

presentation does not have to reject completely those categories necessary for it to be dramatic. They are maintained in a deemphasized, incidental manner that allows the real subject negative expression as a deviation from traditional dramatic form.

*The Three Sisters* does have the rudiments of traditional action. The first act, the exposition, takes place on Irina's name day. The second presents transitional events: Andrei's marriage, the birth of his son. The third takes place at night while a great fire rages in the neighborhood. The fourth presents the duel in which Irina's fiancé is killed—on the very day the regiment moves out of town, leaving the Prozorovs to succumb completely to the boredom of provincial life. This disconnected juxtaposition of active moments and their arrangement into four acts (which was, from the first, thought to lack tension) clearly reveals their place in the formal whole. They are included, although they do not actually express anything, to set the thematic in motion sufficiently to allow space for dialogue.

But even this dialogue carries no weight. It is the pale background on which monologic responses framed as conversation appear as touches of color in which the meaning of the whole is concentrated. These resigned self-analyses—which allow almost all the characters to make individual statements—give life to the work. It was written for their sake.

They are not monologues in the traditional sense of the word. Their source is not in the situation but in the subject. As Georgj Lukács has demonstrated, the dramatic monologue formulates nothing that cannot be communicated otherwise.<sup>8</sup> "Hamlet hides his feelings from the people at court for practical reasons. Perhaps, in fact, because they would all too readily understand that he wishes to take vengeance for his father—that he must take vengeance."<sup>9</sup> The situation is quite different in Chekhov's play. The lines are spoken aloud in front of others, not while alone, and they isolate the speaker. Thus, almost without notice, empty dialogue turns into substance-filled monologue. These are not isolated monologues built into a work structured around the dialogue. Rather it is through them that the work as a whole departs from the dramatic and becomes lyric. In lyric poetry, language is less in need of justification than in the Drama. It is, as it were, more formal. In the Drama, speech, in addition to conveying the concrete meaning of the words, also announces the fact that something is being spoken. When there is nothing more to say or when something cannot be expressed, the Drama is reduced to silence. In the lyric, on the other hand, silence speaks too. Of course words are no longer "exchanged" in the course of a conversation; instead, all is spoken with a naturalness that is inherent in the nature of the lyric.

This constant movement from conversation into the lyrics of loneliness is what gives Chekhov's language its charm. Its origins probably lie in Russian expansiveness and in the immanent lyric quality of the language itself. Loneliness

is not the same thing as torpor here. What the Occidental most probably experiences only while intoxicated—participation in the loneliness of the other, the inclusion of individual loneliness in a growing collective loneliness—seems to be a possibility inherent in the Russian: the person and the language.

This is the reason the monologues in Chekhov's plays fit comfortably into the dialogue. It also explains why the dialogue creates so few problems in these plays and why the internal contradiction between monologic thematic and dialogic declaration does not lead to the destruction of the dramatic form.

Only Andrei, the three sisters' brother, is incapable of even this mode of expression. His loneliness forces him into silence; therefore, he avoids company.<sup>10</sup> He can speak only when he knows he will not be understood.

Chekhov manages this by making Ferapont, the watchman at the district council offices, hard of hearing.

*Andrei:* How are you old friend? What can I do for you?

*Ferapont:* The council chairman sends you a book and some papers.

Here . . . . (*Hands him a book and a packet.*)

*Andrei:* Thanks, that's fine. But why did you come over so late? It's after eight already.

*Ferapont:* What say?

*Andrei (loudly):* I said, you came over very late. It's after eight.

*Ferapont:* That's right. It was still light when I got here, but they wouldn't let me in to see you. . . . (*Thinking Andrei has said something.*) What?

*Andrei:* I didn't say a thing. (*Looks over the book.*) Tomorrow's Friday and I'm off, but I'll come over anyway and do some work. I get bored at home. (*Pauses.*) Ah, old fellow, how life changes; what tricks it plays on us! Today I had nothing to do so I picked up this book here—it's an old collection of university lectures—and I felt like laughing. Good lord, here I am, secretary of the Rural Council, the council, mind you, of which Protopopov is chairman, and the most I can hope for is to become a member one day. Imagine, me a member of the local council, when every night I dream that I'm a professor at Moscow University and a famous scholar of whom all Russia is proud!

*Ferapont:* I wouldn't know . . . I don't hear so good.

*Andrei:* It's just as well, because I hardly would've spoken to you like this if you could hear. I need someone to talk to, since my wife doesn't understand me and I'm afraid that my sisters would laugh in my face. . . . I don't like bars but let me tell you, old man, right now I'd give anything to be sitting at Tesov's or in the Great Moscow Inn.

*Ferapont:* And me, I heard some contractor over at the Council telling them that he'd seen some merchants in Moscow eating pancakes.

And there was one of 'em ate forty, and it seems he died. Either forty or fifty, I can't say for sure.

*Andrei:* You can go into a big Moscow restaurant where you don't know anyone and no one knows you, and yet you feel perfectly at home there. Now, here, you know everyone and everyone knows you, and yet you feel like a stranger among them. —And a lonely stranger at that.

*Ferapont:* What? (*Pause.*) Well, that same contractor was saying that they're stretching a big rope right across the whole of Moscow—but maybe he was lying at that!<sup>11</sup>

Although this passage seems to be dialogue—thanks to the support given by the motif of not hearing—it is really a despairing monologue by Andrei. Ferapont provides counterpoint with his own equally monologic speech. Whereas elsewhere there is the possibility of real understanding because of a common subject, here its impossibility is expressed. The impression of divergence is greatest when the speeches simulate convergence. Andrei's monologue does not arise out of the dialogue. It comes from the negation of dialogue. The expressivity of this cross-purpose speaking is rooted in a painful, parodistic contrast with real dialogue, which it removes into the utopian. But dramatic form itself is called into question at this point.

Because the collapse of communication is motivated in *The Three Sisters* (Ferapont's inability to hear), a return to dialogue is still possible. Ferapont is only an occasional figure on stage. But everything thematic, the content of which is larger and weightier than the motif that serves to represent it, struggles toward precipitation as form. And the formal withdrawal of dialogue leads, of necessity, to the epic. Ferapont's inability to hear points the way to the future.

### 3. Strindberg

What was later called *I dramaturgy*, and shaped the image of dramatic literature for decades to come, actually began with Strindberg. In his case it was a drama—*lurgy* rooted in autobiography.—This is obvious in more than the thematic continuity of his plays. His theory of the "subjective drama" itself seems to coincide with that of the psychological novel (the history of the development of one's own soul) in his outline of the literature of the future. A comment made during an interview concerning the first volume of his autobiography, *The Son of a Servant*, also sheds light on the new dramatic style which emerged a year later with *The Father* (1887). He said:

I believe that the complete portrayal of an individual's life is truer and more meaningful than that of a whole family. How can one know what goes on in the minds of others, how can one be aware of the hidden

reasons for someone else's deed, how can one know what one person has said to another in a moment of confidence? One makes suppositions, of course. But the study of the human species has not, up to now, been helped much by those authors who have used their limited psychological knowledge in an attempt to sketch the life of a soul, something that, in reality, remains hidden. One knows only *one* life, one's own.<sup>1</sup>

One could easily read into these lines, written in 1886, a rejection, pure and simple, of the dramatic. In fact, they present the basic preconditions for a developmental process which encompasses *The Father* (1887), *To Damascus* (1897–1904), *A Dream Play* (1901–02), and *The Great Highway* (1909). How far these developments actually lead away from the Drama is central to the problem of analyzing Strindberg's work.

*The Father* is an attempt to blend subjective and naturalist styles. The result is that neither could be fully realized because the goals of naturalist and subjective dramaturgy stood in radical opposition to each other. Naturalism, however revolutionary it was or wanted to be in style or "worldview," actually took a conservative position in questions of dramaturgy. Preservation of the traditional dramatic form was central to naturalism. Behind the revolutionary desire to give a new style to the Drama lay, as will be seen, the conservative idea of saving the Drama from intellectual-historical jeopardy by shifting it into a realm both archaic and contemporary, although untouched by recent developments.

At first glance, *The Father* seems to be a family drama similar to those countless others written at the time. The father and mother collide over the question of the daughter's upbringing: a struggle of principles; a battle of the sexes. But one does not need to keep in mind the remarks quoted above to see that the work is not a direct, that is, dramatic, presentation of this poisoned relationship and its history. It is constructed solely from the standpoint of the title figure and unfolds through his subjective point of view. An outline of the play only hints at this: the father is in the middle, surrounded by women—Laura, his nurse, the mother-in-law, and, finally, the daughter—who form the walls of the female hell in which he believes himself to be. More important is the recognition that the battle waged against him by his wife usually achieves "dramatic" realization only as a reflection of his own consciousness. Its main features are even established by him. He himself hands over to his wife her most important weapon—the question of paternity. And his mental illness is attested to by one of his own letters, in which he "feared for his sanity."<sup>2</sup> The lines his wife speaks at the end of the second act, which lead him to throw the burning lamp at her, are believable only as a projection of the thoughts the Captain himself suspects his wife of having. "Now you have fulfilled your destiny as a father and family supporter. . . . You are no longer needed. . . . and so you must go!" If naturalist

dialogue is an exact reproduction of conversation as it might take place in reality, Strindberg's first "naturalist" work is as much at odds with it as is the *tragédie classique*. They differ in their *principium sitisactionis*. The neoclassical Drama posits its principle as an objective ideal. In *The Father* it is determined by the subjective perspective. The Captain's fall, which Laura prepares with the straitjacket, is transformed into a profoundly internal process because of its connection with his childhood and because of his magico-psychanalytic identification with the memories contained in the words the nursemaid speaks as she puts him into the jacket.

Because of this displacement, the three unities, which are rigorously observed in *The Father*, become meaningless. Their function in genuine Drama is to raise the purely dialectical-dynamic flow of events above the static situation caused by the isolation of internal and external worlds, thereby creating that absolute space which the exclusive reproduction of interpersonal events requires.<sup>3</sup> This play, however, depends on the unity of the *I* of its central figure, not on that of action. The unity of action is not essential to the presentation of psychic development and may even interfere with it. There is no need for a flawless action, and there is no necessary correlation between the unities of time and place and that of the psyche. That much is made clear in the few scenes in which the Captain is not on stage. There seems to be no real reason why the spectator, who sees the family's reality through the father's eyes, should not follow him on his nightly walks and, later, be locked in with him. To be sure, even the scenes from which he is absent are dominated by him. He is present as the sole subject of conversation. Laura's intrigues are only indirectly visible; in the foreground stands the picture she paints of him for her brother and the Doctor. And when the Pastor learns of his sister's plan to hospitalize the Captain and have him judged incompetent, he becomes the spokesman for his brother-in-law—a man he had otherwise always "regarded . . . as a weed in our family pasture,"<sup>4</sup> because of his free thinking.

You are a strong woman, Laura! Unbelievably strong! Like a fox in a trap, you would rather gnaw off your leg than allow yourself to be caught! Like a master thief, you have no accomplice—not even your own conscience! Look at yourself in the mirror! You don't dare! . . . Let me look at your hand! Not a sign of blood to betray you—not a trace of insidious poison! An innocent murder that cannot be reached by the law—an unconscious crime—unconscious mind you! A clever scheme, a master stroke!<sup>5</sup>

And speaking for himself instead of for his brother-in-law, the Pastor concludes, "As a man, I would gladly see you hung! As brother and as pastor, my compliments."<sup>6</sup> But even these final words echo those spoken by the Captain. These few points, all of which show the growing problems of character por-

trayal and the unities in the realm of subjective drama, indicate why Strindberg's naturalist and autobiographical intentions go their separate ways after *The Father*. *Miss Julie*, written a year later and not conceived in perspective, became one of the most famous of all naturalist plays and Strindberg's foreword to it, a kind of naturalist manifesto.

His efforts to place the ego of a single individual, primarily his own, at the center of a work led further and further away from traditional dramatic construction, however (*Miss Julie* had remained fully within this tradition). First came experiments in monodrama, such as *The Stronger*. That seems to be a logical result of the idea that one can know only "one life, one's own." It should be added, though, that the single role in this play is not an autobiographical portrait of Strindberg. This is understandable when one remembers that subjective theater arises less out of the notion that one can describe only one's own psychic existence (since it is all one can know) than from the prior intention of bringing this mostly secret psychic existence to life dramatically. The Drama, the art form par excellence of dialogic openness and frankness, is given the task of presenting secret psychic events. It accomplishes this first by withdrawing into the central figure and then by either limiting itself to this character (monodrama) or enclosing the others within the character's frame of reference (*I*-dramaturgy). At which point it ceases to be Drama, of course.

The one-act *The Stronger* (1888–89) is probably more important in relation to the inner problematic of the modern analytical technique in general than it is to Strindberg's dramatic development in particular. It should, in this case, be looked at in terms of Ibsen's work, since in this monodrama of six pages can be found something akin to the core of the three—or four—act play by Ibsen. The secondary action, the one in the present, which serves as a backdrop for the primary action exists only in embryo: "On Christmas night, Mrs. X, actress, married," meets "Miss Y, actress, unmarried," at a corner table in a tea house. And the internal reflexes, the memories of the past—which Ibsen invents dramatically in such a masterful yet dubious fashion with actual events—is presented here by the married actress in a grand epic-lyric monologue. At this point one sees more clearly how undramatic Ibsen's material was and the price Ibsen had to pay because he held fast to dramatic form. The hidden and the repressed appear with incomparably greater power in the density and purity of Strindberg's monologue than in Ibsen's dialogue. And their revelation does not require that "unparalleled act of violence" which Rilke saw in Ibsen's work.<sup>6</sup> Far from turning into mere reportage, this self-narration even manages to produce two peripetias that could hardly be more "dramatic," despite the fact that, because of their pure interiority, they move beyond dialogue and, therefore, beyond the Drama as well.

In 1897, after a five-year pause in his work, Strindberg created his own form, the "station drama," with *To Damascus*. Fourteen shorter pieces from the years

1887-92 and the long hiatus between the years 1893-97 separate this play from his major work *The Father*. The one-acts from this period (eleven in all, counting *The Stronger*) push into the background the problems of dramatic action and role construction that appear in *The Father*. They do not solve these problems; instead, they bear indirect witness to them—through their efforts to avoid them.

The "station drama," on the other hand, provided a formal equivalent to the thematic intent of that subjective theater which *The Father* had already hinted at. The internal contradiction that subjective dramaturgy had created within the dramatic form was, therefore, eliminated. The subjective dramatist is most concerned with the isolation and elevation of a central figure who most often represents the dramatist himself. The dramatic form, the basis of which is a constantly renewed balance in personal interplay, cannot satisfy the subjective dramatist without destroying itself. In the "station drama," the hero, whose development is described, is separated in the clearest possible manner from the other figures he meets at the stations along his way. They appear only in terms of his encounters with them and only from his perspective. They are, thus, references to him. And because the "station drama" is not constructed around a number of more or less equally important characters but, rather, around a central *I*, its space is not a priori dialogic; the monologue loses the exceptional quality it necessarily has in the Drama. And the limitless unfolding of a "secret psychic existence" becomes formally possible.

Subjective theater also leads to the replacement of the unity of action by the unity of the self. The station technique accounts for this change by replacing continuity of action with a series of scenes. These individual scenes stand in no causal relationship and do not, as in the Drama, generate one another. On the contrary, they seem to be isolated stones strung out along the path of the onward moving *I*. This static, futureless quality of the scenes (which makes them, in Goethe's sense of the word, epic) is tied to a structure that is defined by the perspective from which the self faces the world. The dynamics of the dramatic scene arise out of an interpersonal dialectic. The scene is driven forward because of the future moment contained in this dialectic. In the "station drama," on the other hand, there is no mutual rapport. The hero does encounter other people, but they remain strangers.

When this happens the very possibility of dialogue is called into question and, in his last "station drama" (*The Great Highway*), Strindberg, in certain places, actually shifted from a dialogic structure to that of an epic for two voices:

*The Hunter and the Wanderer are seated at a table, outside, each one with a glass before him.*

*Wanderer:* It's peaceful down here in the valley.

*Hunter:* A little too peaceful, thinks the miller . . .

*Wanderer:* . . . who sleeps, no matter how hard the water runs . . .  
*Hunter:* . . . because he is always on the alert for wind and weather . . .  
*Wanderer:* . . . which useless pursuit has awakened in me a certain antipathy to windmills . . .  
*Hunter:* . . . just as it did in the noble knight Don Quixote of la Mancha . . .  
*Wanderer:* . . . who never, however, became a turncoat because of the way the wind blew . . .  
*Hunter:* . . . but rather the opposite . . .  
*Wanderer:* . . . which is the reason for his getting into perplexing situations. . . . 7

This kind of scene cannot provide a transition into another scene. Only the hero can internalize and take with him its traumatic or healing effects. The scene itself is left behind as a station along his way.

When a subjective path replaces objective action in this manner, the unities of time and place cease to be valid categories. This has to be the case, since only isolated turns along a basically internal pathway are presented on stage. In the "station drama," this pathway is not, as is the action in genuine Drama, shown in its entirety. The hero's development continues between times and between places and, thus, by constantly going beyond the objective boundaries of the work, makes it relative.

Because organic rapport does not exist between the individual scenes and because they represent only segments of a development that extends beyond the work (they are, so to speak, scenic fragments from an *Entwicklungsroman*), their composition can arise even out of an external schema that further relativizes the scenes and makes them more epic. Unlike the dramatic model constructed by Glustav Freytag, in which the pyramid he postulates arises of necessity out of the organic growth of the acts and scenes, the symmetric construction of *To Damascus I* follows a mechanical pattern of organization which, although understandable, is alien to the work.

By presenting the interpersonal as a harsh juxtaposition, the "station drama" seems to contradict Strindberg's "expressionism," according to which the characters, as in the *Damascus* trilogy (the Lady, the Beggar, Caesar), are projections of the Stranger's own psyche, and the work as a whole, therefore, is located in the subjectivity of its hero.<sup>8</sup> But this contradiction represents the paradox of subjectivity itself: self-alienation in reflections, the reification of the self through self-contemplation, the sudden transformation of energized subjectivity into the objective. It is quite clear in psychoanalytic terminology that the conscious *I* (that is, the *I* as it becomes aware of itself) views the unconscious as a stranger. The unconscious appears as the id [it]. Thus, the isolated individual, fleeing from the world into himself, is confronted once again by someone unknown. The Stranger recognizes this at the outset of the play.

I have no fear of death. It is loneliness I am afraid of—for the loneliness of life is people. . . . I don't know whether it is someone else or myself I sense—but in loneliness one is never alone. The air becomes dense, the atmosphere thickens, and spirits that are invisible and yet have life can be perceived, hovering about.<sup>9</sup>

He meets these beings in what follows at the stations along his way. They are usually himself and a stranger at the same time; they seem most alien when they are himself. This meeting between two aspects of the self leads once more to the abolition of dialogue. The Lady in the *Damascus* trilogy, who is apparently a projection of the Stranger, can tell him only what he already knows.

*Lady [To the Mother]:* He is a little eccentric; and there is one thing I find rather tiresome: I can never mention anything that he doesn't already know. As a consequence we say very little to each other.<sup>10</sup>

The relationship between the subjective and the objective manifests itself tentatively as a rapport between the present and the past. In thought, the remembered, internalized past reappears as an alien present: the others whom the stranger meets are often signs of his own past. Thus, the Doctor is a reference to a childhood schoolmate who, though innocent, was punished in his stead. The meeting with the Doctor objectifies in the present the source of the mental anguish which had never left him since that moment (a motif from Strindberg's own past). And the Beggar he meets on a street corner bears the scar he himself carries as a result of the blow he once received from his brother.

The "station drama" and Ibsen's analytical technique converge here. But, like the self-alienation of the isolated individual, the alienation of an individual's past acquires adequate form without dramatic "violence" in the separate encounters which compose Strindberg's work.

The meeting of the isolated *I* and the alienated-reified world is the foundation for the formal structure of two later works by Strindberg: *A Dream Play* (1901-2) and *The Ghost Sonata* (1907).

*A Dream Play*, written the same year as *To Damascus III*, does not differ from the "station-drama" as far as its formal conception is concerned (It reproduces] "the detached and disunited, although apparently logical, form of dreams"—Strindberg's preface). Strindberg also referred to *To Damascus* as a dream play, which is to say that he did not conceive of *A Dream Play* as an enacted dream. He used this title only to indicate the dreamlike composition of the work. Indeed, dream and "station drama" are alike in structure: a sequence of scenes whose unity does not reside in the action but in the unchanging psyche of the dreamer, who is, perhaps, the hero.

If the emphasis is on the self in isolation in the "station drama," in *A Dream Play*, it is the world of human activity that stands in the foreground as an object

of observation for the god Indra's Daughter. This is the notion that constitutes the play and that determines its form—Indra's Daughter is shown "what human life is like" (Strindberg). The loosely connected scenes in *A Dream Play* are more like those of a revue from the Middle Ages than those of a dream. And the revue is—in opposition to the Drama—essentially a presentation that unfolds for someone who is not part of it. Because of this, *A Dream Play*, in which the observer is the real *I* of the play, has the epic structure of a confrontation between subject and object.

Indra's Daughter, who in the original version (without prologue) seems to be a dramatic persona coequal with the others, formulates her epic separation from mankind in her leitmotivlike remark, "human beings are pitiful." The content of the remark indicates pity; formally, however, it expresses distance and can, therefore, become the magic phrase through which Indra's Daughter, even during her deepest involvement (in Strindberg's eyes) in things human—her marriage to the Lawyer—can rise above human existence.

*Daughter:* I am beginning to hate you after all this.

*Lawyer:* Alas for us then! But let us prevent hatred. I promise never to mention untidiness again, although it is torture to me.

*Daughter:* And I will eat cabbage, although that is a torment to me.

*Lawyer:* And so—life together is a torment. One's pleasure is the other's pain.

*Daughter:* Human beings are pitiful.<sup>11</sup>

In accord with its revue-like structure, the work's most characteristic gesture is that of showing. In addition to the Officer (who represents Strindberg), the figures Indra's Daughter encounters are primarily those who have, as it were, a concrete sense of mankind because of their professions and can, therefore, serve best to present it. Thus, for example, the Lawyer (the second incarnation of the author) says:

*Lawyer:* Look at these walls! Isn't the wallpaper stained as if by every kind of sin? Look at these documents in which I write records of evil! Look at me! . . . Nobody who comes here ever smiles.

Nothing but vile looks, bared teeth, clenched fists, and all of them squint their malice, their envy, their suspicions over me. Look my hands are black and can never be clean! See how cracked they are and bleeding! I can never wear my clothes for more than a few days because they stink of other people's crimes. . . . Look at me! Do you think, marked as I am by crime, I can ever win a woman's love? Or that anyone wants to be the friend of a man who has to enforce payment of all the debts in town? It's misery to be human.

*Daughter:* Human life is pitiable.<sup>12</sup>

The Poet (Strindberg's third incarnation) hands Indra's Daughter a "petition from mankind to the ruler of the universe, drawn up by a dreamer,"<sup>13</sup> which has as its subject the *condition humaine*. He also shows her this condition as embodied in another human being.

*Enter Lina with a bucket.*

*Poet:* Lina, show yourself to Miss Agnes [Indra's Daughter]. She knew you ten years ago when you were a young, happy, and, let me add, pretty girl. . . . Look at her now! Five children, drudgery, squalling, hunger, blows. See how beauty has perished, how joy has vanished in the fulfillment of duties.<sup>14</sup>

The Officer, too, occasionally takes an epic stance:

*An elderly man walks past with his hands behind his back.*

*Officer:* Look, there goes a pensioner waiting for his life to ebb. A captain probably, who failed to become a Major, or a Clerk to the Court who was never promoted. Many are called, but few are chosen. He's just walking about waiting for breakfast.

*Pensioner:* No, for the paper, the morning paper!

*Officer:* And he's only fifty-four. He may go on for another twenty-five years, waiting for meals and the newspaper. Isn't that dreadful?<sup>15</sup>

In other words, *A Dream Play* is in no way a work in which mankind enacts itself—a Drama—rather, it is an epic play *about* mankind. This presentational structure (although hidden both thematically and formally) defines the *Ghost Sonata* as well. In *A Dream Play*, the structure manifests itself thematically in the visit Indra's Daughter makes to earth and formally in the revue style arrangements of the scenes. In the *Ghost Sonata*, on the other hand, the structure is hidden behind the facade of a traditional salon Drama. It is not used as an all-encompassing formal principle. Instead, it functions as a means of achieving certain ends: for the *Ghost Sonata* presents the same formal problem that Ibsen's late work did: how to reveal dramatically a secret and deeply internalized past, how to prevent it from escaping dramatic presentation. In Ibsen's work discovery is made possible by intertwining the past with a topical dramatic action; in Strindberg's one-act *The Stronger*, by the use of monologue. In the *Ghost Sonata*, both these methods are employed to a certain degree—the monologic *I* of subjective theater appears in the midst of the other characters dressed as an ordinary dramatic persona. It will be this character's function to unroll the secret past of the others. This role belongs to the old man, Hummel. Through him, as through the Lawyer and the Poet in *A Dream Play*, mankind is seen as an object, from the outside. In response to the Student's opening question,—whether Hummel knows the people "who live there" (that is, the people Hummel will later

unmask), he answers, "Every one of them. At my age one knows everybody . . . but no one knows me—not really. I take an interest in human destiny."<sup>16</sup> Just as this line gives a thematic basis for Hummel's formal role and special position, so do the following statements explain why these people need an epic narrator.

*Bengston (The butler in the house [a figure parallel to Hummel])*

*describes his employers to Hummel's attendant:* The usual ghost supper, as we call it. They drink tea and don't say a word—or else the Colonel does all the talking. . . . And they've kept this up for twenty years, and always the same people saying the same things or saying nothing at all for fear of being found out.<sup>17</sup>

And in the third act:

*Student:* . . . Tell me. Why do your parents sit in there so silently, not saying a single word?

*Girl:* Because they have nothing to say to each other, and because neither believes what the other says. This is how my father puts it: What's the point of talking, when neither of us can fool the other?<sup>18</sup>

These lines mark one source of modern epic dramaturgy. They locate the moment when middle-class salon Drama, which had taken over the formal principles of the neoclassical Drama, was transformed, of necessity, into the epic because of the form-content contradiction that had arisen in the course of the nineteenth century. Within this process, Hummel's presence may well be the first example of the epic *I* appearing on stage, albeit disguised as an ordinary dramatic character. In the first act, he describes the inhabitants of the house to the Student. Devoid of all dramatic independence, they show themselves at the windows—objects to be presented. In the second act, during the ghost supper, it is Hummel who unmasks their secrets.

It is difficult to understand, however, why Strindberg remained unaware of this character's formal function. In the second act, he lets the traditional unmasking of the unmasker end in Hummel's suicide. The work thereby loses, on the level of its content, the formal principle on which it was built. The third act had to fail, because, with no epic support, it could not generate dialogue of its own. In addition to the episodic figure of the Cook, who, surprisingly enough, carries on Hummel's thematic "vampire" role without taking over his formal role, the Girl and the Student are the only characters capable of carrying a dialogue, but they can no longer sufficiently free themselves from the spell of the ghost house to create one. Their desperate, wandering conversation—interrupted by pauses, monologues, and prayers—ends the play. This tormenting, failed conclusion to a unique work can be understood only in terms of the transitional dramaturgic

situation to which it belongs. The epic structure is there but still thematically bound and, thus, subject to the unfolding of the action.

Whereas in Ibsen's plays the dramatis personae had to die because they had no epic narrator, Strindberg's first stage narrator dies because he is not recognized as such—he wears the mask of a dramatis persona. More than anything else, this demonstrates the internal contradictions in the Drama at the turn of the century and precisely designates Ibsen's and Strindberg's historical position. The former comes just before, the latter just after the sublation of these contradictions via a conversion of the thematic epic into epic form. Both, then, are on the threshold of that modern theater which can be understood only in terms of *its own* form problematic.

#### 4. Maeterlinck

Maeterlinck's early work (it alone will be discussed here) is an attempt to dramatize existential powerlessness—mankind's dependence on a fate that is forever obscure. Greek tragedy depicted the hero in conflict with destiny. Neoclassical Drama displayed the conflicts arising from interpersonal relationships. In Maeterlinck's work only a single moment is dealt with—the moment when a helpless human being is overtaken by fate. Not in the manner in which this took place in the romantic *Schicksalsstragedie*, however; it focused on human interaction within the sphere of a fate that was blind. The mechanics of destiny unfolding and a concomitant perversion of human relations were its themes. There is none of this in Maeterlinck's plays. For him, human destiny is represented by death itself, and death alone dominates the stage in his works. But not as any particular figure, not in any particular tragic connection with life; no action brings on death, no one is responsible for it. From the dramaturgic point of view, this means that the category "action" is replaced by "situation." The genre Maeterlinck created should, in fact, bear this name, because the essential in each of these plays does not reside in the action. They are, therefore, no longer "Dramas"—as long as the Greek word is understood in this sense. It is this distinction that lies behind the rather paradoxical term *drame statique*, which Maeterlinck coined for his work.

In genuine Drama, situation is only the starting point for the action. In the *drame statique*, on the other hand, the possibility of human action has been eliminated for thematic reasons. The individual waits in total passivity until death's presence penetrates his consciousness. Only the attempt to verify his situation permits the individual to speak. When he becomes aware of death (the demise of someone close to him), which, because of his blindness, he has not seen standing in front of him the whole time, he has reached his goal. This is the subject of *L'Intruse*, *Les aveugles* (both published in 1890), and *Mitrierar* (1894). The stage, as set for *Les aveugles* [*The Blind*], presents an "ancient Norland

forest, with an eternal look, under a sky of deep stars. —In the centre and in the deep of the night, a very old priest is sitting wrapped in a great black cloak. The chest and the head, gently upturned and deathly motionless, rest against the trunk of a giant hollow oak. The face is terribly pale and of an immovable waxen lividness, in which purple lips fall slightly apart. The dumb, fixed eyes no longer look out from the visible side of eternity and seem to bleed with immemorial sorrows and with tears. . . . On the right, six old men, all blind, are sitting on stones, stumps and dead leaves. —On the left, separated from them by an uprooted tree and fragments of rock, six women, also blind, are sitting opposite the old men. . . . It is unusually oppressive, despite the moonlight that here and there struggles to pierce for an instant the gloom of the foliage."<sup>1</sup> The blind figures are waiting for the return of the old priest who led them to this place, and he is sitting in their midst—dead.

Even the detailed stage directions, which have been quoted only in part here, show that the dialogic form is insufficient as a means of presentation. Or vice versa—what there is to say is an insufficient basis on which to build a dialogue. The twelve blind characters pose anxious questions about their fate and thereby slowly become aware of their situation. Conversation is thus limited and its rhythm determined by the exchange of question and answer.

*First Blind Man (blind from birth):* He hasn't come yet?

*Second Blind Man (also born blind):* I hear nothing coming.<sup>2</sup>

Later:

*Second Blind Man:* Are we in the sun now?

*Third Blind Man (also born blind):* Is the sun still shining?<sup>3</sup>

Often the statements move parallel to one another and sometimes even at cross-purposes.

*Third Blind Man:* It's time to go back to the home.

*First Blind Man:* We ought to find out where we are.

*Second Blind Man:* It has grown cold since we left.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever symbolic content blindness may have, dramaturgically it saves the work from the silence that threatens it. It represents human powerlessness and isolation ("Years and years we have been together, and we have never seen each other! You would say we were forever alone. . . . To love one must see.")<sup>5\*</sup> and, therefore, calls into question the possibility of dialogue. At the same time, it is solely due to this blindness that there is still cause for speech. In *L'Intruse*, which presents a family gathered together while the Mother lies dying in the next room, it is the blind Grandfather whose questions (and premonitions, since as a blind person he sees both less and more than the others) generate the conversation.

The verbal exchanges in *Les aveugles* move away from dialogue in several directions. They are mainly choral. The little individualization granted the twelve blind figures is lost in the responses in this play. Language cuts itself free; its essentially dramatic ties to position disappear. It is no longer the expression of an individual awaiting a response; instead, language expresses the mood that reigns in all the characters' souls. The fact that this language is divided into individual lines in no way makes it synonymous with the conversation in genuine Drama. It simply reflects the nervous glitter of uncertainty. It can be read or heard without paying attention to who is speaking. The essential is the language's intermittence, not its relation to an immediate *I*. This means that the dramatic personae are far from being causal agents or subjects of an action. They are, quite simply, objects of an action. This single theme in Maeterlinck's early work—the individual, helpless in the face of destiny—calls for an equivalent formal statement.

The manner in which he conceived *Intérieur* shows the results of this need. In it, too, a family experiences death. The daughter, who left in the morning to look for her grandmother on the other side of the river, drowned herself, and her body is brought back to the house. Her parents are not expecting her yet and are passing a calm, carefree evening. Just as these five people (to whom death comes unexpectedly) are speechless victims of destiny, so, too, they formally become the mute epic objects of the person who has come to inform them of the daughter's death. The Old Man, before he undertakes this difficult task, talks to a stranger about them in front of a brightly lit window through which the family is visible. Thus, the body of the drama is split in two—into the mute characters in the house and those in the garden who speak. This division into thematic and dramatic groups illustrates a subject-object separation which turns human beings into objects and which is fundamental to Maeterlinck's fatalism. It creates an epic situation inside the Drama, which had been possible only occasionally before—in descriptions of offstage battles, for example. Here, however, it forms the whole of the work. The "dialogue" between the Stranger, the Old Man, and his two grandchildren serves almost entirely as an epic description of the silent family.

*The Old Man:* I would like to see, first, if they are all in the room. Yes, I see the father sitting in the chimney-corner. He waits with his hands on his knees; . . . the mother is resting her elbow on the table.<sup>6</sup>

There is even a certain amount of awareness of the epic distance, which arises because the narrator knows more than the objects of his narration.

*The Old Man:* I am nearly eighty-three years old, and this is the first time the sight of life has struck me. I don't know why everything

they do seems so strange and grave to me. . . . They wait for night quite simply, under their lamp, as we might have been waiting under ours; and yet I seem to see them from the height of another world, because I know a little truth which they don't know yet.<sup>7</sup>

Even the most animated conversation is really only description that has been divided up between the speakers.

*The Stranger:* Just now they are smiling in silence in the room . . .  
*The Old Man:* They are at peace. . . . they did not expect her tonight . . .

*The Stranger:* They smile without stirring, . . . and see, the father is putting his finger on his lips.

*The Old Man:* He is calling attention to the child asleep on its mother's heart.

*The Stranger:* She dares not raise her eyes lest she disturb its sleep.<sup>8</sup>

Maeterlinck's decision to dramatize the human situation as he saw it led him to present his characters as silent, suffering objects in the hands of death. He did this within a form that, until then, had known only speaking, active subjects. This caused a shift toward the epic within the concept of the Drama itself. In *Les aveugles*, the characters describe their own situation—their blindness is sufficient motivation. In *Intérieur*, the hidden epic element in the material is even more evident. It creates an actual narrative situation in which subject and object stand facing each other. But even this remains thematic and requires further motivation inside a now meaningless dramatic form.

### 5. Hauptmann

What was said previously in reference to Ibsen is, in part, also valid for Hauptmann's early work, *Das Friedensfest* (1890), for example, is a typical "analytical drama." It lays out the history of a family on a Christmas evening. But even Hauptmann's first play, *Before Sunrise* (1889), contains a perspective not found in Ibsen's work. The play's subtitle—*A Social Drama*, announces the difference. Critics have usually accounted for this difference by concluding that Hauptmann had had another teacher as well: Tolstoy and his play *The Power of Darkness*. However powerful Tolstoy's influence might have been, an analysis of the internal problems of Hauptmann's "social Drama" has to be carried out without reference to it, because Tolstoy's play poses none of the sociological-naturalistic problems found in Hauptmann's work. Furthermore, Tolstoy overcomes the formal difficulties of the Drama through the same Russian lyric tendency found in Chekhov's plays.

The social dramatist attempts to dramatize the politico-economic structures



which dictate the conditions of individual life. He has to show factors that are larger than those of a single situation or a single action—factors which, nonetheless, define such situations and actions. This kind of dramatic presentation requires another sort of work first: the transformation of alienated conditionality into interpersonal actuality.\* in other words, the conversion and dispersal of historical process in the aesthetic realm that is supposed to reflect it. The dubiousness of this attempt becomes absolutely clear when one looks closely at the manner in which form evolves in this case. Transforming alienated conditionality into interpersonal actuality means finding an action that will give presence to these states. This action, which functions as a subsidiary mediating between the social thematic and the preexisting dramatic form, proves to be problematic from the standpoint of the thematic as well as of form. An action which represents is not dramatic: the events in the Drama, absolute in themselves, can stand for nothing beyond themselves. Even in the philosophical tragedies of Kleist or Heibel, the plot has no demonstrative function. It is not "meaningful" in the sense that it points beyond itself to the nature of the universe as conceived by the author in a personal metaphysics. Instead, it focuses on itself and its own metaphysical depths. This in no way limits its capacity to make meaningful statements—quite the contrary: the world of the Drama can, because of its absoluteness, stand for the real world. The relationship between signifier and signified resides in the symbolic principle that unites microcosm-macrocosm but not in the *pars pro toto*. But this is precisely what is found in the "social Drama." In every sense it works against the requisite absoluteness in dramatic form: the dramatis personae represent thousands of people living in the same conditions; their situation represents a uniformity determined by economic factors. Their fate is an example, a means of "showing" that implies not only an objectivity which transcends the work but also a subject which stands above the play and does the showing: the authorial *I*. In the work of art, tension between the empirical and creative subjectivity—open reference to something external to the work—is the formal basis for the epic, not the Drama. The "social Drama" is, therefore, epic in nature and a contradiction in itself.

However, the transformation of alienated conditionality into interpersonal actuality also contradicts the thematic intention itself. Its goal is to show that the determinant forces in human existence have been transferred from the sphere of the "interpersonal" to that of alienated objectivity; that, fundamentally speaking, there is no present—so much does it resemble what has always been and will be; that an action which outlines the present and thus lays the basis for a new future is impossible as long as these crippling forces hold sway.

Hauptmann tried to resolve the problematics of the social drama in *Before Sunrise* and *The Weavers*. *Before Sunrise* undertakes the description of those Silesian farmers who, having become wealthy because of the coal discovered under their fields, through idleness drift into a licentious and diseased way of life.

A typical example is chosen from this group—the farmer, Krause, and his family. He passes his days in drunkenness, while his wife has an affair with the fiancé of his daughter from a previous marriage. Martha, the eldest daughter, married to an engineer, Hoffmann, and about to give birth, has also become an alcoholic. Such characters cannot found a dramatic action. The vice into which they have sunk places them beyond interpersonal relationships. It isolates and debases them to speechless, screeching, vegetating animals. The only person in the family who is active, Krause's son-in-law, accommodates himself to the family's decadence and tries to exploit it and the neighborhood as well in whatever ways he can. But thereby, he too, escapes the open, decision-filled present demanded by the Drama. And the life of the only pure individual in this family, the youngest daughter, Helene, is one of quiet, misunderstood suffering.

The dramatic action that is to present this family must, therefore, have its source outside the family. It must also be an action that leaves these characters in their thinglike objectivity and must not falsify the monotone, timeless quality of their being through a formally determined, taut development. Furthermore, this action has to expose the condition of the Silesian "coal farmers" as a whole.

This explains why a stranger, Alfred Loth, is brought into the play. A social researcher and childhood friend of Hoffmann's, he visits the region to study the situation of the miners. Thus, the Krause family is given dramatic presentation by gradually being revealed to the visitor. The reader or spectator sees the family from Loth's perspective—as an object of scientific research. In other words, Loth's role is a mask worn by the epic *I*. The dramatic action itself is none other than a thematic travesty of the formal principles of the epic: Loth's visit to the family reproduces thematically that movement of the epic narrator toward his object, which is the formal basis of the epic.

This happens more than once in the plays written at the turn of the century. The presence of a stranger whose appearance motivates the action is one of the more commonly observed characteristics of these works. Most critics, however, fail to see the conditions that necessitate his appearance and assign him a function parallel to that of the classical *raisonneur*. They have nothing in common though. Of course the stranger reasons, but the *raisonneur*, who could have freed him from the stain of the modern, was no outsider; he was part of the society which, through him, achieved ultimate transparency. The appearance of a stranger, on the other hand, expresses the incapacity of the characters to whom his presence gives dramatic life to achieve this life on their own. His mere presence is a sign of the crises in the Drama, and the Drama he makes possible is no longer really Drama. It has its roots in an epic subject-object relationship in which the stranger stands facing the others. The action unfolds because of the steps taken by an outsider; it is not determined by interpersonal conflict. Dramatic tension disappears. This is the basic problem with *Before Sunrise*. External tensions, the nerve-racking wait for Frau Hoffmann to give birth, for exam-

ple, have to stand in for real tensions anchored in interpersonal relationships. Even the audience attending the première noticed the extra-artistic and the contingent nature of these practices. From the midst of the spectators, according to one well-known anecdote, a gynecologist raised his forceps aloft, no doubt as a sign that he wanted to offer his help.

Another undramatic element is added when the stranger appears. Real dramatic action does not present human existence in terms of some specific cause. If it did, the action would point beyond itself. Its presence is pure actuality, not the making present of a conditioned being. The existence of the dramatic personae should not reach beyond the temporal borders of the Drama. The notion of causation is, on the contrary, intelligible only within a temporal context, and, as an artistic means, it belongs to the epic and epic theater as it existed in the Middle Ages and the baroque period. There the thematic occasion corresponded (on the level of form) with the fact of the performance, a fact excluded from the Drama. Here, on the other hand, the play is openly announced as a play and refers to the actors and spectators. *Before Sunrise* shows none of this in its form, though. It takes up the epic principle itself as its plot line but retains a dramatic style that can be no more than partially successful.

Even the end of the play, which has always been considered incomprehensible and a failure, can be explained in this light. Loth, who is in love with Helene and wants to save her from the swamp in which she lives, leaves her and flees from the family when he learns of their inherited alcoholism. Helene, who had seen in Loth her only chance to escape, commits suicide. Loth's "loveless and cowardly dogmatism" has never been understood, especially because the spectator, without ever having grasped his formal function as onstage epic narrator, connects Loth with Hauptmann himself. The role was determined by the form, though. What distorts Loth's character at the end is the result of his formal, not his thematic, function. Just as the formal movement of the classic comedy requires that the maze of obstacles that hinders the lovers' engagement be overcome before the final curtain falls, so does the form of a Drama dependent on the arrival of a stranger require his departure from the stage at the close of the last act.

Thus the same thing occurs in *Before Dawn* that happens in the *Ghost Sonata* with Hummel's suicide, but in reverse. During this period of crisis in the Drama, epic formal elements appeared in thematic guise. The result of this doubling in the function of a role or a situation can be a collision between form and content. And if a content-bound event in the *Ghost Sonata* destroyed its hidden formal principle, here, in contrast, a formal requirement causes the action to slide into the incomprehensible.

Two years later (1891), Hauptmann completed his other "social drama," *The Weavers*. It is supposed to show the suffering of the weavers in the Eulen mountains in the mid-nineteenth century. The source of the work—as Hauptmann

writes in his dedication—was his father's "story of grandfather, who when young sat at the loom, a poor weaver like those depicted here." These lines have been quoted because they also lead into the formal problems of the work. At its origin is an indelible image: weavers behind their looms and the knowledge of their misery. This seems to call for a figurative presentation, like that in the *Weavers' Uprising* cycle, which Katho Kollwitz completed around 1897—inspired by Hauptmann, to be sure. For a dramatic presentation, however, the same question must be posed here about the possibility of dramatic action that was raised in relation to *Before Dawn*. Neither the life of the weavers, who have known only work and hunger, nor the political-economic situation can be transformed into dramatic actuality. The only action possible, given the conditions of their existence, is one *against* these conditions: an uprising. Hauptmann attempts to present the weavers' uprising of 1844. As motivation for the revolt, an epic description of conditions seems susceptible to dramatization. But the action itself is not dramatic. The weavers' uprising, with the exception of one scene in the last act, lacks interpersonal conflict. It does not develop through the medium of the dialogue (as does, for example, Schiller's *Wallenstein*) but rather from an explosion in people whose despair is beyond dialogue—an explosion that can at most become thematic material for some other dialogic exchange. Thus, the work becomes epic once more. It is constructed of scenes in which various elements of epic theater are used. This means that the relationship narrator-object is built thematically into the scenes.

The first act opens in Peterswaldau. The weavers are turning in their finished webs at the home of the manufacturer Dreissiger. The scene reminds one of a medieval revue, except that the introduction of the weavers and their misery is thematically motivated by the delivery of their work: the weavers present themselves along with their wares. The second act depicts the cramped room of a weaver family in Kaschbach. Their misery is described to an outsider, Moritz Jäger, who after long years of service as a soldier is estranged from the hometown to which he has returned. But it is precisely as an outsider—someone who has not succumbed to the living conditions there—that he is able to spark the fire of rebellion. The third act again takes place in Peterswaldau. It is set in the inn, where recent events are reported and discussed from time to time. And so the weavers' situation is first discussed by the local craftsmen, then further described by a second outsider, the Commercial Traveler. The fourth act, in Dreissiger's house, brings (after another dialogue about the weavers) the first dramatic scenes of the work. The fifth act, finally, takes one to Langenbietenau and into the workshop at Old Hülse's. Here the events that have transpired in Peterswaldau are described. Then, in addition to a description of what is happening in the street (in the meantime the rebels have arrived in Langenbietenau), comes the closing dramatic scene—the dispute between Old Hülse (who, having turned away

from the events of this world, refuses to participate in the uprising) and his entourage. We will return to this scene later.

The multiplicity of epic situations—review, presentation for an outsider, reports, description carefully anchored in the choice of scenes, the manner in which each act begins anew, the introduction of new characters in every act, the way in which the uprising is followed as it spreads (in fact, in the last act a scene even opens one step ahead of the rebels)—all points to the epic basis of the play. It shows clearly that the action and the work are not, as they are in the Drama, identical; the uprising is rather the subject matter of the work. The play's unity is not rooted in the continuity of action but rather in the invisible epic *I* who presents the conditions and events. That is why new figures can keep appearing. The limited number of characters in the Drama serves to guarantee the absoluteness and autonomy of the dramatic whole. Here new figures are regularly brought on stage, and, at the same time, the randomness of their selection, their representativeness, that which points to a collective, is expressed through their appearance.

The epic *I*—paradoxical as it may seem—is a prerequisite for naturalism's "objective" language as it emerges in *The Weavers* and more especially in the original version, *De Weber*. It is precisely in those places where dramatic language foregoes the poetic to approach "reality" that it points to its subjective origins—to its author. The voice of the scientific-minded dramatist is continually audible in this naturalistic dialogue (which anticipates the recordings made later for oral history archives): "This is the way these people talk, I've studied them." In terms of its aesthetics, what is usually considered objective becomes subjective here. A dramatic dialogue is "objective" when it remains within the limits defined by the Drama's absolute form without pointing beyond it to either the empirical world of experience or the empiricist author. In other words, Racine's and Gryphius's alexandrines can be called "objective," as can the blank verse used by Shakespeare and during the German classical period or even the prose in Büchner's *Woyzeck*, in which there is a successful transformation of the dialectical into the poetic.

But the epic form, denied though it may be, has its vengeance at the end of *The Weavers*, just as it did in *Before Sunrise*. Old Hilse condemns the uprising on the basis of faith.

*Old Hilse*: . . . Why else would I have sat here—why would I have worked this treadle here for forty years until I was almost dead? And why would I have sat here and watched him over there living in pride and gluttony, making himself rich on my hunger and misery? Why? Because I had hope. . . . We've been promised. The day of judgement is coming; but we are not the judges: Vengeance is Mine, saith the Lord our God.<sup>1</sup>

He refuses to move from his weaving stool in front of the window.

Here is where the Heavenly Father has placed me. . . . Here we will sit and do what is our duty, though the snow itself catch fire.<sup>2</sup>

There is a volley of fire and Hilse collapses, mortally wounded, the only victim of the uprising Hauptmann shows on stage. One can see why this ending was found strange both by the public at contemporary performances for workers and by bourgeois literary critics. After the opening of the final act, in which Hauptmann's sympathy for the rebels seems to give way to an acceptance of Hilse's religious convictions, comes this second reversal, which transforms a Drama about revolution into the almost cynically presented tragedy of a martyr. How is this to be interpreted? Certainly not from a metaphysical point of view. Here, too, it seems to be the contradiction between the epic theme and the dramatic form Hauptmann refused to abandon that is the source of the problem. An understated conclusion would best correspond with the desire to give no further presentation of the uprising and its suppression. But such a conclusion would be epic in nature. Because the epic narrator never completely separates his work from the empirical world, or from himself, he can break it off. After the final line of the narration comes not nothing but, rather, that no longer narrated "reality," the hypothesis and suggestion of which belong to the formal principles of the epic. The Drama, however, since it is absolute, is its own reality. It has to have an end that stands for the end as such and raises no further questions. Instead of breaking off with a look at the suppression of the weaver's revolt, thereby sticking to the presentation of their collective destiny and at the same time confirming the epic theme in the formal structure, Hauptmann tried to satisfy the demands of dramatic form—even though it had from the very beginning been cast into doubt by the subject matter.

Part Two