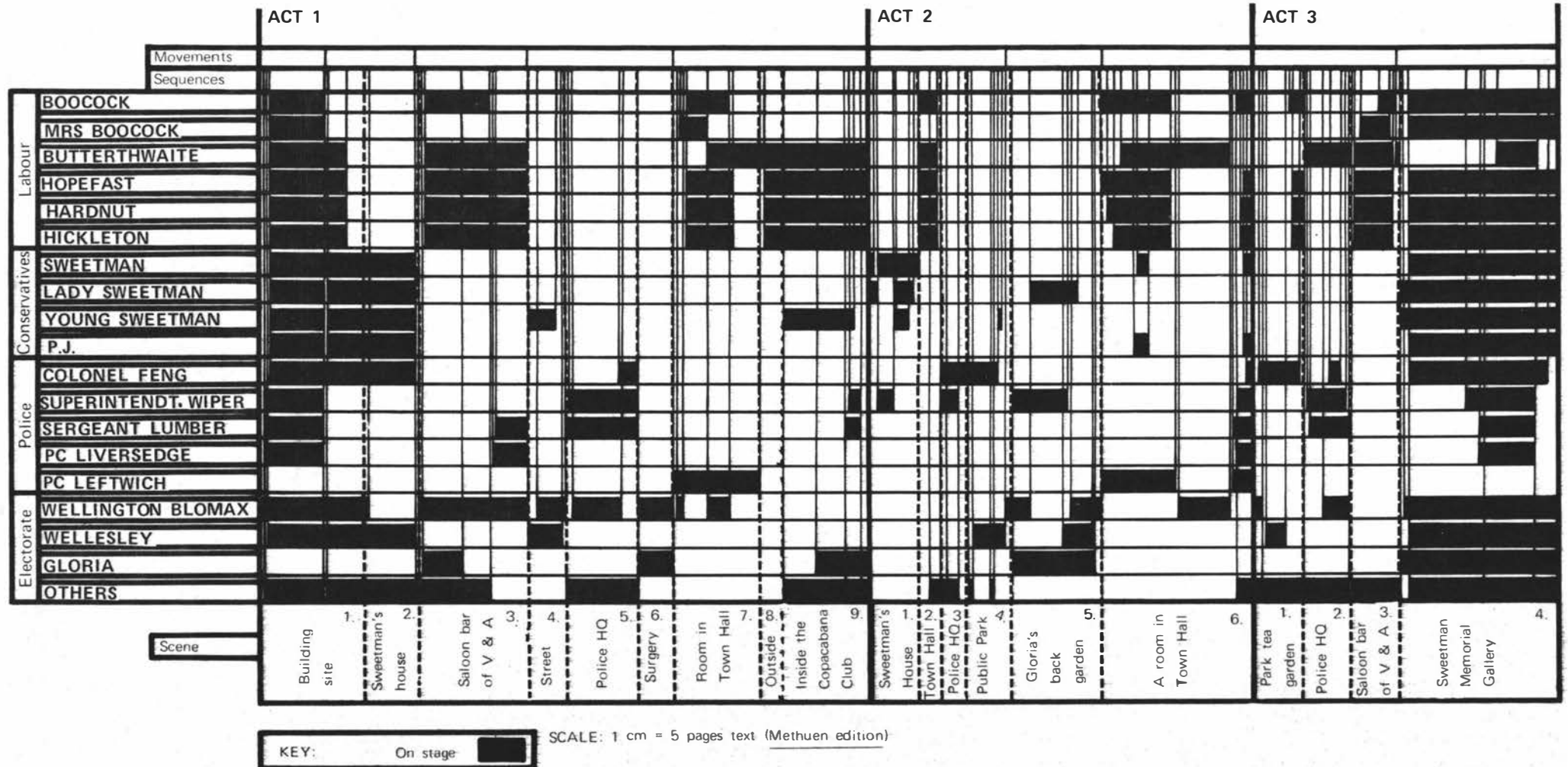
ships which influences the fate of the central character on whom ultimately, the meaning of his play depends. As for the spirit of saturnalia (the Dionysiac attributes of "noise, disorder, drunkenness, lasciviousness, nudity, generosity, corruption, fertility and ease" as Arden identifies them in his introduction⁹⁰), this again, as will be shown later, largely depends on the personality and conduct of the protagonist, though the playwright suggests "a certain air of caricature in the costumes and settings"⁹¹ and incorporates a good deal of music-hall song and dance into the dialogue and action.

Arden's chosen subject-matter also gave him a time problem which Jonson took care to avoid: "several years of political intrigue have had to be compressed into three hours of stage-time."⁹² The difficulty of doing this successfully (and audiences did find the original National Theatre production of The Workhouse Donkey difficult to follow⁹³) provoked Arden to speculate in his introduction to the play about a more "open" style of staging than is possible in a conventional theatre:

... I would have been happy had it been possible for The Workhouse Donkey to have lasted, say, six or seven or thirteen hours (excluding intervals), and for the audience to come and go throughout the performance, assisted perhaps by a printed synopsis of the play from which they could deduce those scenes or episodes which would interest them particularly and those which they could afford to miss. A theatre presenting such an entertainment would, of course, need to offer rival attractions as well, and would in fact take on some of the characteristics of a fairground or entertainment park ... The design of the playhouse itself would need careful consideration, as clearly members of an audience continually moving to and from their seats in a conventional building will cause intolerable distraction. But I am convinced that if what we laughably call 'vital theatre' is ever to live up to its name, some such casual or 'prom concert' conception must eventually be arrived at.⁹⁴

Here again it is not difficult to detect the influence of Bartholomew Fair which in its action from Act II on invites simultaneous staging

FIGURE 20: Scenario graph of THE WORKHOUSE DONKEY by John Arden



with all the booths being visible at once to the audience. (It is probably wildly unhistorical but nevertheless easy to imagine a performance of Jonson's play in which the fair booths were all set out in the bear pit of the Hope Theatre and the groundlings mingled with the actors while the rest of the audience watched the spectacle from the surrounding galleries!) But Arden had to make do with the less flexible open stage facilities at Chichester, and create the impression of lively diversity by a succession of scenes presented within the accepted time-limit of a conventional production.⁹⁵ It is not surprising, that his play seems (to quote a genial criticism by John Russell Taylor) "to force a gallon into a pint pot."⁹⁶

The scenario graph for The Workhouse Donkey (see Figure 20) is the most complex of all those included in this study. The play has not only a large cast and uses a considerable number of entrances and exits, but requires some eighteen changes of setting during its presentation. However, when its "blocking" pattern is compared with those of earlier Arden plays such as The Waters of Babylon and Serjeant Musgrave's Dance, it can be seen that several technical devices have been carried over into The Workhouse Donkey which to some extent diminish its complexity in performance. There is, for instance, a fluidity in the transitions from one scene to the next which is made possible partly through the use of scenic emblems rather than full sets,⁹⁷ but also through the frequent use of characters who remain on stage while the scenery is changed. The most notable of these is Dr Wellington Blomax who functions for much of the action as its presenter.

Like the characters in The Waters of Babylon, the fifteen named characters "in the Donkey are all very busy indeed" and the

proliferation of sub-plots around the main action is intended, on Arden's own admission, "to suggest a much larger number of people than the cast in fact contains."⁹⁸ As in Serjeant Musgrave's Dance and a number of the later plays, the cast list divides into a number of groups — here identified by Arden as Labour, Conservative, The Police and The Electorate (p.12) — but because most of the characters are motivated rather more by self-interest than group loyalty the use of these groupings does not greatly simplify the action. The characters often enter and exit with the other members of their group, but they also operate independently.

The various scene locations can be broadly classified in a similar manner. Labour rules at the Town Hall but much of its business is conducted in an informal (not to say underhand) manner in the saloon bar of the Victoria and Albert Hotel. Sir Harold Sweetman, the leader of the Conservatives, has to operate from his own home, but the shadier side of his activities is represented by the Copacabana Club until he finds it prudent to transform this establishment into the "Sweetman Memorial Gallery". The Police, of course, operate from their Headquarters, and the remaining settings (with the dubious exceptions of Blomax's surgery and Gloria's back garden) may be described as common ground. There is, however, a goodly amount of visiting (and, on occasion trespassing or even invasion) of hostile territory by members of the various groups.

The act structure, as illustrated by the scenario graph appears clumsy and unbalanced. Acts 2 and 3 in the Methuen edition are each only half the length of Act 1 which therefore seems disproportionately long. In its first production (by the National Theatre of Chichester) the play was presented in two parts. Charles Marowitz, reviewing

this production, noted:

The play was conceived as a three-acter, and, divided in two, the material does not properly resolve itself. One should either have scaled it down to the given time, or insisted on its natural full length.⁹⁹

In theory, the National Theatre's decision to perform the play in two halves makes sense in terms of the script's running time and also in thematic terms: Act 1 showing the apparent triumph of the protagonist, Alderman Charlie Butterthwaite, and Acts 2 and 3 his downfall (or to be more precise, his realisation of his true identity). But this solution does not work out satisfactorily in practice — not for the reason which Marowitz advances, but because the strength of the climax at the end of Act 2, (not to mention the interval of a week which is supposed to elapse before the beginning of Act 3) demands an intermission at this point in the performance. In seeking to condense his chosen subject-matter "into the bounds of conventional acting time", Arden clearly failed to achieve a tidily balanced act structure.

Tidiness, however, has never been an important virtue in Arden's drama. (Nor for that matter, did it greatly concern either Shaw or O'Casey.) It is more important to note the cohesion of the play as a whole than to criticise a lack of balance in its parts. The Workhouse Donkey achieves shape and cohesion in several ways — through a complex web of intrigues depicted in episodic scenes ironically commenting on each other by juxtaposition, through the rich and distinctive flavour of Arden's dialogue and songs, and, especially, through his ability to make "the visual pattern coalesce into ... vital image(s)" which are the "nerve-centres of the play"¹⁰⁰ To demonstrate these matters it is necessary to analyse the text movement by movement. When this has been done, it should be apparent

that the form of the play is expressive of the response of the community to the hubris and self-discovery of the protagonist.

The first movement of Act 1 features a scene of public ceremonial, as does the final movement of Act 3. The ceremonies are, respectively, the laying of the foundation-stone of the new Police Headquarters and the opening of The Sweetman Memorial Gallery. The ironic contrasts within and between these scenes are numerous. The foundation-stone ceremony is combined with an official welcome to Colonel Feng, the town's new Chief Constable and an exemplar of official rectitude, but the stone is laid by Alderman Charlie Butterthwaite, unofficial czar of the Labour Party and "the only man in town who really pumps the oil." (p.19) The Sweetman Memorial Gallery, on the other hand, is a transmogrification of the Copacabana Club, an expensive strip joint which has become a political embarrassment for its undercover owner, Sir Harold Sweetman. This public whitewashing is also the occasion of the effective expulsion from the town of both Feng and Butterthwaite. The contrast in the settings emphasises the reversals which take place in the course of the action, but what is of even greater importance to the patterning of the play is that these are the only scenes in which all the conflicting individuals and factions in the town submerge their differences and act with apparent unanimity.

Dr Wellington Blomax is the first character to enter in the play, and his opening speech, given while the other inhabitants of the town assemble for the foundation-stone laying ceremony, emphasises the parochial nature of the community which is being presented on stage, and something of its (and his) dubious moral character:

BLOMAX

Ladies and gentlemen: let us suppose we go
From St Pancras to Sheffield,
To Doncaster from King's Cross:
By either route to Leeds.

Enter MASONS

Not very far to go, for us or the flight of a crow
But involving geographically an appreciable mutation,
(I mean in landscape, climate, odours, voices, food.)
I put it to you that such a journey needs
In the realm of morality an equal alteration.

Enter WIPER, LUMBER and PC's as Guard of Honour

I mean, is there anything you really believe to be bad?
If you come to the North you might well think it good.
You might well think, as I do,
That you should change the shape of your faces
Or even double their number
When you travel between two places.

Enter civic procession . . . (p.15)

While the official party led by the present Labour Mayor, Alderman Boocock, inspects the Guard of Honour, Alderman Charlie Butterthwaite (who has previously been Mayor of the borough no fewer than nine times) chats ironically with the masons about the new Chief Constable and the ceremonial which is going on. Indicating his own robe, he comments,

We may be garnished up like the roast beef of old England, but we haven't ^{quite} forgotten all realities yet, I hope. Blimey, look at that! Left right, left right, one two three, and how long have you been in the force, my fine fellow? Jolly good. Jolly good, give that man three stripes! Eh, the police force: we can't do without 'em, but my God how we hate 'em! (p.17)

This is a significant lead-in speech for it underlines Butterthwaite's consciousness of the artificiality of the occasion and the falsity of his own part in it. He proceeds to demonstrate this publicly by the speech he makes before laying the stone and his boisterous horseplay as he does so. This deliberately crude behaviour, counterpointed by the primness of the Conservative members of the official party and the rigid appearance of the police Guard of Honour, provides the

first "vital image" of the play.

This first episode is terminated when "All stiffen as the band breaks into the National Anthem. Then the group begins to break up and converse in knots." (p.20) Blomax comes forward again to address the audience. He introduces himself properly, prepares the ground for a later scene at the Victoria and Albert, and then introduces his (illegitimate) daughter Wellesley to the audience and to Young Sweetman. After this the scene dissolves quite simply into a cocktail party at the Sweetmans by the departure of the unwanted characters and the entry of a maid who brings in a tray of drinks. Blomax remains "on stage in foreground" (p.23) during the transition, expresses his paternal pride at seeing his daughter fraternising with the son of the Tory beer baron, and then exits.

The cocktail party episode completes the first movement of the play. The rivalry between the Conservatives and Labourites, and in particular Sweetman's jealousy of Butterthwaite's power, now comes more into the open as Sir Harold sounds out the new Chief Constable to see whether he might prove a useful ally. Feng (unlike the established members of his force) proves incorruptible, but takes note of Sweetman's hint about the after-hours drinking of Butterthwaite and his cronies at the Victoria and Albert. The inciting incident of the play thus prepared for, the movement ends with a complete clearance of the stage as Sweetman and his guests exeunt for dinner.

The second movement of Act 1 comprises the first of the two scenes in the play set in the saloon bar of the Victoria and Albert, the unofficial headquarters of Butterthwaite and his Labour cronies. The juxtaposition of this scene with the previous one provides an immediate social contrast between the rival political factions, but

the importance of this new scene lies mainly in the inciting incident with which it ends — the police raid which provokes Butterthwaite to embark on a course of all-out retaliation against both Sweetman and Feng. The scene begins with the entry of several drinkers and Blomax who proceeds to transact a little shady medical business with one of them. Arden's skill in the tactics of the open stage is particularly evident in the ease with which he has Blomax slip in a moment from involvement in the scene to commentator on it when Gloria enters and comes up to him:

GLORIA. For the sake of old times, can we have a little word?

BLOMAX. Gloria! Good gracious me! We don't expect to find you these days slumming it in the midst of the town in this dreary old boozing-ken! Gentlemen, you all know Gloria! — Get her a drink! — I am surprised, my dear Gloria, that you can tear yourself away from that expensive establishment of yours out ^{there} on the bypass ... (He addresses the audience.) ... known for your information as the Copacabana Club. And this most elegant and most gorgeous lady — who was for a space my very close friend — is now the manageress. There you are: You all know Gloria. What you don't know, I fancy — is where the money comes from that keeps that club going. I don't know it either.

GLORIA. I'm not going to tell you.

BLOMAX. What are you going to tell me? (p.29)

And they are back in the scene again. A similar skill is evident in the varying of the grouping during the rest of the scene: the mock-triumphal entrance of Butterthwaite, Boocock and the Labour councillors; the emptying down to the hard core of Butterthwaite and his cronies when the landlord announces closing time; and the vengeful exit of the hard core following the police raid.

The third movement consists of three short scenes dealing with the immediate aftermath of the various encounters in the two

previous scenes, and is linked by the personality and machinations of Dr Wellington Blomax. In the first scene of this movement Wellesley is being walked home by Young Sweetman, and discovers that because her father is "not persona grata" with Sweetman's parents Young Sweetman's infatuation for her is likely to be fruitless. Blomax soon enters, and eavesdrops on the conversation. He remains on stage after the departure of Young Sweetman and his daughter, passes a comment while a quick scene-change takes place, and then "leaves the stage to re-enter directly" (p.41) into the new setting of the Police Headquarters. There he applies a little pressure on Superintendent Wiper who has put Gloria in the family way while receiving payment "in kind" for not interfering with her "libidinous knocking shop" (p.45). (The use of a split scene technique in this scene to show the outer and inner offices at the Police Headquarters effectively suggests the public and private faces of the local force.) Although Blomax leaves the stage for the last part of this scene, during which Feng orders the reluctant Wiper to organise a raid on the Copacabana Club, he is back on immediately it ends to introduce the following brief episode at his surgery where he promises to help Gloria out of her predicament. This last scene of the movement which has centred on Blomax's machinations ends with his singing a song ("I can pull out my hand ...") about his devious doings while he dances off the stage with Gloria.

The final movement of Act 1 is concerned with Butterthwaite's revenge for the raid on the Victoria and Albert. The movement begins with a conversation in a room in the Town Hall between the Town Hall factotum, PC Leftwich retired, and Blomax who "enters from the side opposite his last exit, carrying a black bag." (p.52)

Blower has come to attend to Alderman Boocock's bad leg — the Mayor's lameness is suggestive of his political timidity, a quality which, in different ways, infuriates both Mrs Boocock and Butterthwaite. When Boocock refuses to countenance Butterthwaite's demand to sack Feng, Butterthwaite determines to take matters into his own hands. He worms out of Leftwich information pointing to Sweetman's secret ownership of the Copacabana Club and decides to personally investigate the premises in the hope of uncovering a scandal which may embarrass both Sweetman and the Police. The Town Hall scene ends with Butterthwaite singing a rowdy ballad about the triumphs of Napoleon, and dancing his way offstage with Leftwich. Within seconds he is back, leading his trio of Labour cronies on "A preliminary reekin-ayssance" to the "portals of iniquity" (p.60) — i.e. the door of the Copacabana Club. This short transitional scene, played at the front of the stage, underlines a plot point about Butterthwaite's shortage of cash, and allows time for the main stage to be fully set up for the big scene inside the club. He then leads his cronies inside and the action into the climactic scene of Act 1. The following spectacle, in which Butterthwaite with lascivious glee tinkles the bells and pops the balloons on the otherwise nude dancing girls before triumphantly laying information against the conduct of the club to a highly-embarrassed Superintendent Wiper, provides the second of the play's "vital images".

The first movement of Act 2 comprises four short scenes each involving one of the various groups and depicting their reactions to the Copacabana raid and its immediate consequences. Scene 1 is set at Sweetman's house later in the night of the raid. In contrast to the cocktail party of Act 1 where Sir Harold entertained the Chief

Constable, he now receives an unexpected visit from Superintendent Wiper to warn him of Butterthwaite's charges; and, before Wiper leaves, Young Sweetman, too, arrives (in a drunken condition) direct from the Copacabana Club. The scene ends with a mock-Shakesperian soliloquy by Sir Harold in which he laments the fact that in previous Mayoral contests the election has lit on Butterthwaite "not once/But three times three, or nine times nine, I fear" but predicts that his rival

... has himself prepared his own trap-door
And greased his easy hinge. Tonight, he did it!
All it needs now, cagy play and watch
For luck to rock the lock and heave the lever
And he's down! ... (p.74)

Scene 2 then cuts to the Town Hall where Butterthwaite rides roughshod over the protests of Boocock and lays charges of police corruption before the Press. The device of having characters remain on stage while the scene changes is then used to provide continuity into Scenes 3 and 4. At the end of the short Town Hall scene, the journalists move round the stage to confront Feng, Wiper and a PC who enter as the journalists complete their perambulation; and at the end of the Police Headquarters scene Feng remains on a stage delivering a soliloquy about the difficulties and loneliness of his position while a park attendant brings on several deck chairs. Feng then sits down wearily on one of the chairs, Wellesley enters, and the park scene has begun. This scene, which completes the first movement of Act 2, features two encounters involving Wellesley: in the first she demurs to a proposal of marriage from Feng, and in the second she berates Young Sweetman for his parents' hypocrisy. The movement ends with her walking away and Young Sweetman following, calling out after her.

The second movement is concerned with a three-pronged attack by Lady Sweetman, Gloria and Wellesley who, for different reasons, join

together to force Blomax to foreclose on gambling debts owed him by Butterthwaite. Blomax, after quite a long absence, returns to the stage at the end of the park scene and resumes his role of presenter. His grip is slipping, however, and he is now seen not as the "fixer" but the "fixed". He guides the audience into the scene in Gloria's back garden, enjoys a brief moment of triumph when he catches Wiper with his pants down and informs the superintendent of his marriage to Gloria, but then finds himself driven into a corner by the women. Lady Sweetman tells Wellesley that she can marry Young Sweetman if her father abandons Butterthwaite, Gloria (who wants revenge for the closing down of her establishment) tells her new husband that his decision will determine whether his marriage-bed "Will be narrow or wide", and the hapless Blomax is left alone on stage at the end of the scene to reflect on his dilemma:

Well, whether it's one or whether it's the other, I still seem to have invited into it the east wind and the west and they're ~~scraping~~ like two catamounts between my skin and my pyjamas ...

He picks up the empty bottles, pours out the dregs into one bottle, and drinks it.

Fact of the matter is, I have been betraying my class. Wellesley is entitled to the natural advantages of her place in society, the snooty little bitch. I am, after all, a comfortable man: and I don't want to be disrupted. When all is said and done, this town is run by an ignorant overweening yobbo: and it's time I stood up firm to him and accepted the responsibilities of my superior education ... Furthermore, he owes me money .

He goes into the house. (pp. 90-1)

The third and final movement of the act builds to and culminates in the act of hubris which is Butterthwaite's response to the pressure Blomax has been forced to bring to bear on him. The action all takes place in the one setting, the room in the Town Hall. The scene opens with a prologue of rapid doggerel in which Boocock,

Leftwich and Councillor Hopefast, joined first by Councillor Hardnutt and then by Councillor Hickleton, gossip furiously about Butterthwaite's desperate attempts to borrow money to pay his gambling debts. This passage comes to a climax with Hickleton and Hopefast chanting in unison, "I said I wasn't made o'brass", and the three councillors chorussing the reply Butterthwaite had made to them, "He said he bloody knew it!" -- whereupon the subject of their gossip enters and the action of the scene begins. Sweetman and his henchman, P.J., arrive to protest about Butterthwaite's attack on the Police and also his blocking of Sweetman's plans to re-open the civic Art Gallery. A minor confrontation follows between Boocock and Butterthwaite over the latter's devious management of the Ways and Means Committee, which provokes Butterthwaite to sing a tactless song, "I'm King of this Castle, Barney,/ And that by right of conquest ...", before trying (without success, of course) to borrow money from Boocock. The mayor and the other councillors then depart, leaving only Leftwich on stage with Butterthwaite for a telling little exchange:

BUTTERTHWAITE. Go and lock up. I won't be half an hour.
I've got some letters to attend to.

LEFTWICH. I say, Charlie, is it that bad?

BUTTERTHWAITE. There's nowt that bad, Herbert, as can't
be made better with a bit o' pride of achievement in
some other field. All I want to do is get rid o' Feng.
If I can manage that, I don't give a bastard's egg if
I spend the rest o' my life i't' workhouse!

LEFTWICH. Well, you were born i't'bloody place, worn't
you?

Exit LEFTWICH. (p.98)

Leftwich's final comment effectively introduces the climactic sequence of the play in which Butterthwaite, with Blomax an unwilling accomplice, burgles the Town Hall safe. "He sings, with a little dance", a song describing the persecution he suffered in

his youth when he was regarded by himself and others as a "Work-house Donkey"; and after he has given Blomax his money proceeds to scatter the rest around the stage while still dancing and singing. The climax comes when he describes how he had happened one day when walking slowly in a half-starved condition past a pawnbroker's window to see his reflection "in a gilt-framed orrulo mirror ... "

O what a shock, I nearly died,
 I saw my ears as small as these,
 Two feet, two hands, a pair of knees,
 My eyeballs jumped from side to side,
 I jumped right round, I bawled out loud,
 You lousy liars, I've found you out!
 I know now why you're fleeing ...
 I am no donkey, never was,
 I'm a naked human being!

You know, after that, it was easy ... all I had to do was to buy a suit of clothes ... they came, they came back, me boy, and there I prospered, there I grew ... and you look at me now! (p.102)

This is the third of the play's "vital images" and its most ironic moment for even as Butterthwaite recalls the realization by himself of his human identity he is throwing away the power this gave him.

The scene then concludes rapidly with the hastily-hatched plot for Blomax to provide Butterthwaite with an alibi; Leftwich's discovery of the robbery; and the rapid entry of the police, Boocock, the Labour councillors, Sweetman, F.J., and finally, Feng. The eventual rejection of Butterthwaite by the entire community is thus foreshadowed in the scene's last few seconds which, as Professor Brown has noted, receive special emphasis through Arden's device of having journalists take "flashlight photographs of eight specified dramatic confrontations in the single situation."¹⁰¹

Act 3 consists of two basic movements; the first, comprising the first two scenes and most of the third, shows Butterthwaite resisting while the net draws in around him; and the second, con-

prising the end of Scene 3 and the whole of Scene 4 shows his deliberate resumption of his former identity of the Workhouse Donkey. Blomax opens the first movement with a frightened soliloquy in the park tea garden, but soon becomes conscious of police surveillance and flees the scene followed by a constable. Feng who has been watching from another table then has another meeting with Wellesley who gives him just enough encouragement to compromise him in his investigations into the Town Hall burglary, and this encounter is followed by another in which Boocock and the Labour councillors demand his resignation for persecuting Butterthwaite. There is a clean break to the following scene at the Police Headquarters where Butterthwaite is holding out against close interrogation, but before long two PCs bring in Blomax who has finally confessed to abetting the robbery. The two amateur burglars are saved for the moment, however, by the arrival of Feng who refuses to accept the confession because of the moral quandary in which he finds himself after his overtures to Blomax's daughter. Again the stage is cleared completely before the next scene at the Victoria and Albert.

This scene offers an ironic contrast with the Act 1 scene in the same setting, for both display what Blomax has described as "extraordinary meeting(s) of the working caucus committee of the Labour Party" (p.21), but the content of the meetings is entirely different. In the first, Butterthwaite takes the chair as soon as Boocock has left the pub, and assumes command while Councillors Hopefast, Hardnut and Hickleton "hang upon his words, as is usual: as is dutiful; as is, after all, only convenient." (p.21) In the Act 3 scene, however, the councillors, under the chairmanship of Mrs Boocock, rapidly proceed in Butterthwaite's absence to vote him off all the Council sub-

committees. Boocock, as usual, arrives too late to do more than make an ineffectual protest, which is rejected by his wife and the councillors as they exeunt one after the other, and then, "stamping with frustration" on his lame leg, he

staggers and falls knocking the screen over.
BUTTERTHWAITE is standing at the bar. He is much
as in the police station, but wearing a ragged old
ruffler, and a woollen tam o'shanter over his
bandage. (p.117)

This coup de theatre ends the first movement of Act 3 and initiates the final one of the play. The falling of the screen reveals Butterthwaite's acceptance of his true identity and his rejection of the hypocritical pretences of the power game which he had played for so long. As Professor Brown aptly comments; "Suddenly he has found that he is exposed and free, and he hastens to be as he began, penniless and derided."¹⁰² Gathering together the riff-raff of the bar, whom he now recognises as his equals, he leads them all into the back bar for a May Day debauchment, financed by the last of the petty cash in his Post Office account. The falling of the screen is thus the prelude to the showdown in the final scene at the grand opening of "The Sweetman Memorial Gallery."

The stage is cleared momentarily before the lights come up on the artistic decor of the erstwhile Copacabana Club. (The clean breaks between each of the four scenes of Act 3 emphasises the rapid progress of the play towards its dénouement.) Blomax again resumes his role as presented in an opening speech to the audience:

And so we lead on, to the final cruel conclusion
 Compounded of corruption and unresolved confusion.
 I think the time has come to resolve it if I can.
 Here I stand alone, an embrangled Englishman
 Nerving myself up in the torment of my duty.
 The first day of May is the day of Art and Beauty,
 The dust of Sweetman thrust into the eye-balls of you all
 For to wash you ^{white and} whiter than the whitewash on the wall.

But out in the dark back lane
The great grey cat still waits by the mouse's hole ... (p.119)

The forebodings in this speech are rapidly realized. The formal proceedings of the opening of the Art Gallery are interrupted first by Blomax's confession to his part in the robbery, and then by Superintendent Wiper's announcement that Butterthwaite is leading a gang of "half a hundred others, of the lowest type in town. layabouts, tearaways, every man of them half-seas over!" with the express purpose of wrecking the gallery. This is the last straw for Feng, already accused of corruption, and he resigns leaving Wiper to cope with the emergency. The final "vital image" of the play comes when Butterthwaite breaks through the police cordon, accompanied only by a little demonstrator who squats down at his feet. "Overtly decked as a ritual king-victim",¹⁰³ Butterthwaite partakes of the feast uninvited and in a massive final speech, as Professor Brown notes,

borrows the words of Jehovah to express his pride and scorn, but ... knows ... that he offers no promised land ... He is a scapegoat, not a saviour or redeemer; and all traces of his existence will be covered up.¹⁰⁴

He is finally dragged out, with a paper chain round his neck and a ring of flowers on his head, singing the song of his rejection. The remaining characters then join together to resolve their differences by a series of shady compromises, and they too sing a final chorus expressive of their new-found solidarity:

ALL

We stand all alone to the north of the Trent
You leave us alone and we'll leave you alone
We take no offence where none has been meant
But you hit us with your fist we'll bash you with a stone!
.....

And if for THE WORKHOUSE DONKEY
We should let one tear down fall
Don't think by that he's coming back ...
The old sod's gone for good and all!

Professor Brown observes that in this ending

Arden has shown his hand. None of the characters is a critical voice or author's mouthpiece, none is obvious hero or sympathetic centre, but Arden has made his judgement on the world he has created: the political and moral issues 'illustrated' by the assembled cast are to be contrasted with qualities of carnival, protest and recklessness and with the self-knowledge that comes from defeat and rejection,¹⁰⁵

This is true, but, of course, it in no way denies Arden's "openness" of outlook or technique, any more than similar comments about the plays of Shaw or O'Casey would deny theirs. "Openness", as I have used the term, implies a positive attitude to life, an enjoyment of its richness and complexity and a desire to fit it all in if possible; it does not mean the writer lacks opinions of his own. It would indeed be surprising if the instinctive sympathy of Shaw, O'Casey and Arden for vitality and honesty and their dislike of rigidity and hypocrisy were not expressed in their plays. It is important, however, that such authorial attitudes be conveyed through the total pattern of the action and are not imposed on top of it. Arden, writing of a concept of theatre based on the narrative techniques of the traditional ballad, states the point well in the concluding sentences of his essay, "Telling a True Tale":

I have found in my own very tentative experiments that audiences (and critics) find it very hard to make the completely simple response to the story that is the necessary preliminary to appreciating the meaning of the play. Other habits of playgoing have led them to expect that they are going to have to begin by forming judgements, by selecting what they think is the author's "social standpoint" and then following it to its conclusion. This does not happen in ballads at their best. There we are given the fable, and we draw our own conclusions. If the poet intends us to make a judgement on his characters, this will be implied by the whole turn of the story, not by intellectualized comments as it proceeds. The tale stands and it exists in its own right. If the poet is a true one, then the tale will be true too.

The difficulties of telling a true tale for the contemporary theatre and having it understood by contemporary audiences are mainly due, of course, to the fragmentation of standards and beliefs in contemporary society. Commenting on this problem, Arden has remarked:

It was possible in the Middle Ages for good plays to be communal — how many writers worked on the York Mystery Cycle? — but there was a shared body of belief in those days. Now we are faced with audiences who, taken as a mass, believe in nothing in particular; a play has to present its meaning to both the sympathetic and the anti-pathetic at the same time. The former must be fulfilled and the latter converted, if possible. This demands a degree of passionate affirmation on the part of the writer which cannot be shared.¹⁰⁷

Every serious playwright in the modern theatre has had to devise his own strategy of coping with this problem, an old one which seems to be getting worse. Shaw made use of the shock effect of taking stock conventions and affirming the opposite; O'Casey sought to make basic affirmations through the medium of symbolic fantasy, and Arden has endeavoured to demonstrate the complex issues of contemporary society by complicated parables with a mythic substructure.

The problem might appear to be less serious for playwrights who choose to concentrate on private lives rather than public issues. Certainly it is not of great significance in the social dramas of Pinero who knew his audience fairly well and understood, even if he did not entirely accept its code of morality. But for more recent writers, conscious not only of the lack of positive values in society but of the difficulty of achieving a sense of identity in such an environment, the problem of effective theatrical communication is not diminished by narrowing the focus of the play. This can be effectively demonstrated by analysis of the structural strategies of T. S. Eliot and Harold Pinter.

All citations in my text from O'Casey's plays are to the Collected Plays, vols 1-4 (London, 1949-1951), hereafter cited as OCCP. The citations are followed by parenthetical reference to the page numbers of the appropriate volume of this edition.

Volume One: Juno and the Paycock, The Shadow of a Gunman, The Plough and the Stars, The End of the Beginning, A Pound on Demand

Volume Two: The Silver Tassie, Within the Gates, The Star Turns Red

Volume Three: Purple Dust, Red Roses for Me, Hall of Healing

Volume Four: Oak Leaves and Lavender, Cock-a-Doodle Dandy, Bedtime Story, Time to Go

(No quotation has been necessary from the plays published subsequently to OCCP — see Bibliography, Section A.)

All citations in my text from Arden's plays are to the individual volumes in which they have appeared. The relevant volumes for the plays I have discussed in this chapter are the following:

Three plays, introduced by John Russell Taylor (London, 1964)
This collection includes The Waters of Babylon, Live Like Pigs, and The Happy Haven.

Serjeant Musgrave's Dance (London, 1960)

The Workhouse Donkey (London, 1964)

Armstrong's Last Goodnight (London, 1965)

(For a complete list of Arden's published plays to date see Bibliography, Section A.)

1. "The Author's Apology", OTN, vol. I, p.vi.
2. See, for example, O'Casey's Autobiographies, vol. II (London, 1963), p. 279 and p. 621.
3. "Shaw — Lord of a Century", The Green Crow (London, 1957), p.223. (Two of O'Casey's other articles in praise of Shaw appear in this collection: "A Whisper about Bernard Shaw" and "Bernard Shaw: An Appreciation of a Fighting Idealist".)
4. O'Casey has, of course, written vividly of his childhood in the first volume of his autobiographies. For a summary of the facts relating to O'Casey's early years and the conditions then existing in the slum areas of Dublin, see David Krause, Sean O'Casey: The Man and his Work (London, 1960) pp. 1-18.

5. The Green Crow, p.15
6. The Theatre in Our Times (NY, 1954), pp. 241-2.
7. Preface to Heartbreak House, BHBS, V, p.58.
8. "Who's For a Revolution?", Tulane Drama Review XI (Winter, 1966) p.45.
9. Guardian, 16 May 1964. Cited by John Russell Brown. Theatre Language (London, 1972), p.226.
10. Op.Cit., p.46.
11. Blasts and Benedictions, ed. Ronald Ayling (London, 1967), p.70.
12. Ibid, pp. 70-1.
13. Ibid. p.73.
14. "Poetry and Theatre", TLS, 6 August 1964, p.705.
15. "The Play of Ideas", New Statesman, 8 April 1950. Reprinted in Blasts and Benedictions, pp. 25-6.
16. "An Irishman's Plays", Radio Times, 25 Jan 1957. Reprinted in Blasts and Benedictions, p.83.
17. O'Casey in his essays uses the word "realism" where I have used "naturalism". See, for example, Blasts and Benedictions, p.153.
18. "Pro-Per Proscenium", The Green Crow, p.118.
19. See, for example, the three essays entitled "Coward Codology" in The Green Crow. Cf. also, John Arden's comment "I have no sympathy with T.S. Eliot's attempts to make verse sound like Noel Coward comedy", in "Building the Play" Encore VIII, 4 (1961), p.23.
20. Three Plays (London, 1964), pp. 193-4.
21. "Telling a True Tale", Encore, VII, (1960) p: 25.
22. "From Within the Gates", NY Times 21 October 1934. Reprinted in Blasts and Benedictions, pp. 116-7.
23. "The Reps and New Plays: a writer's viewpoint", New Theatre Magazine; I, 2 (1960), pp. 23-6. Cited in Theatre Language, p.193.
24. Krause. pp. 88-9.
25. Ibid. p.91.
26. Ibid. p.92.

27. Vincent C. De Baun. "Sean O'Casey and the Road to Expressionism" Modern Drama, IV (December 1961), p. 259.
28. "Sean O'Casey: An Appreciation". Daily Telegraph, 11 March 1926. Reprinted in Sean O'Casey: Modern Judgements, ed. Ronald Ayling (London, 1969), p.85.
29. Autobiographies II, p. 270.
30. See Robert Hogan, The Experiments of Sean O'Casey (NY, 1960), pp. 184-206 for a selection of excerpts from statements made during the original controversy when the play was rejected by the Abbey Theatre. Among more recent commentators who have discussed the matter at length may be noted Krause (Chapter III) and G.W. Brandt in "Realism and Parables: From Brecht to Arden", Contemporary Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 4 (London, 1962).
31. Krause, p. 99.
32. Ibid. p. 205.
33. The exceptions are Purple Dust and Oak Leaves and Lavender (both expressions summing up the faded glories of bygone ages, though the latter play does contain the Lavender Seller's song and references in the dialogue to the scent of lavender), and The Bishop's Bonfire which is prepared off-stage and not actually lit during the action of the play.
34. This division is used by Krause and Hogan in their full-length studies and generally followed by Saros Cowasjee in his monograph, O'Casey (Edinburgh, 1966).
35. See "Cock-a-Doodle Doo", published in part in the NY Times, 9 November 1958, under the title of "O'Casey's Credo". and reprinted in full in Blasts and Benedictions, p. 143.
36. Krause. p. 187.
37. Classic Irish Drama (London, 1964), p. 135.
38. Blasts and Benedictions, p. 144.
39. Ibid, pp. 144-5.
40. "Note" to Kathleen Listens In, Tulane Drama Review VI (Summer, 1961), p. 36.
41. Ibid.
42. Reprinted in Feathers from the Green Crow, ed. Robert Hogan, (London, 1963), p. 276.
43. Blasts and Benedictions, p. 145.
44. The garden also appears in an early O'Casey short story entitled

"The Seamless Coat of Kathleen", first published in the Gaelic journal Poblacht Na-Eireann, 29 March 1922, and reprinted in Feathers from the Green Crow, pp. 244-7. The story reveals an even earlier use of the "phantasy" technique than Kathleen Listens In. The following are two relevant passages from "The Seamless Coat of Kathleen":

And most sensible children would be satisfied with the well-ordered loveliness of the garden specially arranged for her [*i.e.* Kathleen's] enjoyment by the confederation of Kilkenny, well-fertilised by Castlereigh, strongly walled in by the gardening Parliamentary Party who were so eager to preserve the symmetry of the original that when their head gardener (Parnell) tried to make the view more extensive, they stoned him and buried him in a deep grave in a place called Glasnevin ...

... And there, in her little garden, the colleen sits from morning to night, and from night until morning. A short time ago it was a terrible scene of desolation and disorder. The walls had been broken down, crowds of men had trampled the pretty plants and flowers to pieces, and here and there were patches of bloodstains; but all these signs of tumult have been cleared away, and now the garden is neater and newer and fresher, and ever so little bigger than before ...

45. Krause, p. 188.
46. Classic Irish Drama, p. 136.
47. The Experiments of Sean O'Casey, p.120.
48. Blasts and Benedictions, p. 145.
49. See Krause, pp. 195-6.
50. The relevant lines of Yeats' poem (Variorum Edition p.781) read:

Up with the neck and clap the wing
Red Cock, and crow!
51. Cowasjee, p. 92.
52. See Autobiographies II pp. 238-41.
53. In the opening movement of the play it is revealed that Marthraun presented Lorna's father with £50 so that Julia could make the pilgrimage, and in return Marthraun received the turf bog as a dowry. He has thus (despite his claims of generosity) traded on Julia's illness in order to gain his present wealth and position.
54. Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (revised ed., London, 1952), p. 94 (Bellman).
55. Classic Irish Drama, p. 137

56. Krause, p. 197.
57. This typically Irish argument over the colouring and species of the bird that rescued the priest would not be out of place in Gulliver's Travels. O'Casey's satiric point calls to mind Cusins' remark to Undershaft in Act II of Major Barbara, "The business of the Salvation Army is to save, not to wrangle about the name of the pathfinder."
58. Krause, p. 199.
59. Ibid., p. 200.
60. "Telling a True Tale", op. cit., p.23.
61. "Poetry and Theatre", op. cit.
62. "Building the Play", op. cit., p.20
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. "Who's for a Revolution?", op. cit., p.49.
66. Ibid., p. 50.
67. "The Island of the Ardens", Plays and Players XX (January 1973), p.16.
68. Brown, Theatre Language, p. 194.
69. See for example, Arden's preface to Two Autobiographical Plays (London, 1971), and "The Island of the Ardens" op. cit.
70. John Russell Taylor Anger and After (revised ed., London 1969), p. 84.
71. "Who's for a Revolution?", op. cit., p. 46.
72. "Building the Play", op. cit. p. 41.
73. See note 71.
74. "Telling a True Tale", op. cit., p.25.
75. Brown, pp. 190-1.
76. Arden notes in his Introduction to Serjeant Musgrave's Dance that "Scenery must be sparing - only those pieces of architecture, furniture and properties actually used in the production need be present: and they should be thoroughly realistic, so that the audience sees a selection from the details of everyday life rather than a generalised impression of the whole of it. A similar rule should also govern the direction and the acting." (p.6)

77. "Who's for a Revolution?", op. cit. p. 50
78. Scenes 1 and 2 of Act 1 come before the murder of Wamphray in the published text, but in the production of the play by the National Theatre in 1965, the performance actually began with the murder — a readjustment which Arden sanctions. See "Note on Production", pp. 13-14
79. See Chapter 3, p. 73.
80. Telling a True Tale", op. cit., p.25
81. "Building the Play", op. cit., p. 42.
82. Mary B. O'Connell, "Ritual Elements in John Arden's Serjeant Musgrave's Dance", Modern Drama XIII (February, 1971), pp. 356-7.
83. Thomas P. Adler, "Religious Ritual in John Arden's Serjeant Musgrave's Dance", Modern Drama XVI (September 1973), pp. 163-5.
84. "Who's for a Revolution?", op. cit., p. 49.
85. "Arden of Chichester", Plays and Players (August, 1963), p. 18.
86. "Author's Preface", p. 7.
87. "Arden of Chichester", op. cit.
88. Ibid., p. 17.
89. "Ben Jonson", The Reader's Encyclopaedia of World Drama (London, 1970), p. 52.
90. Op. cit., p. 9.
91. Ibid., p. 7.
92. "Arden on Chichester", op. cit., p. 19.
93. See, for example, John Russell Taylor's review of the National Theatre production, "Back to Melodrama", Plays and Players X (September, 1963), p. 36.
94. "Author's Preface", p. 8.
95. As Professor Brown comments, the play (despite Arden's pipe-dream) "was prepared for an audience that is not permitted to smoke or move about; and Arden's hand is shown in the organization of the play if not by the clearer means or argument or debate." (Theatre Language, p. 211.)
96. Anger and After, p. 105.
97. In his preface Arden states, "For productions within a proscenium arch it is essential that decor be kept to a

minimum and that the action be allowed to flow from one scene into the next with the least possible delay." (p.7)

98. "Who's for a Revolution?", op. cit., p. 49.
99. "The Workhouse Donkey", Encore X (September, 1963). Reprinted in The Encore Reader (London, 1965), p. 239.
100. See note 80.
101. Brown p. 212.
102. Ibid., p. 222.
103. John Russell Taylor, "Back to Melodrama", op. cit.
104. Brown, pp. 222-3.
105. Ibid., pp. 223-4.
106. Op. cit., p. 26.
107. "Poetry and Theatre", op. cit., p. 705.

Chapter 5

T. S. Eliot and Harold Pinter: Variations on "Enclosed" Form

I

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps contained in time future
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable. ("Burnt Norton")

These opening lines of the Four Quartets by T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) could stand as an epigraph for his own drama and that of Pinter. Applied ironically they may even serve this purpose for the plays of Harold Pinter (b. 1930). The precise applicability of the lines varies significantly with each playwright, but in the work of each there is an element of determinism. Pinter's social dramas illustrate the thesis that "the future is only the past entered through another gate"; Eliot's characters believe themselves to be trapped in time and would be were it not for the possibility of atonement through divine grace; while Pinter's characters, living in an "eternal present", trap themselves (to paraphrase an observation by John Lahr¹) in walls constructed of concrete, of language, of philosophy: to protect themselves from a protean reality and give themselves a chance. The structures of the plays by these writers reflect the different varieties of "enclosure" involved.

Pinter's social dramas, as we have seen, endeavoured to show in carefully-articulated, but apparently naturalistic detail, the "inevitable" results of the contravention by his heroines of the rules of the narrow society in which they moved. The plots are developed in a tight (if, at times, somewhat forced) causal chain which depends on the assumptions of this code. Even if Shaw had not discredited Pinter's development of the well-made play as a vehicle for serious

social and psychological comment, the form could not have remained unchanged with the disintegration of the code, a process which was accelerated by the social upheaval of the 1st World War.

In the post-war world the uncertainty of moral values mirrored in the loose and apparently haphazard structures of many of Shaw's "Third Manner" works, was reflected also in a new type of drawing-room drama, frivolous rather than serious, extremely symmetrical in its design, and displaying "meticulously neat plotting and crystal-clear articulation of parts."² The acknowledged master of this new breed of well-made play, epitomised in comedies such as Private Lives (1929) and Design for Living (1932), was, of course, Noel Coward. His drawing-rooms, even more insulated from the outside world than those of Pinero, have been aptly described by John Russell Taylor as "nurseries where overgrown children can take refuge, safe from the world, to play at being grown-ups for as long as they care to and on exactly what terms they choose."³ Though Coward's plays may be superficial and escapist in content, they provide the link between Pinero's social dramas and the "enclosed" forms used by Eliot and Pinter.⁴

In the light of Eliot's views on the post-war English theatre, published in The Criterion and elsewhere, and of his experiments with a new type of Aristophanic Melodrama in the unfinished fragments of Sweeney Agonistes, it is ironic that he was later, most notably in The Cocktail Party, to move close to the surface texture and appearance of the Noel Coward type of drawing-room comedy which O'Casey so despised. Though Eliot's dramatic aims were as different from O'Casey's as the chosen personas of the two men — Old Possum and the Green Crow — his objections to the surface realism of the London commercial stage were even more radical.

In 1923, for example, Eliot declared in a Criterion article entitled "Dramatis Personae":

The realism of the ordinary stage is something to which we can no longer respond, because it is no longer realistic. We know now that the gesture of daily existence is inadequate for the stage; instead of pretending that the stage gesture is a copy of reality, let us adopt a literal untruth, a thorough-going convention, a ritual. For the stage — not only in its remote origins but always — is a ritual and the failure of the contemporary stage to satisfy the craving for ritual is one of the reasons why it is not a living art.⁵

In "Elizabethan Dramatists: A Preface", published in The Criterion early the following year, he reiterated his belief that "the theatre has reached a point where a revolution in principles should take place", and went on to state:

The great vice of English drama from Kyd to Galsworthy has been that its aim of realism has been unlimited ... there has been no form to arrest, so to speak, the flow of spirit at any particular point before it expands and ends its course in the desert of exact likeness to the reality which is perceived by the most commonplace mind ... It is essential that a work of art should be self-consistent, that an artist should consciously or unconsciously draw a circle beyond which he does not trespass: on the one hand actual life is always the material, and on the other hand an abstraction from real life is a necessary condition to the creation of a work of art.⁶

Eliot's desire to discover order and design informing the apparent meaninglessness of life is apparent in these quotations. His later drama does, in fact, attempt to serve this aim, but by means less overtly theatrical and ritualistic than he was contemplating at this time. O'Casey would have cheerfully razed Shaftesbury Avenue to the ground, but in his modern comedies Eliot was to seek its conversion.

There are a number of hints in Eliot's early criticism which, with hindsight, may be seen as pointing towards this development. His favourite form of theatrical art at this time was the ballet, but in his tribute to Marie Lloyd, published in the first number of The Criterion, he showed his appreciation of a very different style of

performance:

In the details of acting Marie Lloyd was perhaps the most perfect, in her own style, of British actresses. There are no cinema records of her; she never descended to this form of money-making; it is to be regretted, however, that there is no film to preserve for the recollection of her admirers the perfect expressiveness of her smallest gestures. But it is less in the accomplishment of her act than in what she made it, that she differed from other comedians. There was nothing about her of the grotesque; none of her comic appeals was due to exaggeration; it was all a matter of selection and concentration.⁷

The phrases "the perfect expressiveness of her smallest gestures" and "a matter of selection and concentration" offer significant clues to the nature of the art Eliot was to develop in his comedies. The special bond which Marie Lloyd had in the music-hall with her working-class audience also impressed the young Eliot:

... no other comedian succeeded so well in giving expression to the life of that audience, in raising it to a kind of art ... There is no such expressive figure for any other class. The middle classes have no such idol: the middle classes are morally corrupt. That is to say, their own life fails to find a Marie Lloyd to express it ...⁸

What the middle classes had, of course, was drawing-room comedy and the vapidty of this form merely confirmed their moral decadence. But there is a hint in "Dramatis Personae" that a partial redemption of even this genre might be possible, granted a sure sense of style in the performers:

If there must be telephoning on stage, Lucien and Sacha Guitry know how to do it better than anybody ... but the spectacle of Seymore Hicks telephoning for months on end is enough to discredit the use of that instrument altogether.⁹

In the light of Eliot's use of the telephone as a punctuating device in the structure of The Cocktail Party this latter criticism appears ironic — unless his implied tribute to the Guitrys is kept in mind.

One final quotation from Eliot's early dramatic criticism is appropriate here as a link between his earlier views and his later

practice. In his "Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry", written in 1928, one of the speakers comments, comparing the present drama to that of earlier periods:

As for us, we know too much, and are convinced of too little. Our literature is a substitute for religion and so is our religion. We should do better if, instead of worrying about the place of drama in society, we simply decided what amused us. What is the purpose of the theatre except to amuse?¹⁰

The negative statement implied in this question exactly sums up the point of view of Noel Coward, but was not one which could be accepted by an Eliot who in 1928 had announced his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism. Accordingly, in his "Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry" another speaker immediately replies:

It is all very well to reduce the drama to 'amusement'. But it seems to me that this is just what has happened. I believe that the drama has something else to do except to divert us.

What this "something else" was to be for Eliot is perhaps best summed up in the concluding remarks of his famous address, first published in 1951, "Poetry and Drama":

It is a function of all art to give us some perception of an order in life, by imposing an order upon it ... It seems to me that beyond the nameable, classifiable emotions and motives of our conscious life when directed towards action — the part of life which prose drama is wholly adequate to express — there is a fringe of indefinite extent, of feeling which we can only detect, so to speak, out of the corner of the eye and can never completely focus; of feeling of which we are only aware in a kind of temporary detachment from action ... At such moments, we touch the border of those feelings which only music can express. We can never emulate music, because to arrive at the condition of music would be the annihilation of poetry, and especially of dramatic poetry. Nevertheless, I have before my eyes a kind of mirage of the perfection of verse drama, which would be a design of human action and of words, such as to present at once the two aspects of dramatic and of musical order ... For it is ultimately the function of art, in imposing a credible order upon ordinary reality, and thereby eliciting some perception of an order in reality, to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness and reconciliation; and then leave us, as Virgil left Dante, to proceed towards a region where that guide can avail us no longer.¹¹

It is above all the perception of order, especially the divine order perceived "at the intersection of the timeless moment"¹² with the visible world, which Eliot sought to convey in his full-length plays. The purpose, therefore, of the plays' highly symmetrical structures, which will be examined in some detail, is the unfolding of a pattern of spiritual exploration, the end of which is "to arrive where we started/ And know the place for the first time."¹³

A similar tendency to develop the actions of his plays in symmetrical patterns which reach towards a condition of stillness and silence can be observed in the plays of Harold Pinter, but in these no ulterior shaping forces are permitted. In a speech at the Seventh National Students' Drama Festival, held in Bristol in 1962, Pinter commented:

There is certainly a good deal of prophecy indulged in by playwrights these days, in their plays and out of them. Warnings, sermons, admonitions, moral judgements, defined problems with built-in solutions; all can camp under the banner of prophecy. The attitude behind this sort of thing might be summed up in one phrase: "I'm telling you!"

... I can't but feel that we have a marked tendency to stress, so glibly, our empty preferences. The preference for "Life" with a capital L, which is held up to be very different, to life with a small l, I mean the life we in fact live ¹⁴

There is some common ground here with Eliot's criticism of writers such as Shaw and H.G. Wells (whom he labelled "Life Forcers"¹⁵), but, while his view of life "in time" was uncompromising, Eliot's belief in the possibility of redemption through divine grace marks a clear difference between his outlook and that of Pinter.

Pinter, rejecting like Samuel Beckett (the writer he most admires) all "philosophies, tracts, dogmas, creeds, ways out, truths, answers",¹⁶ attempts to write without presumptions of any kind, including any inside knowledge of his characters. The pattern which the action forms becomes of paramount importance because, as Martin

Esslin has put it,

All he can do is to render a meticulously accurate account of the movement which takes place, to give a description of the situation at the beginning ... and to note the changes that have taken place at the end. But - if the playwright cannot claim to know what his characters feel, what makes them act as they do, what can he communicate to an audience? He can convey his impression of the structure, the pattern of a situation, the movement of its change as it unfolds, again in a pattern, like the movement of a dance ...¹⁷

Pinter's plays are therefore an exploration into the unknown.

Like Eliot, he has written of a feeling about words "which amounts to nothing less than nausea",¹⁸ but though he has no faith in a divine order beyond the chaos of everyday existence he contends that "if it is possible to confront this nausea, to follow it to its hilt to move through it and out of it, then it is possible to say that something has occurred, that something has been achieved."¹⁹ Pinter's characters exist in a moral vacuum, and seek to impose their own will and meaning on the people and objects around them. Words are used as weapons in a struggle to achieve some kind of dominance rather than as a means of communication which can be accepted more or less at face value. Eventually the words and actions punctuated by pauses and silences, are developed towards the achievement of a final silence. Pinter, in his speech at Bristol, commented:

There are two silences. One where no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed. This speech is speaking of a language locked beneath it. That is its continual reference. The speech we hear is an indication of that which we don't hear. It is a necessary avoidance, a violent, sly, anguished or mocking smoke-screen which keeps the other in its place. When true silence falls we are still left with echo but are nearer nakedness.²⁰

The patterning of Pinter's meticulously punctuated drama traces progressions towards final silences in which this nakedness is most clearly apparent. The actions, as we will see, then become

self-enclosed: the recognition of a basic condition which has existed all the time but which is only at the final silence fully recognised. But before we consider in detail the structural patterning of this, perhaps ultimate, form of "enclosed" drama, it is necessary to examine in similar detail its foreshadowing in T.S. Eliot's plays, the most significant of them for this purpose being The Cocktail Party.

II

Examination of the structural patterning of T.S. Eliot's plays raises a difficulty which does not occur (or not to the same degree) with the other playwrights discussed in this thesis. Pinero and Shaw not only wrote their plays but made it their business to produce them as well, and Arden and Pinter, though they have usually entrusted other directors with the first productions of their plays both endeavour to keep a close watch on their plays during the rehearsal period. Even O'Casey, writing for most of his career out of direct contact with a theatre, had a flair for the practical mechanics of stagecraft and a good deal of necessary self-confidence. Eliot, however, relied very heavily on his producer, E. Martin Browne, not only for the staging of his plays, but for practical advice and guidance as he wrote them. The published texts of the plays are thus very much the result of a collaboration, the extent of which is outlined in Martin Browne's The Making of T.S. Eliot's Plays. Frequent reference will be made to this account because it indicates a number of significant modifications in patterning which Eliot adopted on the advice of his producer. On balance the collaboration was a valuable one for Eliot, but, as we will see, it involved losses as well as gains. The published texts of the plays reveal, too, that the modifications

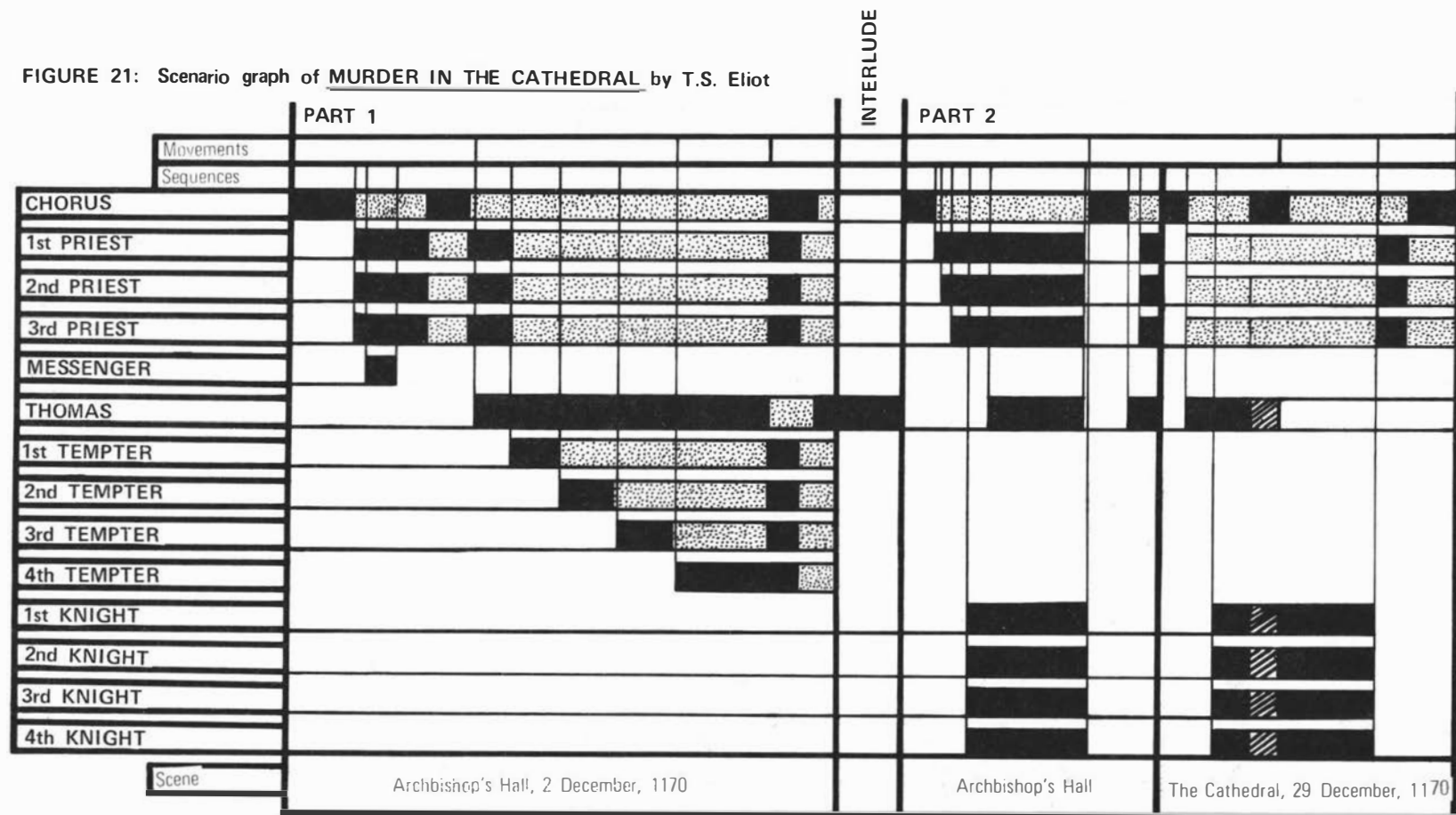
continued after the initial productions in the light of the experience gained then and in subsequent revivals. Discussion of Eliot's dramatic patterning therefore necessarily implies a discussion of the contribution made by Martin Browne and others. However, Eliot was the final arbiter so in that sense the patterning is his and will generally be discussed as such.

A further difficulty in discussing the theatrical patterning of Eliot's plays also requires some mention here because it has been the subject of a criticism which raises a wider issue which is important to the development of "enclosed" forms in modern English drama. This difficulty is the comparative spareness of stage-directions in the published texts. In Drama in Performance, Raymond Williams argues that this is a symptom of a basic discrepancy between the verse and the settings of Eliot's modern comedies:

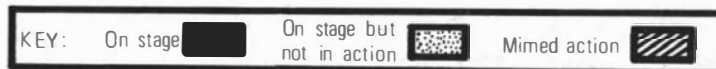
If one looks at the text of The Cocktail Party, in terms of a "literary work written in such a manner that it can be directly performed", one comes to see, in the end, that it is ... essentially incomplete ... A reader may feel that an ordinary naturalist play is so cluttered up with italicised comment that the "clean lines" of The Cocktail Party represent a welcome advance. But the "cleanness" is not a solution of this problem; it is, rather, an open evasion. For, in performance, not only does the speech not stand alone — all the elements of movement, sound and design are necessarily added, and radically affect the experience of the play; but also the speech cannot be played as written, and for an obvious reason. The actors of the original production of The Cocktail Party were highly skilled and intelligent professionals, but they were being asked to do the impossible. For they were given an action which demanded that they should move, look and sound "like life" but they were given verse and a theme, which, particularly in crisis, were not "like life", but were constructed on a definite stylised pattern. It is hardly surprising that the resulting dramatic experience seemed disintegrated.²¹

This is a serious criticism for it accuses Eliot of precisely the same weakness which he himself had stated vitiated "English drama from Kyd to Galsworthy" — that "its aim of realism was unlimited."

FIGURE 21: Scenario graph of MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL by T.S. Eliot



SCALE 1 cm = 5 pages text (Collected Plays)



Nevertheless, as the next section of this chapter will endeavour to demonstrate in detail, it is possible to defend the stagecraft of The Cocktail Party on two counts: the indications for enactment are by no means confined to the "italicised comment", and, more importantly, the action of the play requires an undermining of the naturalistic surface, a deliberate effect of "disintegration".²² It is necessary first, however, to consider briefly the relationship between stagecraft and structure in Eliot's two previous full-length plays, Murder in the Cathedral (1935) and The Family Reunion (1939).

Murder in the Cathedral, as Raymond Williams has noted,²³ comes closer to the classical ideal of "acted speech" than any other play of this century. Because of the overt religious theme and the historical setting Eliot was able to make full use of church ritual and to incorporate a chorus which functions not only in the classical manner of commentating on the action but as a surrogate for the audience or congregation. There are opportunities for formal movement in a number of the choric interludes which punctuate the action, and the ritual of the church offers further possibilities as, for example, in the procession with banners which follows the opening chorus of Part II. The force of the convention which Eliot establishes is such that the abrupt change (physically as well as in the language) from ritualistic enactment to public meeting near the end of the play seems almost more sacrilegious than the murder itself.

The ritualistic quality of the play is also apparent in the symmetry of its design (see Figure 21). The two parts of the play are of equal length and balance around the intervening sermon in a manner which recalls the central image of the turning wheel. Although within the parts the blocking of the appearances of the various groups

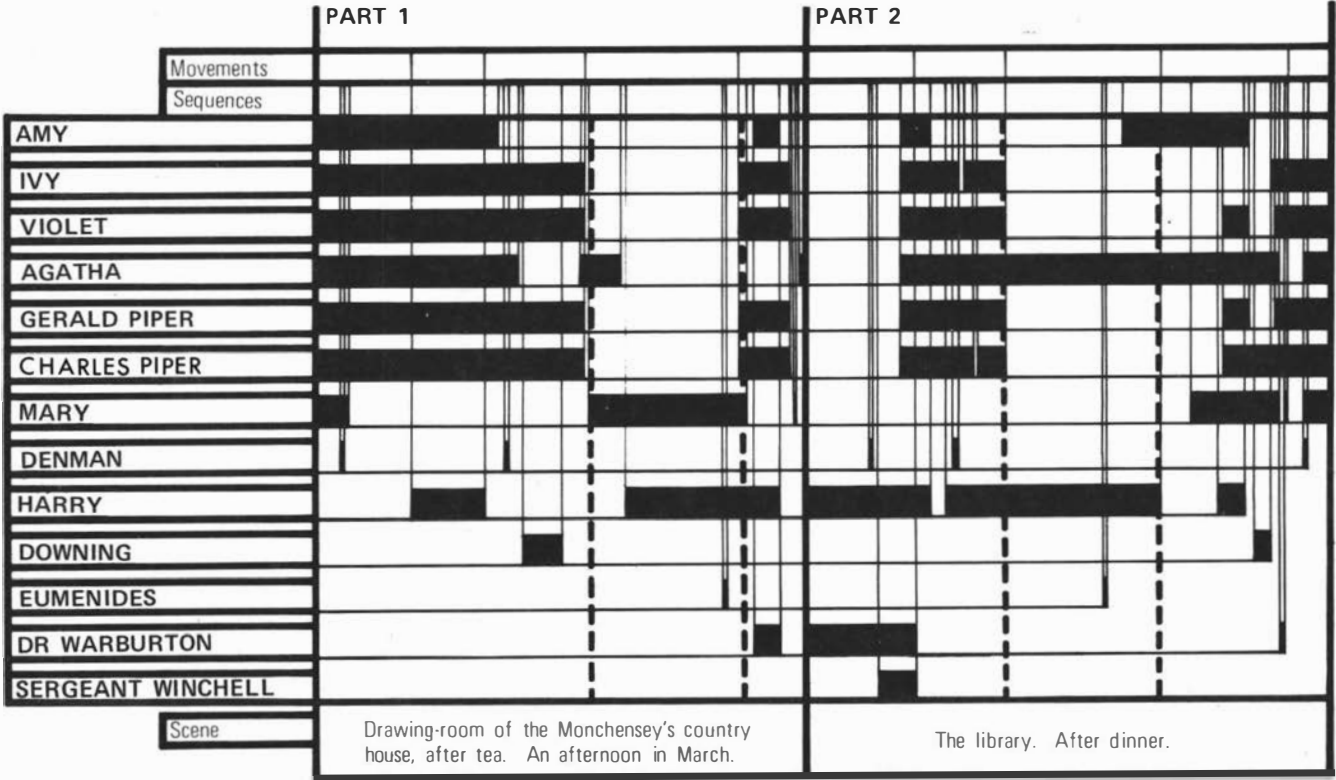
and figures is not identical, there are striking similarities. Each part is introduced by the Chorus and next to appear are the three Priests. The patterns then necessarily diverge for Part I requires a longer build to Thomas's entrance than does Part II. However, the forebodings of the Messenger who precedes him in Part I are paralleled by the threats of the Knights before he appears in Part II. The action of Part II which culminates in the murder is, of course unique in the play, but the subsequent temptation of the audience by the Knights parallel in placing and intention the temptation of Thomas in Part I. Finally, Thomas's rejection of the Tempters and his acceptance of the will of God are paralleled at the end of Part II by the Priests' curse on the Knights and by the final chorus of thanksgiving.

In some respects the play can be considered "open" (it is, after all, a celebration of an event of some public significance, and characters and groups representing various interests and points of view are juxtaposed in the action), but it was written for a limited and specialist audience,²⁴ the patterning is tightly controlled, and the essential action, as Eliot has stated, is

somewhat limited. A man comes home, foreseeing that he will be killed, and he is killed. I did not want to increase the number of characters, I did not want to write a chronicle of twelfth-century politics, nor did I want to tamper unscrupulously with the meagre records as Tennyson did ... I wanted to concentrate on death and martyrdom.²⁵

As M. C. Bradbrook has remarked, "Eliot's plays ... reveal a solitary man essaying a public art and ... consist of a single action, the distinctive act of choice."²⁶ This is true of Murder in the Cathedral, the most "open" in format of the plays, and it is also generally true, despite the author's endeavour to achieve a greater amount of interaction between his characters, of the modern comedies.

FIGURE 22: Scenario graph of THE FAMILY REUNION by T.S. Eliot



SCALE: 1 cm = 5 pages text (Collected Plays)

KEY: On stage

The Family Reunion marked a radical change of dramatic mode.

Eliot now sought "to take a theme of contemporary life, with characters of our own time living in our own world."²⁷ Stylistically the play is obviously a transitional piece involving, as Eliot frankly admitted in "Poetry and Drama", a number of difficult problems for the actors and producer of the original production:

In retrospect, I soon saw that I had given my attention to versification at the expense of plot and character. I had, indeed, made some progress in dispensing with the chorus; but the device of using four of the minor personages, representing the Family, sometimes as individual character parts and sometimes collectively as chorus does not seem to me very satisfactory ... the immediate transition from individual characterised part to membership of a chorus is asking too much of the actors: it is a very difficult transition to accomplish ... Furthermore, I had in two passages used the device of a lyrical duet further isolated from the rest of the dialogue by being written in short lines with only two stresses. These passages are in a sense 'beyond character', the speakers have to be presented as falling into a kind of trance-like state to speak them.²⁸

As Katherine Worth has noted, more recent productions accentuating rather than concealing the unnaturalistic elements in the play have shown that these work with contemporary audiences attuned by the drama of writers such as Beckett and Pinter to a mode of theatrical communication "below the level of conscious thought."²⁹ Eliot, however, though intuitively groping in this direction, was consciously endeavouring (for his own purposes) to establish an effect of surface naturalism acceptable to the audiences of Shaftesbury Avenue in the late thirties. It is not surprising, therefore, that the play demonstrates a measure of stylistic uncertainty.

Structurally, despite surface appearances, The Family Reunion (see Figure 22) has a good deal in common with its predecessor. As with Murder in the Cathedral, it consists of two equally-balanced parts with the protagonist arriving to be confronted by his ghosts in the

first part, and accepting his destiny in the second. In the original planning of the play this symmetry was to have been underlined by parallel settings. A draft version of the play includes the following note:

The action takes place in a country house in the North of England. Part I is placed in the drawing-room, between tea and dinner; Part II is in the library of the same house directly after dinner on the same day. The two rooms may be conceived as lying on either side of a central hall; so that the disposition of doors and windows is symmetrical. Each part is in three scenes, which are played without intermission.³⁰

Eliot, however, was persuaded by Martin Browne to dispense with the second setting in favour of "a single monumental setting to depict the brooding power of the classical mansion",³¹ a change which has its economic advantages but deprives audiences of a useful clue to the play's structure. The "scenes" are perceptible divisions only in the printed text; on stage the action of each part is continuous. But for the reader the divisions do point towards a feature of the play's structure which is significant in performance: the alternation of ensemble (Family) passages with scenes involving only two or three of the principal characters. Though the "Family" scenes are only partially choric in technique, this alternation is again clearly related to the patterning of Murder in the Cathedral.

What Eliot was up to in The Family Reunion has been well put by Carol H. Smith:

The curtain was to open on the most conventional of dramatic worlds, the English drawing room, but every device at the dramatist's disposal was to be used as the play progressed to shake the audience's confidence in the validity of that world of surface reality as a total representation of existence.³²

Thus the alteration from "realistic" action to choric commentaries delivered in trance-like states was intended to suggest the spiritual reality beneath the naturalistic surface, and the symmetry

FIGURE 23a: Scenario graph of THE COCKTAIL PARTY by T.S. Eliot

SCALE: 1 cm = 5 pages text (Collected Plays)

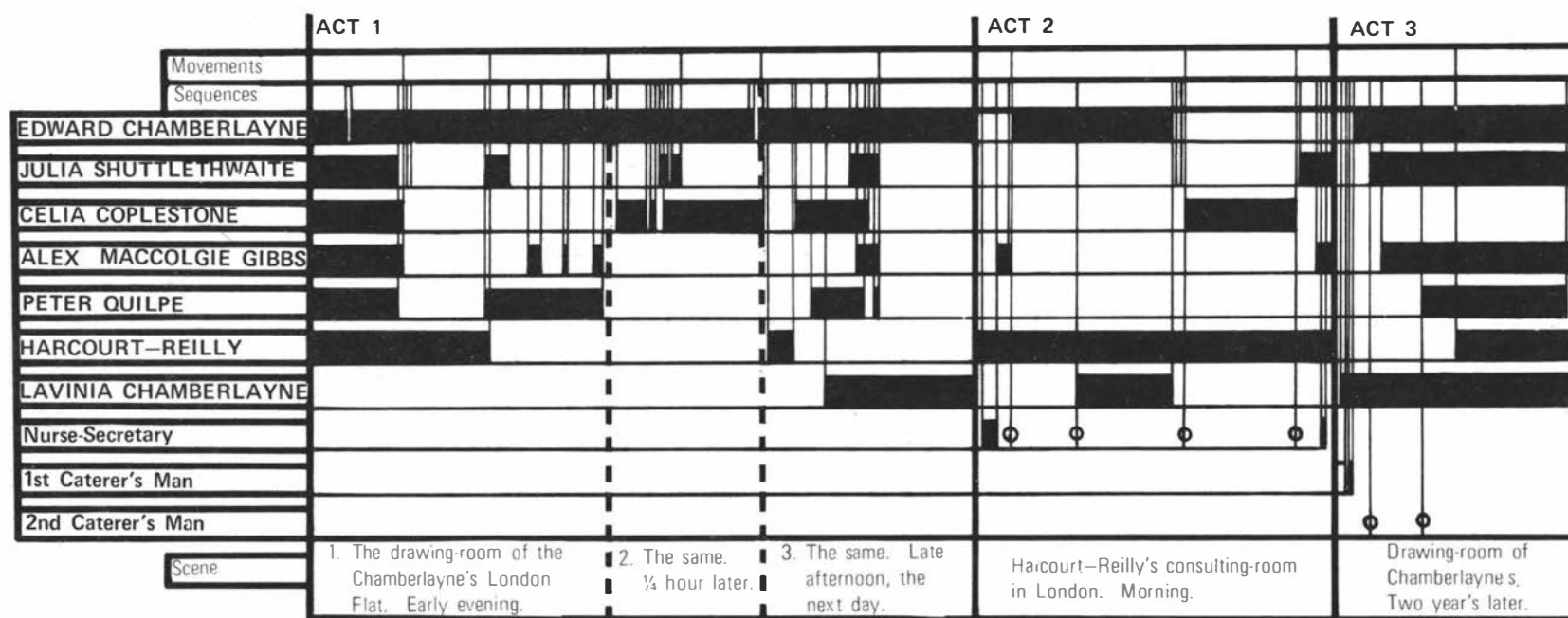
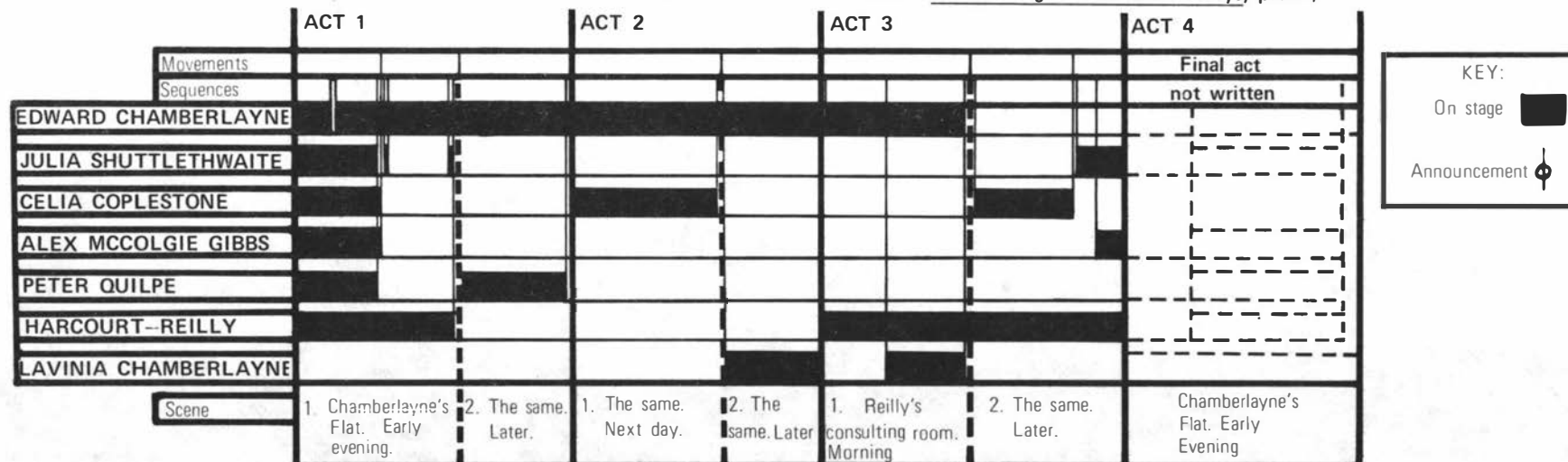


FIGURE 23b: Scenario graph of "One-Eyed Reilly", Eliot's first draft of THE COCKTAIL PARTY.

(Graph based on description in E. Martin Browne's The Making of T.E. Eliot's Plays, p.175)



SCALE: Based on final version above.

of the structural pattern the working out of God's design: in this case a ritual of religious purgation. However, from the point of view of the audience he was writing for it is doubtful whether Eliot established a surface reality which was even remotely credible — the "realistic" details in the opening speeches (after Any's initial doom-laden and quite unnaturalistic invocation to Light) are such transparent caricature that there is not much "surface reality" to be undermined. As one critic remarked, "The audience, if not just giddy by now, leaves the theatre with perhaps a suspicion that it has been intellectually 'had!'"³³ In his next modern comedy, therefore, Eliot strove to achieve a much more convincing naturalistic surface and a more subtle technique of hinting at the spiritual reality behind the action. For this purpose he developed a sophisticated stagecraft which subtly points the gradual revelation of the circular structural pattern.

III

The Cocktail Party in terms of its "blocking" (see Figure 23a) appears at first sight to lack the symmetry of Eliot's two previous full-length plays—indeed, it seems uncharacteristically ill-proportioned. The first act (divided by quick curtains into three scenes) is twice as long as the second act which in turn is twice as long as the third. This shape, however, is not the one Eliot originally intended. His first scheme was for a four-act play which, as Martin Browne realised when he read the draft, was really a play in two parts with a prologue and an epilogue.³⁴ In order to cut down on curtains and intervals, Martin Browne suggested various modifications which eventually resulted in the final, rather ungainly, three-act pattern; but the underlying structure of the play is much clearer if it is analysed according to the divisions of the original scheme (see Figure 23b). It then

becomes apparent that the basic "blocking" is, in fact, even more symmetrical than that of the earlier plays.

The "prologue" (Act 1, scene 1, in the final text) balances exactly in its grouping of characters with the "epilogue" (Act 4 in Eliot's first draft, and Act 5 in the final text). In the letter to Martin Browne which accompanied the first draft of the play, Eliot comments:

Act IV, as I now propose it, will repeat the scene, and most of the personages of Act I. The only person absent will of course be Celia ... The interesting problem ... is that of the behaviour of the several persons while Celia is being discussed.³⁵

What Eliot does not note in this letter, though it is obviously part of his design, is that Celia's absence in the "epilogue" exactly parallels Lavinia's absence in the "prologue". Lavinia's absence there is the main point of dramatic interest as is Celia's absence from the "epilogue". Thematically, this balance is extremely important for at the time of the "prologue" Lavinia is spiritually "dead" though physically alive, while at the time of the "epilogue" Celia is physically dead but as an influence on the group very much "alive".

Nor is this the sum of the play's essential symmetry. After the "prologue" scene and the Edward/Reilly and Edward/Peter duologues, the remainder of Act 1 (the original Act 2) consists basically of two interviews: the first between Edward and Celia, and the second between Edward and Lavinia. These interviews are complementary for in the first Edward breaks with his mistress and in the second his wife returns to him. Act 2 (originally Act 3) also consists basically of two interviews which are also complementary and which, moreover, parallel the interviews in Act 1: in the first Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly leads Edward and Lavinia to accept each other and their mundane existence, while in the second he leads Celia to choose

a martyr's death. This internal symmetry is very clear from the original scenario, but in the final text it is to some degree complicated by the addition of the libation scene to Act 2, and by the further interventions of the Guardians, which Eliot, working on a suggestion by Martin Browne,³⁶ incorporated into Act 1. However, the pattern still suggests the working out of a divine plan, and the suggestion to develop the "machinery" of the Guardians provided Eliot with the key to the brilliantly suggestive stagecraft of the final text.

The "clean lines" (to quote Raymond Williams's expression) of the text of The Cocktail Party might suggest at first sight that Eliot provided merely the dialogue for the play and left his producer to supply the 'business' on the basis (to quote another expression of Raymond Williams) of "probable behaviour."³⁷ While this charge appears valid enough for Eliot's other comedies, it applies only to a very limited extent to this play as its 'business' is specified to a remarkable extent in the words of the dialogue as well as in the economic (but, for Eliot, rather more generous than usual) stage-directions. If all these indications are considered and related to the structure of the play it can be seen that Eliot has planned an action involving an alternation of passages in which the dialogue is frequently interrupted by 'business', thereby suggesting an effect of manipulation by (initially) unidentified forces, together with passages of stillness which help to intensify the effect of the dialogue as the characters seek to reveal the essence of their existence and problems. Without the 'business' (which is in any case integrated into the dialogue in a manner which makes the term 'acted speech' not inappropriate) the play would lose not only in liveliness but in impact and meaning. The

stagecraft, therefore, merits much closer examination than it has generally been given.

The starting-point for this must be Eliot's insistence on naturalism for the settings and the costumes. In letters to Martin Browne before the original production at the 1949 Edinburgh Festival he stipulated:

The supernatural element, if we call it that ought to be not at all evident: this play, it seems to me, needs a much more matter-of-fact and realistic setting than *The Family Reunion*, and the costumes should not be too stylised and harmonious.

An imposed symbolism in the decor would be painful. What I want is something superficially at least purely realistic — the rooms what they would be in a perfectly naturalistic play. If the decor conveys any more than that, it should only come from the genius of the designer — and indeed should be almost subconscious on the designer's part. But if the designer is TOLD to go symbolic, the only result will be a late imitation of 'experimental' theatre.³⁸

In other words, Eliot wanted his audience to feel, when they saw the curtain rise for Act 1, scene 1, to reveal "The drawing-room of the Chamberlayne's London flat. Early Evening", that this was exactly the same solid and well-furnished room they had seen in a hundred other West End comedies. They had first of all to feel at home before he quietly began to pull the rug from under their feet.

At first sight the stagecraft of The Cocktail Party is as naturalistic as the settings: the dialogue is accompanied by people standing and sitting, by drinks being offered and accepted or declined, and by the ringing of telephones and doorbells. But when this naturalistic machinery is examined in detail it becomes apparent that in fact virtually every detail of it is initiated or controlled by "machinery" of a very different kind — by the three characters who are eventually revealed to us as the Guardians. The extent of their control is such that the other characters — especially Edward, who

is on stage for most of the play — appear to be little more than puppets in their hands,³⁹ and though Eliot in due course suggests that the powers of the Guardians are limited this tactic merely transfers the effect of string-pulling to the invisible deity which controls them. Thus the apparent reality of the drawing-room and even of Reilly's consulting room is eroded, though the process is so gradual as to be almost imperceptible in the theatre. The precise way it works is probably best demonstrated by noting the nature and timing of each item of 'business' (including entrances and exits) as it occurs.

The cocktail party group we see in the opening movement of Act 1 does not appear to be unusual: the host, Edward Chamberlayne, is a well-to-do lawyer, and his guests include such stock types as Julia Shuttlethwaite, an elderly busybody; Alexander MacColgie Gibbs, a knowledgeable man-about-town; Peter Quilpe, a young film writer; and Celia Copplestone, an attractive young amateur poetess. Only the Unidentified Guest, standing slightly apart from the others, suggests any sense of mystery. The first hint that something is amiss in the Chamberlayne household comes when Edward leaves the room for a moment in search of some food for his guests:

PETER. But do go on. Edward wa'n't listening anyway.

JULIA. No, he wasn't listening, but he's such a strain —
Edward without Lavinia! He's quite impossible!
Leaving it to me to keep things going.
What a host! And nothing fit to eat!
The only reason for a cocktail party
For a gluttonous old woman like me
Is a really nice tit-bit. I can drink at home.

(EDWARD returns with a tray)

Edward, give me another of those delicious olives.
What's that? Potato crisps? No, I can't endure them. (p.127)

Julia thus draws attention to Edward's embarrassment and hints at the cause of it. The potato crisps business not only points the inadequacy of the catering but prepares us for Edward's general inadequacy in

covering up his domestic situation. A few speeches after this, Julia makes Edward sit down (p. 128), thus putting him at a disadvantage compared with herself and the other guests who would probably remain standing, and questions him closely on the whereabouts of his wife. Having probed sufficiently to suggest Edward's story that Lavinia is looking after a sick aunt is a fabrication, Julia then prompts a general exodus by making an ostentatious farewell and taking Peter with her. Celia and Alex follow after a few lines which subtly hint at a relationship between Celia and Edward, and at Alex's awareness of the non-existence of "Lavinia's aunt". The stage is thus rapidly cleared except for Edward and the Unidentified Guest. The second movement now begins.

Edward barely has time to offer the stranger a drink and confess that he had tried to cancel the party which has just ended when Eliot, with superb comic timing contrives an interruption:

EDWARD. But it's only that dreadul old woman who mattered —
I shouldn't have minded anyone else,

(The doorbell rings. EDWARD goes to the door, saying:)

But she always turns up when she's least wanted.

(Opens the door)

Julia!

(Enter JULIA)

JULIA. Edward! How lucky that it's raining!
It made me remember my umbrella,
And there it is! Now what are you two plotting?
How lucky it was my umbrella,
And not Alexander's -- he's so inquisitive!
But I never poke into other people's business.
Well, good-bye again. I'm off at last.

(Exit) (p.131)

This is the first of the series of interruptions by Julia and (later) Alex which progressively undermine Edward's privacy.⁴⁰ These interruptions serve in the plot two basic purposes of the Guardians: to keep Edward under surveillance: to reduce Edward to a malleable

state by keeping him psychologically unsettled. Julia's interruption here, of course, also neatly "plants" the suggestion that she and Alex, for reasons of their own, "poke into other people's business." (The conscious irony of her words here would almost certainly be pointed by a jabbing movement with her recovered umbrella.)

After Julia's departure, Edward confesses to the Unidentified Guest that his wife has left him but the stranger's response is unexpected:

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST. This is an occasion.
May I take another drink?

EDWARD. Whisky?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST. Gin.

EDWARD. Anything in it?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST. Nothing but water.
And I recommend you the same prescription ...
Let me prepare it for you if I may ...
Strong ... but sip it slowly ... and drink it sitting down.
Breathe deeply, and adopt a relaxed position.
There we are. Now for a few questions. (p.132)

Edward's previous offer of a drink was merely a social convention, but here the Unidentified Guest turns the gesture into a ritual which appears to be partly an ironic celebration of Edward's loss and partly a physician's administering of a sedative. The underlying 'realistic' motivation for the action, however, is part of the general 'softening-up' of Edward. Eliot emphasised this point in a note to Martin Browne after Rex Harrison had taken over the role of Reilly from Alec Guinness and introduced an extra touch of business into the production:

There is one point which troubled me when I first saw this production, and still more when I went a fortnight ago. Towards the end of the first scene, when Edward goes to the door to admit Julia, Rex Harrison attempts to benefit by his absence from the room, by going to help himself to another shot of gin. You will remember that Edward returns and Harrison puts down the bottle without having been able to carry out his design. Now this is very amusing in itself, and Harrison does it very well, but I do feel it is a falsification of the character, and completely falsifies the nature of

Reilly's drinking. It ought to be made clear from Reilly's behaviour in later scenes that the general drinking and singing — apart from their having been originally introduced to bring Reilly's behaviour into connection with that of Heracles in the Alcestis — are entirely an act put on by Reilly for the purpose of mystifying Edward. [*My italics*]₄₁

To this point the further one can be added that the Unidentified Guest's instruction for Edward to sit as a prelude to interrogation echoes the business of Julia's questioning of him earlier in the scene and has exactly the same motivation.

The interrogation which follows is the first extended passage with almost no physical movement or business in the play. It involves a probing of Edward's state of mind and he here appears to be reduced to an almost inanimate object. In the build-up to the one touch of business which punctuates this discussion, the Unidentified Guest notes this by a comparison and also hints at his real function in an ironic pun which Edward fails to grasp:

... take a surgical operation ...
 ... stretched on the table,
 You are a piece of furniture in a repair shop
 For those who surround you, the masked actors;
 All there is of you is your body
 And the 'you' is withdrawn. May I replenish?

EDWARD. Oh, I'm sorry. What were you drinking?
 Whiskey?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST. Gin.

EDWARD. Anything with it?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST Water. (pp.134-5)

The real "replenishing" process, of course, takes place in Act 2, but the preparation for it is begun in this scene when Edward announces that he wishes to see his wife again and the Unidentified Guest promises that she will come the next day. This accomplished, the interview (the second movement) is brought to an end by another ringing of the doorbell. Edward reacts like an automaton:

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST. In twenty-four hours
 She will come to you here. You will be here to meet her.
 (The doorbell rings)

EDWARD. I must answer the door. (p.136)

There are a good many interruptions in the final movement of Act 1, scene 1. The new arrival is, of course, Julia who with Peter in tow is ostensibly looking for her glasses which happen to have one lens missing. Her arrival prompts the Unidentified Guest to depart singing the ballad of "One Eyed Reilly" and this symbolic linking of the two Guardians⁴² is considerably sharpened by the "changing of the guard" effect created by the juxtaposition of the entrance of the one and the exit of the other.

Julia, too, soon departs after Edward has correctedly suggested that the glasses for which she is ferreting around (there is detailed business implied in the dialogue for this on p.137) might be in her bag. Peter unexpectedly decides to stay to talk to Edward, but offers to take Julia downstairs in the lift and there is possibly another suggestive pun in the terms with which she refuses the offer:

JULIA. No, you stop and talk to Edward. I'm not helpless yet.
 And besides, I like to manage the machine myself ... (p.138)

It is not surprising that the duologue between Edward and Peter (which in the overall pattern parallels the preceding one between the Unidentified Guest and Edward) lasts only a couple of minutes before there is yet another interruption as Alex walks in uninvited. Under the pretext of preparing a meal for Edward, Alex camps himself in the kitchen from where, of course, he can keep an ear open for the progress of the conversation between Peter and Edward. This is interrupted twice more — once comically by Alex and once seriously by the telephone. The first of these is a beautifully-timed piece of comic deflation which comes as Peter is trying to describe the peace he had

felt in the company of Celia:

PETER. I had never imagined such quiet happiness.
I had only experienced excitement, delirium.
Desire for possession. It was not like that at all.
It was something very strange. There was such ... tranquillity...

EDWARD. And what interrupted this interesting affair?

(Enter ALEX in shirtsleeves and an apron)

ALEX. Edward, I can't find any curry powder. (p.142)

The second interruption is more subtle as its real point is not apparent until we discover in the next scene that Celia (who is on the other end of the telephone) is Edward's mistress. Peter, unaware of this and speaking of his relationship with Celia, asks

But what is the reality ...
(The telephone rings)

EDWARD. Excuse me a moment.
(Into telephone)

Hello! ... I can't talk now ...
Yes, there is ... Well then, I'll ring you
As soon as I can.
(To PETER) I'm sorry. You were saying?

PETER. I was saying, what is the reality
Of experience between two unreal people? (p.143)

It is, of course, a key question for Edward and for the audience.

This first scene of Act 1 is hastened to a close by the reappearance of Alex (with his jacket on) who announces that the meal is cooking, drops another broad hint about the unreality of Lavinia's aunt and takes off Peter with him — after Edward has pointedly asked him to "Please shut the door after you, so that it latches" (p.144). Having at last, so he imagines, secured his privacy, Edward "picks up the telephone, and dials a number". The call, however, is in vain for Celia is not in, and as Edward slowly puts down the receiver the curtain falls. This final telephone call not only provides a good curtain "teaser" for the audience by hinting at a secret affair between Edward and Celia, but confirms Edward's inability to regain the

initiative in the conduct of his affairs.

Act 1, scene 2 consists of two movements, the first full of embarrassing interruptions, and the second quiet but intense. At the beginning of the scene Edward "is alone, playing Patience" (p.146), a suitable occupation in the light of the Unidentified Guest's advice, "The one thing to do/Is to do nothing. Wait" (p.135). After a pause the doorbell rings again and, answering it, Edward is startled to find Celia on his doorstep. There is barely time for the audience to realise the relationship between her and Edward and for Celia to learn of the projected return of Lavinia, before there is yet another interruption:

CELIA. Lavinia coming back!

Do you mean to say that she's laid a trap for us?

EDWARD. No, If there is a trap, we are all in the trap,
We have set it for ourselves. But I do not know
What kind of a trap it is.

CELIA. Then what has happened?

(The telephone rings)

EDWARD. Damn the telephone. I suppose I must answer it.(p.147)

Although the interruption once again appears reasonably motivated (it is Alex ringing to enquire how Edward has enjoyed his meal) it reinforces the suggestion of the "trap" in which Edward finds himself, though the invasion of his privacy is fast reaching a point where the audience could be forgiven for doubting his assertion that "We have set it for ourselves".

This telephone call is merely the first of a fresh spate of interruptions. The next is indirectly contrived by Alex for a burning smell from the dish he had left cooking (and which Edward has forgotten to remove from the oven) sends Celia rushing into the kitchen. Then as Edward "goes over to the table and inspects his game of Patience" "The doorbell rings repeatedly" and Celia re-

enters from the kitchen to announce that she has no intention of hiding and that Edward had better answer the door (p.148). The new arrival turns out to be Julia again who, as Celia comes in from the kitchen with the charred remains of Alex's omlette, announces that she too has come to feed Edward and thereupon disappears into the kitchen. The set-up is thus identical to that of the last part of the previous scene except that Celia has replaced Peter, and Julia has taken over again from Alex. Edward barely has time to tell Celia of the Un-identitified Guest's proposal to bring Lavinia back before Julia interrupts again. The timing of this and the sound effect which precedes it in relation to the dialogue plants the suggestion that supernatural forces are at work:

CELIA. But why should that man want to bring her back —
Unless he is the Devil! I could believe he was.

EDWARD. Because I asked him to.

CELIA. Because you asked him to!
Then he must be the Devil! He must have bewitched you.
How did he persuade you to want her back?
(A popping noise is heard from the kitchen)

EDWARD. What the devil's that?
(Re-enter JULIA, in apron, with a tray and three glasses) (p.149)

Julia's seemingly diabolic omniscience is given further emphasis as she makes Edward and Celia drink a toast to "Lavinia's aunt" but she encounters a slight set-back when Edward refuses her offer to sup with her, and Celia, though accepting the invitation, states that she wishes first to talk alone with Edward for a few minutes. Julia for the moment is apparently out-manoeuvred and, after asking Celia to follow her as quickly as possible, has to take her leave. This exit ends the first movement of the scene.

For a while Edward and Celia are at last able to talk freely with each other. No business is specified in the text of this

sequence in which the two characters come to realise the false image each has had of the other, though a producer would probably want to accompany some of Celia's more forceful lines with some physical action. Edward on the other hand, believing that his

... life was determined long ago
 And that the struggle to escape from it
 Is only a make-believe, a pretence
 That what is, is not, or could be changed. (p.153)

should remain fairly still. Like an over-stimulated rat in a laboratory he is ceasing to react. However, he is still under surveillance and when yet again "The telephone rings" (p.154), he wearily dares it but says, "I suppose I had better answer it". The caller is, of course, Julia who claims that she has once more left her spectacles behind. Edward finds them in the kitchen and returns carrying also a half-empty champagne bottle with which he and Celia drink a somewhat improbable toast to the Guardians. (In the patterning of the play this toast is paralleled by the libation the Guardians drink on behalf of Edward and Celia at the end of Act 2). Celia then exits with the spectacles and Eliot brings the scene to a close with the deft touch of making Edward realise that he had failed to conclude his conversation on the phone and, the receiver not having been replaced, Julia is still listening in.

The third scene of Act 1 is in three movements: a brief prologue, a very busy second movement with constant interruptions, and a final movement of pure duologue. The first two movements bring the Guardian's attempts at mystification to a head. Already, as we have seen, they have destroyed Edward's privacy so effectively that not only do the walls of his flat fail to offer him any protection, but he has virtually lost the power of independent action. Now they initiate a final series of confusions to bring the process to a climax which

clears the way for the spiritual rehabilitation of the characters whose lives they are manipulating. The opening sequences provide a few minutes of stocktaking before the confusions begin. The curtain rises on "The same room: late afternoon of the next day. EDWARD alone. He goes to answer the doorbell" (p.156). The caller is the Unidentified Guest who has come to prepare him for the reappearance of Lavinia, and in a telling exchange he emphasises Edward's powerlessness to alter the course of events:

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST ... I have come to tell you that you will change
your mind,

But that it will not matter. It will be too late.

EDWARD. I have half a mind to change my mind now
To show you that I am free to change it.

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST. You will change your mind, but you are not free.
Your moment of freedom was yesterday.
You made a decision. You set in motion
Forces in your life and in the lives of others
Which cannot be reversed. (p.156)

After instructing Edward not to question his wife when she arrives and telling him, to his mystification, to "await his visitors", the Unidentified Guest exits appropriately by the flat's "service staircase" (p.158),⁴³ ending the first movement of the scene.

Now there is another pause during which Edward, alone, "moves about restlessly" not knowing what to expect. "The bell rings, and he goes to the front door" (p.156) to find that his first visitor is Celia. Highly embarrassed because of Lavinia's imminent arrival, he asks Celia to leave only to learn that Lavinia has apparently sent a telegram to Julia asking Celia to come. Edward can only ask Celia to sit and remains helplessly tongue-tied, but she is able to see the funny side of the situation. Then "The doorbell rings" again and Edward "Goes to the front door" expecting Lavinia, but instead finds Peter. He states that he has come because Lavinia has requested this

in a telegram sent to Alex! Peter and Celia have barely time to say that each of them is going away (Peter to California) when, without warning, the fourth of the Guardians' subjects arrives:

CELIA. I am going away too.
(LAVINIA lets herself in with a latch-key)

PETER. You're going abroad?

CELIA. I don't know. Perhaps.

EDWARD. You're both going away!
(Enter LAVINIA)

LAVINIA. Who's going away? Well, Celia. Well, Peter.
I didn't expect to find either of you here. (p.160)

This is a beautifully contrived entrance. After two false alarms from the doorbell, Lavinia's quiet arrival using her latch-key takes the audience by surprise, but perfectly emphasises her co-ownership of the flat. (A small but significant point here is that though this is Lavinia's first entrance Eliot has no need to make any of the other characters address her by her name until some eighteen speeches after she has come in — her identity is established purely by her mode of entry.) Lavinia is as surprised to find Celia and Peter in the apartment as Edward had been, but the explanation is suggested by the timing of her entrance. Lavinia is seen to return to Edward at the precise moment that Celia announces she is going away, and Peter's similar announcement (as we learn in Act 2) has the same relevance for Lavinia. The husband and the wife are brought together as their lovers depart.

After hearing about the supposed telegrams, Lavinia realises that the confrontation has been organised by Julia and Alex, and the arrival of this pair is therefore keenly awaited by the audience. In the meantime Lavinia is almost as perplexed as Edward had been how to occupy the time:

LAVINIA. Meanwhile, I suppose we might as well sit down.
What shall we talk about? (p.160)

The ensuing conversation, not surprisingly, is very strained but is prevented from becoming too embarrassing by the timely arrival of, firstly Julia and, a little later, Alex, both of whom ring the doorbell and are admitted by Edward. Though they keep up the mystery about the telegrams, they hasten the departure of Peter and Celia (p.163).

Edward makes an unsuccessful attempt to get an explanation of the telegrams from Julia and Alex, and their refusal prompts Lavinia to speak of her sense of being manipulated. Her speech echoes Edward's remark about "the trap" to Celia in the previous scene, and sums up the effect of the action so far:

I am sure that you could explain the telegram.
I don't know why. But it seems to me that yesterday
I started some machine, that goes on working.
And I cannot stop it; no, it's not like a machine —
Or if it's a machine, someone else is running it.
But who? Somebody is always interfering ...
I don't feel free ... and yet I started it ... (p.163)

But Julia and Alex ~~remain~~ enigmatic and depart, leaving Edward and Lavinia alone together to sort things out as best they can.

There are no indications for enactment in the long duologue between Edward and Lavinia which brings the first act to a close. Although the matrimonial bickering which accompanies the soul-searching in this sequence would appear to invite 'business' in performance, Eliot offers no clues here to the precise actions (if any) of the characters. This is not surprising. Virtually every entrance, exit and item of 'business' stipulated so far in the text has, as we have seen, been directed to the end not of enhancing the reality of the characters, but of undermining it by patent manipulation and mystification. Leaving aside the question of who actually started it, "someone else" is running the machine. But who and why?

Act 2 provides — or, at least, suggests — the answers. The scene is "SIR HENRY HARCOURT REILLY'S consulting room in London."

Morning: several weeks later". In this clinical setting, Sir Henry (whom the audience, of course, recognises as the Unidentified Guest) sits "alone at his desk" and most appropriately, sets the action in motion by pressing an electric button (p.171). "The NURSE-SECRETARY enters, with Appointment Book" and there follows a short sequence which gives the audience (for the first time in the play) a concise scenario for the action to follow. An air of mystery is retained as none of the patients are mentioned by name, but an elaborate system of telephone and push-button cues is set up by which Sir Henry will control their arrivals and departures:

REILLY. About those three appointments this morning, Miss Barraway:
I should like to run over my instructions again.
You understand, of course, that it is important
To avoid any meeting?

NURSE SECRETARY. You made that clear, Sir Henry:
The first appointment at eleven o'clock.
He is to be shown into the small waiting room;
And you will see him almost at once.

REILLY. I shall see him at once. And the second?

NURSE-SECRETARY. The second to be shown into the other room
Just as usual. She arrives at a quarter past;
But you may keep her waiting.

REILLY. Or she may keep me waiting;
But I think she will be punctual.

NURSE-SECRETARY. I telephone through
The moment she arrives. I leave her there
Until you ring three times.

REILLY. And the third patient?

NURSE-SECRETARY. The third one to be shown into the small room;
And I need not let you know that she has arrived.
Then, when you ring, I show the others out;
And only after they have left the house ...

REILLY. Quite right, Miss Barraway. That's all for the moment.

NURSE-SECRETARY. Mr Gibbs is here, Sir Henry.

REILLY. Ask him to come straight in;
(Exit NURSE-SECRETARY) (p.171)

Alex's immediate entrance and his ensuing conversation with
Reilly confirms his role as one of the trio of manipulators. The two

men discuss the success of their efforts so far to condition Edward for treatment, and Reilly comments that he has delayed his appointment with Edward for four days "To lower his resistance". The conversation between the two Guardians is interrupted by a call from Miss Barraway on the house-telephone to announce Edward's arrival, and Alex leaves by "the service staircase" (like Reilly in the last scene of Act 1) to return after Reilly has completed his morning's work. Alex's departure completes what is, in effect, a brief prologue to the first of the act's two main movements. The first of these centres on the diagnosis and suggested cure of the Chamberlaynes.

Edward's shock at discovering on his entrance that the psychiatrist he has come to consult had been his Unidentified Guest is effectively stage-managed by Eliot. While Edward "Stops and stares at REILLY" (p.172), the latter "without looking up from his papers" quietly asks him to sit down. Edward, however, finds the confrontation so embarrassing that he makes to leave, and then, when Reilly asks him for the second time to sit, suspects that he is a victim of a trap prepared by Lavinia:

EDWARD. But you had seen my wife?

REILLY. Oh yes, I had seen her.

EDWARD. So this is a trap!

REILLY. Let's not call it a trap.

But if it is a trap, then you cannot escape from it:

And so ... you might as well sit down.

I think you will find that chair comfortable. (p.173)

Whether or not the interview should be regarded as a "trap", the fact that Edward at last (after Reilly's third invitation) sits down is a significant indication that step by step he is submitting to the will of the Guardians.

In the interview which follows Reilly effectively undercuts the

remnants of Edward's self-assertiveness to bring him closer to an honest assessment of his relationship with his wife. The manipulations of the Guardians have helped him to realise, though he does not fully understand it yet, his spiritual dependence on Lavinia:

Without her, it was vacancy.
When I thought she had left me, I began to dissolve,
To cease to exist. That was what she had done to me!
I cannot live with her — that is now intolerable;
I cannot live without her, for she has made me incapable
Of having any existence of my own.
That is what she has done to me in five years together!
She has made the world a place I cannot live in
Except on her terms. I must be alone,
But not in the same world. So I want you to put me
Into your sanatorium. I could be alone there? (p.176)

At this point the house-telephone rings to signal the arrival of Reilly's second patient in "the other room", and though Reilly replies that Edward could be alone in the "sanatorium" the telephone call, as the audience learns presently, foreshadows a completely different solution. After listening a little longer to Edward, Reilly prepares to implement the second stage of his treatment:

But before I treat a patient like yourself
I need to know a great deal more about him,
Than the patient himself can always tell me.
Indeed, it is often the case that my patients
Are only pieces of a total situation
Which I have to explore. The single patient
Who is ill by himself, is rather the exception.
I have recently had another patient
Whose situation is much the same as your own.
(Presses the bell on his desk three times)
You must accept a rather unusual procedure:
I propose to introduce you to the other patient. (p.177)

And in a few moments, despite Edward's protests the Nurse-Secretary ushers in the other patient who turns out to be Lavinia. Both husband and wife are equally surprised by this confrontation, and Reilly has to ask Edward (as well as Lavinia) to sit before the final stage of the treatment can proceed.

After this there are no stage directions until the end of the interview. Edward and Lavinia have simply to accept the truth about themselves and agree to "make the best of a bad job" (p.182). When this point is reached "EDWARD takes out his cheque-book" to pay the psychiatrist's fee, but "REILLY raises his hand". The gesture is ambiguous for accompanied by Reilly's next two lines it can be taken either as signifying the fact that he does not require immediate payment or as a formal gesture of blessing:

My secretary will send you my account.

Go in peace. And work out your salvation with diligence.

(Exeunt EDWARD and LAVINIA)(p.183)

In Eliot's first draft of The Cocktail Party the act set in Reilly's consulting-rooms (Act 3) was in two scenes, the first ending with the departure together of Edward and Lavinia, and the second beginning with the instructions, "SIR HENRY seated at his desk as before. CELIA enters."⁴⁴ In the final version of the play, however, the action is made continuous by the introduction of a brief scene between Reilly and Julia which parallels the one (also introduced after the first draft) between Reilly and Alex before Edward's entrance. These short sequences serve purposes beyond that of improving the continuity of the consulting-room act: they clarify the role of the Guardians and to some extent deflate Reilly as a seemingly all-knowing, all-powerful figure. This is particularly true of the Reilly/Julia sequence which is introduced by a rare visual joke in which Eliot has Reilly take a brief rest on his own professional couch! Reilly gets up to answer a call on the house-telephone, but returns to the couch as Julia enters by the side door. He is apparently so exhausted after his session with Edward and Lavinia that Julia has to order him to get up to attend to his next patient!

Henry, get up.
 You can't be as tired as that. I shall wait in the next room,
 And come back when she's gone.

REILLY. Yes, when she's gone.

JULIA. Will Alex be here?

REILLY. Yes, he'll be here.
 (Exit JULIA by side door) (p.184)

Thus, for once in the play, a piece of business is used to show the human weakness of a Guardian rather than to further their "diabolical" manipulation of the other characters.

There is almost nothing to say about the stagecraft of the Reilly/Celia interview (the second major movement of the act). Like the Chamberlaynes, Celia is ushered in by the Nurse-Secretary after Reilly has pressed the button on his desk, but there are no shock-tactics or surprises for her. She has, in fact, shown herself to be quite impervious to manipulation (notably in the second and third scenes of Act 1) and what surprises there are in this interview proceed purely from her character and open outlook. The lack of "trickery" in her treatment can therefore be taken as a measure of her sainthood. The only "business" in this sequence is when Reilly "Writes on a slip of paper" the address of his "sanitorium", and at the end when he pushes his desk button to summon the Nurse-Secretary to show Celia out.

Act 2 ends with a brief movement which forms a kind of epilogue to the act. It is introduced by Reilly's dialling on the house-telephone and informing Julia, "It is finished. You can come in now." (p.192) After a short conversation in which Reilly expresses his fears for the Chamberlaynes and Julia her concern for Celia, Reilly "Takes up the house-telephone" to ask for Alex, only to be told he is on his way up. A moment or so after Alex has entered, the "NURSE-SECRETARY enters with a tray, a decanter and three

glasses, and exits. REILLY pours drinks." (p.194) The ritualistic libations which are then offered up on behalf of the Chamberlaynes and Celia formally mark the completion of the active part of the Guardians' work — apart, perhaps, from helping Peter Quilpe. The libations also have the effect of introducing a palpable touch of the supernatural into what has previously passed muster as a consulting room. For a minute or so the play's world of drawing-rooms and psychiatrists seems to be reduced to a mere speck in the infinitude of God's creation:

Protect her from the Voices
Protect her from the Visions
Protect her in the tumult
Protect her in the silence.
(They drink) (p.194)

The final act of The Cocktail Party, we are told, was the most difficult part of the play for Eliot to write.⁴⁵ The act was projected but not included in Eliot's first draft and after being written underwent considerable changes between the Edinburgh and New York productions and between the New York and the London one. Martin Browne comments:

Eliot was setting out to do an exceedingly difficult thing. The characters were to meet again after two years without the one who had most deeply involved us; and we were now to concentrate on the reactions of the other characters to her painful death. There was an obvious danger that this would become, in effect if not in name, an epilogue — and this danger was not entirely avoided ... Another problem was to show Edward and Lavinia living a married life of peaceful understanding without making the relationship boring or banal. The state is essentially an undramatic one.⁴⁶

Eliot's difficulty with this final act was no doubt increased by his acceptance of Martin Browne's well-meant advice to cast the play in three acts instead of the originally-intended four. The added stress this gave to the last act is unfortunate for though the act effectively completes the overall pattern it is undeniably thin in

dramatic action.

Eliot's awareness of the "epilogue" problem, however, prompted him to adopt a device which helped with the dramatisation of the Chamberlayne's "post-operative" state. Writing to Martin Browne after roughing out a draft of the last act, he commented:

I think it might be possible for me to devise a better opening for Act IV rewriting the first few pages, and especially if you could allow me a couple of caterer's men to be present at the very beginning. It seems to me that a little business would enliven the opening and stimulate the interest of the audience instead of the mere dialogue. Besides I am not sure that that light comedy dialogue doesn't go on too long and perhaps give the impression of being rather forced.⁴⁷

The introduction of the Caterer's Man (one only in the final text) in fact accomplished a good deal more than offering scope for a little enlivening business to open the act. It demonstrates that the cocktail party which the Chamberlaynes are to give together will offer more substantial fare than the tray of potato chips which was all the hapless Edward could produce for his guests in the Act 1 party, and thus suggests by metaphoric extension, as Carol H. Smith has noted, that the marriage has been spiritually replenished.⁴⁸ And the Caterer's man has yet another function, of particular relevance to this discussion: he not only serves the buffet but as a buffer.

In Act 1, as has been demonstrated in detail, Edward was at the mercy of the doorbell and the telephone, never knowing who or what was going to intrude next. In Act 2 the "patients" are ushered in and out of the consulting-rooms by bell, appointment-book and telephone, but this time the "machinery" and its purpose are apparent. Now in Act 3 Edward and Lavinia no longer have to answer the doorbell; the Caterer's Man does it for them and announces the new arrivals before they enter. Guests may still arrive unexpectedly but the Chamberlaynes have at last a little insulation against the outside world.

There is, however, the hint in a remark Julia lets slip just after her arrival in this act that the Caterer's Man may be more than he seems:

Oh yes, I know this is a Parkison's party;
I recognised one of their men at the door —
An old friend of mine, in fact. (p.198)

The Chamberlaynes are obviously making good progress in their spiritual convalescence, but they are still, this comment suggests, under observation.

Apart from entrances and exits (and the offering of drinks⁴⁹) there is not a great deal of business stated or implied in the text for this act. Most of it comes at the beginning. Lavinia's moving of a bowl of flowers, the Caterer's Man's arranging of the buffet table and his bringing in of the trolley, inform the audience that a well-organised party is in the offing; and such details as Edward's patient attempts to straighten a picture while Lavinia decides whether it should be moved right or left, his suggestion that she should lie down briefly before the party and her request for him to sit down beside her, show the degree of companionship they now have in their marriage.

The pattern of entrances in the act, according to Martin Browne,⁵⁰ underwent some changes in the course of Eliot's revision, the principal one being to make Reilly the last of the arrivals instead of having him enter with Julia. This is clearly an improvement as the effect of Julia's unexpectedly early arrival, recalling her Act 1 behaviour, is thereby heightened, and keeping Reilly's oracular presence in reserve for the denouement strengthens the shape of the act. Julia's opening speech prepares the entrance of Alex who, of course, has the job of making the climactic disclosure. The final two entrances Peter Quilpe and then Reilly, are used to delay and thus heighten the effect

of Alex's revelation in the final movement of Celia's crucifixion. Eliot's art here, however, essentially relates to his patterning of the dialogue and therefore is outside the scope of this study.

The final exits of the play are intended to suggest that the characters having made a choice must now proceed along the path determined by that choice. Julia speaks for the Guardians — and, no doubt, for Eliot:

Everyone makes a choice, of one kind or another,
And then must take the consequences. Celia chose
A way of which the consequence was Kinkanja.
Peter chose a way that leads him to Boltwell:
And he's got to go there ...

And Peter accordingly goes after saying good-bye to the Chamberlaynes and to the guardians.

... And now the consequence of the Chamberlayne's choice
Is a cocktail party. They must be ready for it.
Their guests may be arriving at any moment. (p.211)

The Chamberlaynes accordingly stay to accept, as Reilly puts it, their "appointed burden". (p.212) Then the Guardians leave together for the cocktail party at the Gunnings where, even though Reilly will not be unexpected, it may be presumed they will assist other "patients" to choose their path.

The play ends with Edward and Lavinia eagerly responding to the familiar ring of the doorbell.

IV

The Cocktail Party marks an important step in the development of the "enclosed" play in modern English drama. As has been noted earlier, few playwrights after Pinero had felt inclined to use the naturalistic well-made play for serious work. It has lived on in a modified form as a vehicle for light comedy providing, at best, diverting but thin entertainment. In The Cocktail Party, however, Eliot made the

revolutionary decision to take the polished surface of the drawing-room comedy world seriously and use it as a mirror to show the emptiness of middle-class life. To achieve this he not only perfected a verse idiom which recreates the effect of drawing-room comedy speech just a little too well, but, as we have seen, employed a type of stagecraft which imparts to the genre's typical business — the offering and accepting of drinks, the ringing of doorbells and telephones — a new consciousness of unreality.

This unreality, however, is charged by the feeling (later confirmed) that the principal characters are being manipulated for purposes which for much of the play are unknown to them. It is doubtful whether Eliot really intended to convey the effect of brainwashing but this as far as Edward is concerned (and he is on stage far more than anybody else) is what the final text suggests. Celia alone remains unmoved by the machinery and her power to choose can therefore be accepted — even if one has reservations about the weird and exotic detail which colours the account of her crucifixion. So much palpable conditioning precedes Edward and Lavinia's choice, however, that it seems no choice at all. To this element of determinism must be added the impression one gets of the Guardians enigmatically circulating from one cocktail party to the next in accordance with their pre-ordained role. Even though their purposes are identified in the action of the play there remains something alarming about them. Whatever Eliot's intentions may have been (for the role of the Guardians grew considerably during the making of the play) their manipulations raise disturbing questions concerning human identity and volition.

Eliot's final two plays, The Confidential Clerk and The Elder Statesman, though they too deal with questions of appearance and

reality, true and false identity and so on, are much less effective in their patterning and theatrical technique. From a technical point of view it would appear that Eliot wished to prove with The Confidential Clerk that he could write a well-made three-act play in which plot interest was sustained right through to the dénouement.⁵¹ Certainly his third act, which is in fact longer than the preceding ones achieves this, but the fatuousness of the mistaken-identity plot (complete with the story of the babes wilfully confused by their nurse) impairs the seriousness of Eliot's theme of real and mistaken vocations. Nor from the point of view of stage-business did Eliot profit by his experiment with farce as he made no attempt to capitalise on the genre's typical business. The Elder Statesman on the other hand has a slight surface plot and an elegiac tone which relates much more to Eliot's source, Oedipus at Colonus, than to drawing-room comedy. The play's settings suggest its simple movement: the first act takes place in "The drawing-room of Lord Claverton's London home. Four o'clock in the afternoon"; the second on "The Terrace at Badgley Court [a convalescent home]. Morning"; and the third act shows the same setting "Late afternoon of the following day" (p.297). It is thus literally a sunset play, notable not at all for its stagecraft but possessing a quiet beauty in its verse as its aging protagonist faces his ghosts and his death. These final two plays are no doubt significant for their verse but show a regression as far as stagecraft and theatrical impact are concerned.

The Cocktail Party, however, does mark a breakthrough in the development of a modern theatrical idiom. It invested a stereotyped form with a sense of alienation,⁵² making previously familiar surroundings and relationships seem insecure and insubstantial. To Eliot

this consciousness of dissociation was a necessary preliminary to the acceptance of another reality. But what if the Guardians in The Cocktail Party had not been servants of a greater reality? What if their "patients" never learnt who was manipulating them or why? What, indeed, if there were nobody at all outside the drawing-room? After Eliot comes Pinter.⁵³

V

No English playwright from Pinero to the present day conveys a stronger sense of enclosure in his work than does Harold Pinter. This feeling does not derive merely from his frequent use of a single enclosing setting — the Pinter room over which so much critical and speculative ink has been spilt — for it is also present in works such as Silence in which the characters are physically isolated, each in his or her own "area", on an empty stage.⁵⁴ This latter image offers a better clue to the nature of the "enclosure" in Pinter's drama than does the room, for even in his earlier plays "the room" is surrounded by the unknown and the characters are shown, as Pinter remarked in an interview in 1960, "at the extreme edge of their living, where they are living pretty much alone ..."⁵⁵ The plays record the characters' attempts to structure an essentially anarchic existence and thus we arrive at a kind of inverse determinism: man is free but walls himself in because of his fear of freedom.

A similar paradox applies to the structural patterns of the plays. "Etched in silence", as John Lahr has described them,⁵⁶ they are at the same time both "open" and "enclosed": "open" in the sense that at any given moment of silence in them the action could go in a number of different directions; "enclosed" in that the ultimate result of the overall action is a kind of circling back, a recognition of a basic condition which was latent at the beginning.⁵⁷ Pinter, from his own

point of view, has described the process as follows:

I'd like to make quite clear ... that I don't regard my own characters as uncontrolled or anarchic. They're not. The function of selection and arrangement is mine. I do all the donkeywork, in fact and I think I can say that I pay meticulous attention to the shape of things, from the shape of a sentence to the overall structure of the play. This shaping, to put it mildly, is of the first importance. But I think a double thing happens. You arrange and you listen, following the clues you leave for yourself, through the characters. And sometimes a balance is found, where image can freely engender image and where at the same time you are able to keep your sights on the place where the characters are silent and in hiding. It is in the silence that they are most evident to me.⁵⁸

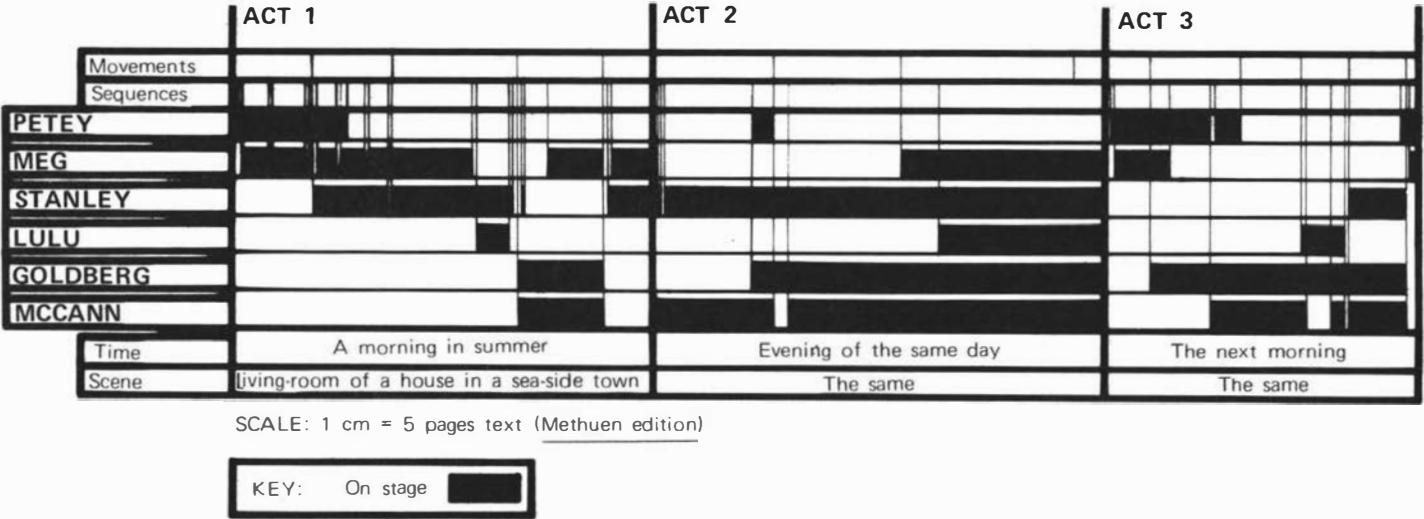
Written in this matter (without, of course, any kind of scenario), Pinter's plays are much more poetic than Pinero's well-made structures, but no less precisely patterned and "punctuated". In the works of both playwrights there is a considerable use of pausation, but, whereas Pinero used pauses to underline specific details in the causal linking of his plots, Pinter writes for the sake of the silences. As Peter Hall, the director of most of the original productions of Pinter's plays, has commented:

Harold writes in silence as much as in words; he defines silence by the noise on either side of it and the literal communication on either side of it. So you have to discover what goes on through that.⁵⁹

The silences, as we will show in some detail in the next section, are graded in terms of both duration and effect, but it is through them that the shape of Pinter's actions gradually becomes manifest in the theatre. Moreover, in most of the stage plays the completion of the action is marked by a "long silence" or its equivalent.⁶⁰

Analysis of "blocking" patterns in Pinter's stage plays is of limited value compared with the study of his silences. After his first plays, The Room (1957) and The Birthday Party (1958), in which his use of pausation bears only slightly on the pattern of entrances and exits, major entrances generally coincide with marked "silences"

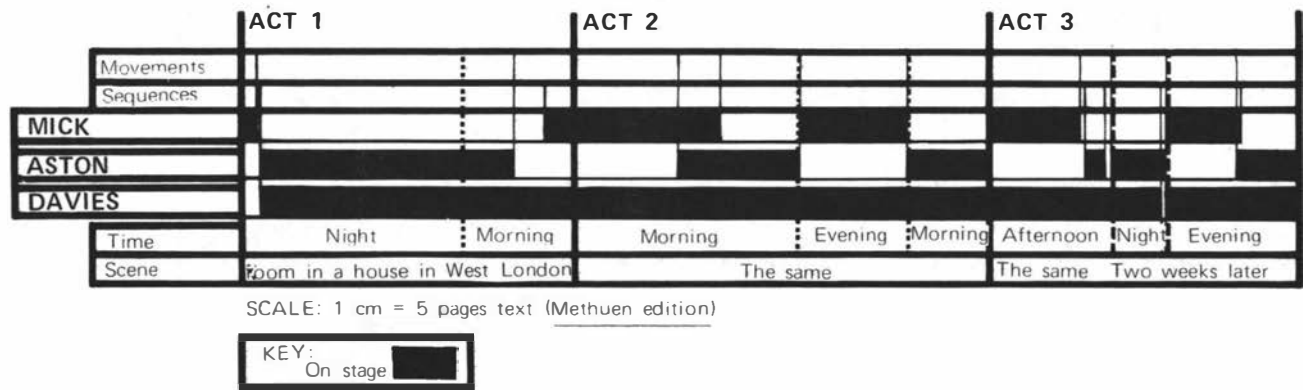
FIGURE 24: Scenario graph of THE BIRTHDAY PARTY by Harold Pinter



in the text, and thus these "silences" may be seen as signalling new movements within scenes.⁶¹ This is generally the case in The Care-taker (1960) and emphatically so in The Homecoming (1965). Since the last-named play, however, Pinter has been exploring a drama of withdrawal in which physical movement has hardly any part. Scenario graphs for Landscape (1968) and Silence (1969) would only show two continuous bars for the former and three for the latter! The same applies to Old Times (1971) in which the three bars are **interrupted** only by a vertical line marking the division between the two acts and by a gap in Kate's bar between her exit at the end of Act 1 and her entrance early in Act 2.⁶² However, a few points suggested by the scenario graphs for Pinter's first two full-length plays, The Birthday Party (Figure 24) and The Care-taker (Figure 25), are worth brief comment before a closer examination is made of the patterning and "punctuation" of Pinter's most ambitious play to date, The Homecoming.

The Birthday Party has a simple overall structure: three acts depicting, in turn, the action before, during and after the "party". The blocking pattern is only vaguely symmetrical, but something of the circular quality of the action is suggested by the opening and ending of the play with Meg and Petey. Further points of the blocking pattern are that Stanley, the central character, enters at the beginning of the second movement of Act 1, and (with Goldberg and McCann) exits finally at the end of the penultimate movement of Act 3; that the sequence involving Lulu and Stanley in Act 1 is similarly positioned to the one involving her and Goldberg in Act 3; and that Goldberg and McCann have a sequence together in each of these acts. This however — apart from the fact that Stanley and McCann are on stage for almost the whole of Act 2 — is the sum of the "blocking" symmetry, though there

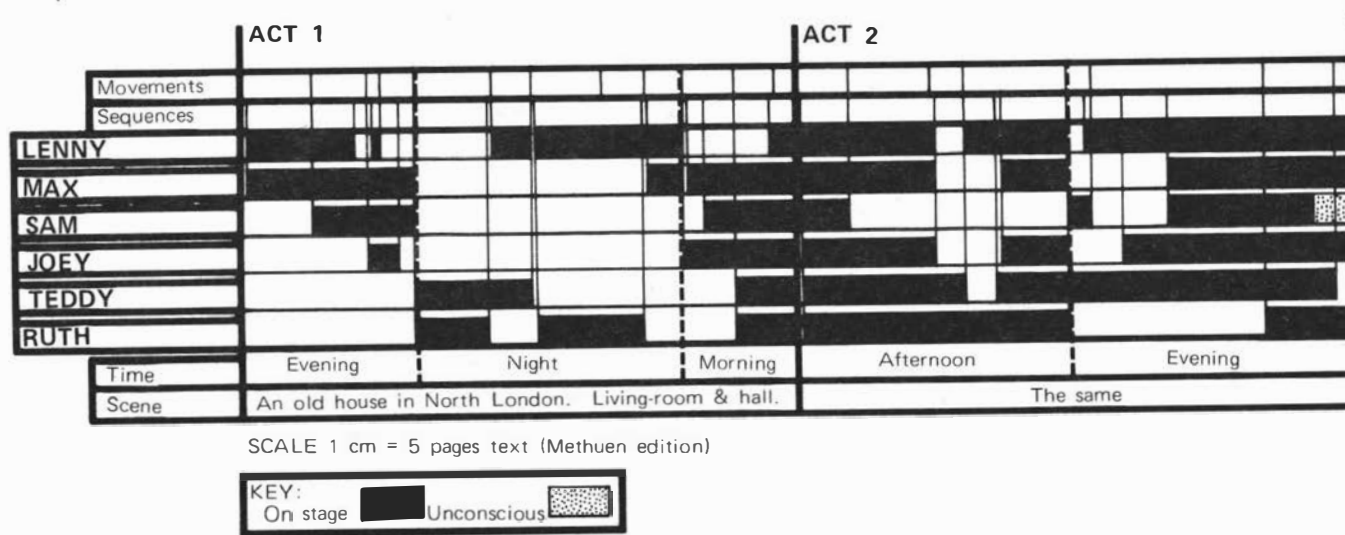
FIGURE 25: Scenario graph of THE CARETAKER by Harold Pinter



are, of course, many recurring motifs in the dialogue and stage business.

The scenario graph for The Caretaker, with only three characters involved, has a much simpler pattern. Davies is present throughout the action, except for the brief sequence at the beginning where Mick sits alone and looks in turn at the objects in the room. Given Davies' continual presence and the fact that Pinter only twice allows the two brothers to be present at the same time (for a three and a half page sequence in Act 2, and momentarily in Act 3), the play inevitably offers a series of alternating duologues between Davies and Aston or Mick. The effect, of course, is to put the audience in the same state of uncertainty about the brothers and their relationship as is the old tramp. The other notable feature of the play's "blocking" is the way in which these duologues, generally speaking, become progressively shorter, and thus the rhythm more staccato, through the interruptions caused by fades, blackouts and curtains as well as entrances and exits. This also has an unsettling effect on the audience, similar to the effect of the brothers on Davies, but the division of the action into eight sections showing a series of encounters spread over some two weeks of stage time necessarily results in the unusual sacrifice for Pinter of one of the unities. His next full-length play, however, scrupulously observes all three, and with its two equally-balanced acts acquires a monumental quality reminiscent of Eliot's The Family Reunion; a title which like The Cocktail Party and The Birthday Party, is strangely echoed in Pinter's choice of "The Homecoming."

FIGURE 26: Scenario graph of THE HOMECOMING by Harold Pinter



VI

In a 1966 Paris Review interview Pinter stated of his drama:

The only play which gets remotely near a structural entity which satisfies me is The Homecoming. The Birthday Party and The Caretaker have too much writing ... I want to iron it down, eliminate things 63

The Homecoming is clearly the most tightly constructed of Pinter's first three full-length plays, having a firmer control of the sub-text (indicated by the greater economy of dialogue and stage-business) and more precision in the "blocking" and pointing of the action than either of the others. The formality of the play's structure in which the second half inverts the happenings of the first half is hinted at by the scenario graph (Figure 26), but is more effectively demonstrated by analysis of Pinter's usage of his unique system of theatrical punctuation devices: the hesitation (indicated in the text by three dots), the pause; the silence; the blackout; and the curtain. These "stops" assist his audiences, denied the explicit connections and progressions of the well-made play, to respond creatively to the sub-textual implications of his dialogue and stage-business and to gradually sense the unfolding pattern of the action. Instead, therefore, of discussing the patterning of The Homecoming movement by movement, as we have with other plays in this thesis, it is profitable to consider how the pattern emerges through Pinter's usage of his system of theatrical punctuation, beginning with the smaller "stops" and progressing to the more emphatic ones.

(i) The Hesitation: The "three dots" sign should perhaps be regarded as a conventional punctuation stop rather than a theatrical one, but because Pinter makes more than usual use of it and as there are several distinctive features about the way he does so, it is

necessary to consider it briefly. The sign in Pinter dialogue definitely indicates a momentary hesitation.⁶⁴ When it is used frequently the sign indicates a difficulty which the speaker is experiencing in putting together and expressing his thoughts — or perhaps those thoughts he wishes to express. This may be the result of a permanent slow-wittedness as with Joey the boxer or, more interestingly, of a special state of tension. When Ruth, the only woman in the play, uses it, it creates a weird effect almost as if her body were speaking and enables Pinter to prepare an electrifying (and important) effect when she suddenly snaps out of a sexual trance and brusquely orders the men about. Similarly when her husband Teddy hesitates a number of times in a speech in which he claims to be emotionally disengaged from the other characters it is evident that his objectivity is under a degree of stress which has brought it almost to breaking-point.

The hesitations are not always involuntary, however. Lenny, the most viciously articulate character in the play, occasionally uses the device to gain an ironic emphasis. For example, when Max gets out of bed and comes downstairs to furiously demand why Lenny has been shouting in the middle of the night, Lenny's reply: "Look, why don't you just... pop off, eh?" (p.35) contains a hidden innuendo. As one of Lenny's favourite methods of baiting Max is to call him Dad (Max's paternity appears somewhat doubtful), "pop" is obviously loaded. (The word continues to pop up during the remainder of the sequence.) Similarly, a few speeches later, Lenny uses a hesitation to stress a neat combination of ironic understatement and innuendo when he counters Max's incensed demand for an explanation of the shouting, by a diversion: "I'll tell you what, Dad, since you're in the mood for a bit of a ...

chat, I'll ask you a question." (p.36) "Chat" is hardly the word to describe what Max is in the mood for, but it is exactly the euphemism commonly used for a father-son discussion of "the facts of life". Lenny accordingly goes on to ask: "the night you got me ... that night with Mum, what was it like? Eh? When I was just a glint in your eye."

Indicating a state of tension and emphasising a succeeding word are two positive aspects of Pinter's use of the hesitation. There is also a negative aspect which is of some interest — the fact that he rarely uses it to indicate an unfinished speech. In The Homecoming only half a dozen speeches "tail off", whereas in John Arden's The Workhouse Donkey (which also makes frequent use of the hesitation sign) dozens do. Pinter characters nearly always finish their sentences, and this, together with the frequent use of subsequent pauses, gives a distinctive end-stopped character to the verbal exchanges and sharpens their impact.

(ii) The Pause: This is, of course, the most frequently used stage-direction in a Pinter script. It occurs no fewer than 224 times in The Homecoming (beating the tally in The Caretaker by over fifty!). Though the device makes an important contribution to the rhythm by dividing dialogue (together with movement and "business") into units of differing lengths, this is not its main purpose. The basic function of the Pinter pause is to mark "silent interplay of conscious and unconscious motivation"⁶⁵ within and between characters. (The hesitation, of course, directly involves only the speaker.) More often than not in the plays up to and including The Homecoming the speeches are moves or gambits in the continual battle for dominance which characterises Pinter's dramatic world. The pause

alerts the audience to the trap concealed in the speaker's words and focuses attention on his opponent's capacity to avoid it. The opening exchanges of The Homecoming demonstrate this clearly:

MAX. What have you done with the scissors?

Pause

I said I'm looking for the scissors. What have you done with them?

Pause

Did you hear me? I want to cut something out of the paper.

LENNY. I'm reading the paper.

MAX. Not that paper. I haven't ^{even} read that paper. I'm talking about last Sunday's paper. I was just having a look at it in the kitchen.

Pause.

Do you hear what I'm saying? I'm talking to you! Where's the scissors?

LENNY. (looking up, quietly) Why don't you shut up, you daft prat?
(p.7)

Here Max is trying to assert himself by putting Lenny at a disadvantage: "What have you done with the scissors?" rather than "Do you know where the scissors are?" The first two pauses mark Lenny's refusal to "bite", or indeed to respond at all to Max if he can help it. When Max then reinforces his move by offering a reason for wanting the scissors, Lenny not only undercuts it by asserting his claim to the paper but by so doing implies Max's inferior position in the household. Max counters by implying that Lenny has reduced him to reading last Sunday's paper in the kitchen, but Lenny is quite unmoved. Finally, when Max renews his demand, Lenny deals directly with the real issue (Max's attempt at asserting paternal authority) by giving him, with the minimum of effort, a calculated verbal slap. Thus the pauses in this opening passage help to introduce and define the nature of the relationship between Max and Lenny far more effectively than could have been done by words alone.

Lenny's refusal to reply until it suits him indicates his superior strength in the family power game, and this suggests another point about the way pauses work in the play. Generally the characters who do most of the talking turn out to be the losers because sooner or later they leave themselves open to effective counter-attack. Max loses in his contest with Lenny, but later in the first act Lenny loses to Ruth because in the course of trying to intimidate her with a long story about the way in which he beat up a prostitute who made him "a certain proposition" he unconsciously reveals his impotence. Similarly the weakness of the marital bond between Ruth and Teddy is clearly signalled by the fact that most of the many pauses in their conversation result from Ruth's failing or delaying to reply to her husband's constant suggestions and questions.⁶⁶

A refusal to answer does not, of course, always indicate strength. It is sometimes merely the only way in which a weaker character can avoid total defeat. An exchange early in the play between Max and his chauffeur brother Sam provides a good example of this. Sam knows that Max's deceased wife Jessie had cuckolded him, her lover being Max's best friend MacGregor. The incident has remained on Sam's conscience as it had happened while he was driving the couple around town in his firm's limousine. Nevertheless, he uses oblique hints about it as a means of retaliating against Max's constant attempts to humiliate him. Unfortunately Max has guessed Sam's "secret" long ago and is more than capable of calling his bluff:

MAX. Above having a good bang in the back seat, are you?

SAM. Yes, I leave that to others.

MAX. You leave it to others? What others? You paralysed prat!

SAM. I don't mess up my car! Or my ... my boss's car! Like other people.

MAX. Other people? What other people?

Pause.

What other people?

Pause.

SAM. Other people. (p.15)

The pauses here point Sam's partial defeat. However, as long as he does not come out directly with his knowledge he has a weapon, double-edged as it may be, to use against Max. When he finally does blurt it out at a moment of crisis near the end of the play he has a seizure, collapses, and is disregarded. Once spoken, his secret has lost its power and he has nothing left with which to defend himself.

The exchange between Max and Sam also illustrates a further point. The pauses clarify what is happening and ensure that the exchange between the brothers registers with the audience. But the details which explain the conflict are not revealed until the end of the play and then are shown to be without significance. What matters is not the fact — which has no intrinsic significance — but how it is used. Thus Pinter's pauses are in a sense more tangible than the "facts" which lie behind them.⁶⁷

(iii) The Silence: A strong claim could be made for the pause as Pinter's trademark, but the silence is another matter. Since Waiting for Godot the silence in drama has been the ultimate symbol of the Absurd. Pinter, however, did not adopt this usage decisively until Landscape and Silence. The silences in these plays signify withdrawal or oblivion — Beth's withdrawal into her one moment of bliss (Landscape), the disintegration into nothingness of Ellen, Rumsey and Bates (Silence). There is a clear hint of this development with two of the silences in Act Two of The Homecoming which occur during Ruth's hesitant description of the barrenness of her life in America. In the play as a whole, however, the silences perform the same functions (though with greater precision) as they do in The Caretaker; they

divide the action into movements, and at the same time they emphasise moments of extreme menace or tension.

There are twenty silences in The Homecoming, all pointing significant stages in the overall development of the action. Perhaps coincidentally, there are four of them in each of the five major sections into which the play is divided, but, as the sections vary in length and the silences are not evenly spaced within them, the device can be found used both in clusters and singly. In the majority of cases, however, it occurs at the beginning or the end of a sequence, and where this happens the encounter is given particular stress — a larger version of the end-stopped effect mentioned earlier.

The silences of the opening section (i.e. up to the first blackout) are of this kind. The first comes at the end of the opening sequence between Max and Lenny and the second at the end of a sequence between Max and Sam. In both cases the silences point defiance of Max's authority — first as father, then as elder brother and (subtextually) husband. They also stress entrances — Sam enters immediately after the first one and Joey after the second.⁶⁸ Joey's initial entrance is actually framed by silences, the one which follows his entrance indicating that even he can sense the tension between his father and uncle. His opening remark, "Feel a bit hungry" (p.16) is a singularly unfortunate attempt at a diversion. It happens to follow criticism by both Lenny and Sam of Max's inadequate cooking and so provokes Max into a bitter outburst against the others, culminating in a dark threat against Lenny (who exits contemptuously) — and the fourth silence. Thus each of the silences in the first section of the play underlines the unresolved tensions in this womanless household.

The isolating effect which the silences often have on encounters

in this play is particularly evident in the second (Night) section of Act One. Here there are four major sequences involving pairs of characters, each sequence being separated from the next one by a silence (as well, of course, as an exit and entrance). This not only imparts a quality of deliberation and menace to this section presaging the eruption in the next one, but helps to "plant" in performance an important feature of the overall pattern: that each of these sequences is paralleled in Act 2 by a related encounter involving the same characters but reversing the earlier conflict or action. In the first one, Ruth (having been brought in the middle of the night to the home of in-laws she has never met and who are not expecting her) is clearly reluctant to stay despite her husband's assurances that the family will not mind, whereas in the second act he wants to leave and she does not. Similarly, Lenny's superficially matter-of-fact acceptance of Teddy's arrival is counter-balanced in Act 2 by his savagely ironic denunciation of Teddy's failure to accept the family "hospitality" in the proper spirit; Ruth's defeat of Lenny when he unconsciously gives himself away in trying to intimidate her, by her confession and apparent submission to him; and Lenny's avoidance of telling Max about the arrival of Ruth (and Teddy), by his co-operation with Max in concocting the plan to retain her.⁶⁹

The silences in the final section of Act 1 prepare, initiate and resolve the climactic confrontation of the first half of the play. The first one simply marks Max's mood of black frustration when he enters the room in the morning, and leads to another ill-tempered attack on Sam who has been tidying up after Max in the kitchen. The next two silences follow in rapid succession, doubling the effect of outrage and menace, when at last Max comes face to face with his uninvited guests:

TEDDY and RUTH come down the stairs. They walk across the hall and stop just inside the room.
The others turn and look at them. JOEY stands. TEDDY and RUTH are wearing dressing gowns.

Silence.

TEDDY smiles.

TEDDY. Hallo ... Dad ... We overslept.

Pause.

What's for breakfast?

Silence.

(p.40)

The first of these silences marks the stupefaction of Max, Cam and Joey — none of whom had any prior knowledge of Teddy and Ruth's presence in the house; the pause, the realisation by Max that Lenny (who is deliberately absent at this point) had concealed from him the news of their arrival the previous night; and the second silence, Max's mounting fury (exacerbated by Teddy's question) at this ultimate insult to his authority. This is the lighting of a fuse which Pinter has been laying through the entire act.

The fuse burns rapidly until Max's rage explodes in a savage denunciation of Teddy for bringing a "stinking pox-ridden slut" (p.41) into his house and he orders Joey to "chuck them out". Joey ignores him. Then follows a remarkable series of actions, without dialogue, culminating in an unexpected reversal which is marked by the final silence of the act:

LENNY walks into the room, in a dressing gown.

He stops.

They all look round.

MAX turns back, hits JOEY in the stomach with all his might.

JOEY contorts, staggers across the stage. MAX, with the exertion of the blow, begins to collapse. His knees buckle. He clutches his stick.

SAM moves forward to help him.

MAX hits him across the head with his stick. SAM sits, head in hands.

JOEY, hands pressed to his stomach, sinks down at the feet of RUTH. She looks down at him.

LENNY and TEDDY are still.

JOEY slowly stands. He is close to RUTH. He turns from RUTH,

looks around at MAX.

SAM clutches his head.

MAX breathes heavily, very slowly gets to his feet.

JOEY moves to him.

They look at each other.

Silence.

MAX moves past JOEY, walks toward RUTH. He gestures with his stick.

MAX. Miss. (pp.42-3)

Nowhere in Pinter's plays is his equation of dialogue with gesture more vividly demonstrated than in this passage. Not only does it present the culmination of all the tensions of the first act, but it also foreshadows the realignment of relationships in the second act — in particular Ruth's adoption of Joey as her mate and protégé within the clan. The silence which marks the confrontation between Max and Joey ends with Max's submission and his acceptance of Ruth's arrival in the house. The consequences of this decision are worked out in the second act.

The silences in Act 2 point the stages of a conflict between Teddy and his family (excluding Sam) for the possession of Ruth. The act begins after dinner with the whole group together and Max in particular oozing cordiality. Before long, however, he drops his mask and once again vents his spleen on his usual scapegoat. The climax of his attack is marked by the first silence:

MAX points his stick at SAM.

MAX. He didn't even fight in the war. This man didn't even fight in the bloody war!

SAM. I did!

MAX. Who did you kill?

Silence.

SAM gets up, goes to RUTH, shakes her hand and goes out of the front door.

The incident is an ominous portent of the savagery to come. '

After Sam's exit, Max, again apparently benign, turns his attention to Teddy's marriage and doctorate, and it is soon apparent from Teddy's

hesitant assurances that neither is as sound as he pretends. This movement comes to a head with Lenny's interrogation of Teddy about the philosophical definition of a table, but is brought to a halt by an extraordinary interruption from Ruth:

RUTH. Don't be too sure though. You've forgotten something. Look at me. I ... move my leg. That's all it is. But I wear ... underwear ... which moves with me ... it ... captures your attention. Perhaps you misinterpret. The action is simple. It's a leg ... moving. My lips move. Why don't you restrict your observations to that? Perhaps the fact that they move is more significant ... than the words which come through them. You must bear that ... possibility ... in mind. (pp.52-3)

As Kelly Morris has observed in an article on the play,⁷⁰ this speech sums up Pinter's dramatic method and the danger for his audiences that they may be deceived by "the suggestive rustle which accompanies the real action."⁷¹ In context, however, Ruth's words direct the family to pay attention to her and what she is, rather than what she seems to be. The silence which follows her statement is the pivot for the remainder of the action, for Ruth then goes on to make a simple but chilling confession:

Silence.

TEDDY stands.

(RUTH) I was born quite near here.

Pause.

Then ... six years ago, I went to America.

Pause.

It's all rock. And sand. It stretches ... so far ... everywhere you look. And there's lots of insects there.

Pause.

And there's lots of insects there.

Silence.

She is still. (p.53)

The action which this crucial passage represents is clear — Ruth is revealing the emptiness of her marriage and implying that the family can have her if they are prepared to take her.

In the following movement **Max** and Lenny obligingly (and Joey reluctantly) leave Teddy alone with Ruth. He tries to cajole her into leaving but getting no positive response decides to force the issue by going upstairs to pack. Lenny comes into the room and there is another silence to mark the beginning of the fifth movement of this section of the play: Ruth's passive but devastating counter to her husband. She simply makes herself available, first to Lenny and then to Joey. Teddy is helpless to stop her; he can only attempt to avoid humiliation by refusing to acknowledge it.⁷²

The final section of the play is divided by silences into four movements. The first, a brief one, begins with the two family victims, alone together. Sam is trying to comfort Teddy for, as is soon revealed, Ruth and Joey have been sharing a bed upstairs for the last two hours. When, however, Lenny enters the room, Teddy's impotent hostility becomes evident. His futile "declaration of war" is signalled by a "double silence":

LENNY. Still here, Ted? You'll be late for your first seminar.

He goes to the sideboard, opens it, peers in it, to the right and the left, stands.

Where's my cheese-roll?

Pause

Someone's taken my cheese-roll. I left it there. (To SAM.)
You been thieving?

TEDDY. I took your cheese-roll, Lenny.

Silence.

SAM looks at them, picks up his hat and goes out of the front door.

Silence. (p.63)

Sam exits, of course, because he cannot bear to watch the mental carnage he knows will result from this defiance. Although Teddy explains his action in terms which exactly parallel the family's behaviour with Ruth ("I was hungry so I ate it"), his gesture is not

one Lenny is prepared to ignore. The long movement which follows presents an escalation of vicious effrontery by Lenny and Max, with Joey a willing accomplice. It has a dual purpose: to secure Ruth to the family on the most profitable terms, and to try Teddy's stance of indifference to the limit. The culmination of this process comes with Lenny's proposals that Ruth should be installed in one of his Greek Street flats to earn her keep "on her back" (p.72) and that Teddy might act as her American advertising agent!

Ruth's entry at this point begins the climactic movement and therefore is given emphatic stress:

RUTH comes down the stairs, dressed.
She comes into the room.
She smiles at the gathering, and sits.
Silence. (p.75)

In this movement Teddy continues to demonstrate his apparent indifference to the proceedings by himself informing Ruth of the family's proposal without stating any objection on his part, but Ruth's acceptance reveals a callous practicality which far outdoes his or even the family's.

Only Sam, the one character with a moral conscience,⁷³ attempts to intervene, and though the effort nearly kills him he could have saved himself the bother for all the notice that is taken of it. Even Teddy merely looks down at Sam's body and remarks unfeelingly, "I was going to ask him to drive me to London Airport" (p.79). He then says goodbye to his father and brothers as if nothing in the least unusual had happened, but ignores his wife until she calls out as he gets to the front door:

RUTH. Eddie.
 TEDDY turns.
Pause.

Don't become a stranger.

TEDDY goes, shuts the front door.
Silence.

This silence marks the last turning point of the play. Teddy has avoided humiliation at the cost of anaesthetising his humanity, while Ruth has assumed the role of a mother saying goodbye to a son who rarely visits the family. She then impassively and silently takes command of her brood.

(iv) The Blackout. Pinter's use of blackouts goes back to his very first play, The Room (1957). At the end of that play Rose's sudden blindness is immediately followed by a blackout and when the house lights come up the curtain has closed. In The Birthday Party a blackout is used to heighten the terror of the game of blind man's bluff, though here the action continues in the darkness with momentary illuminations from a flashlight. It was not until The Caretaker, however, that Pinter used the blackout as a scene divider. Here he made a significant distinction between fade to blackout, indicating a simple time-lapse,⁷⁴ and blackout which he used in the third act to indicate not merely a time-lapse but Davies' isolation and moral blindness.

The three blackouts in The Homecoming (there are no "fades") have a similar effect and significance. The first one cuts to darkness immediately on Max's statement, "I remember my father" (p.19), and when the lights cut in again a few seconds later Teddy and Ruth (looking almost like ghosts in light summer suits and raincoats) "stand at the threshold of the room." Teddy by returning home has "remembered his father" (as Max with gurgling glee points out at the end of the act), but if he had remembered him a little more acutely he would not have come at all. The second blackout (on Max's exit after his night encounter with Lenny) underlines the fact that Lenny has left Max "in the dark" about the arrival of Teddy and Ruth. There is also a

suggestion of a "blindness of paternity" motif here as Lenny has been inquiring about his conception and wishing aloud he had obtained information about it from his "dear mother" before she "passed over to the other side" (p.37). The third blackout comes in the middle of Act 2 when Teddy, after standing impotently by while Joey sprawled on top of Ruth kissing her, makes his speech claiming he has the objectivity to maintain "intellectual equilibrium" but that Max, Lenny, Joey and Ruth are "just objects":

You just ... move about. I can observe it. I can see what you do. It's the same as I do. But you're lost in it. You won't get me being ... I won't be lost in it.

BLACKOUT. (p.62)

(v) The Curtain: This and the blackout are, of course, the major "stops" for defining the overall pattern. The logical function of these "stops" are clearly distinguished: the curtains to open and close acts and the blackouts to sub-divide the acts. Together in The Homecoming they divide up the play into five major sections. Temporally these come close to being a continuum: Evening; Night; Morning; Afternoon; Evening. The action of "homecoming" can be schematised similarly as: "Home"; Arrival; Confrontation; Acceptance; Takeover. When the single setting of the "open living area" is also noted, it can be seen that Pinter happens, as he usually does in his stage plays, to have observed the neo-classical unities.

Underlying and complementing this unity is a design rather like a woven tapestry the colour pattern of which appears in reverse on the other side. The two acts are equally balanced in length and essentially counter-balanced in action. The first act may be described as Teddy's homecoming; the second, in several senses of the word,⁷⁵ as Ruth's. This is emphasised by the opening and final curtains. In Act 1 the curtain falls with Max moving in to his "prodigal son"⁷⁶

for a "nice cuddle and kiss" (p.44); in Act 2 with Teddy rejected and Max beside Ruth grovelling on his knees and saying "Kiss me" (p.82). The pattern has been reversed and the homecoming is complete.

VII

The Homecoming presents a stark, monumentally-structured, study of human behaviour in a moral vacuum. Pinter has attempted nothing on the same scale since, but in his subsequent plays to date has probed still deeper to question the very possibility of human relationships when each individual inevitably attempts to shape the flux of the past into an arbitrary pattern which will justify the present. The result, especially in his next two stage works, has been a lyrical mode of drama in which physical action and even overt mental conflict are virtually eliminated.

The action in Landscape and Silence is almost entirely in the characters' minds which co-exist but touch each other, if at all, only accidentally. In both plays the characters are physically isolated as well. In Landscape the husband wife sit at right angles to each other and are separated by a long kitchen table. Pinter notes in his text:

DUFF refers normally to BETH but does not appear to hear her voice.

BETH never looks at DUFF, and does not appear to hear his voice. (p.8)

In Silence there is not even a set, merely "Three areas. A chair in each area." For the most part the characters talk aloud to themselves, "shoring fragments of verbal memory against oblivion", as Ronald Bryden commented in his Observer review.⁷⁷ Pinter's "punctuation" here expresses the theme by itself. At the beginning of the play Bates and Rumsey each relate to Ellen to some extent (each even makes a tentative physical move in her direction) and their exchanges are punctuated merely by pauses, but soon the characters are isolated in their areas

and their spoken thoughts are broken up into smaller and smaller fragments by silences. The final stage-directions read: "Long silence. Fade lights."(p.51)

In these plays Pinter passes beyond drama as it is normally defined to a form of theatrical poetry obviously influenced by Beckett's recent work. Old Times, however shows a partial return to the type of conflict presented in The Homecoming. There is a struggle for dominance between two of the characters with the object of establishing a claim to possess the third. But, as in Landscape and Silence — though there is a little physical action and more overt mental conflict, the dialogue fluctuates ambiguously between past and present until at the end of the play the characters realise that they are and always have been completely isolated and alone. There are two settings: the living room and the bedroom. In the living-room are two parallel sofas on which Kate and Anna lie, and a chair at right angles to them on which Deeley, the "Odd Man Out", sits. In the bedroom there are two divans and an armchair which Pinter stipulates "are disposed in precisely the same relation to each other as the furniture in the first act, but in reversed positions." (p.47) The rooms, therefore, can be seen to be mirror images of each other — public and private reflections of the same continuing isolation.

These last three plays of Pinter would seem to take the "enclosed" play as far as it can possibly go — at least while remaining more or less in the naturalistic mode. It is not surprising, therefore, that the intervals between the appearance of each new script from him grow longer and longer. If the danger of "open" form is that it may ultimately expand into chaos, that of "enclosed" form is that in the quest "to iron it down, eliminate things" it may contract to the

point where the curtain will rise and fall on nothing. Beckett's Breath (1970) virtually achieves this, but Pinter so far has managed to balance on the brink without going over. It is a remarkable achievement, and in no way diminished by a statement he has made, borrowing a phrase from Eliot's Four Quartets, that for him each new play has been "a different kind of failure."⁷⁸

NOTES

All citations in my text from T. S. Eliot's plays are to the single-volume Collected Plays (London, 1952). Citations from Harold Pinter's plays are to individual volumes (published by Methuen) as follows:

The Birthday Party and other plays (London, 1960)

The Caretaker (London, 1960)

The Homecoming (London, 1965)

Landscape and Silence (London, 1969)

Old Times (London, 1971)

Citations are followed by parenthetical reference to the page numbers of the appropriate volumes.

(For a complete list of the Methuen editions of Pinter's plays to date see Bibliography, Section A.)

1. John Lahr, "Pinter and Chekhov", Tulane Drama Review XIII (Winter, 1968), p.138.
2. John Russell Taylor, The Rise and Fall of the Well-Made Play (London, 1967), p. 140.
3. Ibid.
4. John Russell Taylor (op. cit., pp.138-9) cites a passage by Noel Coward from the introduction to volume II of his Play Parade (new, enlarged edition, London, 1950), in which Coward perceptively analyses the nature of Pinter's social drama and pays tribute to it. Eliot's debt to Coward is discussed by Katherine Worth in an article, "Eliot and the Living Theatre", contributed to Eliot in Perspective, ed. Graham Martin, London, 1970 (pp. 162-4). Coward's admiration of Pinter's dramatic craftsmanship is also worth noting here. Martin Esslin cited two tributes to Pinter by Coward in The Peopled Wound, London, 1970 (pp. 23-4).
5. "Dramatis Personae" The Criterion I (April, 1923), pp. 305-6.
6. "Elizabethan Dramatists" The Criterion II (February, 1924), pp.116-7
7. "In Memoriam: Marie Lloyd", The Criterion I (January, 1923) p.193.
8. Ibid., p.194.
9. Op. cit., p. 304.
10. "A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry", Selected Essays, 3rd enlarged edition (London, 1951) p. 44.
11. "Poetry and Drama", the first Theodore Spencer Memorial Lecture delivered at Harvard University. Published, London, 1951, and reprinted in T.S. Eliot's On Poetry and Poets (London, 1957), pp. 86-7.
12. "Little Gidding" I, Four Quartets, reprinted in The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot, (London, 1969), p.192.

13. "Little Gidding" V, op. cit., p.197.
14. Reprinted as "Writing for the Theatre", Evergreen Review VIII (August-September 1964), p.81.
15. Cited by Carol H. Smith in T.S.Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice (New Jersey, 1963) p. 17.
16. Harold Pinter "Beckett", in Beckett at 60 (London, 1967), p. 86.
17. Martin Esslin, The Peopled Wound (London, 1970), pp. 41-2.
18. "Writing for the Theatre", op. cit., p. 81.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., p. 82
21. Raymond Williams, Drama in Performance (London, 1954), pp. 111-2.
22. As Carol H. Smith has noted, "In part, the same motive determined Eliot's use of a comic surface in The Cocktail Party as that which lay behind his disruption of the expectations of his audience in The Family Reunion: the desire to destroy and clear away conventional modes of thought and interpretation of events in order to reveal the hidden meaning and the divine plan behind appearances." (op. cit., p. 147) This strategy is, of course, similar to that of Shaw in his early plays, but in Eliot's hands both the purpose of the strategy and its effect are different.
23. Williams, p. 110.
24. See Eliot's comments in "Poetry and Drama", op. cit., p.79.
25. "Poetry and Drama", pp. 80-1.
26. M.C. Bradbrook, English Dramatic Form, pp. 176-7.
27. "Poetry and Drama", p.82.
28. Ibid., pp. 82-3.
29. Katherine Worth, "Eliot and the Living Theatre", Eliot in Perspective, ed. Graham Martin (London, 1970), p. 161.
30. E. Martin Browne, The Making of T.S. Eliot's Plays (London, 1969), p. 111.
31. Ibid., p. 112.
32. Carol H. Smith, p. 116.
33. Grover Smith, T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays (Chicago, 1956), p. 208.
34. See Eliot's letter, dated 18 July 1948, to Martin Browne in The Making of T.S. Eliot's Plays, pp. 173-4.
35. Ibid.
36. Eliot comments to Martin Browne in his letter of 18 July 1948, "In order to use the same set for Act IV as for Act I, I have put a final scene at the end of Act III, which was not contemplated in this form when I last saw you, so as to get Julia, Reilly and Gibbs together with all the others out of the way. This is the kind of scene which I, naturally, rather fancy: and which equally naturally, I fear you will disallow." Martin Browne's suggestion about increasing the use of the Guardians in the action was made in a

letter to Eliot dated 31 July 1948: "From Act I scene 2 to the middle of Act III scene 2 the play consists of a series of interviews. Each is of great interest in itself but they do not seem to me to be sufficiently integrated into a pattern of action. The solution of this problem seems to lie in the use of Julia and Gibbs." (Martin Browne, p. 175).

37. Williams, p. 106.
38. See Martin Browne, p. 232.
39. Many critics have commented on this. For example, Desmond Shawe-Taylor in his *New Statesman* review (3 September 1949) of the Edinburgh Festival production of the play remarked, "Mr Eliot's characters are admirably amusing puppets, he manipulates them as cunningly as the magician in Petrouchka ... I find something faintly repellent in the quiet smiles and superior wisdom of Sir Henry and his two pals. Considered as moral teachers and 'guardians' (a key-word of the play), they suggest a group of infinitely superior Buchenwaldite leaders out of the Upper Sixth instead of the usual Lower Fourth ... (Cited by Martin Browne, p. 238.)
40. See the letter from Martin Browne to Eliot cited in note 36 for the former's detailed suggestions about these interruptions.
41. Martin Browne, p. 246.
42. William Arrowsmith in "English Verse Drama II: The Cocktail Party", Hudson Review (Autumn 1950), pp. 113-4, discusses this linking of "half-sight" images and observes, "The meaning of Julia's half sight is to be found in a proverb: In the kingdom of the blind the one-eyed man is king." The Guardians have spiritual half-sight, while Edward and Lavinia are at the outset spiritually blind. Arrowsmith observes (ibid) that, "The intent of the imagery, then, is: the parable of a modern miracle, the recovery of sight." These conclusions are cited and further discussed by Denis Donahue in The Third Voice (London, 1959), pp. 117-120. Katherine Worth in "Eliot and the Living Theatre" takes this imagery a step further: "... as in The Family Reunion, the force controlling the action, whose agents the Guardians are, is represented by a watchful eye; in this play it has a disquieting likeness to the omnipresent Orwellian eye which haunts the modern mind. The likeness is strengthened by the image of the single eye shared by three, an image pointing to the legend of the Gorgon and her petrifying stare." (Op. cit., p. 164)
43. This image is obviously informed by the episode in Eliot's source play, the Alcestis of Euripides, in which Heracles descends to Hades to bring back Alcestis to her husband Admetus. The Unknown Guest is here preparing Edward for the return of his (spiritually dead) wife, Lavinia.
44. See Martin Browne, p. 214.
45. Ibid, p. 218.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid, p. 219.
48. Carol H. Smith, p. 180.

49. The offering of drinks takes on a variety of symbolic implications at various points in the play. The cocktail party is itself a secular ritual which may be ironically contrasted with the mass, and the ritualistic libations at the end of Act 2 are unmistakable. On the subject of Reilly's drinking habits, Carol H. Smith comments: "Sir Henry's ritual identity is suggested by his continual drink of gin with a drop of water (he is adulterating his spiritual nature with a drop of water, representing, time, flux and humanity)." (p. 179)
50. Martin Browne, p. 220.
51. In an interview with Donald Hall in the Paris Review XXI (Spring-Summer, 1959), pp. 43-70, Eliot comments, "It sometimes happens, disconcertingly, at least for practitioners such as myself that it isn't always the things constructed most according to plan that are the most successful. People criticised the third act of The Cocktail Party as being rather an epilogue, so in The Confidential Clerk I wanted things to turn up in the third act which were fresh events. Of course, The Confidential Clerk was so well constructed in some ways that people thought it was just meant to be farce." This interview is reprinted in Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews, 2nd series (London, 1963) pp. 77-94.
52. Katherine Worth makes this point obliquely in her article "Eliot and the Living Theatre": "In selecting a form giving splendid opportunities for exploring conditions of alienation but none at all for solutions in terms of 'ordinary, social morality', Eliot followed his theatrical instinct, though only by making things difficult for himself as a moralist." (op. cit., p. 165) I had already completed a full draft of this chapter before I read Miss Worth's article which, although it does not deal specifically with structure, takes much the same view of The Cocktail Party as I do. Her main point, however, in the sentence I have cited at the beginning of this note prompts the thought, which I had not consciously formulated before reading her article: that "enclosed" form is inimical to moralistic exhortations, whether implied or overt. It is the pattern which counts; hence the special effectiveness of Beckett's and Pinter's "enclosed" drama.
53. M. C. Bradbrook (as Katherine Worth observes in her article on Eliot) has noted in her study English Dramatic Form (London, 1965) how "Harold Pinter's earlier comedy seems to reflect Eliot indirectly. The Birthday Party, whose very title is reminiscent, shows the unlucky hero being abducted, after a scene of mystification, by two diabolical Guardians, to be treated at an unknown destination by a sinister and powerful character, Monty (who may be either military or senatorial or diabolic)." (p. 173) Miss Bradbrook also notes the similarities in the speech patterns used in this play and Eliot's The Cocktail Party.
54. Landscape (1968), although set in "the kitchen of a country house", also emphasises the physical isolation of the characters. Pinter notes that: "The background, of a sink, stove, etc., and a window, is dim." (p. 8)
55. Pinter interviewed by Kenneth Tynan in the series People Today, B.B.C. Home Service, 28 October 1960. Cited by Martin Esslin in The Peopled Wound, p. 34.

56. John Lahr, "Pinter the Spaceman", A Casebook on 'The Homecoming', ed. John Lahr (New York, 1971), p. 185.
57. The underlying circularity of The Birthday Party is emphasised in Pinter's poem on the play, "A View of the Party":

And Stanley sat — alone,
A man he might have known,
Triumphant on his hearth,
Which never was his own.

For Stanley had no home.
Only where Goldberg was,
And his bloodhound McCann,
Did Stanley remember his name. (Poems, London,
1968, p. 18)

58. "Writing for the Theatre", op. cit... p. 82.
59. "A Director's Approach: An Interview with Peter Hall", A Casebook on 'The Homecoming', p. 16.
60. The Caretaker and Silence end with the stage-direction, "Long silence." The Room ends with a blackout before the curtain; The Collection, in its stage version, ends with a slow fade to half light and then to blackout; The Lover with the stage direction, "They are still, kneeling, she leaning over him"; The Homecoming with the stage direction "She continues to touch JOEY's head, lightly. LENNY stands, watching"; and Old Times with a long, still, and silent grouping as the lights fade and then come up to full before the final curtain.
61. Martin Esslin in his full-length study of Pinter, The Peopled Wound (1970) makes this point (conveniently using the same term): "silences are notations for the end of a movement, the beginning of another, as between the movements of a symphony." (p. 220)
62. In these plays the patterning of the (verbal) action by silences is of crucial importance. There is no other way of signalling to the audience the beginning of a new movement.
63. "Harold Pinter: An Interview", The Paris Review XXXIX (1966), p. 26.
64. This is rather obvious but it is as well to distinguish Pinter's usage in this respect from that of Granville-Barker, the first modern English dramatist to employ the three dots notation extensively. Margery M. Morgan in her full-length study of Granville-Barker states that he used it "to indicate the phrasing of the dialogue for the actor's delivery: the breaking up of speeches into separate short intonational units, 'Little tunes' requiring great flexibility in the use of the voice. In many instances, perhaps most, no perceptible pause is intended [Dr. Morgan's italics] but the actor has to suggest — and the reader may understand — that new thoughts are crowding up behind the words as they are uttered." (A Drama of Political Man, Preface, p.vii) Granville-Barker's method is interesting as an earlier attempt to evolve a dramatic notation which could guide the actor in the details of his delivery. His method, however, does not have the precision of Pinter's.

65. John Russell Brown, "Dialogue in Pinter and Others," The Critical Quarterly, VII, No. 3 (1965), p. 229. (The extension to Professor Brown's definition is necessary to clarify the distinction between the pause and the hesitation. It takes two to pause in The Homecoming.)
66. Another important example of this occurs in Act 1 at the end of the sequence in which Teddy and Ruth arrive at the house in the middle of the night. Teddy's unease at Ruth's suddenly announced decision to "have a breath of air" is sharply signalled by pauses. The audience learns in Act 2 that Ruth was born nearby and before her marriage had been "a model for the body." In retrospect then it can be inferred that Teddy suspected that her urge to take a walk at night round her old haunts was prompted by a yearning to escape from an emotionally sterile marriage and return to her old profession. The pauses in fact operate as another subtle "plant" foreshadowing Ruth's eventual decision to leave Teddy and take over his father's household.
67. There is possibly a similar "secret" underlying a number of the exchange between Max and Lenny (*i.e.* that Lenny is not Max's son but MacGregor's), but Pinter deliberately leaves the point ambiguous. Paul Rogers who played Max in the original RSC production of the play, has stated that he believes Joey to be MacGregor and Jessie's son. Rogers makes the essential point, however, about the family infighting that "The rules of this game are that nobody ever shows a blow actually register." Actor's Approach: An Interview with Paul Rogers, A Casebook on 'The Homecoming', p. 165.) Whether or not Lenny is Max's son both of them are too experienced to make Sam's mistake.
68. All the characters before speaking their first words are "shown" to the audience: Max and Lenny by the opening curtain, Sam and Joey by entering on silences, and Teddy and Ruth by "discovery" when the lights come up after the first blackout.
69. The parallel sequences in Act 2 are not marked off by silences (though there is a "double silence" before the crucial part of the Lenny/Teddy one), and during the Lenny/Max plotting episode Teddy and Joey are also on stage. Pinter (as usual) is content to make his points subliminally.
70. "The Homecoming", Tulane Drama Review XI, (Winter 1966), pp. 85-191
71. *Ibid*, p. 191.
72. The difference between the effect of Teddy's role as played by two different actors is indicated by some comments of Peter Hall in the interview published in A Casebook on 'The Homecoming':

"Teddy was only changed because Michael Bryant, who played it in England, couldn't go to New York. So we got Michael Craig to play it. ... I can't compare the two performances; I thought they were both brilliant. Michael Bryant was so much the campus intellectual who'd opted out of any kind of responsibility in human terms, wanted to keep his hands clean. He did that absolutely beautifully. Michael Craig got some of that, but he also had something else which made the play even more horrific. He was the biggest bastard of the lot, as

well as being the withdrawn intellectual. He really was. So when he went at the end, leaving his wife he was not in any way a victim or a martyr. He was the biggest shit of all. He was leaving them with their deserts. He was leaving her with her deserts. And he was the worst of the lot." (p. 20)

73. This is perhaps questionable. John Normington, who played the role in the RSC production, considers that Sam is a nasty character, "just as capable of putting in the boot as the rest of them." ("An Actor's Approach: An Interview with John Normington, A Casebook on "The Homecoming", p. 137) But Sam does at least make a desperate attempt to stop Ruth's defection from Teddy to the family.
74. As noted in Chapter I of this thesis, Pinero achieved the same result in Iris (1901), by lowering the curtain for thirty seconds in his first and third acts.
75. "'Homecoming' is a fruitful pun: 1. Jessie, in Ruth, returns home; 2. the Mother brings Home back to the family; 3. Ruth is returning to her birthplace (as is Ted); and 4. the play erupts into a veritable household orgasm (or tribal rite) just before the final curtain." Kelly Morris, op. cit., p. 186.
76. The "prodigal son" parallels are discussed in an article by Hugh Nelson, "The Homecoming: Kith and Kin," Modern British Dramatists, ed. John Russell Brown (New Jersey, 1968).
77. "Pared to privacy, melting into silence", The Observer, 6th July, 1969.
78. "East Coker" V, Four Quartets, op. cit., p. 182. Cited by Pinter in "Writing for the Theatre", op. cit., p. 82.

CONCLUSION

Chapter 6Summary and Conclusions

I

Modern dramatic form is usually discussed in terms of modifications to and reactions against the realistic mode, but in this thesis I have endeavoured to consider the structural techniques of six playwrights of the modern English theatre from a somewhat different perspective, namely (to persist with the optical metaphor) that of dramatic focus. Realism as a theatrical style may, for convenience, be dated from the middle of the nineteenth century, but the basic contrast between what I have termed "enclosed" and "open" form may be found in drama (and, indeed in all art) from its recorded beginnings. It may, for example, be observed in a comparison of Sophoclean tragedy and Aristophanic comedy or of the tragedies of Racine and Shakespeare. In essence the contrast is between works in which the author has sought perfection of form by stripping away all that is inessential to his conception, and works in which the author has sought to include as full an impression of the manifold complexity of life as his medium and theme can encompass.

This polarity of approach, though it can be found in the drama of different periods, is not strongly marked in every age. Elizabethan drama, for example, is generally "open" in form though some plays (such as Ben Jonson's major works) are more tightly constructed than others. In English drama since the 1890's, however, there seems to be evident in the work of certain major playwrights a strong tendency towards one or the other of these two basic structural approaches. The central aim of this study has been to provide evidence for this contention by discussion and analysis of

the theatrical patterning of some relevant plays. The need for detail in this has meant that my study is necessarily a selective one, but I hope that the selection of plays and playwrights has been sufficient to provide the necessary evidence. The purposes of this final chapter are to assess the usefulness of the analytical techniques I have used, to summarise the results obtained, and to consider briefly the implications of these results.

II

I have endeavoured to analyse the theatrical patterning of the selected plays in two complementary ways: (1) by examining their overall "blocking" patterns — i.e. the order, frequency and grouping of the characters' appearances within the general structure established by the act and scene divisions; and (2) by examining in detail the use of entrances, exits, stage-business and pausation to impress the moment-by-moment unfolding of the action on the audience. My principal tool for (1) has been the scenario graph. This, though it might be more aptly described as a blunt instrument, has the merit of providing a compact visualisation of the "blocking" pattern from which it is frequently possible (in the light of one's knowledge of the play) to make some useful observations and, on occasion, comparisons. It obviously becomes useless when a playwright decides to dispense with entrances and exits as, for example, Pinter has in his most recent plays. There is no simple way of studying the detailed internal patterning (2) of a play, but the terminology of movements, sequences and units has at least provided me with a way of discussing it. I have tried to use these terms with care, but while sequence is usually a precise term (though sequences vary greatly in

length and impact) movements and units involve value-judgements and interpretation as well as theatrical signals such as entrances and pauses. Despite these admitted limitations, I believe my methods of analysis have yielded some useful results.

The scenario graphs of Pinero's major social dramas illustrate the general similarity of their "blocking" patterns and suggest some of the ways in which their author attempted to overcome the problem of combining realistic effect with the artificial plot formula of the well-made play. As the graphs show, the plays are regularly proportioned with (except for Iris) three long acts and a shorter final one. Though the number of characters in the plays is rather larger than we find in the plays of Eliot (Murder in the Cathedral excepted) and Pinter, the blocking patterns show the dominance of three or four characters in each play. The actions clearly revolve around the central female character who after her initial entrance is rarely absent from the on-stage action. Something of the basic action of the play is usually suggested by the ways in which the appearances of the other character are related to that of the heroine: in the graph of The Second Mrs Tanqueray, for example, characters are introduced in the second and third acts but disappear from the graph during the last act. In the plot of the play, as I have noted, the arrival of each new character appears to offer Paula some relief from her consciousness of social isolation but this hope always proves illusory. Of all the social dramas Iris has the most expressive "blocking" pattern, with the progressive defection from the heroine of all her admirers until she is cast out by the last of them. The main point, however, which emerges from analysis of these scenario graphs is that, though the

plays get progressively longer, Pinero uses fewer sequences in his later ones. The reason for this is that in his later plays he simplifies the plot structure in terms of complications in order to give himself more room for realistic characterisation.

It is in the internal structuring of the plays, however, that their essentially "enclosed" nature is most apparent. As has been shown by detailed analysis of sequences from The Second Mrs Tanqueray, The Thunderbolt and Mid-Channel, Pinero meticulously punctuates the action by pauses and silences so as to emphasise its logical development. This punctuation is contrived so that it appears realistically motivated, but in fact it divides up major sequences into an almost mathematically-exact series of units and movements. There is, indeed, a strong sense of symmetry evident in the construction of many of Pinero's acts and major sequences, and this is often emphasised by repetitive stage-business. The giving and returning of the latchkey at the beginning and end of the climactic sequence of Mid-Channel is a typical example. Such touches emphasise the working out of a pattern in which the beginning strongly foreshadows the end. The theatrical effect suggests the inexorable unfolding of a pre-determined design.

It was precisely this air of inevitability in Pinero's social dramas which infuriated Bernard Shaw and impelled him to expose them as, in his view, ~~pretentious~~ entertainments. The "blocking" patterns of Shaw's major plays, compared with those of Pinero, show hardly any consistency at all. After his earlier works in which the structures (though not the contents) are fairly conventional, Shaw's "blocking" patterns become increasingly idiosyncratic and irregular. There is, indeed, little point in generalising about them, except to say

that Shaw was attempting to let the action of each play find its own peculiar shape. Thus the "blocking" pattern of Major Barbara reflects a relatively clear-cut outline of "exposition, situation and discussion", Getting Married shows a progressive introduction of new points of view until Mrs George arrives and the grouping dissolves into a series of duos and trios, the groupings in Misalliance seem as haphazard as the lives of the characters, and the patterning of Heartbreak House shows its inhabitants alternating between futile scurryings-around and inertia until the moment of nemesis arrives. The "Third Manner" plays display an even greater variety of "blocking" patterns (most of them multi-scened) which must likewise be interpreted according to the distinctive ways in which their "emotionalised discussions" are developed. However, the scenario graphs of a number of these plays do illustrate one common structural feature: Shaw's use of "dispersal endings" to emphasise the unfinished nature of their actions. Notable, too, in these "Third Manner" plays is Shaw's use of series of symbolic settings to give a kind of metaphorical emphasis to the general direction of the action.

Detailed analysis of the internal theatrical patterning of Shaw's plays reveals the fluidity of his technique. This is apparent even in such early work as Mrs Warren's Profession. Analysis of the major sequence between Vivie and her mother at the end of Act 2 reveals a completely different relationship between stage-business and dialogue from that shown in Pinero's drama. Stage-business is used in seeming excess in the first part of Shaw's sequence in order to suggest the insincerity of Mrs Warren's attitude and behaviour. When she begins to speak in earnest, however, Shaw dispenses with stage-business altogether so that the audience will concentrate on the

dialogue. This, as I have demonstrated with reference to other plays such as John Bull's Other Island and Major Barbara, is a basic feature of Shaw's technique. Stage-business is often used for light relief and to vary the pace in between the serious discussions and sermons, but the climactic passages of the plays are essentially verbal. In this respect the final act of Too True to be Good appears to me to demonstrate the quintessence of Shavian theatrical technique. In essence this act is, as Shaw frankly admitted, a collection of stage sermons, but each new entrance is brilliantly contrived to create a shock effect which keeps the audience alert for the torrents of ideas which are yet to be released.

Analysis of the "blocking" patterns and internal theatrical structure of plays by O'Casey and Arden reveals several broad features which are also evident in Shaw's drama, along with some features which are peculiar to them. The most obvious features in common are the increases in size, scope and complexity which can be seen when their early plays are compared with their later ones. All three playwrights favour large-cast ensemble works, and the later two, because they place more emphasis on action than discussion, normally use a considerable number of entrances and exits. (It is worth repeating here that though Pinero's later social dramas also increase in length the structures become simpler. There is also a clear difference in character between the family groups in plays such as The Thunderbolt and the larger and much more varied ensembles in the plays of Shaw, O'Casey and Arden.)

Generally speaking, the structural outlines of O'Casey's plays are more regularly-shaped than those of Shaw and Arden. In none

of his plays does O'Casey use more than four acts or scenes, and these are usually approximately equal in duration. This regularity of outline is further emphasised by the use of seasonal or diurnal patterns in the act structures of a number of the later symbolic plays. When, however, the "blocking" patterns are examined it is evident that the internal structure is highly episodic. In a number of the plays a measure of linear continuity is provided by the almost continuous presence on stage of one or two central characters (such as Marthraun and Mahan in Cock-a-Doodle Dandy), but the overall effect of O'Casey's patterning is to convey the impression of an entire community responding in various ways to the central conflict.

Arden's plays give the impression of being even more thickly populated with disparate individuals. His casts are large by modern theatrical standards and they appear even larger because of the busy and somewhat fragmented nature of the "blocking" patterns. In Cock-a-Doodle Dandy (and Kathleen Listens In) O'Casey presents his community in a single setting comprising three related elements — the house, the walled garden with its flagpole, and the surrounding countryside — which together may be taken as symbolising Eire and perhaps the wider world beyond its boundaries. Arden, however, generally presents his communities in a more piecemeal fashion using a number of scenic locations. In order that the various scenes can follow without a break, he requires open-stage methods of theatrical presentation with the various localities being represented by selective (often emblematic) details rather than by fully realistic settings. In Armstrong's Last Goodnight he demands the use of the medieval staging technique of "simultaneous mansions";

in Serjeant Musgrave's Dance and The Workhouse Donkey he asks for skeletal settings which can be changed with a minimum of interruption to the action. The use of these techniques enables him to juxtapose successively or simultaneously the various elements in the complex patterns of his plots.

The scenario graphs of Arden's plays thus display "blocking patterns" which are even more complicated than the larger works of Shaw and O'Casey. Arden does, however, simplify things to a degree by assigning most of his characters to interest groups (e.g. "Labour", "Conservative ", "The Police", and "The Electorate" in The Workhouse Donkey) and by the use of certain characters as "presenters" who can give the audience some idea of the direction of the action and maintain continuity through the scene changes. Both these features emerge clearly from the detail of the scenario graphs: characters belonging to a particular interest group often enter or leave the stage together, and certain characters can often be noted continuing on stage despite a change of setting. But the most interesting feature of these scenario graphs is the way in which the "blocking" patterns suggest the basic conflicts of the plays. Thus the graph of Serjeant Musgrave's Dance shows the alternation of "cold" and "warm" scenes in Acts 1 and 2 which mirrors the fundamental difference of attitude between Musgrave and the women, and the graph of Arm-... strong's Last Goodnight suggests the irreconcilable division of interest between the Palace and the Castle. One further point which is clearly indicated by the Arden graphs is his practice of building to a final confrontation scene involving most or all of the cast. In The Waters of Babylon and The Workhouse Donkey he ends with a chorus involving everyone except the protagonist; in Serjeant

Musgrave's Dance and Armstrong's Last Goodnight he allows a brief epilogue after the climactic scene to point the moral in a quiet and subdued manner.

The main point which needs to be made about the internal patterning of O'Casey and Arden's plays is that it is overtly theatrical. Attention is gained not by subtle pointing to isolate key details, but by strong entrances, broad gestures and emphatic stage-business. Neither playwright uses the technique of meticulous punctuation by pausation which is so characteristic of the drama of Pinero and Pinter. O'Casey's and Arden's plays, as I have demonstrated in the analyses of Cock-a-Doodle Dandy and The Workhouse Donkey, can be readily divided into movements and episodes signalled by strongly-emphasised entrances and exits, but for the most part their sequences cannot be subdivided into smaller units which have any theatrical validity. Like Shaw, Arden and O'Casey have so much ground to cover in their plays they can rarely afford to slow down the action, let alone allow it to stop.

Analysis of the techniques of theatrical patterning used by Eliot and Pinter show these to be clearly different in kind from those used by Shaw, O'Casey and Arden. The scenario graphs of Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral, The Family Reunion and The Cocktail Party display "blocking" patterns which have a clear tendency towards formal symmetry. These plays are two-part structures (despite the ultimate decision to present The Cocktail Party as a three-act play) in which both halves are evenly weighted; key scenes and sequences in the first half often being paralleled by related scenes and sequences in the second. Pinter's most recent full-length plays, The Homecoming and Old Times, display a similar balance in their

two-act structures, but this is more evident from a detailed study of the texts than from scanning the bare scenario graphs. What is evident at a glance is that Eliot's and Pinter's plays usually keep to the spirit, if not the absolute letter, of the neo-classical unities. The casts are small, only one or two settings are used in each play (if two then the sets are usually in some way complementary), and the action takes place over a limited time-span, often a single day. On the other hand, the tendency of "open" drama is to ignore the unities.

As with Pinero, however, it is in the detailed internal patterning that the "enclosed" nature of Eliot's and Pinter's plays is most evident. Both "punctuate" heavily so that attention is drawn to the details they present. Much of the control in Eliot's plays comes from the precision of the verse, but theatrical "punctuation", as I have shown, is very important to the effect of The Cocktail Party. The sound of doorbells, buzzers and telephones is inescapable when the play is presented on stage, and contributes to the impression that the characters are being manipulated by mysterious forces for some inscrutable purpose. Eliot thus compels his audience to observe closely in order to detect clues offered by the dialogue and action which may help to solve the mystery.

Pinter demands even greater audience concentration for his plays. Here the meaning and pattern of the action become apparent, if at all, mainly through the impact of the various kinds of pauses which punctuate the dialogue and stage-business. In Pinero's plays it is generally possible to accept the literal truth of the information conveyed by the dialogue, but this is not so with Pinero's drama. Instead the audience has to consider the gestural

significance of the speeches, and the main clues which Pinter offers are to be found in the placement and duration of the pauses. By noting the various hesitations, pauses and silences, the audience can make some assessment of the relative strength or weakness of the characters. Even more germane to the purposes of this study, however, is the fact that the silences alert the audience to the most crucial moments in the action, and thus supplement curtains and blackouts in signalling the beginning or end of the principal movements. I have demonstrated a similar structural use of pausation in Pinero's drama, but there its role is supportive: the meaning of the action would be tolerably clear (though less effectively conveyed) without it. In Pinter's plays the structural use of pausation is crucial for without it the audience would be lost. When, however, the "punctuation" is examined closely, it is possible to verify Pinter's claim that for him "everything has to do with shape, structure and over-all unity" and that he is, in this sense, "a very traditional playwright".¹

III

I believe that the evidence I have summarized in the previous section supports my claim that a polarity between "enclosed" and "open" structural forms is demonstrable in English drama from the 1890's to the present day. It is, however, also necessary to consider, even if only briefly, why this polarity has been so strongly marked, and what influence it has had on the development of English drama. If the following remarks appear tentative, I hope it will be appreciated that I am conscious of the fact that this has been a selective study and that there is need for caution in extrapolating general conclusions from limited evidence.

The first point which needs to be made (or, from the point of view of this study, admitted) is that undoubtedly much of the structural experimentation which has occurred in modern English drama has been in large measure motivated by the dissatisfaction of a number of playwrights with the shallow "realistic" forms preferred by the middle-class audiences of London's commercial theatres. Indeed, for much of the period under discussion playwrights have had to choose between writing for these theatres or not having their work performed. It is, therefore, clearly significant that most of the really innovative English drama of the past eighty years has been written for non-commercial theatres, notably the Stage Society and the Court Theatre (during the Vedrenne-Barker management) prior to World War I, and the various subsidised theatres which have come into existence during the last two decades.

The above explanation accounts fairly adequately for the comparative dearth of innovatory drama written in England between the world wars and for the much greater number of experimental plays written in the decades immediately before and after this period; I do not think it accounts adequately for the particular forms which have been developed by the genuine innovators. Clearly a playwright will be reluctant to write an unusually-structured play if it is unlikely to be performed (few playwrights have the stubbornness and tenacity of O'Casey), but the existence of a market does not explain the innovatory form itself. Though the playwright will undoubtedly be influenced by existing dramatic forms (both contemporary and traditional), his principal reason for creating a new one is likely to be that only thus can he express his personal view of things.

Of the six playwrights discussed in this thesis Pinero has the weakest claim to be accorded the standing of a genuine innovator. Despite his worthy, and not unsuccessful, efforts to raise the standard of drama in the commercial theatre of his day, occasional lapses into conventional sentimentality betray the lack of a distinctive and emphatic view of life. The generally negative and "enclosed" view which his social dramas appear to embody would, on balance, seem to be the product of the dramatic form he chose to imitate and which he sought, through careful craftsmanship, to bring to a new standard of excellence. His work is best categorised as an attempt at improvement from within the system rather than innovation, and as an improver he merits an honourable place in the development of modern English drama.

Shaw, on the other hand, possessed a clear outlook on life which permeates all his drama from "potboilers" like Fanny's First Play to major works such as Man and Superman and Heartbreak House. He consistently opposed rigidity of form because of his belief in a Life Force which continually seeks by experiment to create higher forms of life. His plays are, therefore, dedicated to the possibility and necessity of change. He unquestionably was the principal figure in the English theatrical avant-garde during the two decades prior to World War I, opening up a vast field of new subject-matter and encouraging the inventive use of techniques and ingredients drawn from a considerable range of classical and popular dramatic forms. His later plays faithfully mirror the confusion and uncertain standards of English and European middle-class society after World War I, but the strength of his vision gives even these oddly-structured works a sense of coherence. It seems likely,

therefore, that one of the principal reasons for the existence of a substantial number of "open" plays in modern English, and indeed European, drama is quite simply the inspiration and example provided by Shaw.

Shaw is unquestionably a major influence on the drama of O'Casey. I have in Chapter 4 cited several of the warm tributes which O'Casey paid Shaw, and many more could be added. Though O'Casey's plays lack Shaw's quicksilver facility with ideas, they display an equally vigorous social concern, an equally passionate endorsement of youth and vitality, and an even stronger dislike of hypocrisy and rigidity. When the strength of O'Casey's likes and dislikes is considered, it is not surprising that his plays are more emphatic in their overall structure than Shaw's, but his belief that "life is never rigid"² finds expression in a vigorous juxtaposition of farce and pathos, realism and fantasy.

Arden's drama is equally strong and direct in manner, but the thought and feeling which informs it is more complex. This, I think, is because Arden's instinctive sympathy for the vital Dionysiac impulses of life is qualified by an appreciation of their dangers and by a rational (though not enthusiastic) awareness of the necessity for law and order. Ultimately his plays endorse vitality, but the view expressed is never a simple one and the tension between what may be described as the opposing sides of his personality is expressed in dramatic structures which are often not merely complex but fragmented in appearance. His drama is "public" in format, drawing on a rich store of traditional and popular forms, but intensely personal in its underlying poetic concern — namely, "to test the truth of his own knowledge, feelings and vision."³

T. S. Eliot began his playwrighting career by experimenting with "open" forms and even in his modern comedies there are elements and references which are derived from older (especially classical) traditions of drama and literature. There is, too, an evangelical motive behind Eliot's plays which might further suggest that an "open" rather than an "enclosed" viewpoint informs them. However, the classical and religious references in his plays after The Family Reunion are concealed so carefully as to be virtually invisible. A slight similarity may be noted between Eliot's attempt to convert to his own purposes the well-made comedy forms acceptable to the entertainment industry of Shaftesbury Avenue, and Bernard Shaw's parodistic treatment of the equivalent forms of the 1890's in his early plays. Eliot's, however, is a much more covert approach. His method in The Cocktail Party is essentially one of subversion rather than parody: the subtle infusion of religious significance into a conventional and shallow form of entertainment. By taking this form seriously he hoped to demonstrate the conventional and shallow lives of its audience and thus suggest their need for salvation. Eliot in fact, manipulates the responses of his audience in much the same way as, in the play, his Guardians manipulate their "patients". The effect, in my view, is somewhat chilling. Not only are there implications of determinism in the action of the play, but there is an implied view of human society (when unredeemed by divine grace) which is essentially in accord with that of Machiavelli.⁴ The "enclosed" structure of The Cocktail Party, therefore, matches the viewpoint which informs it. This, I believe, makes the play an important work not only in its own right but in its foreshadowing of a new type of "enclosed"

dramatic structure.

Pinter's major contribution to modern English drama has been the realisation of this form. In his drama he rejects all "philosophies, tracts, dogmas, creeds, ways out, truths, answers" and concentrates his attention on the surface behaviour of a very limited number of characters in an enclosed space. His sole dramatic concern is to accurately record the patterns which emerge from the encounters of his characters as they manoeuvre for position among themselves. The theatrical effect of this is often highly ambiguous. Martin Esslin has commented how Pinter's plays are simultaneously realistic and absurd,⁵ and, from the perspective of this thesis, a similar paradox may be observed concerning structure: that the plays can be logically classified (according to the definitions offered in the opening paragraph of Chapter 1) as either "enclosed" or "open". However, this synthesis is the result of Pinter's method of stripping away inessentials so as to isolate the underlying patterns, and, therefore, the plays are primarily "enclosed". The differences between The Second Mrs Tanqueray and The Homecoming illustrate how profoundly "enclosed" form has been modified in English drama during recent years.

It is not my intention in this thesis to claim that "open" forms are superior to "enclosed", or vice-versa. Each approach is valid in its own terms and has produced vital and innovatory drama. Shaw, O'Casey and Arden (to say nothing of other advocates of "open" theatre such as Joan Littlewood, Henry Livings and Charles Wood) have vastly expanded the horizons of modern English theatre; Pinter in some measure, Eliot and Pinter have accomplished the even more difficult task of imparting new relevance to apparently sterile and exhausted

realistic forms. (Noel Coward and John Osborne might, perhaps, also be cited in this category.) What, however, I would like to suggest as I conclude is the creative effect of the polarity. I have quoted numerous comments by the selected playwrights which confirm their preference for one or the other approach, and I consider that it may be possible to demonstrate a further claim: that conscious rivalry between playwrights favouring "enclosed" or "open" form has, in itself, been a significant factor in the shaping of some of the most original and influential works in modern English drama.

NOTES

1. "Harold Pinter: An Interview", The Paris Review XXXIX (1966), p.30.
2. Sean O'Casey, Blasts and Benedictions, p. 83.
3. John Arden, "Building the Play", Encore VIII (1961), p. 23.
4. For Eliot's general endorsement of Machiavelli see the essay on him in For Launcelot Andrews: Essays on Style and Order (London, 1928), pp. 49-66.
5. Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd, rev. ed. (London, 1968), p. 291.

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The following list of books comprises all the works to which I have referred in the text of my thesis, and a selection of other works to which I am indebted.

I first list plays and other writings (including published interviews) by the six playwrights with whom I have primarily been dealing (Pinero, Shaw, O'Casey, Arden, Eliot and Pinter). The plays or collections of plays are listed in chronological order of publication; the other writings, which include collections of material published over a number of years, are listed alphabetically by title.

In the second section of this bibliography the other books and articles which I have found useful for my thesis are listed alphabetically by author or editor.

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