its relation to the object, "while the restriction and hardening that the *I* claims as its origin, by this very fact, limit, impoverish and reduce it."[2] Despite his isolation as an individual, what continues to define the Stranger in the *Damascus* trilogy is the traumatic residue of his former being-with-others. And Strindberg's final work, *The Great Highway*, shows that limiting the point of view to the subject alone erases rather than creates the possibility of subjective, that is, original, statements.[3]

Expressionism adopted Strindberg's station technique to give dramatic form to the individual, to his journey through an alienated world, rather than to interpersonal actions. The formal structure of the "station drama" has already been discussed at length, along with its epic nature, which mirrors the confrontation between the isolated *I* and a world become strange. What remains to be added is a description of the various modes of separateness and the emptiness of the isolated *I* that are precipitated by the Weltanschauung and style of expressionism.

Strindberg's "Stranger" reappears in these works as *The Son* (Hasenclever), *The Young Man* (Johst), and *The Beggar* (Sorge); his road *To Damascus* becomes that of the *Transfiguration* (Toller), the *Red Street* (Csokor), and the timespan *From Morn to Midnight* (Kaiser). The area of the least difference in these "station dramas" is the individuality of their central figures. These plays are distinguished by the particular sphere through which the formally conceived individual is led: the world of fatherly authority and its irresolute opposite in Hasenclever's *The Son*; the world of war in Toller's *Transfiguration*; the metropolis in Sorge's *Beggar*, in Kaiser's *From Morn to Midnight*, and in Brecht's *Drums in the Night*. Paradoxically, expressionist *I* dramaturgy does not reach its peak in the formation of the individual; but instead, and first of all, in the shocking discovery of the metropolis and its pleasure houses. An essential feature of expressionist art as a whole seems to emerge here. Because its exclusive focus on the subject finally leads to the undermining of that same subject, this art, as the language of extreme subjectivity, loses its ability to say anything essential about the subject. On the other hand, the formal emptiness of the *I* precipitates as the stylistic principle of expressionism – as the "subjective distortion" of the objective. This is the reason German expressionism achieved its best and, probably, its most enduring work in the plastic arts and, especially, in graphics (one need only consider the artists in the Dresden "Brücke" group). This relationship is reflected in the interior of the dramatic work: although the station technique does satisfactorily maintain the isolation of the individual on the level of form, it is not the isolated *I* but the alienated world confronting the individual that is expressed thematically. Only through self-alienation, by becoming congruent with alien objectivity, could the subject manage, nonetheless, to express itself.[4]

Of course, in expressionist dramaturgy, the individual is isolated for various reasons. These works do not limit themselves to autobiographical or historical-

critical representations of psycho-social isolation like those found in Hasenclever's *The Son* or in the plays about homecoming by Toller (*Hinkemann*) and Brecht (*Drums in the Night*). Isolation also appears in programmatic form, such as in Kaiser's call for the "renewal of man." As Kaiser emphasizes at one point, "the most profound truth – is always and only found by the lone individual." His "station dramas" show a lone "renewed" man passing through a generally uncomprehending world (*From Morn to Midnight*). Ultimately this releasing of a single individual from the interpersonal relation corresponds to the highest aspiration of expressionism: capturing *the* human being in terms of an "intuition of essences." Isolation thus becomes a method. In one of the most important of expressionism's theoretical texts, one reads:

> Each person is no longer simply an individual bound by duty, morality, society and family. In this art, each becomes the most elevated and the most deplorable of things: *becomes a human being*. Here is the new and unheard of with respect to other epochs. Here the bourgeois notion of the world ceases at last to be thought. Here there are no longer any contexts that veil the image of the human. No stories of marriage, no tragedies arising out of the collision between convention and the need for freedom, no milieu pieces, no harsh employers or carefree officers, no marionettes who, while dangling from the strings of a psychological Weltanschauung, suffer, laugh and play with the laws, standpoints errors and vices of a man made and man-constituted social existence.[5]

The inevitable abstraction and emptiness of the individual already announced in Strindberg's "station dramas" acquire a theoretical foundation here; expressionism consciously chooses to regard the individual as an abstraction. And from this proud rejection of the interpersonal "connections that veil the image of the human" follows a renunciation of dramatic form – a form, however, that makes itself unavailable to the modern dramatist, for whom those connections had collapsed.

11. The Political Revue: Piscator

Despite the internal contradictions that it contained of necessity, because it was a "social Drama," Hauptman's *The Weavers* – along with a few other naturalist plays (e.g., Gorky's *The Lower Depths*) – remained for decades at the forefront of that dramaturgy that portrayed social conditions. This occurred because the verdict that the social thematic handed down about dramatic form (a verdict already present in *The Weavers*) was at first enforced on the ephemeral level of *mise en scène* rather than in the realm of play writing per se. This is what happens in Erwin Piscator's work, and his *The Political Theater* (1929) – a book rich in documentary as well as in programmatic information – is worth examining in

the context of this investigation. This injection of theatro historical events can be justified both in terms of the impact of Piscator's productions on the dramatists of later years and in terms of the negative origins of his efforts in the dramaturgy of his age. "Perhaps my whole style of directing is a direct result of the total lack of suitable plays. It would certainly not have taken so dominant a form if adequate plays had been on hand when I started."[1]

Piscator himself suggested that naturalism was one of the roots of the "political theater,"[2] and his staging of Gorky's *Lower Depths* (one of his early productions, which arose out of problems similar to those discussed in relation to *Before Sunrise* and *The Weavers*) already contained important elements of the political revue, into which Piscator later dissolved the Drama.

> In this early naturalistic work Gorky had painted a picture of a milieu which was conceived in terms of types, according to the conventions of the day, but which still remained narrowly circumscribed. In 1925 I could no longer think in terms of a small room with ten miserable people in it, but only on the scale of the vast slums of the modern city. The subject of discussion was the slum proletariat as a concept. I had to widen the confines of the play to embrace this concept. . . . It was precisely the two moments in the play which we modified to this end which were the most effective in the theater: the opening scene, the snoring and wheezing of a crowd fills the whole stage, the city awakens, streetcar bells ring, then eventually the ceiling was lowered in and closes the room off from its surroundings, and then comes the tumult, not just a little private fight in the back yard, but a whole quarter rebelling against the police, a rising of the masses. Throughout the play my aim was to translate the spiritual anguish of the individual into general terms wherever possible and to make it typical of the present, to open the confined space (by raising the roof) out into the world."[3]

These changes, no doubt adequate for a social dramaturgy, raise questions about dramatic form itself: they deny its absoluteness. The actual stage setting, which in itself is the world of the Drama, a microcosm that stands for the macrocosm, becomes a segment here. Its presentation arises from the notion of the pars-pro-toto. The relationship of the part to the whole, the exemplary significance of limiting the scene to a room and ten people is clearly expressed in the action of lowering the ceiling at the beginning of the performance. Through this gesture, the dramatic scene is brought into contact with the environment it is meant to evoke, and, at the same time, it is enclosed in a demonstrative act and relativized by an epic *I*.

This is the manner in which Piscator corrects the falsification that the "social Drama" necessarily produced because of the contradiction between an alienated and reified conditionality in its thematic and an interpersonal immediacy in its

formal postulate. Through a supplementary turn in his *mise en scène*, Piscator ensured that an adequate form would be given to the historical process of reification and "socialization"—the very process that dramatic transposition into the interpersonal overturned and abolished.[4]

This is clearly the intention of all those scenic innovations that are the source of Piscator's fame.

> Conclusive proof can be based only on scientific analysis of the material. This I can only do, in the language of the stage, if I can get beyond scenes from life, beyond the purely individual aspect of the characters and the fortuitous nature of their fates. And the way to do this is to show the link between the events on stage and the great forces active in history. It is not by chance that factual substance becomes the main thing in each play. It is only from the facts themselves that the constraints and the constant mechanisms of life emerge, giving a deeper meaning to our private fates.[5]*

For Piscator,

> man portrayed on the stage is significant as a social function. It is not his relationship to himself, not his relationship to God, but his relationship to society which is central. Whenever he appears, his class or social statum appears with him. His moral, spiritual or sexual conflicts are conflicts with society. . . . A time in which the relationship of individuals in the community to one another, the revision of human values, the realignment of social relationships is the order of the day cannot fail to see mankind in terms of society and the social problems of the times, i.e., as a political being. . . . The excessive stress on the political angle—and it is not *our* work, but the disharmony in current social conditions which makes every sign of life political—may in a sense lead to a distorted view of human ideals, but the distorted view at least has the advantage of corresponding to reality.[6]
>
> What are the forces of destiny in our own epoch? . . . Economics and politics are our fate, and the result of both is society, the social fabric. . . . Therefore, when I designate the elevation of private scenes to the plane of the historical the basic intent of all stage actions, that can only mean elevation into the political, economic and social. Through them we put the stage in touch with our lives.[7]

The basic formula for Piscator's efforts, the elevation of the scenic to the plane of the historical (formally speaking, a relativizing of the immediacy of the setting by nonactualized objectivity) destroys the absoluteness of the dramatic form and makes way for the rise of epic theater. The use of motion pictures was one means of showing "how human/superhuman factors interact with classes or individuals,"[8] a means that, furthermore, was one of Piscator's clearest and most significant epic gestures.

The development of the motion picture between the end of the century and the 1920s is marked by three discoveries: (1) the mobility of the camera – that is, the shift of focal length, (2) the close-up, and (3) the montage – the composition of an image. With these innovations, film (as B[ela] Baláz's seminal text, *The Visible Man* [1924], has shown) came into possession of means of expression that are particularly its own, through which it finally achieved its position as an autonomous art form. Its discovery, around 1900, was a purely technical achievement: film first served as a technique for bringing the theater to the screen. As a mechanical reproduction of a theatrical production, it could appropriately be called dramatic. But with the artistic discoveries just mentioned (which bring the camera into the picture as a productive force, make modifications of the relationship between camera and object a fruitful means of shaping the image, and allow the sequence of images to be controlled not only by real events but also by the principles of composition used by the director in his montage), the motion picture ceases to be filmed theater and becomes an independent pictorial narrative. It is no longer a technical repetition of the Drama, it is an autonomous, epic art form.

The epic nature of the motion picture, which is grounded in the opposing spaces of the camera and its object, in the subjectively codetermined representation of objectivity as objectivity, allowed Piscator to add to the stage action those things that escaped dramatic actualization – the alienated reification of "the social, the political and the economic." This epic quality allowed him to elevate "the scenic to the plane of the historical."

This is the manner in which Piscator used film in staging such works as Toller's *Hoppla, Such is Life!* (1927). Here as well, it was crucial "to derive the fate of the individual from general historical factors, to establish a dramatic connection between Thomas's fate and the war and revolution of 1918." The central idea of the play was the

> impact of today's world on a man who has spent eight years in isolation. Nine years have to be shown with all their terror, stupidity and triviality. Some conception of the enormities of the period has to be given. The impact will not register with its full force unless the audience sees the yawning chasm. No medium other than film is in a position to let eight interminable years roll by in the course of ten minutes.
>
> For this "film interlude" alone we worked out a script which incorporated four hundred separate items of information about politics, the arts, society, sport, fashion, etc. . . . A small army [was] constantly on the search for authentic footage of the last ten years.[9]

It is not just the inherent epic nature of film that transforms sociopolitical Drama into epic theater when motion pictures are used in a production. The juxtaposition of stage and screen events also has an epic (relativizing) effect. The action on stage ceases to be the sole foundation for the totality of the work. This totality no longer arises dialectically from interpersonal events. Instead, it is a result of the montage of dramatic scenes, film reports, choruses, projections of calendars, pointed allusions, etcetera. The fact that the various parts have become internally relative to one another is emphasized spatially by the various forms of simultaneous setting that Piscator employed. Even time, in the revue mounted in this manner, is no longer that absolute sequence of events in the present constituted by the Drama. Movies leave past events in the past and represent them documentarily. They can also anticipate future events in the stage action and dissolve the essentially dramatic tension about what will happen in the end by means of epic juxtaposition. In A[lexei] Tolstoy's play *Rasputin*, film permitted a "*confrontation* (*for the public*)" between the Tzar's family and its fate by showing its execution before the fact on the screen.[10] And last, the choruses and cries that are directed at the public partake of the flow of real time. Behind all these elements of the revue, however, stands the extravagant, larger-than-life epic *I* who brings them together and disseminates them to the public with the gesture of a political orator: Erwin Piscator in persona. That he saw and presented himself in this light is revealed by a now famous setting:[11] on the giant screen of a three-story stage one sees his monumental profile.

12. Epic Theater: Brecht

Bert Brecht, like Piscator, is a descendant of naturalism. His efforts also begin at that point where the contradiction between social thematic and dramatic form becomes visible: in the naturalist "social Drama." It was not naturalism itself but its internal adversary (an adversary that could only appear in thematic disguise while under the dominion of the Drama's rules of form) that was taken up by Piscator and Brecht and led to a breakthrough at the expense of dramatic form. But whereas Piscator, the director, lifted the revue element out of the antithetical structure of the "social Drama" and transformed it into a new principle of form, Brecht, the dramatist, looked deeper. For him it was a question of enthroning the scientific principle, which, although it belongs essentially to naturalism (as Zola's novels prove), can come into its own only by accident in naturalistic Drama – as a dramatis persona, for example (Loth in *Before Sunrise*). Where Hauptmann transforms the Silesian "coal farmers" into objects scrutinized by a stranger who happens to be a sociologist, Brecht shifts this objectivity from thematic contingency into the institutional stability of form. In his "Short Organum for the Theater," he insists that the scientific eye, to which nature was forced to submit, should turn its regard toward those people who subdued nature and whose lives are now determined by its exploitation. The theater should portray the interpersonal relationships that belong to the age in which nature has

been mastered, or, more precisely, it should show the "division" between people created by this "gigantic joint undertaking."[1] And Brecht is aware that the necessary condition for this portrayal is a renunciation of dramatic form. The increasingly problematic nature of interpersonal relationships calls the Drama itself into question, since dramatic form asserts that these relationships are unproblematic. This explains Brecht's attempt to oppose the Aristotelian theory and practice with a non-Aristotelian epic dramaturgy.

His Notes to the opera *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, published in 1931, lists the following shifts in emphasis from the dramatic to the epic theater.[2]

Dramatic Theater	Epic Theater
The stage "embodies" an event	narrates the event
involves the spectator in an action and	turns the spectator into an observer but
exhausts his capacity for action	arouses his capacity for action
engenders feelings in him	forces him to make decisions
allows him experiences	grants him knowledge
the spectator is transplanted into an action	confronts an action
it operates through suggestion	it operates through argument
sentiments are preserved	brought to the point of recognition
the human being is presumed known	the human being is the object of investigation
he is unalterable	he is alterable and able to change
tension focuses on the conclusion	the tension of process
each scene generates the next	each scene exists for itself
linear development	curves
natura non facit saltus	*facit saltus*
the world as it is	the world as it becomes
what man ought to do	what he must do
his instincts	his reasons for action
thought determines being	social being determines thought

What these changes have in common is that they replace the essentially dramatic transformation of subject and object into one another with an epic confrontation. Thus, in art, scientific objectivity is transformed into epic objectivity and pervades all levels of the stage play—its structure, its language, and its *mise en scène* as well.

The events unfolding on stage no longer completely fill out the performance the way dramatic events had previously. This earlier dramatic practice led to the elimination of the fact of the performance (noted historically in the disappearance of the prologue during the Renaissance). The flow of events is now the object of a stage narrative—the stage is to these events what the narrator is to the object of his narration. It is only the confrontation of the two that produces the totality of the work. Likewise, the spectator is not excluded from the play; neither is he pulled into the play by its suggestive power (caught in its illusion) in such a way that he ceases to be a spectator. Instead, as spectator, he is confronted by the events, which are proposed as an object for his consideration. Because the action does not, by itself, complete and dominate the work, it can no longer transform the time of the performance into an absolute unfolding of time in the present. The present of the performance is, as it were, broader than that of the action; therefore, rather than focusing exclusively on a conclusion that comes of its own course, the performance grants recourse to the past and acknowledges the present course of events as well. The dramatic concern with ends is replaced by an epic freedom to pause and reflect. Since the active individual has now become the object of the theatrical performance, the performance itself can go beyond this individual and ask questions about the causal grounds for his actions. According to Hegel,[3] the Drama shows only that which the hero's subjectivity objectifies in action and that which this action retains of the objective world and transfers into subjectivity. In epic theater, on the other hand, and in line with its scientific-sociological intention, there is a process of reflection on the social "base" of actions and their reified alienation.

As author and director, Brecht produced an almost endless wealth of dramaturgic and scenic ideas in order to transform this theory into practice. These ideas, and those he borrowed, served to isolate and alienate the traditional elements of the Drama and its staging, both of which were familiar to the public. This isolation and alienation from the total movement that typifies the Drama transformed them into scenic-epic elements—that is, into objects on display. Thus, Brecht named them "estrangement effects." Of the profusion of such effects realized or suggested in his works, in the Notes and in his "Short Organum," only a few will be mentioned here.

The play in its totality can be estranged through the use of a prologue, a curtain-raiser, or through the projection of captions. Since it is expressly presented, the play no longer possesses the absoluteness of the Drama; it now refers to the newly uncovered fact of "representation"—becomes the object of

this representation. The individual dramatis personae can estrange themselves by introducing themselves or by speaking of themselves in the third person. This is what takes place when Pelagea Vlassova speaks at the beginning of Brecht's adaptation of Gorky's *The Mother*.

> It's such a shame to pour out soup like this for my son. Yet I can't put more fat in. Not even half a spoonful. Only last week they took a kopek an hour out of his wages and there's nothing I can do to make up for it. . . . What am I to do—I, Pelagea Vlassova, forty-two years old, the widow of a worker and the mother of a worker?[4]

The roles in a play are further estranged by the actor, who, in the epic theater, is not allowed to submerge himself entirely in the character. "He has just to show the character, or rather has to do more than just get into it; this does not mean that if he is playing a passionate part he must himself remain cold. It is only that his feelings must not at bottom be those of the character, so that the audience's [feelings] may not at bottom be those of the character either.[5] A role can also be estranged by redepicting it in the setting. Or through "subjective descriptions of morals":

> Now let's drink another
> Then we still won't head for home
> Then we'll drink another
> Then we'll take a little break.

Brecht remarks that "the people who sing this are subjective moralists. They are describing themselves."[6] The stage, which no longer signifies the world but only depicts it, loses its absoluteness and, at the same time, loses its apron, which had helped create the illusion that the stage generated its own light. The stage is lit by lamps hung among the spectators—as a clear sign that something is on display for them. The decors are estranged. They no longer give the impression of real places. As an independent element of the epic theater, they "quoted, narrated, anticipated and reminded."[7] In addition to indicating the place of action, the stage can also have a screen for projections: texts and documentary pictures can be used (as Piscator did) to show the context in which events take place. The unfolding action, which no longer has the linear resoluteness and necessity of the Drama about it, can be estranged by the projection of textual commentary, by choruses, songs, or even by the cries of "news vendors" in the house. They interrupt the action and comment on it.

> As we cannot invite the audience to fling itself into the story as if it were a river and let itself be carried vaguely hither and thither, the individual episodes have to be knotted together in such a way that the knots are easily noticed. The episodes must not succeed one another

> indistinguishably but must give us a chance to interpose our judgment. (If it were above all the obscurity of the original interrelations that interested us, then just this circumstance would have to be sufficiently estranged.)[8]

And to further estrange the spectator, Brecht (following the example of the futurists) suggested that they smoke while watching the play.

Through these estrangement techniques, the subject-object opposition that is at the origin of epic theater (the self-alienation of the individual, whose own social being has become reified) is precipitated formally on all levels of the work and, thus, becomes its general formal principle. Dramatic form rests on the interpersonal relation; the thematic of the Drama is constituted by the conflicts generated by this relation. Here, on the other hand, the interpersonal relation becomes entirely thematic and is removed from the certainty of form to the uncertainty of content. And the new formal principle consists of a pointed distance between the individual and what has become questionable; the epic subject-object opposition appears in a scientific-pedagogical modality in Brecht's epic theater. In the "Short Organum," he designates "the exposition of the story and its communication by suitable means of alienation" as "the main business of the theater."[9]

13. Montage: Bruckner

To give scenic expression to the separation marking the lives of the people of his era, Strindberg set the facade of a house on stage. But its role was of a subordinate and even antithetical nature in the formal whole of *The Ghost Sonata*—a role that revealed only the general contradiction between the theme of isolation and the dramatic form that pervades this work. The apartment house, with its numerous places of action, remained in the background. The square in front of the house ensured the unity of place. And in this open scenic space, it is the mediation of Hummel, the company director, that allows the motif embodied by the closed house to achieve dramatic form. He tells the Student, a "stranger"[1] who happens to be passing by, about the occupants of the house. Thus, the epic process—narration itself—appeared in the guise of a dramatic fable.

On the other hand, two dramatists of the 1920s, Georg Kaiser in *Side by Side* (1923) and Ferdinand Bruckner in *The Criminals* (1929), tried to provide an unmediated view of the epic quality inherent in life when it is lived "next to" rather than "with" others. They attempted to go beyond the Drama to give this epic situation adequate form. Yet, there is a particular affinity between *The Criminals* and *The Ghost Sonata*.

Bruckner, too, set a three-story house on stage, but his three stories filled the entire stage. When the curtain went up, it was not a square in front of the house

that came into view, as in *The Ghost Sonata*, but seven separate rooms inside the house. This also made it possible to forgo the use of figures whose task it was to mediate between the epic theme and dramatic form. Hummel was, as it were, moved into the background and reabsorbed in the formal subjectivity of the work. The Student, on the other hand, was shifted forward, into the house. Their juxtaposition, which, in *The Ghost Sonata*, creates a motivated narrative situation that is inscribed in the dramatic form, was recast by Bruckner as a confrontation between the invisible epic *I* and the spectator—a confrontation which is itself the new principle underlying form.

At this point, the manner in which the action unfolds changes too. Since *The Ghost Sonata* held fast to dramatic form, it could not portray the side-by-side existence of individuals as a synchronous unfolding of separate actions. Only the first act could present them in their separateness, since in that act these individuals were not carriers but merely objects of the dialogue. The second act, however, assembled them at the "ghost supper" and combined their fates into a single dramatic action. In *The Criminals*, Bruckner handles the problem differently. In this work, the simultaneous setting corresponds to the temporal dimension in which five individual actions run parallel to one another. Of course, these actions are connected, but not in the manner dramatic form requires. They are not provided with concrete links to a single situation; instead, their connection stems from the fact that they are individually tied to the same theme, to the possible congruity or incongruity that may exist between legal decisions and justice. *The Criminals* is not just a play about how people exist next to but separate from one another, it is also about the problem of justice. The unity of these two themes becomes clear during a conversation in the second act of Bruckner's work, in which two judges argue about the nature of justice.

> *Older Judge*: The community of man is predicated on a shared notion of the law.
>
> *Younger Judge*: And I have only seen real demonstrations of community at those moments when this shared notion of the law has been overthrown, at those moments when one talks about criminals. The negative form is that of dull, egocentric, side by side existence, of watching, of non-participation. Those are the only real crimes, since they have their origin in a complacency of the heart, an inertia of the spirit—thus a total denial of the principle of life and the idea of a community. But these crimes are left unpunished. The other, opposite sort of actions indicate a will to life, and that alone is sufficient to deem them positive, but in every case in which a verdict is rendered, they are punished as crimes.[2]

The reversal of the relationship between communication and isolation proposed here with regard to justice and injustice, rule and exception, certainty and doubt, is central to the formal concept of the play. The interpersonal relation is the unproblematic/formal framework for the Drama. By answering the call of duty, the tragic hero separates himself from this framework and makes himself guilty of isolation, as does the comic character when at the mercy of an idée fixe. Thus, the problematic of an actualized/thematic isolation remains within the certainty of the interpersonal while emerging at the two extremes of the Drama, tragedy and comedy. Not so in Bruckner's play. Its unproblematic framework is life disjoined—isolation. Therefore, an epic presentation, a structure in which an isolated being is placed in relation to the epic *I*, replaces dramatic form and the absoluteness of interpersonal events. When this happens, communication becomes thematic—becomes an exception and is perverted to the criminal within the space of "egocentric, side by side existence." This thematic reintroduction of the interpersonal in no way allows the epic work to fold itself back into the dramatic, however. Instead, the dubious/objective nature of the interpersonal calls for further representation. Within the epic form, which already contains a subject-object relationship, the interpersonal must appear as the object in a second thematic relation. The second and central act satisfies this exigency: the incidents of the first act reappear, but are objectified thematically as the focus of courtroom proceedings.

This thematic consolidation corresponds to that which takes place formally. In a loose combination of juxtaposed and successive steps, the first act marks the descent into crime of a few inhabitants of the tenement: a poor, old woman who sells the jewelry she has been saving for her brother-in-law in order to raise her children; a young girl who wants to kill herself and her newborn baby, but hesitates in the face of death, saves herself, and thus becomes a child murderer; a cook who kills her rival and shifts the suspicion onto her sweetheart to take vengeance on him too; a young man who gives testimony in favor of a blackmailer because he wants to hide his homosexuality; and a young employee who dips into the till so he can travel abroad with the mother of a friend. All of this is depicted in the first act, but not dramatically—not by meshing the individual moments. Instead, a few pregnant scenes, presented in loose succession, point the way to the past and the future. Actually they sketch rather than represent the actual events. The scenes do not engender one another in closed functionality as in the Drama; they are the oeuvre of the epic *I*, who shifts his spotlight from one place in the tenement to another. The spectator catches fragments of dialogue. When he has grasped their significance and can imagine the results, the light moves on and illuminates another scene. Everything is thus relativized by the epic technique and integrated into a narrative act. The individual scene does not dominate as it does in the Drama; the spotlight can leave it at any moment, can thrust it back into the dark. This shows that reality has neither achieved dramatic openness on its own nor moved continually within such openness. Rather, reality must first be disclosed through an epic process. Of course, this process

cannot function without dialogue because it does not allow its *I* to speak as narrator, but it does make it possible for the dialogue to disavow itself. Because the dialogue no longer has to take responsibility for the forward movement of the work (the epic *I* guarantees this movement), it can unravel into Chekhovian monologue or even revert to silence and thereby renounce dialogue as such.

The diversity of the first act contrasts with the unity of the second. Even though simultaneous settings are used again and three floors of a criminal court appear in place of those of the tenement, the relationship between the individual spaces and actions is now totally different. Their simultaneousness is augmented by a unity that is revealed in the courtroom proceedings. They no longer show different aspects of life in a metropolis but, instead, the mechanical uniformity of legal judgments. A formal modification marks this shift. The scene changes no longer depend on the narrator's freedom to turn first to one group of figures and then to another. What is essential now is that the fragments of the various proceedings blend to form a unified picture of the court of law. This is achieved by using the domino principle of fictive sameness to blur the transitions. One trial breaks off at the point where a judge says, "The evidence is clear," the area is darkened, another courtroom is lit, and the spectator enters a new trial at the point where a new judge utters the same words.[3] Thereafter, other expressions are used in the same manner: "I ask the witness"[4]; "Do you know the accused?"[5]; "The prosecutor has the floor"[6]; "The idea of punishment would lose all meaning"[7]; "What is the nature of justice?"[8]; and "In the name of the people"[9]. The individual scene transcends its dramatic exclusiveness in each of these phrases. Each scene quotes from the world of real courts of law and, through the quotation, slips into another scene. There is no organic bond between two successive scenes. Continuity is simulated by their articulation with regard to a third term with which they are associated: the court of law. They form a montage. The formal-historical significance of this technique can only be alluded to, because it belongs to the pathology of the epic and painting and not to that of the theatrical work. That the tendency toward the epic in the dramaturgy of the twentieth century did not secure the position of the epic, that, even in the interior of the epic, antithetical forces accumulated, becomes evident quite by chance in the example of the *monologue intérieur* discussed earlier.[10] Not only interiorization and its methodological result, psychologization, but also the alienation of the external world and its corollary, phenomenology, stand in opposition to the traditional role of the epic narrator.[11] In addition, montage is the epic art form that disavows the narrator. While narration perpetuates the narrative act—does not break the link with its subjective origin, the narrator—montage freezes at the moment of its production and, like the Drama, fosters the impression that it in itself embodies something whole.* It points to the narrator only as to a brand name—montage is mass-produced epic.

14. Enacting the Impossibility of the Drama: Pirandello

*Six Characters in Search of an Author** has for decades been considered by many to be the quintessence of the modern Drama. However, its historical role hardly corresponds to the occasion that, according to Pirandello's preface, inspired the play: a breakdown in the workings of his imagination. The question is, why are the six characters "in search of an author"; why did not Pirandello become this author? In response, the dramatist explains that fantasy once brought six characters into his house. But he rejected them, because he saw no "higher meaning" in their fate that could justify giving them form. Only their stubborn desire for life allowed Pirandello to discover this "higher meaning," but it was no longer what he had expected. Instead of the Drama of their past, he composed the Drama of their new adventures—their search for a different author. There is no reason to cast critical doubt on this statement; nor is the critic prevented from placing another next to it, one that can be extracted from the work itself, one that eliminates mere accident as its reason for coming into being and points out the historical significance of this origin. Soon after the entrance of the six characters—another play is being rehearsed on stage—their spokesman mentions the dramatist's rejection and enlarges in the following manner on the explanation given in the preface: "the author who created us alive no longer wished, *or was no longer able*, materially to put us into a work of art."[1]* The notion that it was less a question of will than of ability or, objectively stated, of possibility is confirmed frequently throughout the rest of the play. The attempt made by the six characters to stage their Drama with the help of the rehearsing troupe not only makes it possible to recognize the piece that Pirandello allegedly refused to write but also grants insight into the reasons why that play was doomed to failure from the start.

It is an analytical Drama in the vein of Ibsen's late works or Pirandello's *Henry IV* (which was written at about the same time as *Six Characters*). The first act unfolds at the home of the procuress, Madame Pace, where a visitor discovers that the girl offered him is his step-daughter. This act closes with the shrill cry of his former wife, the girl's mother, who has suddenly appeared. The place of action for the second act is the garden of the Father's house. He takes back his ex-wife and her three children despite his son's objections. Each of them is hostile toward the others: The Son toward the Mother, because she left the Father; the Step-Daughter toward her step-father, because of his visit to Madame Pace's; the Father toward the Step-Daughter, because she judges him solely on the basis of this one faux pas; the Son toward his half-sister, because she is the child of a stranger. In an Ibsenesque analysis, the parent's past is slowly revealed and the error in the Father's well-intended but destructive principles is discovered. "All my life I have had these confounded aspirations towards a certain moral sanity,"[2]* is his explanation for the fact that he married a woman

because of her humble origins, without loving her; that he took her son from her to give him to a wet nurse in the country. When the Mother receives sympathy and understanding from her husband's secretary, the Father believes he must forgo his claim to her, so he lets them establish a new family. Even the benevolent interest that he shows them afterward proves to be pernicious: out of jealousy, the secretary goes abroad with his wife and children, and they are forced to return home in poverty when he dies. The Mother sews for Madame Pace, her daughter delivers the finished work. The play ends with an unmotivated catastrophe, as do many "analytical dramas": one child drowns in a well and the other shoots himself with a pistol.

The project of completing this play according to the rules of classical dramaturgy would not only have required Ibsen's mastery but his blind violence as well. Pirandello clearly saw the manner in which the material and its intellectual postulates would resist dramatic form, however. Therefore, he did without it, and instead of overcoming the resistance, he firmly confined it to the thematic. Thus arises a work that replaces the one originally planned—a work that deals with the impossibility of the latter.

The conversations between the six characters and the manager of the troupe not only present a sketch of the original play but also give expression to the forces that, ever since Ibsen and Strindberg, have called the Drama into question. The Mother and Son are reminiscent of Ibsen's characters[3]; but because they are not subdued by the dramatist, they can reveal how much they hate dialogic-scenic openness.

The Mother: I beg you, sir, to prevent this man from carrying out his plan which is loathsome to me.[4]
My God! Why are you so cruel? Isn't it enough for one person to support all this torment? Must you than insist on others seeing it also?[5]
The Son: I had rather not say what I feel and think about it. I shouldn't even care to confess to myself. No action can therefore be hoped for from me in this affair.[6]
Have you no decency, that you insist on showing everyone our shame? I won't do it! I won't! And I stand for the will of our author in this. He didn't want to put us on the stage, after all.[7]

Even the fact that the Son's attitude makes the unity of place impossible is discussed—it would require him to interact precisely with those others from whom he wishes to withdraw:

The Manager: Are we going to begin this second act or not?
The Step-Daughter: I'm not going to talk any more now. But I must tell you this: you can't have the whole action take place in the garden, as you suggest. It isn't possible.
The Manager: Why not?

The Step-Daughter: Because he (*indicates the Son again*) is always shut up alone in his room.[8]

In other scenes, naturalism prevails in the daughter's protests. The idea of the theater as an imitation of reality is so strong here that it is doomed to failure—a failure produced by the irreconcilable difference between the real scene and the theatrical scenery, between the character and the actor.[9] At the same time, the Step-Daughter represents the Strindbergian *I* that demands sole rule of the stage. The criticism she receives from the Manager because of this can be read as a critique of subjective dramaturgy in general.

The Step-Daughter: . . . but I want to act my part, *my part*!
The Manager: (*annoyed, shaking his shoulders*) Ah! Just *your* part! But, if you will pardon me, there are other parts than yours: His (*indicating the Father*) and hers! (*indicating the Mother*) On the stage you can't have a character becoming too prominent and overshadowing all the others. The thing is to pack them all into a neat little framework and then act what is actable. I am aware of the fact that everyone has his own interior life which he wants very much to put forward. But the difficulty lies in this fact: to set out just so much as is necessary for the stage, taking the other characters into consideration, and at the same time hint at the unrevealed interior life of each. I am willing to admit . . . that . . . it would be a fine idea if each character could tell the public all his troubles in a nice monologue or a regular one hour lecture.[10]

But it is only in the role of the Father that Pirandello's deepest concerns are expressed. That they involve the breakup of the Drama remains, of course, unsaid—either because the Father has hopes of actually creating a Drama or because Pirandello did not want to imply that his ideas were valid only for the Drama. Nevertheless, the existential presuppositions for the Drama have seldom been called into question so sharply as by the subjectivity of Pirandello's philosophy of life. It is on this before all else that the Drama of the six characters founders, and it also explains their forever unsuccessful search for an author.

The Father: But don't you see that the whole trouble lies here. In words, words. Each one of us has within him a whole world of things, each man of us his own special world. And how can we ever come to an understanding if I put in the words I utter the sense and value of things as I see them; while you who listen must inevitably translate them according to the conception of things each one of you has within himself. We think we understand each other, but we never really do.[11]
For the drama lies all in this—in the conscience that I have, that each one of us has. We believe this conscience to be a single thing,

> but it is manysided. There is one for this person, and another for that. Diverse consciences. So we have this illusion of being one person for all, of having a personality that is unique in all our acts. But it isn't true. We perceive this when, tragically perhaps, in something we do, we are as it were, suspended, caught up in the air on a kind of hook. Then we perceive that all of us was not in that act, and that it would be an atrocious injustice to judge us by that action alone, as if all our existence were summed up in that one deed.[12]

If the first of these quotations denies the possibility of verbal understanding, the second takes aim at action as a valid objectification of the subject. Contrary to the creed of dramatic form, which holds that dialogue and action are, in their finality, an adequate expression of being, Pirandello sees in them an illicit and injurious limitation on the endless multiplicity of internal life.

As a critique of the Drama, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* is an epic rather than a dramatic work. As in all "epic dramaturgy," that which had constituted the form of the Drama is thematic here. The fact that this theme is not dealt with as the general problem of the interpersonal (as in Giraudoux's *Sodome et Gomorrhe*) but, rather, in terms of the questionable nature of the Drama, as a search for an author and an effort at dramatic realization, explains the special position of this work in modern dramaturgy. It becomes almost a self-representation of the history of the Drama. At the same time, it represents a further, intermediate step in the development of the epic. The subject-object opposition is still masked, but this mask is no longer at one with the real action (as it still is in Strindberg's *Ghost Sonata* and Hauptmann's *Before Sunrise*).[13] The thematic operates on two different levels: the dramatic (the past of the six characters), which is no longer able to generate a form, and a second level that answers for the form and is epic in its relation to the first. This second level corresponds to the appearance of the six characters at the rehearsal and the attempt to embody their Drama. They narrate and perform their fate themselves with the Manager and his troupe as their public. The breakup of the dramatic nexus is not yet complete, however, because the epic action that frames the first (dramatic) level makes use of dramatic form and, thus, raises no questions about interpersonal actuality—the very thing that, in the real movement of the play, cannot be relied on. Only when the narrative situation is no longer thematic and no longer dialogic/scenic can the idea of the epic theater be fully realized. Otherwise it will always be open to the seduction of a pseudo-dramatic conclusion. In *Six Characters*, the two thematic levels, whose separation constitutes the formal principle of the work, become one in the end: a shot kills the Boy both in the past narrated by the six characters and in the present on stage while the actors rehearse. And the curtain, which, following the dictates of the epic theater,[14] was already up

at the beginning in order to mix the reality of the rehearsal with that of the spectators, falls, nonetheless, in the end.

15. *Monologue Intérieur:* O'Neill

Dramatis personae have always been able to avail themselves of an occasional aside. But such passing suspension of dialogue does not refute the assertion that dramatic form has dialoguing as its principle; nor is it the famous exception that proves the rule (this expression is meaningless). Instead, it is indirect proof of the strength of the dialogic stream, which survives such interruptions as if it were beyond dialogue. This is possible, however, only because the aside, as it is known in genuine Drama, has no tendency to destroy dialogue; here too, G[eorg] Lukács's previously cited comment about the monologue holds true.[1] The content of the *à part* is not essentially different from that of dialogue.* It does not come from a deeper stratum of the subject and is not in some sense the inner truth that shows dialogue to be the lie of the external. It is not by accident that comedy is the special realm of the *à part*: in comedy the possibility of communication is compromised least of all, and there is no need for an inner, psychic reality. But the momentary destruction of this secure dialogic realm is what is most comic. Thus the misunderstanding and confusion that make up the whole of such works as Molière's farce *Sganarelle; ou, Le cocu imaginaire*. In it the *à part* reveals its main function: to give pointed emphasis to the misunderstanding and confusion. Furthermore, it is no accident that the great dramatists of the past did not use the *à part* in the most deeply problematic encounters of their plays, whereas, in like situations, such means would force themselves upon today's authors. One need only reread Racine's dialogue between Phaedra and Hippolytus[2] or Schiller's between Mary and Elizabeth[3] to see the difference. It is precisely because the dialogic structure is being attacked at its foundations that the *à part* cannot appear. The dialogue must engage itself totally in the struggle for its own continuity if, in fact, dramatic form is to be preserved. And, although comedy and tragedy permeate each other in genuine Drama, as in Kleist's *Amphitryon*, the aside tends readily toward the comic pole. Therefore, Jupiter's "curse the madness that lured me here"[4]—the suggestion of divine tragedy—constantly runs the danger of not being taken seriously because it is the remark of someone who has been duped.

Hebbel's Dramas point with particular clarity to the historical change in the significance of the aside that took place when modern dramaturgy came into being. Rudolf Kassner saw in the heroes of these plays individuals "who had long been by themselves, speechless."[5] In fact, for them the aside is rather a "by-one's-self,"—even an "in-one's-self," a sort of speech without words. Asides are no longer a function of the situation; instead, the situation gives rise to the occasion in which they reveal the inner being of the individual of whom they are al-

ready an externalization. Thus, Herod's mad idea is already announced in the seemingly innocent conversation of the first scene, owing to an interpolated "for-one's-self." Judas, a captain, reports to him about the raging fire of the previous night and speaks of a woman who refused to leave the burning house.

> *Herod*: She must have been demented!
> *Judas*: Possibly
> Her mind had been upset by pain and grief!
> Her husband had just died a while before,
> His body lay still warm upon the bed.
> *Herod* (*aside*): That I will surely tell to Mariamne
> And watch her while I tell her! (*aloud*) Probably
> This woman had no child! But if she had,
> I will take care of it! She shall herself
> Be buried richly and with royal splendor,
> She was, it may well be, the queen of women![6]

And in the decisive conversation:

> *Herod*: If ever I
> Myself lay dying I could even do
> What you expect Salome would, prepare
> A poison in your wine and give it to you,
> So I should still be sure of you in death!
> *Mariamne*: If you did that, you would no doubt recover!
> *Herod*: Oh no! For I would share this poison with you!
> But tell me whether you could e'er forgive
> Such an excess of love as that would be!
> *Mariamne*: If after drinking such a drink I still
> Had only breath enough for one last word,
> Then I would curse you with that final word!
> (*aside*) Yes, all the more, the more I'm sure that I
> Could reach out for the dagger in my grief
> To kill myself if death should call you hence:
> That one can do, not have it done to him![7]

Here the aside does not correct the error of an external situation; in it the conversation with Herod is, rather, carried forward within Mariamne. It reveals her inmost feelings, feelings that do not deny but fundamentally deepen what she says. It is not two different beings that speak in Mariamne—one who dissembles before Herod and one who is really her. She would not betray herself (as Kleist's Jupiter did, e.g.,) if she said everything aloud; but she has feelings that her spirit prevents her from sharing with her consort. And that she must at this point remain silent about her real love for Herod contributes significantly to our understanding of her nature.

Thus, Hebbel's use of the aside anticipates the *monologue intérieur* technique employed by the psychological novelists of the twentieth century; and one can understand why modern dramaturgy allowed itself to be animated by Joyce's school in its extended use of the *à part*. In this sense, Eugene O'Neill's nine-act Drama, *Strange Interlude* (1928), not only records the conversations of its eight heroes but also continually notes their thoughts, which they cannot share because they feel too estranged from one another. This is demonstrated indirectly at the beginning of the last act. For the first time, the inward monologues are silenced when two young lovers face each other—lovers who, for the moment at least, know nothing of the gulf between human beings. But because the *à part* shares equally with the dialogue the responsibility for shaping the form, it loses the right to this designation. It makes sense to speak of the aside only in a space in which, in principle, people speak to one another. Here, however, the *à part* is not a passing self-suppression of the dialogue; it stands autonomous, next to dramatic dialogue, as the psychological report of an epic *I*. Therefore, *Strange Interlude* takes the form of a montage constructed of dramatic and epic parts. The montage requires an epic *I* not simply to provide the psychological insights of the *à part* but also to ensure its formal completeness, because the continuity of the work can no longer be derived from the dialogue itself. If soliloquies followed one another without any dialogue, time would stand still; no epic *I* would hold them on course. But the epic *monteur* of *Strange Interlude* can be understood in terms other than those of the psychological Drama. The naturalistic novelist lives on in him as well, a descendant of Zola, who no longer has a word to put in about his hero—to say nothing of a good word; a descendant who now only registers, machinelike, the outer and inner speech provided him by individuals in the unfree space of genetic and psychological laws.

16. The Epic *I* as Stage Manager: Wilder

Hardly another work of the modern theater is at once so bold in the formal realm and of such moving simplicity in the statement it makes as Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* (1938). In it the melancholy lyric quality that everyday events assume shows Wilder's debt to Chekhov; but his formal innovations represent an attempt to free the Chekhovian heritage from its contradictions and provide it with an adequate form beyond that of the Drama. Chekhov (like Hauptmann and others) did not wish to forgo dramatic form. Therefore, he had to give his heroes at least the beginnings of dramatic life, despite the fact that this life did not unfold in the sphere of conflict and decision. Uniform, uneventful, deeply impersonal, and tedious events became immediate/interpersonal events and acquired the appearance of uniqueness. But, Wilder did not want to prove himself disloyal to his theme for these purely formal reasons. Therefore, he released the action from its dramatic function—that is, allowed it to generate form out of its own

inner oppositions. He transferred this responsibility to a new character, the Stage Manager, who stood outside the thematic space in the pivotal position occupied by the narrator. Since, for him, the dramatis personae function as objects of the performance, the fact of performance, which was always hidden in genuine Drama, becomes explicit here.[1] One can speak of the "destruction of illusion" at this point, but the notion, which comes from romantic dramaturgy, may not be borrowed uncritically. In terms of the psychology of reception, dramatic "illusion" designates the homogeneous world of the Drama, its absolute quality.[2] Illusion is destroyed when the structure of the Drama becomes differentiated, when another (supra- or intra-personal) relation cuts across the interpersonal. In both Tieck's "romantic irony" and Wilder's "epic theater," this relationship operates between the subject and the object of consciousness, but with one essential difference: the roles in Tieck's comedy, being projections of the early romantic subject, are conscious of themselves as objects—that is, they become their own objects,* whereas in *Our Town* it is the Stage Manager who is conscious of the roles as roles and, thus, represents a subject-object relationship external to them—precisely that epic relationship existing between the narrator and his object. The result of the romantic's destruction of illusion was to give shape to the actual loss of the world as it was experienced by the now all-powerful *I*. The destruction of illusion in the modern "drama" on the other hand, leads to that aestheticized representation of reality supplied by all epic writing.

Dramatic action is replaced by scenic narrative, the order of which is determined by the Stage Manager. The individual parts do not, as in the Drama, engender one another; they are bound together in a whole by the epic *I* according to a plan that moves beyond individual events to the general. Because of this, the element of tension found in the Drama also recedes; the individual scene no longer carries within it the seed of the next. The exposition, the dramatization of which (i.e., its inclusion in the unfolding action) may never have been as difficult as it was in this case, can retain its epic objectivity here. The first act is called "the Daily Life"[3]: morning, midday, and evening, it briefly depicts the lives of two families. Because these scenes have no dramatic function conferred on them, they are not required to give life the sharp edge of conflictual situations; everything indicates that the day presented, May 7, 1901, is a day like every other. Even the portrayal of the two neighboring families is based on their representativeness; neither the doctor's nor the editor's family has special or characteristic features: each has two children, a boy and a girl, each has problems common to every family, and each conveys details in its conversations that stand for a thousand other families. "Love and Marriage" is the title of the second act. It is July 7, 1904, the day on which the doctor's son and the editor's daughter marry. It too is a day that begins like all others. Then come the wedding preparations. To explain the wedding, the Stage Manager reaches back into the past and grants new scenic presence to the conversation in which George and

Emily discover their mutual feelings. Following this conversation comes another, also from the past, in which George's parents discuss the impending marriage. Next comes the wedding ceremony, again presented not as something singular and immediate but as an event the advent and significance of which is common to the life of almost every individual. The Stage Manager says, "There are a lot of things to be said about a wedding; there are a lot of thoughts that go on during a wedding. We can't get them all into *one* wedding, naturally, and especially not into a wedding at Grover's Corners, where they're awfully plain and short. In this wedding I play the minister. That gives me the right to say a few more things about it."[4] The representative character of the action is so exposed that the Stage Manager can add a verbal supplement to the scenic presentation when the latter is insufficient. The same thing occurs in the third act, which is about death. Nine years later, in the summer of 1913, Emily dies while giving birth to her second child. She is buried in Grover's Corners cemetery.

But the Stage Manager does not simply take over the task of ensuring a formal whole—a task that had belonged to the action. In him the thematic that had produced the crisis in the Drama at the turn of the century precipitates as form. The earlier fragmentation of interpersonal relationships had produced a paradoxical situation for the dialogue: the more unstable its existential underpinnings became, the more obliged it was to resolve in dialogic form the alienated matter that came from extradialogic spaces—from the past[5] or social conditions.[6] Here, the Stage Manager takes over from the dialogic action the task of presenting this objective material. The intrathematic, epic distance that Ibsen's characters maintained regarding the past and that Hauptmann's characters maintained regarding the political and economic conditions of their lives—despite dramatic form—achieves formal expression in the epic posture of the Stage Manager. He replaces the mediating figures found within the action of the transitional plays of Strindberg and Hauptmann: the company director, Hummel,[7] and the social scientist, Loth.[8]

The temporal context for *Our Town's* three widely separated acts, along with the past and the future, is given epic presentation in the incidental information added by the Stage Manager. His description of the surrounding world is even more significant, however: the town of Grover's Corners, with its geographical, political, cultural, and religious conditions. What the naturalist playwright, in an effort doomed to failure, had painstakingly tried to translate into immediate/interpersonal events is here reported to the public by the Stage Manager, by a "university professor," and by the editor, who is also part of the action. This information is provided in the form of an introduction and between the first three scenes. The spectator is instructed in ironic but precise scientific fashion about the background upon which the lives of the two families will be played out—but only as representatives of the life of the town. Even though this play preserves the naturalist desire to expose the surrounding world as the determining factor

in individual existence, it also tries to rid the dialogic realm of the objective elements that had constantly threatened to transpose the dialogue of the transitional plays into epic description. The absence of a stage set and properties can be understood as the external signs of this effort. The objective can appear only in the Stage Manager's report; the stage itself must remain free to accommodate the already endangered and reduced interpersonal events. Because of this epic shaping of external conditions, the dialogue in *Our Town* achieves a transparence and purity that only the lyric Drama has possessed in the post neoclassical period. Thus, Wilder's epic theater proves to be more than a renunciation of the Drama; it is also an attempt to prepare a new site and an epic framework for the very substance of the Drama—the dialogue.

The degree to which the dialogue is called into question from within becomes apparent in the last act, however, when Wilder manages to resubmerge both the formal principle and the insight that led to it in the thematic. Emily, carried to her grave, longs to be with the living and not among the dead. In vain the dead try to dissuade her. She dares to face the painful disappointment she has been told awaits her and asks the Stage Manager if she can relive at least one day of her life—her twelfth birthday. The Stage Manager's epic freedom to reach back in time and make the past present once more[9] is transformed into an almost godlike freedom at this point: he can revivify the past for the dead. This day is no longer presented for the spectators but for an onlooking dramatis persona; and the narrator's epic distance from the life he depicts becomes simply the distance between the dead and life. Just as in Hofmannsthal's early work, and frequently thereafter,[10] the perennial self-alienation of the individual is illustrated from the perspective of dying or death, the only vantage point that could really justify such distancing of the individual from himself. The image the dead have of the living thus proves to be the deathly picture that today's individual has of himself.

Emily: . . . Live people don't understand do they?
Mrs. Gibbs: No, dear—not very much.
Emily: They're sort of shut up in little boxes aren't they?[11]

This is one insight that death makes possible. The other can be understood only by inverting it; only then does it become a real insight.

Emily: . . . Why should that be painful: [That is, her return.]
Stage Manager: You not only live it; but you watch yourself living it.[12]

Although estranged as the experience of a dead person, if these lines did not express a basic experience of people living today, the tragic aspect of the next scene, which involves Emily both as participating child and as onlooking woman would be incomprehensible to the spectator. The fact that Emily also continually sees herself is the obverse of that blindness she recognizes in the living: "every-

body's inevitable self-preoccupation." In this statement, taken from one of his letters, Wilder joins the two and makes a reference to Chekhov. "Chekhov's plays are always exhibiting this: Nobody hears what anyone else says. Everybody walks in a self-centered dream. . . . It is certainly one of the principle points that the Return to the Birthday makes."[13] Wilder's renunciation of dramatic form—of dialogue as the sole mode of expression—can also be understood on the basis of this insight.

17. The Play of Time: Wilder

"It is high time I should come out into the open air again. . . . Nearly three years in detention—five years in prison—eight years in the gallery up there." This is the manner in which time is presented in Ibsen's analytical Drama; it is named and calculated.[1] But the possibility of expressing the essence of time, its duration, its passing, and the changes it produces, was denied Ibsen the dramatist, because such expression is possible only in a literary form that allows the joint, thematic, and formal representation of two different points in time. Their quantitative and qualitative difference is the only evidence that time, in its all-transforming flight, leaves behind. But the temporal structure of the Drama is one of absolute linear sequentiality.[2] In it only the (always) present moment is visible, a moment turned toward the future, of course—one that destroys itself for the sake of the future moment. The accord between action and temporal movement expressed by this sort of tightened focus on the (always) present is not the same as that sense of time generated by Ibsen's protagonists, however. The idle reflection that marks them seems to lift them out of the flow of time and allows them their first real opportunity to give it thematic expression. Ibsen takes this into account by dramatizing only the last chapter in the life story of his protagonists and by unfolding this scenically presented finale analytically, in the form of conversations. The simultaneous epic representation of different points in time is, therefore, at least achieved thematically, even if at the expense of the dramatic action and its absolute linear presence, which, because of the all-dominant analysis, are no longer "dramatic." Of course, this critique is not applicable to the dramaturgic tradition with which Ibsen is frequently, but erroneously, associated. Dramatists have regularly found themselves faced with material whose temporal dimension made it appear unsuitable for the Drama. If they did not want to give it up entirely (as was the case for Grillparzer and his Napoleon material), they were obliged to safeguard it for the Drama by concentrating on its end phase. Schiller's *Mary Stuart* is a classic example of this practice, and it makes the difference with regard to Ibsen absolutely clear. Schiller was hardly concerned with providing a retrospective narrative of the Scottish queen's life, and even less concerned about it serving as an example of the thematically presented past of an individual. Instead, in this last chapter, the

whole struggle between Mary and Elizabeth is present. Indeed, it is fought out here for the first time. One would be interpreting Schiller in terms of Sophocles or even Ibsen if one assumed that, when the curtain goes up, everything has already been decided and that the death warrant has already been signed.[3]

Time as such first became problematic in that postneoclassical era referred to as bourgeois—an era for which Ibsen will no doubt always be considered the most representative dramatist. The first major document concerning this preoccupation with time was not a play, however; it was a late manifestation of the novel of development, namely, Flaubert's *L'education sentimentale*.[4] And the high point of such concern was reached in the oeuvre of Flaubert's only student: Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Proust's experience of the tragic dialectic between happiness as fulfilled desire and time as a transforming power is one of the major themes of this novel. Proust was struck by the painful awareness that all fulfillment comes essentially too late, since, as a person strives toward the object of his desire, he is transformed by time and the fulfillment no longer corresponds with the original wish. Instead, it meets only emptiness. This is why, according to Proust, only the unexpected, that which was never desire's goal, can really make one happy.*

This sort of reflectively experienced equation of being and time can only be given shape by the novel. And it is not without justification that modern literature has been accused of a "complete disorientedness" that poses the problem of "representing development and the gradual passing of time in dramatic terms."[5] But it would not be appropriate to lump "dramatic" and "scenic" together and thereby deny both the Drama and the theater in general access to time as a theme, particularly since even a single work, if it is successful in providing a dialogic-scenic representation of time, witnesses to the theoretical possibility of such representation as well. And Thornton Wilder's one-act, *The Long Christmas Dinner* (1931), must certainly be regarded as a success of this sort.

The motif of time, of its passing and standing still, surfaces regularly at the Bayard family table during this "long Christmas dinner."

> Anyway, no time passes as slowly as this when you're waiting for your urchins to grow up and settle down to business. . . . I don't want time to go any faster, thank you.[6]
> But darling, the time will pass so fast that you'll hardly know I'm gone.[7]
> Isn't there anything I can do? . . . No, dear. Only time, only the passing of time can help in these things.[8]
> Goodbye, darling. Don't grow up too fast. . . . stay just as you are.[9]
> Time certainly goes very fast in a great new country like this. . . . Well, the time must be passing very slowly in Europe with this dreadful, dreadful war going on.[10]

> Isn't there anything I can do? . . . No, no. Only time, only the passing of time can help in these things.[11]
> Time passes so slowly here that it stands still, that's what the trouble is. . . . I'm going somewhere where time passes, my God![12]
> How slowly time passes without any young people in the house.[13]
> I can't stand it. I can't stand it any more. . . . It's the *thoughts*, it's the thought of what might have been here. And the feeling about this house of the years *grinding away*.[14]

There are not just verbal references to time, however. Dramaturgic devices, some of which are borrowed from the cinema but which attain their greatest efficacy in the theater, are used to evoke the passage of time in almost abstract purity and allow it to be experienced without mediation. The opening stage directions indicate that "ninety years are to be traversed in this play which represents in accelerated motion ninety Christmas dinners in the Bayard household." The expression "in accelerated motion" should not be taken literally, however, because even though ninety years are spanned in the Christmas dinner portrayed on stage, the normal rhythm of movement and speech is maintained throughout. The fast-motion shot is not used here in the mechanical fashion of the movies, where it usually serves comic, rarely documentary, purposes (e.g., the portrayal of slow-moving events) and never brings the passage of time into sharp focus. The cinema would use montage rather than fast motion to solve the problem of how to depict the permutations of ninety Christmases. It would juxtapose clips of individual Christmas celebrations, separated by years or decades. Their diversity would then speak for the transforming power of time but only insofar as it came to expression through such spatial deconstruction and only in terms of the images presented. Wilder, too, uses montage, and in his role as epic narrator places numerous segments next to one another, but—this time as dramatist—he also goes beyond the cinematic by joining these temporally disparate fragments in a dramatic whole that gives the impression of a single—although "long"—Christmas dinner. It is only this second step that transforms the epic montage into an absolute dramatic event and thereby grants the continuity that makes possible the immediate time/experience mentioned earlier. It is as if the periods of time that had fallen into the interstices of the montage were forced out of hiding when the mass of fragments achieved dramatic unity. These time periods were themselves thereby bound together in a unified temporal movement that does not constitute but, rather, accompanies the "long Christmas dinner" as an independent entity.

When the montage, which encompasses ninety years, is transformed into a dramatic event, the result is a division of the temporal flow into two movements: a formal movement that corresponds to the time of the performance, and a second movement, which is imposed on the content by the original montage. This duality, which is natural in the epic, and which Günther Müller has formulated

as the conceptual pair "narrative time/narrated time," has a particular effect within the framework of the Drama.* Since the two tempi do not correspond, the result is an "estrangement effect," in Brecht's sense of the term: the flow of time, which, in the Drama as well as in active life, is immanent in an action and therefore not at all present to consciousness as an independent entity, is suddenly experienced as something new because of the dissociation of things that ought to be identical. Just as the duration of time can be grasped only when spatialized as the difference between two points in time—as a span of time—it seems that the unfolding of time, too, can be delineated only as the difference between two temporal movements, each immanent in the action, that have been laid parallel to each other.

This difference in temporal movements, which can be traced back to the two phases in which the work arose (montage and dramatization), is the formal principle underlying *The Long Christmas Dinner*. Everything points to the same desire—that is, to allow the passage of time to be experienced in the most intense manner possible, by conveying it through the difference just mentioned. In terms of the action, the ninety years correspond to that "decline of a family" previously given epic portrayal by Thomas Mann. After the constructive life and internal unity of the first generation comes the estrangement of brothers and sisters, the dissatisfaction with small town life, and the flight from family tradition. On the dramatic level, this process contrasts with the Christmas dinner which, like all such festive occasions, makes time stand still, changes temporal movement into repetition, and leads to remembrance of the past. Thus, the static condition of the second event not only constitutes the desired opposite of the first but also draws attention to the latter by calling forth memories:

Charles: . . . it certainly is a keen, cold morning. I used to go skating with Father on mornings like this and Mother would come back from church saying—
Genevieve (dreamily): I know: saying "Such a splendid sermon. I cried and cried."
Leonora: Why did she cry, dear?
Genevieve: That generation all cried at sermons. It was their way.
Leonora: Really, Genevieve?
Genevieve: They had had to go since they were children and I suppose sermons reminded them of their fathers and mothers, just as Christmas dinners do us. Especially in an old house like this.[15]

This dual function of the repetition becomes even clearer in the conversations. While the ninety-year time passage is expressed through brief references to new and different incidents, the same, almost formulaic sentences are repeated during the Christmas dinner. The sermon is praised again and again,[16] a traditional turn of phrase is used as wine is poured,[17] the rheumatism of an

acquaintance is discussed, or the maid is asked to serve. Through these repetitions, the Christmas event, which does not change, separates itself from the process that encompasses ninety years. But at the same time, the event gives expression to the process whenever names change (that of the pastor, of the sick acquaintance, of the maid) and also because it is itself a repetition—one that would be incomprehensible without the interim movement of time. The dramatis personae too, reveal the constant duality of change and stability, when the four generations that succeed one another are contrasted with the static figure of the "poor relation" who lives in the house and who changes only once. And finally, this duality is the basis for the scenic style as well. The Christmas dinner is set realistically: "the dining-room of the Bayard home. Close to the footlights a long dining table is handsomely spread for Christmas dinner. The carver's place with a great turkey before it is at the spectator's right. A door, left back, leads into the hall." But this realism is permeated by the symbols of temporal coming and going: "at the extreme left, by the proscenium pillar, is a strange portal trimmed with garlands of fruits and flowers. Directly opposite is another edged and hung with black velvet. The portals denote birth and death."[18] And since these two portals remain in front of and unconnected with the realistic set, the "natural" performance of the actors—"natural" despite the absence of props—is regularly transformed into symbolic performance: the birth of the children is represented by their entry through the fruit- and flower-bedecked portal; a serious illness of long duration is indicated by having the sick person get up from the table and move closer to, then hesitate in front of the portal hung in black; aging is symbolized by a white-haired wig donned almost without notice; finally, death, by an exit through the black portal. It is this simple scenographic symbolism (a symbolism that, because it is epic/representational, contrasts with dramatic illusionism) that finally reveals the true nature of the play, which, up to this point, has been regarded from a technical point of view as dramatized montage: it is a secular mystery play about time.

18. Memory: Miller

Arthur Miller's evolution from imitator to innovator, which occurred between the publication of his first two works, is the clearest example of that general change in style that both unites and separates the turn-of-the-century dramatists and those of the present: the emergence out of dramatic form of a new formal structure for those epic elements that had previously only been given thematic expression. If this process, which is central to the developmental history of the modern theater, has, up to this point, been presented mainly in terms of a comparison between the two periods—by contrasting Ibsen and Pirandello, Chekhov and Wilder, Hauptmann and Brecht—in Miller's case, as with Strindberg's earlier, it can be illuminated by the works of a single author.

In *All My Sons* (1947), Miller tried to preserve Ibsen's analytical approach to social dramaturgy by transferring it into the American present. An inexorable analysis slowly reveals the long-hidden crime committed by the head of the Keller family: his delivery of defective airplane parts to the Army, a deed that involves him in another – the suicide of his son Larry – which has also been kept secret. All the secondary aspects of the action needed to narrate the past as a dramatic event are at hand – the return of Larry's former fiancée and her brother, for example. Their father, an employee of Keller's, was wrongfully imprisoned for Keller's offense. Even Ibsen's often heavy-handed use of the set is preserved in this work: an element of the decor gives visible presence to the ongoing internal effects of the past, while also laboring to symbolize the deeper meaning of the play. In this case it is the tree that long ago had been planted for Larry. Felled by the previous night's storm, its shattered stump stands in the backyard where the play is set. If *All My Sons* had not been followed by *Death of a Salesman*, it might possibly have been discussed here as an example of Ibsen's powerful influence in the Anglo-Saxon world, an influence that begins with G[eorge] B[ernard] Shaw and lives on today. As it is, however, the play can be regarded as a work from his apprentice years, as if Miller, engaged in giving scenic form to a "wasted lifetime"[1] and in particular to a traumatic past, had, while following in Ibsen's footsteps, come to understand the manner in which dramatic form resists this thematic and the costs attached to making the former serve the latter. What was shown here earlier with respect to *John Gabriel Borkman* must have become clear to Miller as he worked on *All My Sons*: the contradiction between a remembered past conveyed by the thematic and the spatial-temporal present postulated by dramatic form; the resulting need to contrive a supplementary action with which to motivate the analysis; and, the disharmony produced by the fact that this second set of events dominates the stage while the real "action" emerges only in the confessions of the characters.

In his second play, Miller tries to escape these contradictions by surrendering dramatic form. Fundamental here is the fact that he does not disguise the analysis as action. The past is no longer forced into open discussion by a dramatic conflict; the dramatis personae are no longer portrayed as masters of the past to satisfy a formal principle when in fact they are its helpless victims. Instead, the past achieves representation in the same way that it emerges in life itself – of its own accord, in the *mémoire involontaire* (Proust). Therefore, the past remains a subjective experience and can create no illusory bridges between the individuals whom the analysis brings together – individuals whom it had left in lifelong separation. Thus, instead of an interpersonal action that would call forth discussion of the past, the present generated by the thematic discloses the psychic state of the individual overpowered by memory. Willy Loman, an aging salesman, is presented in this manner; the play begins as he slips completely under the thrall of memory. The family has recently begun to notice that he talks

to himself. In fact, he is actually talking to them, not in the real present but in the past he remembers, which no longer leaves him alone. The present of the play is constituted by the forty-eight hours that follow Loman's unexpected return from a business trip. The past had continuously gotten the better of him as he sat behind the steering wheel of his car. He tries in vain to arrange a transfer to the New York office of the company he has represented for several decades; his constant references to the past reveal the state he is in, and he is fired. Finally, Loman commits suicide so that his family can benefit from his insurance policy.

This actional framework, which is situated in the present, has little to do with that found in Ibsen's Drama or even in *All My Sons*. It is not a dramatic event that closes on itself; and it does not require that the past be conjured up in dialogue. The scene between Loman and his employer is characteristic in this respect. The latter is unwilling to join in a conversation that would give presence to the salesman's career and to his own father, who is supposed to have been favorably disposed toward Loman. He finds an excuse to leave the room and hurries out, leaving Loman alone with his ever more vivid memories.

These memories in turn create a means (one already long familiar to the cinema under the name flashback) of introducing the past into the space beyond dialogue. The scene shifts constantly in the play staged for Loman by his *mémoire involontaire*. Unlike the Ibsenesque courtroom procedure, remembrance occurs without being spoken of – that is, entirely on the level of form.[2] The protagonist regards himself in the past and, as self-remembering *I*, is absorbed into the formal subjectivity of the work. The scene presents only the epic object of this subjectivity, the remembered *I* itself, the salesman in the past, his conversations with the members of his family. The latter are no longer independent dramatis personae; they emerge as references to the central *I*, in the same manner as do the character projections in expressionist dramaturgy. One can readily grasp the epic nature of this play of memory by comparing it to the "play within a play" as it appears in the Drama. Hamlet's play, which presents the imagined past in order to "catch the conscience of the king,"[3]* is built into the action in the form of an episode. It constitutes a closed sphere that leaves the surrounding world of action intact. Because this second play is a thematic piece that does not need to conceal the fact of its performance, the time and place of the two actions are not in conflict – the dramatic unities and the absoluteness of the events are maintained. In *Death of a Salesman*, on the other hand, the past is not played as a thematic episode; the present and its action constantly overflow into the play of the past. No troupe of actors enters; without saying a word, the characters can become actors enacting themselves because the alternation between immediate/personal and past/remembered events is anchored in the epic principle of form operative here. The dramatic unities are likewise abolished – indeed, abolished in the most radical sense: memory signifies not only a mul-

tiplicity of times and places but also the absolute loss of their identity. The temporal-spatial present of the action is not simply relativized in terms of other presents; on the contrary, it is in itself relative. Therefore, there is no real change in the setting, and, at the same time, it is perpetually transformed. The salesman's house remains on stage, but in the scenes remembered, its walls are of no concern—as is the case with memory, which has no temporal or spatial limits. This relativity of the present becomes particularly clear in those transitional scenes that belong to the outer as well as the inner reality. Such is the situation in the first act when the memory figure, Ben, Willy's brother, appears on stage while he and his neighbor, Charley, are playing cards:

Willy: I'm awfully tired Ben.
Charley: Good, keep playing; you'll sleep better. Did you call me Ben?
Willy: That's funny. For a second there you reminded me of my brother Ben.[4]

The salesman says nothing that indicates he sees his dead brother in front of him. His appearance could be a hallucination, but only within dramatic form, which by definition excludes the inner world. Yet, in this play, present reality and the reality of the past achieve simultaneous representation. Because Loman is reminded of his brother, the latter appears on stage: memory has been incorporated into the principle underlying scenic form. Because interior monologue (dialogue with a figure evoked by memory), stands side by side with dialogue, the result is a Chekhovian speaking at cross purposes:

Ben: Is Mother living with you?
Willy: No, she died a long time ago.
Charley: Who?
Ben: That's too bad. Fine specimen of a lady, Mother.
Willy (*to Charley*): Heh?
Ben: I'd hoped to see the old girl.
Charley: Who died?
Ben: Heard anything from Father, have you?
Willy (*unnerved*): What do you mean, who died?
Charley: . . . What're you talkin' about?[5]

To give dramatic form to this sort of continual misunderstanding, Chekhov needed the supporting theme supplied by deafness.[6] In *Death of a Salesman*, on the other hand, it arises formally out of the side-by-side existence of the two worlds. Their concurrent representation sets in motion the new principle of form. Its advantage over the Chekhovian technique is obvious. The supporting theme, the symbolic character of which remains vague, does introduce the possibility of mutual misunderstanding, but it also hides the real source of this

misunderstanding—the individual's preoccupation with himself and with a remembered past, a past that can appear as such only after the formal principle of the Drama is abolished.

It is this past, once again present, that finally opens the salesman's eyes as he desperately tries to understand his own misfortune and, even more, the failed career of his elder son [Biff]. While sitting across from his sons in a restaurant, a scene from the past suddenly surfaces in his memory and, therefore, becomes visible to the audience as well: his son finds him in a Boston hotel room with his mistress. At this point, Loman can understand why his son later wandered from job to job and why he thwarted his career prospects by stealing: he wanted to punish his father.

In *Death of a Salesman*, Miller did not want to reveal this secret, the failure of the father (which was borrowed from Ibsen and central to *All My Sons*), through a judicial procedure invented for the sake of form. He gave credence to Balzac's comment, under the sign of which both Ibsen's and Miller's characters stand: "We all die unknown."[7] Because memory takes its place beside the (always) present of the dialogue, which constitutes the sole representational possibility of the Drama, the play successfully presents a dramatic paradox: the past of a number of characters is given visible presence but only for a single consciousness. In contrast to the analysis that is part of the thematic in Ibsen, this play of the past, founded on the principle of form, has no effect on the other characters. For the son, this scene remains a permanent and heavily guarded secret. He is unable to reveal to anyone the shattering effect it has had on his life. Because of this, his mute hatred breaks into the open neither before his father's suicide nor after it. And in the "Requiem," which closes the play, it is precisely the unsuspecting quality of the remarks made by Linda, the salesman's wife, that makes them so moving.

Linda: Forgive me, dear. I can't cry, I don't know what it is, but I can't cry. I don't understand it. Why did you ever do that? Help me, Willy, I can't cry. It seems to me that you're just on another trip. I keep expecting you. Willy, dear, I can't cry. Why did you do it? I search and I search and I search, and I can't understand it. . . .

The Curtain Falls[8]