FRANK WEDEKIND'S DRAMATIC FORM

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INTRODUCTION

I feel that no words of apology should be necessary here for having busied myself with the dramas of Frank Wedekind (1864-1918), but many scholars, I am aware, feel that research ought to be directed to those men and works whose literary and artistic merit has been firmly established by the passing of time. Dr. Franz Saran, under whom Fritz Hagemann at Erlangen in 1926 wrote the first Wedekind dissertation, stated: "Research has the duty to accept the most recent authors just as it has those of the past."\(^1\) More than half a century has elapsed since Wedekind first gave his dramas to the German public. In that time much study has been devoted to Gerhart Hauptmann, the leading naturalist playwright of the day; certainly then we should, to be just, give more attention than we have to his chief artistic opponent, Frank Wedekind, whose importance in the development of modern German drama merits a more detailed investigation than has thus far been his lot.

The interest prerequisite for a study of this type was originally aroused in me, when in an undergraduate course, I was given the "Luludramen" to read and report on. The fascinating characters, the strange philosophy -- Das Fleisch hat seinen eigenen Geist --, and the violent emo-

\(^1\)Kutscher, Frank Wedekind, Sein Leben und Werken, III, 243.
tional quality of these plays gave me a desire to become further acquainted with their author, whom I then found to be as strange and complex as his works. An idea of the complexity of this dramatist and his plays may be gained from the statement of George Jean Nathan, the foremost living drama critic, who said: "Wedekind is a compound of naturalist, symbolist, impressionist, expressionist, realist, satirist, romanticist, and mystic!"\(^1\) During his own lifetime Wedekind's dramas were completely misunderstood not only by the public but also by the connoisseurs of drama. The critical evaluations and interpretations of his plays are more varied than those concerning the works of any other figure in German dramatic literature.\(^2\) Therefore by analyzing the form used in these plays, I hope to bring about a greater clarity in understanding and interpreting Frank Wedekind and his position in the development in modern German drama.

AIM AND EXPLANATION OF METHOD

The first step toward this goal is to determine the kind of dramatic construction that Wedekind employed. This can be accomplished by reading any one of Wedekind's plays; from which we can see that these dramas are composed of a

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\(^{1}\)Nathan, *The House of Satan*, p. 179.

\(^{2}\)Compare the various accounts of Wedekind in Hans Naumann, Julius Bab, W. Mahrholz, B. Diebold, O. Walzel with those found in the literary histories of Wiegand, Bartels, and Soergel.
loosely connected succession of pictures and scenes (Eine Bilder- und Szenenfolge). This "sticking together" of pictures and scenes to construct a drama, as Wedekind has done it, is called by some scholars (Hans Naumann, George Jean Nathan) the "synthetic method" which is, in effect, almost the opposite of the "analytic method" of the ancient Greek and of the more modern French and German classical drama. However, to other scholars this term, synthetic, when applied to drama, is used to designate such works as Lessing's "Emilia Galotti", Schiller's "Wallenstein", "Hamlet", "Macbeth", and most of Shakespeare's plays. Still I think that Wedekind's plays as well as others of this type (Lenz's "Der Hofmeister", Büchner's "Dantons Tod" and "Woyczek", Strindberg's, "Gespenstersonate" and "Ein Traumspiel" with which the works of Wedekind have often been compared) ought not to be categorized with those well known examples mentioned earlier, even though they are all similar in their basic construction (i.e. a succession of connected scenes) and in their opposition to the classical method. Thus I have chosen to term this typical Wedekind scheme of dramatic construction as the "synthetic-scene" technique which is to be regarded as a kind of synthetic drama, distinguished from

1The differences between these two chief types of dramatic construction will be examined in greater detail later in my discussion.

the purer form in the looseness of the threads connecting scene with scene.

The second step in this analysis is then to ascertain the reason or reasons why this "synthetic-scene" technique was used. This step is a more complicated one and requires much more consideration, but at the same time it results in a truer understanding of the man and his works. In my study I have started with the assumption that the form of a work of literature is the conscious or unconscious result, primarily of the author's personality and secondarily, of the subject matter treated, which is also determined by the artist's nature. In other words: I have regarded as direct results of the artist's personality, both the form and content that he has chosen for dramatic treatment, and which react upon and influence each other. From a study of these two factors and the relationships existing between them I hope to show that this synthetic-scene method of Wedekind's was a necessary result of his nature and his artistic-purpose (content), the latter being also a result of his personality.

DRAMATIC CONDITIONS OF HIS TIME

But now, before examining Wedekind and his plays in detail, I think it would be advantageous to cast a cursory glance upon the conditions that prevailed in the world of drama when Wedekind appeared on the scene -- during the last
decade of the nineteenth century. For a proper understanding of his position in modern German drama one must keep in mind that Wedekind's period of creative activity was contemporaneous in Germany with the Blütezeit of Naturalism, Impressionism and with the beginnings of Expressionism (ca. 1889-1917).

NATURALISM

Naturalism is the term given to that school of thought which regarded the purpose of art the precise, objective, and scientific presentation of man and nature. In France Emile Zola (1840-1902) with his twenty volumes of novels, advocated a literature that should regard the thinking, feeling, and acting of the individual, chosen for subject matter, as being shaped by both the influence of the family (that is, heredity, as understood in those days) and the geographical background of that person (or persons). These theories of Zola's were later united in Germany with a preference for the use of characters drawn from the lower social classes, which inclination came from Russian literature, particularly the works of Tolstoi (1828-1910) and Dostoevski (1821-1881), and with the terse analytical dramatic form

1"Les Rougon-Macquart", 1871 ff.
2Röhl und Steiner, Wörterbuch zur deutschen Literatur, 167.
3Tolstoi, "Die Macht der Finsternis", "Der Lebende Leichnam", "Krieg und Frieden", "Anna Karenina"; Dostoevski, "Schuld und Sühne", "Die Brüder Karamazov".
learned from the skillful Norwegian master, Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906).¹

Finally in the year 1889 with all the powerful sweeping vigor of a new movement Naturalism was firmly established as the leading dramatic doctrine in Germany. This same year saw the founding in Berlin of the "Freie Bühne" by Otto Brahm, the famed regisseur, and others like-minded, who desired to produce this modern naturalistic drama which at that time was having censorship difficulties because of the freedom with which it handled the intimate matters of family life and sex. There on this "Free Stage" during the first year of its operation were produced Ibsen's "Ghosts", "Die Familie Selicke" of Arno Holz and Johannes Schlaf, two of the leaders of German Naturalism, and also the epoch-making first drama of Gerhart Hauptmann (1862- ), the most talented of German naturalists, "Vor Sonnenaufgang".

The most outstanding feature of this new drama was its obsession with reportorial accuracy of presentation and veristic effect. (The aim was to make the audience forget that they were in a theatre watching a play and to make them feel that they were observing a part of "real life"). This attitude certainly accounts for the long and detailed scenic descriptions, for the inclusion of sound effects, as well as the frequency of stage directions -- all of which restricted

¹Ibsen, "Ein Puppenheim", 1879; "Gespenster", 1881, etc.
the director and actor, and allowed little leeway for personal artistic interpretation. Another result of this desire to achieve absolute realism was the use of dialect.\footnote{Compare Hauptmann's "Vor Sonnenaufgang" and "Das Friedensfest" with any play before or after Naturalism paying close attention to such details as the descriptions of the settings, stage directions for the actors and the amount of dialect.}

The great influence that the writings of Karl Marx had on this era, are also to be perceived in the naturalistic drama which often concerned itself with the masses and their problems, especially those of the lower classes ("Die Familie Selicke", "Vor Sonnenaufgang", "Florian Geyer", "Die Weber"). This new emphasis and interest in the masses has led to plays wherein the real leading character is an entire social class, such as Hauptmann's, "Die Weber" and "Florian Geyer", the latter having a cast of characters numbering seventy-five people! In the majority of these naturalistic plays the characters are taken from the middle class and more particularly from the lower segment of this group.

With the progress of science at the close of the last century there came into literature the importance of the "scientific" and objective point of view, which sought to eliminate as much as possible the feelings of the author from that which he was writing. Everything, they theorized, could be explained by the "scientific" laws of heredity and environment. The Naturalists never seemed to tire of this idea. How often we meet characters who are "erblich belastet",

[Image 0x0 to 525x753]
suffering from the evil hereditary effects of alcoholism and venereal disease. (Ibsen's "Gespenster", Hauptmann's "Vor Sonnenaufgang" and "Das Friedensfest"). Often these studies in the milieu and family life of the members of the bourgeoisie were but side issues in plays which had, as their main theme, marriage. And they usually portrayed an unhappy one, the many intimate, personal scenes of which the Naturalist playwrights never failed to show (Ibsen's "Ein Puppenheim", Strindberg's "Fräulein Julie", Hauptmann's "Fuhrmann Henschel" and "Einsame Menschen", etc.).

The form regarded as the most fitting for naturalist drama was the analytic form. This was chosen because it was believed (and correctly so) to be the most true to life and because it was the form in which one could best show the influence of family and milieu as well as the relation of the individual to society.\(^1\)

FIN-DE-SIÈCLE DRAMA

However, the rule of Naturalism in the theatres was short-lived, for gifted authors from several European lands took up, almost simultaneously, their pens to descry the crude, ugly, bourgeois drama with which the Naturalists had flooded the stage. The literature that resulted from this

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\(^1\) T. M. Campbell, Hebbel, Ibsen and the Analytic Exposition, Heidelberg, 1922.
Europe-wide antagonism to the tenets of the realistic school has been given the name "fin-de siècle" (from the years in which this spirit arose, 1890-1900) or "decadent" literature.\(^1\) And even though this Weltanschauung was known as Symbolism (as in the case of Maeterlinck), Impressionism or Neo-Romanticism (represented by the plays of Schnitzler and Von Hofmannsthal), or by no name whatever (i.e. the type of play written by Wilde, Shaw, Strindberg, and Wedekind), they all show sufficiently similar features to be regarded as due to essentially the same phenomenon and differ from each other in but one or two minor traits.

While Naturalism was at the crest of its popularity, the Fleming, Maurice Maeterlinck (1862- ), who, according to his own testimony, regarded himself as a "Glied der großen germanischen Rasse"\(^2\) refused to write in accord with the principles of the prevailing style and in his first dramatic effort, "La Princesse Maleine" (1889), sought to create in his own way a new kind of drama. Maeterlinck's plays show definite traces of Romanticism\(^3\) and remind one of the "Schicksal-

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\(^1\) "Decadence is: a falling off from rigid conceptions of morality together with a probing interest in mental states which are responsible for physical urges." "(According to Wilhelm Worringer) a period of decadentism is interpreted as a liberation from the constraint of a fixed style." -- Jethro Bithell, An Anthology of German Poetry (1880-1940), page XVII.

\(^2\) Busse, Das Drama, IV, 100.

\(^3\) The settings of his plays give a mood of haziness and decay. "alle Umrisse verschwimmen phantastisch aufgelöst" -- "in der Ferne rauscht das Meer" -- "tausendjährige Eichen ragen aus der Dämmerung auf" -- "verfallende uralte Burgen mitten im
drama" because of the heavy morbid feeling of imminent doom which pervades them.

In Italy the representative of this fin-de-siècle drama was Gabriele Rapagnette (1864-1938) who called himself d'Annunzio, the messenger of a new art. Particularly evident in his works are such typical traits of this anti-naturalistic movement as the emphasis on beauty, both in subject matter and in language (he might better be called a lyricist than a dramatist), as well as the fact that his plays were not in the realistic present but in the past ("La Gioconda" 1899, "Francesca da Rimini" 1902, and "La Nave" 1908). 1

OSCAR WILDE

If, however, we turn to the English dramatic literature of the time, we find that its most remarkable, though not most representative, dramatic genius was Oscar Wilde (1856-1900) whose plays ("Lady Windermere's Fan" 1892, "A Woman of No Importance" 1893, "Salome" 1893, "An Ideal Husband" 1895, and "The Importance of Being Earnest" 1895), and especially his essays, ("Intentions" 1891) constitute without doubt the

Wald und darinnen gefangen ein armes Königskind -- oder ein Kloster irgendwo in der Ferne" -- "in diesem mystischen Dämmern sieht ja doch eins aus wie das andere". In his later plays, to get farther away from reality, he chose for his settings "eine entlegene Sagenzeit". Cf. "Pelléas and Mélisande", "La Mort de Tintagile", "Le Miracle de Saint Antoine", etc. -- Busse, Das Drama, 98 ff.

1Ibid., IV, 102-34
most outspoken criticism made against Naturalism as well as the most eloquent plea for the importance of beauty, for its own sake, in art, that any author of the decadent school has produced. Probably no other dramatist has shown more characteristics in common with Wedekind than this unfortunate English genius. Both of them were bitter enemies of Naturalism and bourgeois society which they constantly ridiculed and satirized in their dramas. Throughout their writings they stressed the importance of physical beauty and grace in life and art. (Compare the following:)

A good acrobat is always graceful, though grace is never his object; he is graceful because he does what he has to do in the best way in which it can be done -- graceful because he is natural. If an ancient Greek were to come to life now, which considering the probable severity of his criticism would be rather trying to our conceit, he would be found far oftener at the circus than at the theatre. A good circus is an oasis of Hellenism in a world that reads too much to be wise and thinks too much to be beautiful. Not that the circus proprietors are, as a rule, conscious of their high mission. Do they not bore us with the haute école and weary us with Shakespearean clowns? Still, at least, they give us acrobats, and the acrobat is an artist. The mere fact that he never speaks to the audience shows how well he appreciates the great truth that the aim of art is not to reveal personality but to please. The clown may be blatant, but the acrobat is always beautiful.¹

with Wedekind's:

   SCHWIGERLING (aufspringend): Haltung, Haltung, meine Kinder! Euch tut ritterliche Haltung not! Geht in den Zirkus, wenn ihr Kavaliere sehen

¹Oscar Wilde, The Essays of Oscar Wilde (from "London's Artists' Models").
wollt.¹

and:

SCHWIGERLING: Wir taxieren eine Künstlerin nach ihrer Grazie, ihrem Temperament, nach ihrer -- Seele, wenn Sie mir den Ausdruck er -- lauben. Ob Sie eine Schauspielerin als Ophelia oder eine Seiltänzerin auf dem hängenden Draht sehen, das Ausschlaggebende ist immer nur der Mensch, die geistige und körperliche Schönheit: Die Schönheit der Bewegung und die Schönheit der Formen. Und was wir auf dem Draht, im Trapez, am Reck, in den römischen Ringen vom Menschen verlangen, das suchen wir beim Tier durch die sorgfältigste, umsichtigste Erziehung zu wecken. Der Geist, die Seele, die in dem schönen Organismus schlummert, muß in vollendet, rhythmisch gebundener Form zutage treten.²

Neither Wedekind nor Wilde was understood by his contemporaries; both were highly individualistic and outspoken in their views although only a small minority (if their followers were that many) agreed with them and understood them. On Wedekind as well as on Wilde society wreaked its vengeance by subjecting him to a prison term. In fact the only difference between them seems to be one of degree rather than of outlook or form. Wilde's satires of society were not as grotesque as those of Wedekind; the scenes in Wilde's plays lacked the power and passion which his German comrade in arms worked into his.³ Especially noticeable is the difference in the kind of characters portrayed by each: Wilde's were of the

¹Frank Wedekind, Fritz Schwigerling (Der Liebestrank), no date, Act 2, Scene 6.
²Ibid., Act 2, Scene 7.
³Walzel, Die deutsche Dichtung seit Goethes Tod, 447.
soft, effeminate, ultra-refined variety, found so often in decadent drama, while those of Wedekind displayed great strength of mind, resoluteness, and decided masculinity. Alfred Kerr, the discerning dramatic critic of that era in Germany, correctly called Wilde, "A lyrical and snobbish cousin of Wedekind."¹

DIE WIENER KREISE, NERVENKUNST

In Germany the first literary movement, which showed signs of dissatisfaction with Naturalism, along with the other traits of the fin-de-siècle drama, was the so-called "Wiener Kreise" composed of Arthur Schnitzler (1862-1931), Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929) and Hermann Bahr, the critic (1863-1934). It was quite natural that the German version of decadence called "Impressionism" or "Neo-Romanticism",² should be centered around Vienna, which at that time was the southern capital of Germany (Berlin, you remember, was the stronghold of the Naturalists) and possessed a refined

¹Walzel, 448.
²In 1892 von Hofmannsthal wrote in the introduction to Schnitzler's "Anatol" the following, which gives almost the complete program of this Wiener Kreise:

Also spielen wir Theater,
Spielen unser eignen Stücke,
Frühgereift und zart und traurig,
Die Komödie unserer Seele,
Unsres Fühlens Heut und Gestern,
Böser Dinge hübsche Formel,
Glatte Worte, bunte Bilder,
Halbes, heimliches Empfinden,
Agonieen, Episoden ......
ultra-sophisticated society suffering from that Weltmüdigkeit which permeated the decadent literature throughout Europe.

The Impressionist writers still clung to the tenets of Naturalism, however, but only in that they sought to reflect the mood or spirit of life as they perceived it through their senses. They no longer tried to mirror life in minutest detail (Sekundenstil) but sought to faithfully present as true a reproduction as possible of the impression that some aspect of life had made on them, or as von Hoffmannsthal in 1907 wrote in Der Dichter und diese Zeit, the Programmschrift for the neo-romantic movement:

\begin{quote}
Der Dichter kennt, wie der Philosoph, nur die Erscheinungen, die vor ihm auftauchen. Er sieht und fühlt; er darf nichts von sich ablehnen. In seinen höchsten Stunden braucht der Dichter nur zusammenzustellen, und was er nebeneinanderstellt, wird harmonisch. Er gleicht dem Seismographen, den jedes noch so ferne Beben in Vibrationen versetzt.\footnote{Naumann, \textit{Die deutsche Dichtung der Gegenwart}, 74.}
\end{quote}

And what was it that made the Impressionist writer vibrate? Judging from the most frequent topic of their dramas it was LOVE — an emotion rarely handled by the playwright of the realistic school. To the Viennese of this era love appeared as a passion possessing a dual nature. One aspect of it was the easily gained, lightly taken love or Liebelei (playing at love) indulged in with ladies of the upper classes of society or with women from lower levels with
questionable reputations. On the other hand we have the true and good love (die wahre Liebe) of the sweet middle class girl (süsses Bürgermädchen). Often these two kinds of love were woven into the same play and great effect gained by the contrast (Schnitzler's "Liebelei" 1895 and von Hofmannsthal's "Der Tor und der Tod" 1893). The tragic figure under such circumstances was then "das süsse Bürgermädchen" who suffered and died because the sophisticated young man, whom she loved sweetly and sincerely, failed to give that love its proper worth and amorously dallied with the fleeting affection of someone else's lady.¹

Typical of the fin-de-siècle drama in general and Impressionism in particular is the "wasted life" theme, which goes hand in hand with the emphasis on the double nature of love, for men (and women), so tired and dissatisfied with life, that they must turn to forbidden amorous rounds, to please their jaded senses, as they have turned to all other things life has to offer, must of course find only shallowness and emptiness in the end, and then bewail their misspent life. This is very clearly shown in the fate of Claudio in "Der Tor und der Tod" who learns only too late that his life would have been happy and rich in meaning if he could only have submerged his own personality in completely unselfish love for

¹For a discussion of the popularity of such a play, read the discussion of "Liebelei" by Julius Bab in Das deutsche Drama, edited by R. F. Arnold, page 727 ff.
some other being and this, Death showed him, he had failed to do in the case of his dead mother, his sweetheart and his friend.

From the two preceding features of Impressionistic drama one should already have gained a rather good idea of the kind of people to be found in the works of this school. Invariably they are drawn from the aristocracy or the upper middle class. They are usually sophisticated dandies and bon-vivants, suffering from some neurosis. As that "arch-dandy", Schnitzler's Anatol, explains it:

Ich fühle, wie viel mir verloren ginge, wenn ich mich eines schönen Tages stark fände .... Es gibt so viele Krankheiten und nur eine Gesundheit. Man muß immer genau so gesund sein wie jeder andere.

Also typical of the decadent man was his predilection for analyzing his own feelings and those of others, (a symptom of neurotic trouble, hence the term, Nervenkunst). This constant introspection led them to the conclusion that the trouble with their society was its sophistication and complexity and most of all this disease of being constantly compelled to direct one's thoughts inwardly; all of which prevented them from enjoying the simple pleasures that bring happiness to the simple, ordinary man who never bothers to think about it at all (The old problem of the artist and society -- cf. Thomas Mann's "Tonio Krüger" 1903, which treats this theme clearly and in detail). Yet, though these men know their difficulty and offer a possible solution, they
were unable to act -- they lacked the strength necessary for action. Like their authors, these characters could only observe and with a shrug of the shoulders say, "Was kann man tun?" In their weakness these characters of the Impressionistic drama resemble those of the Naturalists' who do not make any struggle, but wait to submit to the fate which meets them. There is no action, there is little conflict, there is only weakness.

Like Wilde in England and d'Annunzio in Italy these Neo-Romanticists in Germany reflected the newly awakened interest in beauty, which had been no concern to the Naturalists who seemed to revel in accurate pictures of ugliness and sordidness that they found in the milieu of their bourgeois characters. Now, however, that servant of reality, dialect, is gone from the stage. The new school (and Wedekind) use the language of literature, the "Schriftsprache", in the use and beauty of which they are especially interested. Again as we saw all through Europe the new lyrical trend in drama (as contrasted with the epic nature of the Naturalists' drama) so do we now notice a more lyrical treatment of German drama, particularly at the hands of Hugo von Hofmannsthal.

No longer does the dramatist choose the analytic form -- from his very desire to capture and to reflect a sense impression he chooses the method of loosely connecting scenes and pictures, somewhat in the manner of Wedekind but with not as much laxity in connection and yet more of it than in the case
of those men who used the true synthetic form. Especially well liked was the one-act play or the cycle of one-act plays. Here we may perceive the influence of Strindberg\(^1\) as well as the general tendency of the period. For it was only in such an era of decadence that the public wanted and needed a variety of entertainment to keep up its quickly tiring interest (cf. the conditions during the decline of the Roman Empire) and would thus allow to be successfully established an enterprise such as the Überbrettl. In 1900 Ernst von Wolzogen, correctly interpreting the \textit{Zeitgeist}, claimed that the public no longer enjoyed sitting through long three-hour performances in the cramped confines of a theater-seat. So he founded this Überbrettl, a small intimate theatre, molded on the pattern of the French cabaret, where the public could enjoy a variety of artistic entertainment (songs, poems, one-act plays, or acts from longer plays, recitations, instrumentalists, etc.) usually delivered by the creating artists. The most famous of these intimate theaters, most of which scarcely lasted one season, was the "Elf Scharfrichter" (Eleven Hangmen) in Munich, chiefly remembered because Wedekind belonged to its exclusive group and because it was there that he first appeared before the public, reciting lines from his own plays and singing his own strange, sensual ballads and lyrics to his own guitar accompaniment.

\(^1\)Busse, IV, 85.
WEDEKIND'S RELATION TO THE DRAMA OF THE TIMES

This has finally brought us to the man whose plays are to form the rest of this study. However, before we go into the necessary details, it might be well to sum up the general trend of German drama in the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the earlier years of the twentieth century, which is plainly to be seen in the works of August Strindberg (1849-1912) whose later plays have many parallels with those of Wedekind's (there are no signs of influence, however) both in form (the synthetic-scene technique) and in content (the sex drive, and the essentially destructive power of woman).


1Naumann, 89 ff.
Again I feel that here emphasis ought to be placed on the fact that Wedekind was never a Naturalist or Impressionist, nor that he was influenced by the members of either of these schools. (In the biography of Wedekind, written by his friend, Arthur Kutscher, there is nowhere any evidence to be found that might allow us to speak of the influence of another author.)

...... wenn irgendeiner, so hat Wedekind auf den Naturalismus und die Impression, neben denen er -- wild und abenteuerlich genug grotesk selber in Abkunft wie im Leben -- aufwuchs, zersetzend eingewirkt. Mit einer ungeheueren Selbstständigkeit und seltenen Unbeirrbareheit ging er seinen eigenen Weg und half das Alte zerbrechen.¹

In spite of this, his works have been regarded as outgrowths of Naturalism and Impressionism. This error in interpretation is due, I believe, to the following facts: 1) most of his plays are set in the "naturalistic" present; 2) like the Naturalists, Wedekind, with an unequalled boldness and frankness, discussed on the stage matters of sex and morals; 3) he was constantly occupied with bourgeois society (although it was always to satirize it) and 4) his particular synthetic form of drama was somewhat similar to that used by Schnitzler. But:

Scheinbar nur bleibt Wedekind meist in der naturalistischen Gegenwart, scheinbar überhaupt nur kommt die jüngste Dramatik vom grässlichsten Naturalismus her, scheinbar auch werden noch Gesellschaftsdramen gegeben.²

¹Naumann, 91.
²Ibid., 90.
In fact it is of the utmost importance, when studying Wedekind, to realize that throughout his life he was a bitter, uncompromising enemy of Naturalism and all it stood for. His opposition to this school was the underlying motive for his first drama, "Die junge Welt" (or "Kinder und Narren") 1889 in which the most ridiculous figure is a Naturalist playwright who had obtained material for a play from the facts of a friend's life, revealed to him by the latter, and who then rebuked the friend when the play failed.

KARL: Das Stück wird aufgeführt. Ich sehe mich vom ersten Heldendarsteller gespielt. Eine fürchterliche Sensation, aber -- damit war es auch aus. Es hatte nicht gefallen. Und nun, denke dir, nun kommt Meier zu mir und macht mich für seinen Mißerfolg verantwortlich. Er sagte, er habe sich genau an meine Mitteilungen gehalten; entweder müsse ich ihm etwas vorge­logen haben, oder ich sei ein verschrobener Mensch, der sein Leben nicht realistisch richtig zu leben verstände.2

Earlier in this same conversation Anna, speaking for Wedekind, compares the Naturalists with a snooping secret police:

Wenn sich der Realismus Überlebt hat, werden seine Vertreter ihr Brot als Geheimpolizisten finden.3

1 Those who believe that this play was written to ridicule Gerhart Hauptmann (portrayed in the character Meier) who is supposed to have used the facts told him about the Wedekind family by Frank Wedekind in "Das Friedensfest", should realize that the latter play appeared one year after "Die junge Welt".

2 Frank Wedekind, Die junge Welt, Act 3, Scene 2, page 77.

3 Ibid., page 76.
In the last act of this play, Meier, who had at first been a huge sensation and had been called the leader of a new literature, but had gradually written successively poorer plays, is the victim of a nervous collapse. In great desperation his wife has asked his old friends to try and help Meier. In the course of their attempts to help him they try to ascertain the cause of his condition and at the same time the cause of his wife's despair. Then it comes to light that Meier had been jotting down in his little black notebook his wife's every facial expression and every reaction. After his wife, Alma, had made one scene of complaint about this, she said nothing more, but Meier then rebuked her and termed her behavior "unnatural" and thereupon directed his naturalistic studies upon himself, with a nervous breakdown as the result:


Statt aller Antwort zog Meier sein Notizbuch aus der Tasche und schrieb auf, was ich für Gesichter dabei machte... Wenn ich fragte: Wie hast du geschlafen? dann schrieb er es in sein Notizbuch. Wenn ich erzählte, es sei ein Kind überfahren worden, dann schrieb er es in sein Notizbuch, wenn ich ihn beschwor er möchte das gottverdammte Aufschreiben lassen, dann schrieb er es in sein Notizbuch. Schließlich dachte ich: Wenn nur eins von uns beiden nicht mehr in dieser Welt wäre, ich oder sein Notizbuch .........

In the strength and turbulence of the emotions that Wedekind unleashes upon the stage and in his determined struggle against bourgeois Philistinism, one is reminded of that ever recurring phenomenon so peculiarly German, "The Sturm und Drang".

Die große Bedeutung von "Frühlings Erwachen" in der Geschichte der deutschen Dramas besteht darin, daß hier nach einer mehr als 50 jährigen Unterbrechung, vielleicht seit Hebbels "Judith" zum erstenmal wieder, das deutsche Drama zu dem großen Mutterboden seiner Kraft zurückkehrt -- zu dem Sturm und Drangstil -- zur deutschen Shakespearvariation, aus der bei aller abweichenden Eigenart doch Goethe wie Schiller, Kleist wie Grabbe, Büchner wie Hebbel gewachsen waren.

Like those earlier enthusiasts, he too was struggling to free the German stage from the harmful effects of the cold, unemotional, truth-seeking rationalists. Out of this desire arose the new, and yet so old, synthetic scene technique employed in the past by Lenz, Grabbe, and Büchner and other

1 Frank Wedekind, Die junge Welt, Act 3, Scene 7, pp. 87-88.
2 Julius Bab, in Arnold's Das deutsche Drama, 773.
3 It was in the first decade of the twentieth century that Grabbe and Büchner were rediscovered and given the popularity denied them in their lifetime.
dramatists of like mind and purpose, and now so effective in
the hands of this new master, Frank Wedekind.

Heute sieht man leicht, daß es sich bei Wedekind
wie bei Strindberg um die Grundstimmung der
neuen Romantik und des neuen Sturm und Drangs
handelt, aus der bei ihnen die Form des synthetischen Dramas entsprang. 1

With him the stage again became a pulpit, an instrument for
moralizing. On it were shown such abstract conceptions as
marriage, shame, jealousy, sex, education, etc. Again the
stage became essentially theatrical in nature and was no
longer a place to show everyday life.

Bei der Moralistik setzt erst Wedekind ein.
Und einer der Väter der Expression in Stil,
Sprache, und Gegenständen ist Frank Wedekind. Es
setzte schon früh jene Richtung ein, die die
Schaubühne wieder als eine moralische Anstalt
betrachtet; es werden Begriffe wie Eifersucht,
Neid, Scham, Hass, Ehe, Erziehung, Erotik, öffentliche Moral demonstriert. 2

Also of importance is Wedekind's position as a precur-
sor of Expressionism (see preceding note). The fact that he
gave form to the essential nature of things as he felt them;
that he did not inquire as to the reality of its appearance
or whether it were in accord with the arts of realistic stage
presentation, -- but rather he created a world that was to
express that which filled his inner self. And it was in this
that the younger generation saw the fulfillment of their
own desire.

1 Naumann, 90.
2 Ibid.
Hier gestaltet einer das Wesen der Dinge, wie es ihm selbst aufgegangen war, fragt nicht nach Wahr­scheinlichkeiten nach den Künsten der Bühnentäuschung, in denen es die Ibsen und Hauptmann so weit gebracht haben, sondern schafft sich eine Welt, die ausdrücken soll, was sein Innerstes erfüllt. Darin sah das jüngere Geschlecht Erfüllung eines eigenen Wünsches: Es fühlte selbst den Drang in sich, sich neu mit der Welt auseinander zu setzen. Den Druck der Wirklichkeit spürte man auf allen Seiten: was war der einzelne in dieser Welt des Großbetriebes, der staatlichen, wirtschaftlichen, gesellschaftlichen Organization? Die Kunst der ablaufenden Zeit, die Eindruckskunst, hatte die Dinge genommen, wie sie waren, nun empfand man es als Überflüssig, wenn die Kunst wiederholte, was schon da war: den Sinn des Lebens galt es zu verkünden — die Wirklichkeitsillusion wurde nicht mehr als Bedingung des Künstlerischen aufgefasst. Daher verschwinden in den Stücken der Jüngsten die Personennamen; sie haften ja am Einzelnen, machen das Drama zum Ausschnitt der Wirklichkeit, während es Verkörperung der Vision des Dichters vom Weltlauf und Menschenwesen sein soll. Ebenso schwinden die Bühnenanweisungen für die Ausstattung und das Spiel des Schauspielers, oder aber sie werden in ihrer Art eingreifend verändert. War früher ihr Ziel, das Spiel der Erscheinung des Lebens anzunähern, so sind sie jetzt Teil der Vision des Dichters: und geben gern deshalb Dinge an, die gar nicht darstellbar sind.¹

However, one must not assume that Wedekind was an Expressionist, for he no more belonged to the latest school of dramatists than he did to either of the two other ones in vogue during his years of creative activity. Perhaps the greatest difference between him and the younger writers was his finely developed sense of the theater and of the functions and limitations of the stage. To him the stage was

¹Busse, IV, 112-113.
primarily a means of entertaining the paying customers, and not a place for confusing dramatic monologues and wildly declaimed allegories.

Was bei Wedekind noch immer unterscheidet vom rein expressionistischen Drama, ist, daß es sich bei ihm noch immer um Gestaltung -- des intensiven seelischen Erlebnisses -- und um dramatisches Geschehen handelt, bei allem Willen, an den menschlichen Figuren die seelisch erlebten Ideen zu theatricalisieren; daß es sich bei ihm noch immer nicht um deklamierte Allegorien handelt, ein zusammenhänglosen Monologen aufdringlich dem Zuschauer zugerufen, sondern um dramatische Fabeln, geschöpft aus der vergänglichen Menschenwelt, aber komprimiert zum ewigen Gleichnis.\(^1\)

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\(^1\)Naumann, 103.
WEDEKIND'S DRAMATIC FORM

DRAMATIC CONSTRUCTION

As I have already pointed out, the typical construction used by Wedekind in his plays was essentially the synthetic method, a method characterized by the manner in which the exposition (or Vorfabel) was treated and by the chronological arrangement of scenes carefully chosen to show the development, turning point, and conclusion of a conflict. Normally in this synthetic construction the exposition concerns itself only with those facts necessary for an understanding of the play and it is invariably given in the opening scenes of the first act either in a monologue (Goethe's "Faust") or in a dialogue (Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet", "Hamlet", etc.).¹

The integration, into a well-rounded play, of these scenes and pictures that were often not unified by the time or place of the action, was then accomplished by the author's adherence to a unity of action and (or) to a unity of character development in the central figure, but at least the succession of scenes and acts was unified and connected by some very

evident thread. In other words: the synthetic drama is lax in its observance of (or disregards entirely) the dramatic unities and finds its unity (is held together) by the course of the action or by the psychological development of the main character -- or by both.

Generally speaking, Wedekind's plays not only disregard the unities of time and place, as does likewise the normal synthetic drama, but they also lack the unification afforded by a well-developed plot and the character development of the central person. However, he has been able to give his plays a connecting thread which enables his dramas to achieve a unity that at first glance seems to be non-existent, that is: the unity of thought or idea, which I shall discuss in detail in another section of my study. For these reasons, then, I have regarded the loosely connected succession of pictures and scenes, so typical of Wedekind's stage pieces, as a distinct type of the synthetic drama and have designated it as the "SYNTHETIC-SCENE" technique.

But now let us examine closely the construction of one of these plays (any one of them will display enough of the features of the synthetic-scene technique to be regarded as typical of his style) in order to get a clearer picture of

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1The only plays that observe the Aristotelian unities are: "Der Kammersänger", a one-act play, and "Die Zensur", a short piece which is really nothing but a dialogue between an author and the state censor.
what is meant by "eine Bilder- und Szenenfolge" which is the basis of the synthetic-scene technique.

KÖNIG NICOLO (oder So ist das Leben) (1901)

There are several reasons why I have chosen this play as the one for our analysis: first, it is, in my opinion, the one which most clearly shows the nature of this synthetic-scene technique; secondly, the play is my favorite of all Wedekind's dramas; thirdly, although generally recognized as one of Wedekind's most polished works, it has so far not been discussed in any detail; and fourthly, in all respects, it can well serve as a typical Wedekind piece. The plot of König Nicolo, which is set in the period of the Italian Renaissance, is briefly the following:¹

Act I
First Picture - Throne room.

Because of his neglect of his kingly duties, King Nicolo of Umbria, who has led a frivolous, wicked life, is overthrown by his subjects and banished from the kingdom for life under the penalty of death by the new king, Pietro Folchi, a former "Fleischermeister" (butcher), now acclaimed ruler by popular demand. The new sovereign gives the land an era of peace and prosperity under his wise and benevolent rule.

¹To help show the arrangement of dramatic pictures, I am dividing the plot into acts and "Bilder" as the author has done.

King Nicolo, believed dead because he eluded his escort and plunged into a swiftly flowing stream, swims to safety and later joins his daughter, Princess Alma, with whom he then sets out on a journey in search of a livelihood. Uns suited by his former occupation for any ordinary labor, the king has unsuccessfully tried begging and now, from some boorish landowner, he begs a job as a shepherd -- all the while being saved from utter discouragement by the comforting presence of his dearly beloved daughter.

Third Picture - Tailor's Workshop.

Disregarding the penalty which threatens him, the king has returned to his capital city, Perugia, and we now find him working as a tailor's apprentice and one highly favored because of his skill in cutting beautifully fitting gowns from the richest materials for the ladies of the court. Alma, disguised as a young man, becomes the assistant to the court scribe. In the heat of an argument with three of his jealous mocking colleagues, the embittered king curses the name of good King Pietro whereupon his fellow apprentices seize him and deliver him to the authorities.

Fourth Picture - Courtroom

In a mockery of a trial the poor Nicolo, now called Gigi, is sentenced to two years of solitary confinement to be followed by lifelong banishment from the kingdom under penalty of death.

Act Two

Fifth Picture - Jail

After half of this prison term has been completed, we learn that Nicolo has really felt well in the solitude of his cell, for he has been kept from the sufferings which his fellow men in the outside world would heap upon him.

Sixth Picture - Night. Wilderness.

When his two years are up, Nicolo meets his daughter and, together with a circus rider for a guide, they set out on their way to "Eine Elenderkirchweih"\(^1\), a poor man's fair which were often

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frequented by the owners of wandering theatrical troupes, who were in search of talent among the free lance entertainers present. At this festi­val which Wedekind calls "gallows" (or "Hochge­richt" and a "witches' sabbath") Nicolo hopes to win the approbation of the mob as well as of the managers with whom he hopes to obtain a job as a tragedian.

Seventh Picture - Gallows

Nicolo climbs upon a rock in the very shadow of the gallows in order to try and gain the approval of the public with his tragic acting. His lines, concerning a ruler whom no one recognizes or understands, are misunderstood by the spectators who burst into laughter. The theatrical managers, watching from the side lines, think to recognize in him a highly gifted comedian and bid highly for his services. Although he insists that he is really a tragedian, he soon resigns himself to his fate -- that of the serious man at whom the people always laugh and whom they refuse to take seriously -- and accepts the most lucrative offer as well as a position for Alma as the "Hanswurst" in the same troupe.

Act Three

Eighth Picture - Market place of Perugia.

While on tour with the troupe, Nicolo, now known as Epaminondas Alexandrion so that he may enter Perugia with impunity, has won everywhere the greatest applause for his comedy and especially for his satirical version of a king. It is this role he portrays when, in Perugia, the group of wandering actors is honored by the presence of the King and his son in the audience, The royal spectator is so impressed by the wisdom which he perceives in the words of the actor that he insists on Nicolo's accepting the most intimate advisory position at court -- that of court fool.

Ninth Picture - Throne room

For a time all goes well at the court for the two wanderers until -- one day King Pietro tells his son, Filipo that he has arranged a marriage between the latter and one of the princesses of the powerful De Medici family. Filipo refuses
such an alliance, protesting that he loves Donna Alma, the jester's daughter. All his father's efforts to dissuade him are in vain, so finally Pietro summons Nicolo and asks him for advice in this affair. The jester replies that in such a matter he cannot advise anyone. At last King Pietro orders him to insist that his daughter refuse to accept any further attentions of the prince. Again Nicolo refuses with the statement that he cannot insist on such an attitude in his daughter. Since he has been in such poor health and now realizes that death is not far away, he adds that Alma is really quite worthy of Filipo for he, the erstwhile fool, is actually the old King Nicolo. Both father and son refuse to believe him and feel certain that he has lost his mind. So they try to humor him. However, Nicolo insists that what he says is true and asks for his daughter who is to prove it. She, of course, corroborates her father's utterance, but meets the same result. Then, while trying to think of some convincing proof, the old man is suddenly seized with a heart attack and soon passes away. Upon Nicolo's death, King Pietro agrees to the marriage of Filipo and Alma, orders a regal burial for Nicolo, and then insists on complete silence about the whole story for: "History shall not say of me, that I made a king my court fool."\(^1\)

With a knowledge of this plot we may proceed to our study of the form and see how Wedekind has used this material -- how he has put this story into dramatic form according to the synthetic-scene technique of construction. As the reader has no doubt noticed, the play, KÖNIG NICOLO, is divided into three acts and nine pictures. This term, picture (Bild) has been rather widely used by literary critics and historians in their discussions of dramatic form; however, I have never found

\(^1\)"Die Geschichte soll nicht von mir melden, daß ich einen König zu meinem Hofnarr gemacht habe!" KÖNIG NICOLO, Act 3, Picture 9, p. 181.
one of them trying to explain just what he understands by this word. ¹ To do this then I have made a special investigation through all the dramatic works of Wedekind to try and learn exactly what the expression, dramatisches Bild, meant to him. The results of this study are as follows:

DAS DRAMATISCHE BILD

A dramatic picture, according to Wedekind’s use, is essentially a developmental stage or happening, in a course of events.

...wir sehen nicht den fortlaufenden Faden, sondern vielmehr Stadien eines Geschehens, vielleicht ein Mosaik.²

This basic characteristic is quite obvious in those plays which Wedekind actually divided into Bilder (pictures).³

Wedekind’s dramatic pictures are very complete in themselves,

...nicht in Üblicher Szenentechnik, sondern in geschlossenen Bildern voll konzentrierten Lebens, welche mehrere "Szenen" fassen können, doch auch wenige Sätze lang sein dürfen, wenn nur ein starker Stimmungsgehalt zum Ausdruck kommt. So entstehen mehr oder weniger selbstständige Abschnitte.⁴

¹Cf. the discussions about Wedekind’s plays in the works of Naumann, Diebold, Kutscher, Walzel, Bab, etc.
²Kutscher, I, 249.
³"König Nicolo" (1901); "Musik" (1906); "Franziska" (1911).
⁴Idem.
so much so that they could even have titles and, in fact, those found in *König Nicolo* and *Musik* have been given "Überschriften". In *Musik* -- "ein Sittengemälde in vier Bildern" the four pictures have symbolic titles -- "Bei Nacht und Nebel", "Hinter schwedischen Gardinen" (a euphemism for jail), "Vom Regen in die Traufe", and "Der Fluch der Lächerlichkeit". However, the nine pictures in *König Nicolo* have titles which describe their setting; for example -- "Thronsaal", "Heerstraße. Waldsaum", "Gerichtsaal", "Nacht. Wildnis", "Marktplatz von Perugia", etc.\(^1\)

From the titles of these pictures in *König Nicolo* as well as from Wedekind's description of the "Inszenierung" for *Franziska*, it is readily seen that "ein dramatisches Bild", besides showing a certain stage in the progress of a definite course of events, is also, in every sense of the word, a picture -- a new and different dramatic setting. To Mahrholz the phrase, "eine Bilder und Szenenfolge", that characterizes the synthetic scene drama, is in Wedekind's case to be regarded as a succession of discussions.

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\(^1\) A comparison between Goethe's *Faust* and *König Nicolo* (or any one of Wedekind's synthetic-scene dramas) in respect to form is most interesting and discloses that *Faust* is basically a synthetic-scene drama and the Goethe master-work is not divided into scenes but into pictures which have titles. Note that there is no act division in the first part!
... seine Verse sind in der Art Heinrich Heines auf Pointen hin gebaut, und seine Dramen sind Aneinanderreihungen von Diskussionen, von dialektischen Stegreiferzeugnissen, von witzigen Einfällen.¹

This statement certainly contains some truth and sheds more light on the nature of Wedekind's dramatic pictures, but I feel that further discussion of this point should wait until we are ready to look into the relation between Wedekind's form and his artistic purpose. Keeping these three aspects of the "dramatic picture" in mind (1) each picture another step; 2) each picture a new setting; and 3) each picture another discussion) let us turn to those other plays, which were not divided into Bilder, to see if Wedekind has incorporated this same idea (and the same type) of the dramatic picture into them also.

Frühlingserwachen (1891),² generally looked on as Wedekind's finest work and certainly his best known one, we find is divided into acts and scenes like any ordinary drama. However, on closer inspection each of these scenes reveals itself to be a "picture" in complete agreement with these three features listed previously (see above). Here each scene is a separate distinct step in the complete dramatic mosaic;³

¹Werner Mahrholz, Deutsche Literatur der Gegenwart, 110.
²Frühlingserwachen (the awakening of spring) is a finely drawn portrayal of the tragedy resulting from the inadequate knowledge of the budding sexual instincts in young adolescents.
³See note 2, page 33.
each succeeding scene calls for a change in stage setting; and every scene is a new conversation among various members of the cast. In *Erdgeist* (1893), the first of the two "Luludramen," 1 which are also regarded as Wedekind's original contribution to German drama, our idea of the dramatic picture corresponds--not to a scene--but to an act! Now Wedekind has each of the four acts represent a step (a new husband) in Lulu's rise to power over all males who come into her sphere of desire (the course of events). Again in *Die Büchse der Pandora* (see footnote 1) we find that each act is "ein Bild". From the point of view of form, the only difference between these two plays is that *Erdgeist* is subdivided into scenes (though this division has no significance formally) while its sequel has no smaller division. What has been stated about the above-mentioned plays also holds true for *Marquis von Keith* (1900), *Karl Hetmann, der Zwergrieze (oder Hidalla)* (1904) and *Oaha*, the satire of satires,--except that this last one affords us the single instance in which the succession of pictures does not go hand in hand with a succession of different stage sets. 2

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1 *Luludramen*: two plays showing that the essential nature of the sexes is tragic, and that between them there is constant bitter struggle. In *Erdgeist* the heroine, Lulu, causes the death of all the men to whom she gives herself. In the sequel *Die Büchse der Pandora* Lulu is preyed upon by the men.

2 "Schloß Wetterstein" (1910) -- a three-act play which is of interest because it had earlier been three individual one act plays: *In allen Sätteln gerecht; Mit allen Hunden getzt*; and *In allen Wassern gewaschen*. Each of these plays, though divided into scenes might be regarded as a "picture".
That the length of Wedekind's "Bilder" varies from that of a single scene or of several scenes\textsuperscript{1} to that of an entire act\textsuperscript{2} is apparent from what has already been said. It is, however, interesting to note the arbitrary use Wedekind makes of the act and scene. Judging from the variable use he has made of these dramatic divisions they hold no especial significance for him except when they represent a complete dramatic picture,

Das starre Gehege alter Aktschematik wurde eingerissen; eine lose Folge kurzer Szenen fügt Bild auf Bild.\textsuperscript{3}

and thus call for a change in stage scenery or when they afford intermission time for the audience.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SYNTHETIC-SCENE TECHNIQUE

Now that we have seen the manner in which Wedekind has divided his plot into these independent sections, called pictures, and have gained an idea of the nature of this dramatic division, we can more fully understand the nature of the complete drama that is thus formed by the "synthesis" of these

\textsuperscript{1}Franziska (1911) -- "Ein modernes Mysterium in fünf Akten und neun Bildern": has act, picture, and scene division. The length of the pictures varies from one scene to four scenes, and that of the acts from one to three pictures. Franziska has been called "a female Faust" and during the period of Wedekind's greatest popularity was actually placed on the same level with Goethe's great work.

\textsuperscript{2}See footnote 1, page \textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{3}Bernhard Diebold, Anarchie im Drama, 41.
pictures. As I have pointed out, each of these pictures portrays a separate complete incident in the course of the entire drama, which is but the sum total of all the pictures. The individual "Bild", that we most frequently find in Wedekind's plays, might better be termed a "station" in the "passion" of the central character whose fate is the subject of the best (and the majority) of Wedekind's dramatic works.¹ (Die Lulu-dramen, König Nicolo, Der Marquis von Keith, Karl Hetmann, der Zwergriese, Franziska.)

Here then we have another essential difference between the ordinary synthetic and synthetic-scene drama. Through the normal form of the synthetic drama the creating artist seeks to portray one especially important and exciting incident or event in the life of his main character. On the other hand, the writer using the synthetic-scene technique attempts to present the entire tragic course of the life of his central figure. This same difference in dramatic presentation is also evident in the basic unit of these two types of synthetic drama, namely the scene and the picture. The

¹A comparison between the synthetic-scene plays of Wedekind and the old passion plays offers some interesting parallels; especially, the similarity in form -- that is, the various stations resembling the pictures that Wedekind portrays, and the play itself is made up of these separate incidents in the sufferings (passion) of the leading character. Then, too, the similarity in purpose, (which I feel primarily causes the form) is most noticeable. "...for in spite of the crudity of some of his devices and the 'blood and thunder' element in his work, he was obviously approximating the direct method of morality plays". Arthur Eloesser, Modern German Literature, 131.
scenes, that we find in the drama which has as its topic the portrayal of one aspect or incident in the life of an individual, are not independent of each other; for their significance and complete meaning, they must depend upon the scenes which have preceded them or upon those following them. Yet, each scene is necessary and indispensable to the entire play for the light it may throw on the characters or for whatever new developments of the plot it may contain. The basic unit of the synthetic-scene drama, the picture, is, as we can see, a complete and independent incident, which might even have served as subject matter for an entire play of the normal synthetic type.\footnote{Study the material to be found in each "Bild" of \textit{König Nicolo} in regard to its suitability as a plot for a regular drama.} Moreover, we have seen that these pictures are not dependent upon each other for their meaning or understanding. Frequently we find some of these "Bilder" that can even be omitted without in any way impairing the effectiveness or significance of the drama.\footnote{Cf. the way in which many of the various passion plays differ only in the omission or inclusion of various incidents (pictures) in the life of Christ or incidents from the Bible: all of which had no effect on their popularity or in their dramatic unification, for like Wedekind's plays, they were held together by the unity of the central theme.}

Quite naturally then it follows that any play, composed of such loosely connected elements, cannot have a well developed plot with its carefully defined conflict of opposing forces; neither can it have any "rising action" that serves to heighten the tension by more closely tying the "dramatic knot" of the
action, nor can such a play have a climax or "turning point" when the issue of this conflict is settled.

Eine Handlung im gewöhnlichen Sinn ist also nicht da.1

In the plays of Wedekind we find no clear-cut, fierce conflict between purpose and counter purpose and logically then no solution of any dramatic problem either.

Speaking of "Frühlings Erwachen", but also true for all of Wedekind's plays: "...da gibt es kein Begegnen von Willen und Gegenwillen, keine Lösung eines dramatischen Knotens".2

One may read at random any scene from any of Wedekind's works; it will disclose that plot development, as well as tense dramatic action, is simply not to be found, and wherever the stage is filled with any action (as in Fritz Schwigerling, Die Luludramen, Der Kammersänger), it assumes a minor role.

Man mag eine beliebige Szene aus seinen Stücken lesen: nie ist eigentlich von Handlungen, von Leidenschaften (?), von drängendem Tun die Rede -- was doch die besondere Substanz des dramatischen Dichters ist -- sondern immer ist Wedekinds Dialog ein Gleiten von Pointe zu Pointe, von Witz zu Witz, von Antithese zu Antithese.3

In place of these factors, just discussed, which serve to unify the drama and which are lacking in the works of Wedekind, we do find strong impassioned dialogue, striking contrasts of men and pictures --

1Kutscher, I, 249.
2Busse, IV, 111.
3Mahrholz, 110-111.
Der Zusammenhang entsteht durch wachsende Intensität, durch stufenweises Fortschreiten der Vorgänge, durch Anordnung der Bilder, ihre Parallelen und Kontraste, wobei selbst solche wichtig werden, die keine Bewegung bringen.\(^1\)

and constant repetition of an idea of theme which the dramatist wishes to drive home to his public.

Was die Stücke notdürftig zusammenhält, ist die Einheit des diskutierten Themas -- niemals liegt die Einheit in Schicksal der Personen, in einem dichterischen Gesamtempfinden.\(^2\)

LENZ, BüCHNER, GRABBE, UND WEDEKIND

This synthetic-scene form of Wedekind's has often been likened to the dramatic form of several older German dramatists: to that of Jakob Michael Lenz (1751-1792) one of the ablest dramatic authors of the "Sturm und Drang" (cf. his plays, Der Hofmeister and Die Soldaten), and Georg Büchner (1813-1837), a young writer whose sarcastic style reminds one of Heinrich Heine, and author of a biographical fragment Lenz\(^3\). His comedy, Leonce und Lena (printed in part in 1839, completely in 1850, -- first produced 1913) is a splendid example of the satirical Romantic comedy (as Ludwig Tieck exemplified it) and shows all the typical features of the

\(^1\)Kutscher, I, 249.

\(^2\)Mahrholz, 119-111.

\(^3\)Lenz' dramatic form he made his own -- whether consciously or unconsciously; from our meagre knowledge of his short creative life, we shall probably never know.
synthetic-scene technique. That the same may be said for his 
dramatic fragment, Woyzeck (Wozzek) can be seen in the fol-
lowing statement:

Auch der Woyzeck (wie"Dantons Tod") besteht 
aus einer Vielzahl von Szenen und Szenchen, 
die am Leser vorbei jagen wie der Kinofilm.\footnote{Arnold, 611 -- "...mit den erörterten Mitteln des epischen 
Dramas: atemlos fiebrischem Wechsel Kleiner Szenen ohne jede 
Rücksicht auf Bühnemöglichkeit, kraftgenialer Prosa mit 
Shakespeareschen Hyperbelyn und Zoten und Liedern, welch letz-
tere der Dichter unbedenklich dem Volksschatz seiner eigenen 
Heimat entnimmt. Die Tradition liegt zutage: Shakespeare, 
der "Götz", Lenz, Grabbe, Büchner." -- and certainly we can 
now say: Wedekind. \textit{Ibid.} 610.}

It is also interesting to note that Büchner's Weltanschauung 
contained the same cynicism that is to be found in the way 
the dramatist Wedekind handles his characters.

"Der Einzelne", schrieb Büchner 1833 seiner 
Braut, "ist nur Schaum auf der Welle, die 
Größe ein bloßer Zufall, die Herrschaft des 
Genies ein Puppenspiel, ein lächerliches 
Ringen gegen ein ehernes Gesetz."\footnote{Idem.}

How closely this mood agrees with that of the famous words of 
the Marquis von Keith, who, when all his schemes have come 
crashing down around his head, says: "Das Leben ist eine 
Rutschbahn!" (Life is a toboggan slide!) and with the despair-
ing cry of King Nicolo when they refuse to believe in his 
nobility: "So ist das Leben! So ist das Leben!" Again in 
Büchner's famous, "Dantons Tod", we find the platitude:

Puppen sind wir, von unbekannten Gewalten am 
Draht gezogen; nichts, nichts wir selbst!
This same sentiment Wedekind has put into practice, and his figures on the stage speak and act exactly as if they were such puppets. The third in this group, of earlier dramatists, who used the synthetic-scene technique was Christian Dietrich Grabbe (1801-1836). It is in Grabbe's works that we see this technique being used to great advantage in portraying historical dramas, much in the manner of Shakespeare. In these histories of Grabbe's the truly epic nature of the synthetic-scene technique is most clearly brought out.

Allenthalben greift diese neue Form ins Gebiet des Epos über; das Stück zersplittert in eine Unzahl von Szenen, als deren Zentrum freilich der Held des normalen Dramas stehen bleibt.2

A more detailed study of these men would surely disclose that they had more in common than their use of this dramatic form. All of them directed the bitterness of their satire against the prevailing conventions of society; all of them showed the same vigorous, passionate antagonism toward Realism or rationalism, which they regarded as a "bête noire" standing in the way of society's progress toward the better, richer life.

Kutscher makes the following statement:

1Die Hohenstaufen -- Friedrich Barbarossa and Heinrich VI, 1829-1830; Napoleon, 1831; Hannibal, 1835; Die Hermanns Schlacht, 1838.

2Arnold, 587. It is my belief that, if Wedekind had lived longer, he, too, would have written great historical works. Or, if not, he would have brought forth a drama, in somewhat the same category as Goethe's Tasso, or Iphigenia.
In seiner Form greift Wedekind auf Büchner, Grabbe, Lenz zurück, also auf den Gegensatz zur griechischen, französischen, oder deutschen Klassik.\(^1\)

This classical drama, to which the form of Wedekind and these others was opposed, is chiefly characterized by its use of the analytic method of dramatic construction, which is defined as a method in which

Die Vorfabel kann jedoch auch selbst die Katastrophe bzw. deren Ursachen enthalten: dann ergibt sich der ANALYTISCH-REGRESSIVE HANDLUNGSVERLAUF, (Folgedrama) die Handlung bezieht sich auf einen rückwärtigen Ausgangspunkt, der in der Vorfabel oder doch im Anfang des Stückes liegt -- "Nathan" Handlung, "Der zerbrochene Krug", "Lear", "Fuhrmann Henschel", "Friedensfest".\(^2\)

Not only was this analytic construction used by the French and German classicists but it was also much in vogue with the "Aufklärung" and its modern counterpart, Realism.

The naturalistic school and all for which it stood, was, as we know,\(^3\) anathema to Wedekind. Therefore, it is only natural that in his dramatic form, as in all other characteristics of his literary works, he should remove himself as far as possible from Naturalism. In order to further clarify and to make more noticeable the features of this synthetic-scene technique, I would like to give the chief traits of the form which is its direct opposite.

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\(^1\) Kutscher, I, 249.

\(^2\) Merker, Stammler, I, 213.

\(^3\) See page 27.
FEATURES OF THE ANALYTIC, REALISTIC DRAMA

As direct outgrowths of the Naturalists' attempt to achieve the utmost reality on the stage and in their dramas, we can note the following traits.

The use of monologues and stage asides were carefully avoided. A marked preference was shown for "indirect characterization"; i.e., the author brings out the character of his figures only by means of their own actions and speeches rather than in any single speech or conversation between two other members of the cast, or in a stage direction of his own. These two points just mentioned are peculiar to the drama of the Naturalists and represent their original contribution to the technique of the drama. Further in accordance with their passion for realism, the naturalistic authors adopted the analytic method of construction for their plays. (See footnote 1, page 8). This they did, primarily, because this classic method was the one truest to life. Certainly in actual life whatever action has occurred previously to a given point in a story -- the opening of a play -- comes to light gradually during the unfolding of the story and not in one or two lengthy scenes at the beginning. Moreover, this form was not only

1 This summary has been adapted from that given by Alfred Kerr, a contemporary critic, which I consider as one of the best and, at the same time, one of the most concise resumes of realistic drama. Das Neue Drama, Alfred Kerr, 295 ff.

2 In the use of this technique the Naturalists had Lessing as a forerunner (Nathan der Weise). In his skillful use of the analytic method as well as the ordinary synthetic method (Emilia Galotti) Lessing reveals himself to be one of the really expert dramatic technicians. Bühnentechniker
the one more closely approximating life but was also the one most suitable for showing the importance of environment in determining an individual's destiny. Observe the effectiveness with which Hebbel (Maria Magdalene) and Ibsen have given expression to this use of the analytic drama:

The space available to the dramatist in which to unfold his picture of life is limited. He has to exercise the utmost economy. If, as Hebbel declared, the divine antagonist must be given more room, then the individual must be given less. The individual, however, is not to be subordinated: not only his individuality but the process of its formation is to be shown. There is a way to solve this problem: show how the individual was made into what he is through the effect of social environment. Again, however, evolution of character cannot be shown apart from a true use of time, and it may even presuppose a composite action. How was this to be done? The logical answer is: the analytic exposition.

The realization of environment as fate made the history of the character important. This implied a vital use of time, which in turn forced the past far beyond the first act into the texture of the whole drama.  

Also springing from the same motive that prompted the abolition of the monologue and the aside, is the complete avoidance of all remarkable happenings ("merkwürdige Zufälle"). One can search in vain through any typical naturalistic play for a trace of the supernatural. Each single element in the development of their plot is connected by very well motivated reasons. Another of the means, used to obtain veristic effects, was the use of the everyday language, of dialect (Cf. page 7).

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1 Campbell, Hebbel, Ibsen and the Analytic Exposition, 34-35.
This last mentioned trait, like the two preceding ones, are not features originated by the Realists, who, however, have thoroughly reshaped them and made them suitable for their own individual use.\footnote{Note the use of dialect in the plays of Herzog Heinrich Julius, of Braunschweig.}

The remaining features are related with the foregoing ones, but are based upon esthetic grounds rather than on the desire for life-like presentation.

Throughout their works the realistic authors sought to maintain an objective point of view on their material -- to avoid any sort of commentary -- and to keep their own feelings, as much as possible, out of their writing; all the while showing an inclination to allow the public to draw its own conclusions. Closely allied with their strict motivation was a shying away from purposeless episodes, which might not be absolutely essential and in direct bearing on the plot. Another aspect of this "knappe Darstellung" is the frequently found strict observance of the unity of time. All the exposition, necessary to understand the play, and the action occurring during the play, takes place, in the best naturalist plays, in the space of twenty-four to forty-eight hours. In these last two points one can see, interestingly enough, a definite contradiction to realism, for surely in life itself no connected course of events nor any important incident ever takes place without containing some episodes that have nothing to do
with that course of action. Nor do all the necessary elements of such a plot really ever occur in the course of one or two days.

One might state, that, point for point, the technique of Wedekind's plays is directly the opposite of all that which has just been mentioned as being characteristic of the naturalistic drama. Irrational elements\(^1\) recognizable in his dramatic form are: in his detailed presentation of scenes and pictures, Wedekind doesn't care in the least about being true to life, although the complete plays are "truths of life"; Kerr in speaking of "Der Kammersänger", but also valid for all of Wedekind's dramas, writes as follows: "Die Komik (oder die Tragik) geht nicht auf Lebenswahrheit; aber das ganze Stück ist eine Lebenswahrheit."\(^2\)

Wedekind never avoids the unreal or the supernatural;\(^3\) frequently we run across scenes or pictures which are absolutely unimportant to the plot, which in itself was not regarded as of prime importance. The dramatic unities mean nothing to him; monologues are by no means avoided;\(^4\) and his use of dialect is infrequent, but wherever employed, it is for grotesque

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\(^1\) Compare Wedekind's dramas with those belonging to the two earlier "irrational" movements, "Sturm und Drang" and Romanticism.

\(^2\) Kerr, 137.

\(^3\) Cf. the closing scenes of Frühlings Erwachen and the character of Der vermummte Herr or such unreal personages as Lulu, Gasti-Piani; "Oaha", "Franziska".

\(^4\) Cf. Frühlings Erwachen; Nicolo; Kammersänger; Schloß Wetterstein, etc.
or comic effect. Wedekind seems quite unconcerned with relating those details which have occurred before the play opens — his exposition is scanty, if any is given at all — further proof for the unimportance of any connected plot in his works. Never does he seek to avoid a commentary on the subject matter in the play; on the contrary, his purpose (he is always subtle about this) was to put before the public his own very decided opinions on some ideal or weighty theme.

**DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

Inextricably tied up with Wedekind's use of the synthetic-scene form, as well as with the other traits of his dramaturgy, and with his artistic purpose in general, are his extraordinary characters, both his main figures as well as those of lesser importance.

The skillful indirect characterisation, that we found in the plays of the Realists, is definitely not present in Wedekind's. In fact, there is scarcely any character description that might be called characterisation. Usually his figures are shown in but one light only — that is, but one trait of the person is emphasized ("Schwarz-weiss Technik"), by which trait we may understand the author's feeling for that character and his subsequent position in the play in relation to the other members of the cast. Invariably Wedekind is interested only in depicting types of characters, never individual personalities, and, in fact, the only types that seem to concern
him are those two referred to by the sweetheart of the Marquis von Keith:

Sehen Sie, ich teile die Menschen in zwei große Klassen. Die einen sind hopp-hopp und die andern sind ethe-petete.¹

The designation, "hopp-hopp", refers to those of the author's choice, while those to whom the word, "ethe-petete", applies are persons disliked by him. Judging from Wedekind's treatment of his various characters, we may safely class those, who are "ethe-petete" and upon whom he has vented his sarcasm, as Rationalists or Realists -- men who represent to him that most despised of things, "bourgeois morality", and who are known to the literary historian as "Vernunftphilister". Those characters, with whom Wedekind is in sympathy, who are "hopp-hopp", are the idealists, artists, and moral reformers, who constantly have to struggle with those representatives of middle-class morality, the smug complacent Philistine Rationalists. These crusading idealists are of the same cut as those met earlier in German Literature, the Irrationalists or "Ge-fühlsmenschen".

Quite logically one would expect from any author who is in sympathy with the struggling idealist that he would infuse into his characters much that is present in his own personality. Such an author was Oscar Wilde,² who among others also shares

¹ Marquis von Keith, IV, 36.

this feature with Wedekind. In each of Wedekind's plays there is at least one character, usually the leading one, by whose utterances or by whose fate we can clearly recognize the author himself.\(^1\) From Fritz Schwigerling on we can clearly perceive a direct line of characters, all of whom are essentially Frank Wedekind -- just as in Goethe's dramas, the leading figures prove to be, in reality, Goethe himself. (Götz, Orestes, Tasso, Egmont, Faust). The authors here used the drama as a means of personal confession and explanation.

The character, Fritz Schwigerling, represents Wedekind's ideal man -- the man he would like to be -- a versatile, many-sided individual, equally at home in the dramatic as well as in the "circus" arts; a man of physical grace, mentally equal to any and all situations.

Gölestiin: "Bei dir, lieber Freund, in den Feengärten von Follies Bergère war das etwas anders. Was warst du dort nicht alles; Komiker, Maschinist, Akrobat, Kritiker, Balletmeister, Clown, Dramaturg, Oberregisseur, Feuerwerker, Chef der Claque..."\(^2\)

\(^1\)In Die Junge Welt, Wedekind may be seen, not only in the person of Karl Rappart, the foil to the personification of the Naturalist Franz Ludwig Meier, but also in those other members of the younger generation who hate the smug outlook of the middle class. The real hero of Wedekind's tragedy, Frühlings Erwachen, is the entire generation of youth, who are just beginning to perceive the first signs of maturity, although his sympathetic treatment of Melchior Gabor would indicate that in this play he is Wedekind. Also, we have the feeling that "der vermummte Herr", the strange personage Melchior encounters in the grave-yard is also the author. In conflict with the youths are those who bear the brunt of Wedekind's effectiveness, the teachers and parents and the unfeeling pastor -- symbols of the hated "bürgerliche Moral".

\(^2\)Fritz Schwigerling, Act 1, Scene 7, II, 186 ff. Compare this with Wedekind's own varied past.
Again, when Schwigerling discusses the aims to be achieved in educating the children of the Prince:

Schwigerling: "Es existiert keine Verlegenheit, nicht die fatalste Situation, aus der meine Zöglinge nicht den richtigen Ausweg zu finden wissen, sei es nun mit dem Degen in der Hand oder über die Hintertreppe."¹

and later when Schwigerling admonishes his old friend, Gölestin, for the latter's indecisiveness.


Wedekind most decidedly had this "elasticity" for he had once plunged into the night of despair when he was sentenced to prison for a year for the crime of lèse-majesté and was later able to regain his former prestige and go on to greater heights.

The next in this succession of Wedekind characters is, to be sure, no hero or main figure, but in the two "Luludramen", Alwa Schön, the son of Dr. Schön, Lulu's benefactor and last-murdered husband, plays a rather important part. In Der

¹Fritz Schwigerling, Act 1, Scene 9, II, 189.
²Ibid., Scene 13, II, 197.
Erdgeist we see Alwa as a playwright, and author of a ballet, the success of which is due to the fact that Lulu is the leading dancer. He also assists his father in editing a newspaper. The first hint we get that he might embody some aspect of Wedekind's personality, comes in a monologue in the second scene of the third act when Alwa is sitting in Lulu's dressing room during a performance of his ballet and musing over the possibility of writing a play concerning this "femme fatale".


Again in the opening scene of Die Büchse der Pandora, Alwa, in a discussion of his (Wedekind's) theories on literature, refers to his play, Erdgeist, thus clearly showing himself to be Wedekind.

1Erdgeist, Act 3, Scene 2, 65. Note: two typical features of Romanticism. The use of the monologue and the "Romantic Irony", that is, the author's inclusion of his own thoughts concerning his own play with a foreboding of the way in which the rest of the tragedy will end.
Alwa: "Das ist der Fluch, der auf unserer jungen Literatur lastet, daß wir viel zu literarisch sind. Wir kennen keine anderen Fragen und Probleme als solche, die unter Schriftstellern und Gelehrten auftauchen. Unser Gesichtskreis reicht über die Grenzen unserer Zunftinteressen nicht hinaus. Um wieder auf die Fährte einer großen gewaltigen Kunst zu gelangen, müßten wir uns möglichst vieler Menschen bewegen, die nie in ihrem Leben ein Buch gelesen haben, denen die einfachsten animalischen Instinkte bei ihren Handlungen maßgebend sind. In meinem "Erdgeist" habe ich schon aus voller Kraft nach diesen Prinzipien zu arbeiten gesucht."¹

Critics have always tried, and unsuccessfully, I think, to include that unemotional, rationalistic, pseudo-artist, Gerardo, Der Kammersänger in this group of characters that show the author's personality.² Far more in sympathy with Wedekind's life and nature is the character of Professor Dühring -- an old composer with the true artist's soul -- whose life has been devoted to his art, but without success and who nevertheless believes in his talent and uses all sorts of methods to gain entry into Gerardo's hotel suite to beg him to listen to his opera, knowing that if it meets with the favor of the court singer, it will probably be produced.

¹Die Büchse der Pandora, Act 1, Szene 1, 125-126.
²To learn what Wedekind really had in mind in this character and to see what various stage directors had done with this one act play, read the introduction to Der Kammersänger, found in the complete works.
lerlos, wie ein Weiberknecht gegen seine Verführerin, wie der Hund, der die Peitsche bekommt, gegen seinen Herrn."

The conversation between the old man and the matinee idol soon comes to an exchange of ideas about the nature of art and it is in this discussion that the practical realism of the singer and the idealism of the composer (Wedekind) comes to light.

Gerardo: "Sie überschätzen die Kunst, mein verehrter Herr! Lassen Sie sich von mir sagen, daß die Kunst ganz etwas anderes ist, als was man sich in den Zeitungen darüber weismacht."

Dühring: "Sie ist mir das Höchste auf Erden!

Gerardo: "Wir Künstler sind ein Luxusartikel der Bourgeoise, zu dessen Bezahlung man sich gegenseitig überbietet. Wenn Sie recht hätten, wie wäre denn dann zum Beispiel eine Oper wie die "Walküre" möglich, die sich um Dinge dreht, deren Bloßstellung dem Publikum in tiefster Seele zuwider ist. Singe ich aber den Siegmund, dann führen die besorgtesten Mütter ihre dreizehn- und vierzehnjährigen Töchterchen hinein. Und ich auf der Bühne habe auch die absolute Gewißheit, daß nicht ein Mensch im Zuschauerraum mehr auf das achtet, was bei uns oben gespielt wird. Wenn die Menschen darauf achteten, würden sie hinauslaufen. Das haben sie getan, solange die Oper neu war. Jetzt haben sie sich daran gewöhnt, es zu ignorieren. Sie bemerken es so wenig, wie sie die Luft bemerken, die sie von der Bühne trennt. Das, sehen Sie, ist die Bedeutung dessen, was Sie Kunst nennen!

Gerardo continues to explain that the artist exists but for the adulation of the public and that he completely belongs to it. He also states that the artist is necessary because so many people derive their subsistence from such a public idol.

1Der Kammersänger, Scene 7, 214.
(The case of the modern American cinematic star will illustrate this point quite well.) The "Heldentenor" concludes by saying:

Es gibt keine verkannten Genies. Wir sind nun einmal nicht die Herren unseres Geschichtes; der Mensch ist zum Sklaven geboren.1

In the adventurous character of that arch-swindler, the "Marquis von Keith", Wedekind has explained more of himself to the world and at the same time has pointed out the direction which, in the future, his heroes will take.

At the time this play was published, 1900, Wedekind was living in Munich where he was busy as one of the most talented members of the famed "Elf Scharfrichter" cabaret. (See page 18) While residing there, Munich came to be a sort of second home for him. There seemed to be a certain mood about the town which struck a harmonious chord in his soul. Discussing a similar idea with his sweetheart, the Marquis von Keith says:


1Der Kammersänger, Scene 7, 224-225. Compare this last sentence of Gerardo's with the attitude of the characters in the naturalistic drama and with the attitude of the dramatists of that school who thought man's fate was to be attributed to heredity and environment.

2Marquis von Keith, Act 1, 10.
Again, when Anna, his mistress, expresses her admiration and envy for his boundless energy (and in his statement we can clearly identify the Marquis as Wedekind) von Keith explains:

v. Keith: "Unsinn, ich habe gar keine Energie."

Anna: "Dir ist es aber doch einfach Lebensbedürfnis, mit dem Kopf durch die Wände zu rennen."

v. Keith: "Meine Begabung beschränkt sich auf die leidige Tatsache, daß ich in bürgerlicher Atmosphäre nicht atmen kann. Mag ich deshalb erreichen, was ich will, ich werde mir nie das geringste darauf einbilden. Andere Menschen werden in ein bestimmtes Niveau hineingepflanzt, auf dem sie ihr Leben lang fort-vegetieren, ohne mit der Welt in Konflikt zu geraten."

Anna: "Du bist dagegen als abgeschlossene Persönlichkeit von Himmel gefallen."

von Keith: "Ich bin Bastard. Mein Vater war ein sehr hochstehender Mensch, besonders was Mathematik und so exakte Dinge betrifft, und meine Mutter war Zigeunerin."

Wedekind's own father, a Hanoverian, had been a surgeon in the Orient, and then practiced in San Francisco where he met his wife, a concert singer on tour. There in California, by means of shrewd manipulation, the father had been able to amass a fortune sufficiently large to permit him to return to Hanover where Benjamin Franklin Wedekind was born but a few months after their return to Germany. His father soon bought an old castle, Lenzburg, in canton Aargau in Switzerland, where

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1Marquis von Keith, Act 1, 10-11.

2Compare with other literary geniuses whose fathers were of a practical, realistic nature and whose mothers were of a soft idealistic and romantic nature. Goethe, Thomas Mann.
Frank spent his entire youth.

Later when her husband berates her for her pessimism, Molly gives us an idea of his adventurous past.


Although Wedekind himself did not undergo these same experiences, he had just as adventurous and varied a past behind him as this hero.

The following speech of the Marquis is interesting, for Wedekind had been born with a slight limp, and here, I believe, he accurately describes -- by using the feelings of von Keith -- the psychological state which caused him to be so concerned with perfect physical condition (viz. acrobats, circus riders, etc.) and with a code of morals based upon physical beauty.

v. Keith (springt wütend auf und geht zum Divan): "Ich bin als Krüppel zur Welt gekommen. So wenig wie ich mich deshalb zum Sklaven verdammt fühle, so wenig wird mich der Zufall, daß ich als Bettler geboren bin, je daran hindern, den allererlegbigsten Lebensgenüß als mein recht-mäßiges Erbe zu betrachten."

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1Marquis von Keith, Act 1, 17.

2Ibid., 18.
Near the end of the play, when the Marquis von Keith's great swindle, the building of a huge artistic center, the "Feenpalast", threatens to become exposed, his friend, Scholz, urges the swindler to flee into a mental sanitarium with him. In his plea we find a statement, which might well have been made by a man who had but recently been freed from prison where he had spent a year for the offense of "Majestätsbeleidigung".

Scholz: "Komm mit mir, dann bist du geborgen. Wir sind zusammen aufgewachsen; ich sehe nicht ein, warum wir nicht auch das Ende gemeinsam erwarten sollen. Die bürgerliche Gesellschaft urteilt dich als Verbrecher ab und unterwirft dich allen unmenschlichen mittelalterlichen Martyern...."

Wedekind's next two heroes, King Nicolo and Karl Hetmann, do not seem to show so many details in common with their author's life, but the tragedy of their fate is clearly meant to be identified with his own; namely, that the prophet of some new teaching is not recognized or even taken seriously by the people; quite the contrary, King Nicolo is taken for a highly talented comedian while Karl Hetmann, at the end of the play, is eagerly sought by a circus owner to appear as "dummer August". Both Nicolo and Hetmann, the Idealists,

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1 Marquis von Keith, Act 5, 95. It is interesting to note that the imprisonment of Oscar Wilde on grounds of immorality (much evidence taken from his works) has been called: "The last act of the Middle Ages in England."

2 Even the so usually astute critic, Alfred Kerr, believed Wedekind to be a writer of comedies. The tendency of society to patronize something just for its surface obscenity -- or something that has been declared immoral -- instead of for its underlying worth, Wedekind has ridiculed in the figure of the editor, Karl Launhart, in Karl Hetmann, and throughout the play Oaha.
failed to recognize the futility of battering their heads against the unyielding wall of middle-class morality. All this is poetically and dramatically summarized in the seventh picture of König Nicolo where the deposed monarch mounts the rock at the poor man's fair to give an audition of his tragic talent.

(Er besteigt den Felsen. Von den Zuschauern wird er mit trockenem Husten empfangen. Darauf spricht er mit klarem Ton, aber innerlich bewegt.):

Ich bin der Herrscher hier in diesem Land, von Gott ernannt, von niemand erkannt!
Und wenn ich's schrie, daß die Felsen dröhnen,
Daß ich in diesem Lande Herrscher bin,
Der Vögel Zwitschern wurde mich verhöhnen!
Wozu gereicht mein königlicher Sinn?
Daß ausgehungert ich mit gierigen Zähnen
Aufschnappen, wie zur Winterszeit das Tier. --
Doch nicht, um meiner Leiden zu erwähnen,
Red' ich, mein Volk, mit dir!

Die Zuschauer: (brechen in ein schallendes Gelächter aus, klatschen stürmisch in die Hände und rufen begeistert) Da Capo! Da Capo!

Der König: Geehrte Zuhörer! Mein Fach auf der Bühne ist die große ernste Tragödie!

Die Zuhörer: Bravo! Bravo!

Der König (mit Anstrengung aller Seelenkraft):
Was ich euch soeben vortrug, ist mir das Teuerste, das Heilige, was ich bis jetzt in den Tiefen meiner Seele verschlossen hielt!1

The prophetic denouement, contained in the last picture, gains in meaning for us if we follow out the symbolic scheme and regard King Pietro, Nicolo's (i.e. Wedekind's) opponent, as the embodiment of the wise (?) domination of the middle-

1König Nicolo, Bild 7, 149-150.
class way of thinking; Alma, Nicolo's daughter, as Wedekind's "Morallehre" which was so long unrecognized; and Filipo, as the younger generation whose love for the new literature of Wedekind's (Alma) is being blocked by his stubbornly conservative parent.


K. Pietro: Bist du von Sinnen!

Der König: Ich sehe klarer als du! Du kannst des wunderbaren gewaltigen Schicksals Erfüllung so wenig hindern wie sich.\(^1\)

In the closing scenes of the third act of Karl Hetmann, Wedekind's public explanation is continued when the misshapen dwarf gives the reasons for the failure met by his international "Verein zur Züchtung von Rassemenschen". This "Society for the Propagation of Pure-blooded Men" represents Wedekind's philosophy.

Hetmann: Denn von Frauen solcher Erkenntnis erhoffte ich, da mit Wohlleben und Sorglosigkeit einmal abgerechnet war, eine frenetische Begeist- erung für mein Reich der Schönheit. -- Die Rechnung war falsch! Das Weib steht sittlich so tief, daß Schönheit bei ihm nur als Mittel zum Zweck in Betracht kommt. Schönheit um ihrer selbst willen\(^2\) ist dem Weib ein Greuel. --

\(^1\)König Nicolo, Bild 9, 176.

\(^2\)"Beauty for its own sake" was the attitude which Oscar Wilde constantly sought to impress on his fellow men.
Vor allem aber hoffte ich die heranwachsende Jugend derart zu fanatisieren, daß schon die nächste Generation die Häßlichkeit so verabscheuen müßte, wie sich die gegenwärtige vor der Armut fürchtet. Die Rechnung war falsch. Die Jugend kennt kein erhabeneres Ziel, als vor alledem, was die Wogen des Lebens aus unergründlichen Tiefen aufwerfen, möglichst rasch in sichere Behausung geborgen zu sein.¹

Josef Reißner, the leading male figure in Musik – ein Sittengemälde in vier Bildern reproaches his friend, Franz Lindeküh, for having sent a notice to the newspapers concerning the former's private life. From what Reißner says about Lindeküh we can immediately perceive that, again in the person of this writer, Wedekind has written himself into one of his dramas. Once again Wedekind uses the dramatic form to try to explain more clearly to the public his real nature.

Lindeküh: Ich -- ich konnte die Verhältnisse, in denen du lebst, nicht länger ruhig mit ansehen.

Josef: Das war in der Tat auch die einzige Erklärung, die mir für deine Handlungsweise übrig blieb. Du hast einen Sparren! Du giltst infolge deiner Schriften seit Jahren als der unmoralischste Mensch, der unter Gottes Sonne umherläuft; in Wirklichkeit läuft du aber tagaus, tagein mit einem ungestillten, unersättlichen moralischen Hunger umher! Du bist moralisch ein Monomane! Du bist ein Don Quichotte, der nicht ahnt, um was es sich in dieser Welt handelt, sondern der vom Leben nur die Erfüllung seiner hirnverbrannten Zwangsvorstellungen erwartet und der gemeingefährlich wie ein toller Hund wird, sobald die erhoffte Erfüllung ausbleibt!²

¹Karl Hetmann, Act 3, 238-239. Strange that the sentiment expressed in the last sentence of this passage -- so derisively stated -- becomes a sort of "der Weisheit letzter Schluß" in Franziska.

²Musik, Bild 3, Scene 3, 79-80.
In the one act play, *Die Zensur*, Walter Buridan seeks to explain and justify himself to the state censor, Dr. Cajetan Prantl. Buridan is obviously meant to be Wedekind, for he talks of the lack of understanding which his play, *Pandora* had received. During their conversation he seeks to explain that his (Wedekind's) works are really quite moral and not harmful -- they do not deserve to be forbidden, as they have been. All Buridan's persuasion is in vain. Some of his speeches, which give much light on Wedekind's purpose and his creative situation are:

Buridan: Darin bewährt sich der untülgbare Fluch, den ich in dieses Erdendasein mitbekommen habe! Was ich mit dem tiefsten Ernst meiner Überzeugung ausspreche, halten die Menschen für Lasterungen. Soll ich mit klarstem Bewusstsein unecht, unaufrichtig, unwahr werden, damit die Menschen an meine Aufrichtigkeit glauben? Um das zu können, müßte ich der Lasterer sein, für den mich die Menschen halten!1

Buridan: Was hilft alle Liebe zum Guten, wenn sich das Gute nicht lieben lassen will! Ich jammerte nie über die schimpflichen Lebenslagen, in die mich das allgemeine Mißverständnis graten ließ; ich nutze vielmehr die schimpflichen Lebenslagen nur wieder dazu aus, um die ewigen Gesetze klarzulegen, die sich in ihnen offenbarten. Aber auch darin erschien ich wieder als Spötter!2

Buridan: In keiner meiner Arbeiten habe ich das Gute als schlecht oder Das Schlecht als gut hingestellt. Ich habe die Folgen, die dem Menschen aus seinen Handlungen erwachsen,

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1*Die Zensur*, Scene 2, 124.
2Idem.
nirgends gefälscht. Ich habe diese Folgen überall immer nur in ihrer unerbittlichen Notwendigkeit zur Anschauung gebracht.¹


Just as in the dramas of Goethe where we usually find a counter foil to the hero,³ so also do we have in Wedekind's plays the two conflicting figures that symbolize the dual aspect of the artist's nature as well as of life itself.⁴

The fate of these idealistic "Gefühlsmenschen" -- Goethe's as well as Wedekind's -- is essentially tragic. Only in those cases where the artistic individual (or "der Strebende") modifies his outlook by some concession to the conventions of

¹Die Zensur, Scane 2, 125.
²Ibid., 131.
³Götz vs. Weislingen; Orestes vs. Pylades; Tasso vs. Antonio; Egmont vs. Alba; Faust vs. Mephistopheles.
⁴Karl Rappart vs. Franz Ludwig Meier; Gerardo vs. Prof. Dühring; Marquis von Keith vs. Konsul Kasimir; Nicolo vs. Pietro; Hermann vs. Morosini; Buridan vs. Dr. Prantl.
society, -- for only in the practical simple life is true happiness and contentment to be found -- may the individual avoid the tragic fate.\(^1\) The truth of this theory can be seen in all those plays where the "Wedekind man" meets total defeat at the hands of the representative of bourgeois society. The first hint we have that Wedekind was beginning to see this truth, which Goethe had already pointed out, comes in Karl Hetmann.\(^2\)

From the characteristics of the typical Wedekind hero, which we have just discussed, the reader has probably noted Wedekind's predilection for the adventurer, for the man with a past.\(^3\) Doubtless his preference for this type of character was due to his feeling of kinship with these men who, like himself, stood outside the pale of society and were contemptuous of it. Like them, he, too, was widely travelled and was at home in any and all spheres of society.

In 1886 Wedekind first went to work as the chief of the advertising section of the famed condensed soup manufacturing company, Maggi, which was located in Zurich. In this city it was that he came to know the Naturalists in the person of Gerhart Hauptmann. When in 1888 his father died, Wedekind came

\(^{1}\) Faust; Franziska.

\(^{2}\) Note 1, page 62.

\(^{3}\) Wedekind's portrayal of the adventurer has been treated in detail by Liselotte Weber in Der Marquis von Keith, der Abenteurer in dramatischer Gestaltung (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Kiel, 1934, 72 pp.)
into the possession of a moderately sized inheritance and then went to Berlin, a city for which he did not much care, and from thence to Munich, where he felt at home. He had been a student there in 1883 at the university. In riotous living he had soon squandered all his money and was forced to look for work. For a half year he was the secretary to the Circus Herzog. Almost penniless he then went to Paris, where he made a bare living as a journalist. There he lived among the bohemian circles and became familiar with all the types of the demi-monde. For a time he was connected with the Circus Franconi but then went over to London where he again lived in the realm of the bohemian. There in 1892-3 he came into contact with the symbolistic literary movement. But he didn't like London and so was soon back on the continent. In 1895-6 he appears in Switzerland as a dramatic reader with the strange name, Cornelius Minehaha. We next hear of him as being one of the more frequent contributors to Albert Langen's important satirical magazine Simplizissimus. In Leipzig Wedekind made the very important acquaintance of Karl Heine, who was the leader of the literary circle there in the city and who later was in charge of the Ibsen theatre there. It was Heine who first became interested enough in Wedekind's works to produce some of them. This helped greatly to give the young author some much-needed self-confidence. However, his political articles in Simplizissimus were causing a sensation and one of them went too far. The issue was confiscated
and Wedekind was forced to flee to Paris. He soon returned to face the music and was imprisoned in the fortress Königstein for one year because of lese-majesté.\(^1\) For about two years following his prison sentence Wedekind had become a sort of "Bänkelsänger", singing his strange, grotesque, sensual ballads to his own guitar accompaniment, all over Germany. This "Überbrettl" period is best remembered by his participation in the "Elf Scharfrichter" cabaret group in Munich. In the meantime he had grown impatient with the lack of success that his plays were having. One of the things he least liked about the productions of his works was the acting. And so he took a few lessons and went on the stage himself, usually appearing in his own leading roles. Finally, while engaged with Max Reinhardt's troupe, in 1906 following, his plays began to win increasingly more popularity. In 1908 he married Tilly Niemann, an actress whom he had met and worked with in the Reinhardt group. After another year or two on the boards, they settled down to that simple domestic life, which Franziska proved to be the happiest and best.\(^2\)

The characters of lesser importance that we meet in Wedekind's plays are also a rather adventurous group. Most of them

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\(^1\)His connection with the Simplississimus is the subject for the play, "Oaha, the Satire of Satires". The year in prison is an experience he has also given to his "König Nicolo" and "Karl Hetmann".

are taken from the bohemian life which he learned to know so well in the metropolitan centers of Europe.

In Wahrheit wird das Gesellschaftliche in ein Abenteuerliches, Zirkusromantisches, Unbürgerliches, Zigeunerhaft-internationales gehoben, wird das Naturalistische vielmehr bis in das Unwirkliche, Groteske, Schemenhaft und Gespensterhafe gesteigert, werden nicht mehr Menschen, sondern imaginäre Gestalten, Marionetten, "wilde, schöne Tiere" gegeben.¹

Through Wedekind's plays there passes a steady stream of artists, writers, acrobats, swindlers, pimps, whores, and even such sexual perverts as a lesbian countess and Jack the Ripper. This use of so many characters having unusual callings, who vagabond through the wide, wide world, is another of the traits which Wedekind has in common with the writers of the Romantic school.

Unlike the characters we meet in the plays and novels of the Romantic, Neo-Romantic (or even the Naturalistic) schools, Wedekind's possess a masculine strength and determination of mind and body that remind us of those of the "Sturm und Drang". His figures are chosen from outside of state, law, morals, culture, religion, and family. They seem to be in a constant struggle with society.²

Thomas Mann nach der Lektüre "Schloß Wetterstein", am 21. Juni, 1910 schrieb: "Wedekind, wird die Geschichte einmal sagen, was in einer teils senilen, teils puerilen, teils femininen

¹Naumann, 90.
²See also page 13.
Epochen der einzige Mann.

Wedekind's peculiar manner of presenting his characters has led the scholars of modern German literature to compare these figures with puppets or marionettes. The passage quoted from Hans Naumann on the previous page is typical of effect that Wedekind's character portrayal has caused. To what is this unusual effect due? The answer lies, I believe, in Wedekind's knack of bringing to light the real nature of his figures with but a few bold strokes of his pen.

Wedekind steht außerhalb der Gesellschaft, fast außerhalb der Welt. Er malt die Welt in leiser absurderlicher Verzerrung; doch ihr echtes Wesen strahlt heraus. Er verrückt unmerkbar die Linien; aber die Gestalten sind real.

Then, to emphasize and further impress this "essential nature" of his people upon his audience, he exaggerates their words and deeds, making them seem grotesque and unreal -- just like carved wooden actors.

Seine Charakteristik meidet wie Gift den Naturalismus und greift zur Stilisierung, hebt also durch Über- und Unterbetonung das Wesentliche heraus. Schon die Technik bedingt daß die Gestalten auf wenige Linien zurückgeführt werden; Wedekind gibt aber nicht bloß die Konturen, sondern das Wesen selbst in festen Strichen.

According to Alfred Kerr, this grotesque effect is a result of

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1Kutscher III, 282.
2Kerr, 137.
3Kutscher, I, 250.
the matter of fact way in which Wedekind presents the unusual. "In der Selbstverständlichkeit, mit der Ungewöhnliches darge-stellt wird."¹ This grotesqueness is further increased because Wedekind does not seem to be satisfied with having his puppets play their little drama, but rather he seems to stand like some supreme power above them and play with them.

Schreibt Wedekind ein Stück, so läßt er seine Puppen nicht nur spielen; er spielt mit seinen Puppen. Man genießt den seltenen Anblick eines ganz losgelösten. Wir ehren inmitten vieler Heuchelei so eine gemeine Aufrichtigkeit.²

The finest examples of Wedekind's use of the grotesque are to be found in those scenes³ in which he seeks to highlight the nature of the figures who represent "die bürgerliche Moral". In the light of his exaggeration and over-emphasis, they are sure to appear utterly ridiculous.

Es handelt sich dem Dichter, mit einem Worte darum, die bürgerliche Moral ad absurdum zu führen, und zu diesem Zwecke bedurfte er der Groteske und verzerrter Perspektive. Seine Groteske wurzelt, wie gesagt, im Sittlichen.⁴

Probably the most skillful scenes that Wedekind ever wrote showing this style are the "Lehrersszene" and the burial scene in Frühlings Erwachen, from which I have chosen a few typical excerpts.

¹Kerr, 134.
²Ibid., 136-137.
³The plays, Fritz Schwigerling and Oaha are grotesque throughout.
⁴Naumann, 99.
In the teachers’ scene, Melchior Gabor is brought before a group of his instructors because an essay of his (an essay about the structure and function of the sex organs) has been found on the body of his best friend, Moritz Stiefel, who had just committed suicide rather than disgrace his parents by not being able to pass in his school work.

Sonnenstich: Meine Herren! Setzen wir den Fall, daß wir die Relegation unseres schuldbeladenen Schülers bei einem hohen Kultusministerium zu beantragen unterlassen, so wird uns ein hohes Kultusministerium für das herein­gebrochene Unglück verantwortlich zu machen. Von den verschiedenen von der Selbstmord­Epidemie heimgesuchten Gymnasien sind die­jenigen, in denen fünfundzwanzig Prozent den Verheerungen zum Opfer gefallen, von einem hohen Kultusministerium suspendiert worden. Vor diesem erschütternden Schläge unsere Anstalt zu wahren, ist unsere Pflicht als Hüter und Bewahrer unserer Anstalt. Es schmerzt uns tief, meine Herren Kollegen, daß wir die sonstige Qualifikation unseres schuldbeladenen Schülers als mildern Umstand gelten zu lassen nicht in der Lage sind. Ein nachsichtiges Verfahren, das sich unserem schuldbeladenen Schüler gegenüber nicht recht­fertigen ließe, ließe sich der zur Zeit in denkbar be­denklichster Weise gefährdeten Existenz unserer Anstalt gegenüber nicht recht­fertigen. Wir sehen uns in die Notwendigkeit versetzt, den Schuldbeladenen zu richten, um nicht als die schuldlosen gerichtet zu werden.

Sonnenstich: (zu Melchior) Wissen Sie was dieses Schriftstück enthält?

Melchior: Ja.

1Note the names of the teachers: Affenschmalz, Knüppeldick, Hungergurt, Knochenbruch, Zungenschlag, and Fliegentod, which aid to increase the ridiculousness.
Sonnenstich: Ist die Schrift dieses Schriftstücks die Ihrige?

Melchior: Ja.

Sonnenstich: Verdankt dieses unflätige Schriftstück Ihnen seine Abfassung?

Melchior: Ja. -- Ich ersuche Sie, Herr Rektor, mir eine Unfähigkeit darin nachzuweisen.

Sonnenstich: Sie haben die genau präzisierten Fragen, die ich Ihnen vorlege, mit einem schlichten und bescheidenen "Ja" oder "Nein" zu beantworten!

Melchior: Ich habe nicht mehr und nicht weniger geschrieben, als was Ihnen sehr wohlbekannte Tatsache ist!

Sonnenstich: Dieser Schandbube!!

Melchior: Ich ersuche Sie, mir einen Verstoß gegen die Sittlichkeit in der Schrift zu zeigen!

Sonnenstich: Bilden Sie sich ein, ich hätte Lust, zu Ihrem Hanswurst an Ihnen zu werden?! -- Habe bald!

Melchior: Ich habe....

Sonnenstich: Sie haben so wenig Ehrerbietung vor der Würde Ihrer versammelten Lehrerschaft, wie Sie Anstandsgefühl für das dem Menschen eingewurzelte Empfinden für die Diskretion der Verschämtheit einer sittlichen Weltordnung haben! -- Habe bald!!

Habe bald: Befehlen, Herr Rektor!

Sonnenstich: Es ist ja der Langenscheidt zur dreistündigen Erlernung des aggluttierenden Volapük!

Melchior: Ich habe....

Sonnenstich: Ich ersuche unseren Schriftführer, Herrn Kollega Fliegentod, das Protokoll zu schließen!

Melchior: Ich habe....
Sonnenstich: Sie haben sich ruhig zu verhalten!! -- Habe bald!

Habe bald: Befehlen, Herr Rektor!

Sonnenstich: Führen Sie ihn hinunter!¹

The second of these two scenes takes place in the graveyard during the funeral of Moritz Stiefel. The contrast between the remarks made by the pastor, the Rektor, the family of the deceased and those of the unfortunate lad's friends, and "die junge Dirne", Ilse, as the coffin sinks into the earth, is most beautifully presented.


Rentier Stiefel: (mit tränenerstickter Stimme, wirft eine Schaufel voll Erde in die Gruft): Der Junge war nicht von mir! -- Der Junge war nicht von mir! Der Junge hat mir von kleinauf nicht gefallen!

Professor Sonnenstich (wirft eine Schaufel voll Erde in die Gruft): Verbummelt -- versumpft -- verhurt -- verlumpt -- und verlodert!

¹Frühlings Erwachen, Act 3, Scene 1, 145 ff.
Hänschen Rilow: (wirft eine Schaufel voll Erde in die Gruft): Ruhe in Frieden, du ehrliche Haut! -- Grüße mir meine ewigen Bräute, hingeopferten Angedenkens, und empfiehl mich ganz ergebenst zu Gnaden dem lieben Gott -- armer Tollpatsch du! -- Sie werden dir um deiner Engelseinflalt willen noch eine Vogelscheuche aufs Grab setzen......

Ilse: Rasch, rasch! -- Dort hinten kommen die Totengräber.

Martha: Wollen wir nicht lieber warten, Ilse?


Martha: Du hast recht, Ilse! (Sie wirft einen Efeukranz in die Gruft. Ilse öffnet ihre Schürze und läßt eine Fülle frischer Anemonen auf den Sarg regnen.)


Ilse: Ich will sie begießen, so oft ich vorbeikomme. Ich hole Vergißmeinnicht vom Goldbach herüber und Schwertlilien bringe ich von Hause mit.

Martha: Es soll eine Pracht werden! Eine Pracht!

No remarks about Wedekind's interesting characters would be complete without some mention of his strange and highly publicized "Aneinandervorbeireden". Essentially this dialogue amounts to little more than the fact that frequently during a conversation the participants make remarks which are but slightly (if at all) connected with the trend of the discussion

\[\text{Frühlings Erwachen, Act 3, Scene 2, 149 ff.}\]
Each person is apparently so deeply concerned with his own thoughts that little attention is paid to what has already been said by another, and the speaker thus goes off on a tangent of his own.

So läuft der Dialog nicht immer die natürliche Kausalitätsbahn von Frage zur Antwort, sondern hier begann das Aneinandervorbeireden der Lebensegoisten, von denen jeder -- nur von sich selbst erfüllt, immer nur die eigene Wollung ausspricht. Andeutungen kreuzen sich hier wie leere Fechtenhiebe, aber vom Dichter doch an einer Treffstelle vereinigt, die über dem paradoxen Frag- und Antwortspiel im Geistigen liegt.¹

This device was not applied (as has been said) "as a cynical comment on human intelligence".² Wedekind would never, I feel, have insulted human intelligence, although cold practical reasoning comes in for a good share of his very sarcastic comments. In my opinion, this so called "irrelevant dialogue" is quite naturally characteristic of the introverted person so frequently occurring in the drama (excepting that of the Naturalists) of that time. Such a dialogue is typical of those people whose conversation concerns almost solely themselves and their thoughts.

Hier (in Wedekind's Dramen) herrscht Erfindung und Konzentrierung statt Beobachtung und breiter Abmalung in Sekundenstil, und damit Hand in Hand wird auch die Sprache völlig entnaturalisiert, konzentriert, stilisiert wie die Charaktere, neigt zu Deklamationen, wird unwirklich, ja

¹Diebold, 58-59.

²Harry Steinhauer, Das Deutsche Drama, (1880-1933), I, 22.
papieren und zeitungsmäßig oft genug. Dialoge sind es keine mehr, unwirklich gespensterhaft reden die Menschen aneinander vorbei, jeder seinen Monolog -- und wir erhalten das Gegen teil vom absichtsvoll gelenkten Konversationsstück sowohl wie vom planlosen aber wirklich keitstreuen Dialog des Naturalismus.1

This unique dialogue of Wedekind's occurs most frequently in the "Luludramen" (which are part of what I like to call Wedekind's early, or "Sturm und Drang" period),2 from the first of which I have chosen a passage that most clearly exemplifies this "Aneinandervorbeireden".


Lulu (nimmt den Schäferstab so hoch sie reichen kann, für sich): Wer hätte das für möglich gehalten!

Schwarz: Ich bin wohl recht lächerlich?

Lulu: Er kommt gleich zurück.

Schwarz: Ich kann nicht mehr tun als malen.

Lulu: Da ist er.

Schwarz: (sich erhebend): Nun?

Lulu: Hören Sie nicht?

1Naumann, 90-91.

2Compare the peculiarities in language which were characteristic of "Sturm und Drang" with Wedekind's dialogue in the two Lulu plays.
Schwarz: Es kommt jemand....

Lulu: Ich wußte es ja.

Schwarz: Es ist der Hausmeister. Er fegt die Treppe.

Lulu: Gott sei Dank.

Schwarz: Sie begleiten Herrn Medizinalrat wohl auf seine Praxis?

Lulu: Das fehlte mir noch!

Schwarz: Weil Sie es nicht gewohnt sind, allein zu sein.

Lulu: Wir haben zu Hause eine Haushälterin.

Schwarz: Die Ihnen Gesellschaft leistet?

Lulu: Sie hat viel Geschmack.

Schwarz: Wofür?

Lulu: Sie zieht mich an.

Schwarz: Sie gehen wohl viel auf Bälle?

Lulu: Nie.

Schwarz: Wozu brauchen Sie denn dann die Toiletten?

Lulu: Zum Tanzen.

Schwarz: Sie tanzen wirklich?

Lulu: Csardas -- Samaqueca -- Skirtdance....

Schwarz: Widert Sie denn das nicht an?

Lulu: Finden Sie mich häßlich?

Schwarz: Sie verstehen mich nicht. -- Wer gibt Ihnen denn den Unterricht?

Lulu: Er.

Schwarz: Wer?

Lulu: Er.
Schwarz: Er?

Lulu: Er spielt Violine. ---

Schwarz: Man lernt jeden Tag ein neues Stück Welt kennen.

Lulu: Ich habe in Paris gelernt. Ich nahm Stunden bei Eugenie Fougère. Sie hat mich auch ihre Kostüme kopieren lassen.1

1 *Erdgeist*, Act 1, Scene 4, 24-25.
REASONS FOR WEDEKIND'S USE OF THE
SYNTHETIC SCENE TECHNIQUE

Now that we have examined Wedekind's dramatic form in
detail, we are in a better position to look for the reasons
underlying his choice of the synthetic-scene technique. These,
I believe, are to be found in Wedekind's personality (and life),
and in the artistic purpose of his plays.

What then was the purpose Wedekind had in mind when he
wrote his plays? He gives some help in answering this ques-
tion by the following characteristic note, found in his
Nachlaß.

Der Schnellmaler möge am Schluß meiner Gesamt-
ausgabe als Beweis dafür Platz finden; wie
fern mir im Beginn meiner Tätigkeit jeder
literarische Ehrgeiz lag. Ich hatte die ehr-
liche Absicht, auf dem Gebiet der Dramatik von
der Pique auf zu dienen, irregeleitet durch
den naiven Aberglauben, daß geistig wertlose
Kunst leichter zu schaffen sei als geistig
anspruchsvolle. Ich ließ mir nichts davon
träumen, daß jeder Künstler schließlich doch
nur das tut, was er tun muß.2

In a later notice, he goes on to explain what it is that an
artist (i.e. a writer) must do.

Einem Manne wird die Wahl gestellt, entweder
der Dichter seines eigenen Geistes zu sein,
dafür aber auf alle Anerkennung zu seinen

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1By this term, artistic purpose, I mean the "raison d'être"
of his plays as well as the contents of them.

2Kutscher, I, 136.
Lebenszeiten zu verzichten, oder der Dichter seiner Zeit und dafür die größte Anerkennung zu ernten.\(^1\)

It is quite clear from this remark that Wedekind considered himself as the "writer of his own soul", who had to forego all recognition during his life-time; and the "author of his time", who reaps the harvest of fame during his life, refers to the naturalistic writer, probably Hauptmann. It cannot be denied that Wedekind gave dramatic form to that which filled his own soul. One has but to think of the many characters that he placed upon the stage who had part of his personality, in order to give expression to his ideas and theories about important aspects of life -- "Wedekind will größere dauernde mit der Existenz überhaupt gegebene Themen,\(^2\)

"und seine Figuren benutzt der Dichter zu Be-
kenntnissen über den Menschen, die menschlichen
eigenschaften und Institutionen.\(^3\)

Von sich selber, von der Kunst, dem Leben, der
gesellschaft in seinen Ansprüchen getäuscht,
missbrauchte Wedekind das Drama zur Zufallsform,
um die Welt grotesk zu verzerren, die er nur
aus dem Blickwinkel des Zirkus, des proletari-
schen Schreibers, der Dirne, des Hochstaplers
zu sehen vermochte. Das Drama war ihm nur das
Reck seine absonderlichen Einfälle vorzuturnen.\(^4\)

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\(^1\)Kutscher, III, 264.  
\(^2\)Ibid., III, 266. See also page 39.  
\(^3\)Naumann, 103.  
\(^4\)Josef Nadler, Literaturgeschichte der deutschen Stämme und Landschaften, IV, 758.
Moreover, we also know that Wedekind's purpose included a deep concern for the eradication of Naturalism and everything for which that movement stood, as well as for the founding of a code of morals in which physical beauty and grace would be of the utmost importance.

Lest doch meine "Mine-haha oder über die körperliche Erziehung der jungen Mädchen", ein Bild einer Erziehung durch Tanz und Musik zu schönen Menschen -- nichts anders ist meine Geschlechtsmoral. Oder hört was mein Hetmann will: eine neue Moral, deren höchstes Gebot nicht sei, Unglück zu bekämpfen, sondern Schönheit zu verbreiten. Denn der Durst nach Schönheit ist ein nicht minder göttliches Gesetz in uns als der Trieb zur Bekämpfung der Erdenqual.¹

We gain a deeper insight into Wedekind's moralizing tendency if we regard him as a bohemian (and from the facts of his life, we are certainly justified in doing that) — that type of person who, according to Mahrholz, is a "born dilettante and adventurer of life as well as a professional moralist and world reformer."² I should like to quote the salient features of the brief analysis Mahrholz makes about the nature of the Bohemian, who, he claims, is the born antagonist to the bourgeoisie, and who is first represented in Germany by the Romanticists and later by Wedekind.

Wedekind wurzelt mit einem großen Teile seines Lebenswerke in der eigentümlichen Kulturatmosphäre der Boheme. Das Widerspiel der Boheme ist das Spießbürgertum, und allein in dieser dialektischen

¹Albert Soergel, Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit, 166.
²Mahrholz, 108.
Spannung zum Spießbürger lebt der Bohemien.

Das Spießbürgertum kennzeichnet sich dadurch, daß in den Trägern dieser Lebensform ein wirkliches Interesse für die bedeutenden Fragen des Lebens überhaupt, wie für die tieferen Probleme der gegenwärtigen Zeit nicht vorhanden ist; daß man im Spießbürgertum in einer geistigen Enge und Durftigkeit dahinlebt, die ohne ein Bedürfnis nach geistigem oder auch nur starkem Leben, ja ohne eine Ahnung von dem Dasein eines reicheren und volleren Lebens außerhalb seiner engen Welt ist.

Die Boheme nun hat, im Gegensatz zum Philisterwesen, gerade dieses, jenem mangelnde, leidenschaftliche Interesse für die geistigen Fragen wie für die Problematik des gegenwärtigen Lebens; aber was sie nicht hat, das ist die Tugend der Beschränkung, jene einfache, selbstsichere, selbstverständliche Pflichttreue, jene Ruhe und Gefestetheit, welche leider nur auf die materiellsten und engsten Bedürfnisse angewandt, das Spießbürgertum als seine positiven Werte einzusetzen hat.

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Alles was den Philistern fehlt, um kulturelle Leistungen zu erkennen und zu würdigen, Interesse, Empfänglichkeit, Lust und Liebe zur Sache und geistige Freiheit -- all das ist beim Bohemien übermäßig ausgebildet. Er lebt und webt einzig in kulturellen Interessen; er hat eine wahre Sucht nach geistiger Freiheit; erwürgt gegen den Philister und ist aus Furcht vor geistiger
Trägheit und aus Mangel an konzentrierendem Willen in ewiger rastloser Unruhe.¹

Further carrying out this similarity between Wedekind and the Romanticists is the following paragraph of Oskar Walzel's which I believe to be the best explanation of the relation existing between Wedekind's use of the grotesque and his moral purpose.


Und die künstlerische Form, die von Wedekinds Angriffen gewählt wird, hat etwas von der welt-verhöhndenden, mit der Welt spielenden Gehrde der romantischen Ironie, übertrifft nur an Paradoxie alle deutsche Romantik von 1800 und drückt auch noch den ironischen Zweifler Heine herab zu einem zagen Wegenbahner Wedekinds.²

The reasons for Wedekind's use of such a dramatic form as the synthetic-scene technique, in which a number of pictures

¹Mahrholz, 105 ff.
²Walzel, 445-6.
and scenes follow each other in rapid succession, may also be found in the very life he led. For example, we know that for a time Wedekind was a circus secretary, and not only are his works filled with references to acrobats, trick riders, tight ropes and tight rope walkers, but also the basic pattern of a circus performance is that of the synthetic-scene technique. Under the "Big top", what goes on before our eyes but a kaleidoscopic, quick succession of gay, whirling, colorful pictures? Arthur Kutscher, Wedekind's biographer, tells us that during Wedekind's stay in Paris he found his pleasure at the ballet and the variety stage in contrast to the theater, which he visited rarely. "Am meisten interessiert ihn das Ballet, der Zirkus, und das Varieté. Er ist froh sich -- dort im Gegensatz zum Theater -- freier bewegen zu können."1 With his interest in physical grace it is small wonder that he liked the ballet so much. For this art form is also one based on the mimic art and Wedekind was quite interested in the skillful use of pantomime.2

1Kutscher, I, 264.

2Note his pantomimes (which could easily become excellent ballets if only set to music) "Die Flöhe, oder der Schmerzens­ tanz" 1892 and "Die Kaiserin von Neufundland" 1897! It is interesting to compare the similarity between ballet dancers on the stage and the marionette-like characters of Wedekind's.
Without a doubt the variety stage, like the "Überbrettl", attracted him because of the many changes in scene and in costume, -- as well as the changes in subject matter. Here again we note a definite preference for those types of entertainment which have as their basic pattern a loosely connected series of various pictures.

In the interests of his dramaturgy Wedekind himself finally took to the stage, for he was completely dissatisfied with the acting technique developed by and for the naturalistic drama.

Es muß aber gleich festgestellt werden, daß er die Schauspielkunst nicht um ihrer selbst willen treibt. Der wichtigste Faktor ist die Sorge um seine Dramatik.

Man gebe einem Schauspieler der naturalistischen Schule einen Löwenbändiger zu spielen, er macht mit unfehlbarer Sicherheit einen Heringsbändiger daraus.

Wedekind became an actor -- usually appearing in only his own leading roles -- to create a new style of acting which was to better express the same thoughts contained in the words of his plays.

1Kutscher, III, 267.
2Ibid., II, 185.
3Ibid., II, 194.
Wenn er jetzt vom Brettl zur Bühne übergeht, so tut er das in konsequenter Erweiterung seines früheren Strebens, um nämlich die seinen Dramen gemäße Ausdruckskunst zu schaffen, eine Schauspielkunst, die noch nicht da war. 1

He was also quite conscious of the fact that the actor is the sine qua non of dramatic presentation -- not the scenery of the stage, nor even the lines themselves -- and thus he was so desirous of writing dramas and acquiring an acting technique that would give the stage back to the actor. Friedrich Kayßler, one of the actors in Otto Brahm's troupe once wrote: "Folglich ist der Schauspieler das wesentlichste Ausdrucks-mittel der Bühne". As a marginal note to that statement, Wedekind remarked: "Daß das gesagt werden muß!" 2

Nachdem 1908 das Münchener Künstlertheater dafür eine brauchbare Formel gefunden hatte, benutzte er hauptsächlich dieses System, das nach dem Vorbilde der Bühne Shakespeares dem Schauspieler sein Reich zurückgab und schnelle Verwandlung, flottes Abspielen gestattete. 3

The opinions about Wedekind's acting ability are almost as varied as those concerning his plays. They range from those descrying his utter lack of talent to those expressing the highest praise and admiration of his effectiveness. Some of these criticisms follow below:

1 Kutscher, II, 185.
2 Ibid., II, 189.
3 Ibid., III, 274.
We first meet him as a dramatic reader in Zurich, where the local critic reports on the fourth of November, 1895: "Herr Minehah, (he appeared under the name of Cornelius Minehaha) markiert die Personen durch eine sehr geschickte Modulation der Stimme, ferner durch Platzwechsel für jedes Hin und Her eines Gesprächs, aber mit wenig Gesten. Er ist in seinen Bewegungen sehr gewandt und fast möchte man sagen graziös. Sein Organ ist außerordentlich biegsam und so fein getönt, daß selbst die leisesten Worte zum letzten Winkel des großen übervollen Saales drangen. Ungeküstelt, ohne den mindesten Anklang an Deklamation, zauberte der eigenartige Künstler doch die Illusion der Wirklichkeit so lebensvoll hervor, daß man nur bewundernde Anerkennung über ihn aussprechen hörte."

The following concern his latter career:

Er spielt mit Inbrunst eines Hauptrollen; ohne Talent, mit starrem Gesicht, fast ohne Technik- und wirkte ungeheuer. Hier wurde eben nicht gespielt, sondern gebeichtet, gerechtfertigt, gepredigt.

...daß Wedekind selbst, der wahrlich kein Schauspieler war, einige seiner Gestalten selbst verkörperte, und daß gerade von diesen Aufführungen, so mangelhaft sie sonst sein mochten, ein unheimlicher Reiz ausging: es bestand in der Selbstoffenbarung einer Persönlichkeit.

On the 25th of October, 1902 Joseph Ruederer wrote: "Wedekind verwandelte mit seinem Marquis von Keith das Schauspielhaus in ein richtiges Überbrettl, auf dem er als unumschränkter König persönlich die Titelrolle spielte. Sehr zum Vorteil der Sache."
In 1906, Josef Kainz, the famous actor, wrote to Wedekind: "Den Kammersänger spiele ich Ihnen nicht nach. Sie erschöpfen die Rolle derart, daß ich nicht nach Ihnen spielen möchte."

Whether bad or good, I believe it safe to say that Wedekind, the actor, was only effective when playing his own roles. Under Max Reinhardt's direction he played the title role in Molière's Tartuffe with the result that the play was forced to close after only five performances. However, the very fact that here an author was appearing in his own plays, in roles which were his own flesh and blood, had a great effect on the younger dramatists. Doubtless the lessons he learned in stage effectiveness served to confirm his faith in his use of the synthetic-scene technique, for his later plays have the same kind of dramatic construction as those written before he became an actor.

\[1\] Kutscher, II, 194.
\[2\] See note 3, page 87.
THE INFLUENCE OF WEDEKIND'S PLAYS ON THE THEATER

Thus far we have seen Wedekind's influence leading to a revolt in the drama and in the art of acting. But it doesn't stop there, for we can see that his plays, and particularly his dramatic form, were to a considerable degree helpful in causing radical changes in the theater, too.

Probably the most important as well as the most definite contribution to theatrical advancement that Wedekind made took place in November of the year 1902, when his Ergeist was produced by Das kleine Theater (formerly "Schall und Rauch")\(^1\) in Berlin. With this performance the moral victory of the new theater had been won. The death blow had

finally been given to Naturalism.

Aber es war der Abend, mit dem der Dramatiker Wedekind endgültig und unausrottbar dem Bewusstsein der Zeitgenossen eingepflanzt wurde. In der Maske des Tierbändigers hatte der Dichter polemisch gegen die ganze wehleidige Milieukunst der Naturalisten seinen Prolog hingeschmettert:

"Das schöne Tier, das schöne wilde Tier,
Das, meine Herrschaften, sehen Sie nur bei mir."

Tatsächlich war hier in einem beinahe abstrakten Zeitraum mit immer gültiger Gewalt der Kampf der Geschlechter vorgeführt: die weibliche Riesenschlange, die voll kindlicher Unschuld die männlichen Raubtiere jeder Art erdrückt. Und dabei war eine dramatische Schlagkraft, eine sprunghafte Wildheit des Dialogs, eine fratzenhafte Übersteigerung der bloßen Realität gegeben, die für die deutsche Bühne etwas völlig Neues war. Für Dr. Schön, das Hauptopfer, setzte Emanuel Reicher das ganze auf dem Untergrunde seiner Natur schlummernde pastorale Pathos ein. Der Gründer des schauspielerischen Naturalismus half hier -- vielleicht ohne daß er es merkte -- einem bereits ganz unnaturalistischen Theater ans Licht. Das Urweib Lulu aber spielte Gertrud Eysoldt, und sie hatte in ihrem knabenhaft geschmiedigen Körper und ihrer resonanzlos hellen, flächigen Stimme großartiges Material, um das Schillernde, die Kühlglatte und das Giftige der Schlange sinnbildlich stark herauszuarbeiten. Der Eindruck des Schlußakts mit dem zerschmetternden Gegeneinander dieser beiden Spieler war ungeheuer. Ein paar in der Moral ihrer Behaglichkeit verletzte Spießer zischten, aber die jungen Leute rasten vor Begeisterung (mir ist einer bekannt, der vom Bravo schreien 14 Tage heiser war.). Nach der Premiere schrieb Friedrich Kayßler auf einer Postkarte an Wedekind: "Wissen Sie, was Sie heute getan haben? Sie haben die naturalistische Bestie der Wahrscheinlichkeit erwürgt und das spielerische Element auf die Bühne gebracht. Sie sollen leben!" Worte, die aufs allerstärkste die ganze theatergeschichtliche Situation beleuchten und auch die Rolle, die Wedekind in ihr spielte. -- Damit war der moralische Sieg des neuen Theaters entschieden.1

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1 Bab, 120-121.
The greatest change that was taking place in the theater at this time was the trend toward a greater intimacy between actor and audience. Max Reinhardt accomplished this in two ways, by an exceedingly small theater (such as the "Schall und Rauch" and "Die Kammerspiele des deutschen Theaters") and by the huge "Großes Schauspielhaus" (also called the "Theater of the Five Thousand", wherein the acting area like that of the Elizabethan theater, projected far out into the audience). In this auditorium (formerly a circus) Reinhardt produced those great spectacles for which he was justly famous. Here, later in his career, he forsook the works of the modern playwrights who had helped to gain that fame, and turned to the classical dramatists -- Greek, German, French, and especially to Shakespeare, whose plays lead the large repertory of Reinhardt. In the former type of theater this desired int-

1"Im nächsten Jahre freilich eröffnete Reinhardt im Nachbarhause des Deutschen Theaters die intime kleine Bühne, die der Architekt Müller aus einem dort seit alters befindlichen Tanzsaal ziemlich zweifelhaften Charakters geschaffen hatte. Diese "Kammerspiele" faßten kaum mehr als 200 Menschen und sollten in der Hauptsache durch ein Abonnement gefüllt werden. Man dachte an eine auch innerlich geschlossene Gemeinschaft ernster Kunstinteressenten zu gewinnen. Aber nachdem die erste Sensation der neuen Mode vorüber war, versagte die berliner Plutokratie, an die man sich mit den Preisen des neuen Hauses doch wenden mußte." Bab, 126.

2Cf. Kutscher, II, 131 for a description of a theater building designed by Wedekind, which was basically that of the Elizabethan era. Note how well suited this stage is for his synthetic-scene type of drama, which, you will recall has been listed among the German variations of the Shakespeare drama. Compare the similarity existing between stage and dramatic form of these two authors widely separated in point of time.
timacy was gained by the physical size of the building itself which, of necessity, brought the audience and the actors closer together. This "Überbrettl", cabaret-like theater was Reinhardt's earliest venture as a regisseur.¹ In keeping with this new theater he was forced to turn to the works of such modern writers as Shaw, Wedekind, Strindberg, and Wilde,² for their plays were ideally suited for the intimate, artistic type of production Reinhardt wished to give. The works of these men, you will recall, were primarily vehicles which afforded them a medium through which to express themselves -- much in the intimate manner of personal explanation or confession -- and which, to a great extent, were written with many of the characteristics of the synthetic-scene technique.

Of more profound importance were two other authors, who very significantly appeared in Reinhardt's repertory at the beginning of the century, and who in a deeper sense brought the end of naturalism. One of these was the Swede, Strindberg. After his realistic period, in which he exerted his mind to conquer and rule the world, came the breakdown of this powerful man. From this breakdown sprang afterwards a new mystic poetry representing the reign of unknown powers over the life of man. The climax of this development was reached in the "Dream

¹Note 1, page 91.

²In 23,374 performances of 452 Reinhardt productions covering the entire field of dramatic literature (given in Berlin during a period of 25 years) the most frequently played were the following: Shakespears - 2527, Shaw - 1207, Wedekind - 1171, Hauptmann - 974, Goethe - 746, Schiller - 645, Strindberg - 491. Theater Arts, January 1944, 52. Wilde is included because of the great success his play "Salome" won when produced by Reinhardt with his splendid company of actors.
Play", which one of Reinhardt's pupils and then Reinhardt himself staged soon after the war.¹ The other important author with whom Reinhardt's stage was connected was the German Swiss, Frank Wedekind. By devious ways, via the circus and vaudeville, Frank Wedekind came to the theater. He stood in conscious opposition to Ibsen and Hauptmann, Maeterlinck and von Hofmannsthal. Neo-Romanticism is after all nothing but naturalism raised to the uttermost by confronting man in his profound impotence with nature. Wedekind, however, conceived man above all as an active force which makes bold to interfere with the course of things. And in this respect he seemed truly destined to revive the dramatic stage.² His dialogue did not dwell on psychological intricacies or on moods of lyric melancholy. In his words people take thrusts at each other as though with knives; nay, the deep obsession by a driving inner force carries them so far that these blindly raging people talk past one another and one no longer hears what the other is saying.³

One of the essential features of the synthetic-scene technique, as we have seen it, was the number of changes of scenery, which must take place rapidly. To fulfill this requirement smoothly and with the proper speed, new and better methods of stage setting had to be discovered. Thus we have Max Reinhardt's use of the new convenience, the revolving stage, and other innovations.

¹Strindberg's "Traumspiel", a perfect example of the synthetic-scene technique.

²Compare Reinhardt's theater as an actors' theater with Wedekind's plays which were written in such a way that the actor is the important element. Notes 2 and 3, page 86.

³The Theater in Changing Europe, Thomas Dickinson, ed.
Moreover these synthetic-scene plays of Wedekind demand the so-called "bare stage", with its simplicity of setting: another modern tendency in the history of the theater.

And, to be sure, since his plays so decidedly give an atmosphere of timelessness and of the unimportance of environment, the detailed, complete, realistic settings of the old stage would seem out of tune with the mood of such dramas. "All scenery and all feeling for Nature have vanished as all feeling for environment vanished."

In conclusion, I hope that with this study the reader has obtained an understanding of the synthetic-scene technique -- what it is; the way in which it was used by its ablest exponent; and the effect which this type of dramatic form (as seen in Frank Wedekind's dramas) had upon the development of the dramatic arts in Germany.

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1 Bab, 126.
2 Naumann, 90.
3 Ibid., 103.
RÜCKBLICK

Wie hab' ich nun mein Leben verbracht?
Hab' viel gesungen, hab' viel gelacht,
Unzähligen Menschen Freude beschert,
Doch den Fröhlichen stets lieber zugehört.
Denn mein Gedicht, wenn man's nicht übel nimmt,
War immer zuerst nur für mich bestimmt.
Und ward's mit den Jahren wesentlich stiller,
Mir selber pfeif' ich noch oft einen Triller
In Genusse der höchsten Lebensgabe,
Daß ich nie einen Menschen verachtet habe.
Nur mit einem lag ich in ewigen Streit,
Mit dem hohlen Götzten der Feierlichkeit.
Denn ein vornehmer Mensch ist selbstverständlich,
Macht nicht seine Vornehmheit extra kenntlich
Und wird sich mit großem Gewinn bequemen,
Den eigenen Wert nicht ernst zu nehmen,
Weil ihm die, so er sich zu Gast gebeten
Dann reicher und freier entgegentreten.
Und wenn nur das Trugbild mählich entschwebt,
Dann sag' ich: Ich habe genug gelebt,
Und verspüre wahrlich kein großes Verlangen,
Die Übung noch einmal von vorn anzufangen,
Denn für den Einzelnen der Ertrag
Ist plus minus null für jeglichen Tag.
Was aber irgend übrig bleibt,
Wird der Kraft der Lebendigen einverleibt.

Frank Wedekind.


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