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THE USE OF EPIC STRUCTURE IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH LEFTIST DRAMA

The Ohio State University

Ph.D. 1982

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THE USE OF EPIC STRUCTURE
IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH LEFTIST DRAMA

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Robert Marvin Knotts, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1982

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INTRODUCTION

In referring to political groups or philosophies, the terms "left" or "leftist" refer to all those parties which adopt a liberal or radical populist and egalitarian position, whether they be Labour, Social Democratic, Socialist, or Communist (Marxist, Marxist-Leninist, Trotskyite, Maoist). The term "socialist" is reserved for those groups or individuals who hold that the means of production should be commonly or publicly held, while the term "marxist" is reserved for those persons or groups who adhere to the philosophical and political principles of Karl Marx. The term "revolutionary socialism" should be understood to reflect a stance which calls for the overthrow of capital and the institution of a classless society, but without a strict adherence to all marxist principles. All marxists and revolutionary socialists are socialists, but not all socialists are marxist or revolutionary.
CHAPTER ONE

EPIC STRUCTURE IN DRAMA:

A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW
Since Aristotle first described literary genres and structures in his Poetics, diverse critics have attempted to analyse, define, and evaluate drama in terms of its structure. From the Neoclassicists of the Renaissance and Baroque periods to the contemporary analysts of the Structuralist and Post-structuralist schools, critics have described and categorized plays on that basis, frequently using the model developed by Aristotle as a guide or point of departure. During that time, a great deal of critical attention was devoted to developing and extending Aristotle’s paradigm of the structure of serious Greek drama to drama in general. The parameters of structure defined by Aristotle were sufficiently broad that the effort was generally successful, creating a reasonably accurate and workable description of dramatic structure and the internal dynamics of plays. However, throughout history, plays were written and performed which, though successful on their own terms, strained, and even broke, the ability of Aristotle’s system to evaluate their aesthetic worth and to define and categorize them as "dramatic" in the classical sense (i.e., as conforming to Aristotelian structural principles and generic definitions). Though undoubtedly dramas, plays such as those of Marlowe, Shakespeare, and the other writers of the English Renaissance, for example, regularly violated the principles of structure outlined by Aristotle (to say nothing of his Neoclassical interpreters), and destroyed the generic barriers implied in his work. With the advent of new forms and styles of drama in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, featuring works employing emphatically non-Aristotelian structures and defying description as tragedy, comedy,
or even melodrama (an amalgamation of mixed genres dating from the eighteenth century), it became necessary to reformulate theories of dramatic genre and structure to account for and satisfactorily describe the new work. Among those theorists and practitioners who were active in both shaping and defining a portion of the new drama were Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht, who created the first examples and formulated the principles of Epic theatre in Berlin during the 1920s and 1930s. While the form of drama and theatrical presentation created by them (and others), Epic theatre, is most properly considered a style (Epic or Brechtian), much like Realism, Naturalism, Expressionism, etc., underlying their work, and discussed in their theories, was a structure markedly different from the dramatic structure proposed by Aristotle; a structure which can be applied fruitfully to the analysis of much of the pre-modern drama which badly strained Aristotelian theory, and which has been employed with considerable regularity and success in the years since its initial description by Brecht in 1927.  

This is epic, or non-Aristotelian, structure; a structure deriving from the elaboration and modification of the structural model for epic poetry discussed briefly by Aristotle, in combination with principles of dramatic characterization and language and theatrical presentation.

In discussing the question of literary genres and structures, particularly those of drama, it must be remembered that when Aristotle formulated his theory of dramatic structure (which for the next 2,300 years

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was virtually the only dramatic structure discussed critically) he was limited by several significant factors. He was working with a comparatively small body of literature: the Homeric epics, extant lyric poetry, and the fruits of the first 200 years of dramatic activity. All the work he was describing in his analysis was from a single cultural tradition. The combination of these two factors necessarily limited his perception of the real form, if not the possibilities, of the genres he was describing. Aristotle was deriving his basic structures and genres from a body of works whose form and definition was at least partially a matter of tradition, and whose current historical form determined to a considerable extent the results of his analysis. Of considerable importance is the fact that, in his surviving work, Aristotle analysed only the serious drama of Classical and Hellenistic Greece (called tragedy by him, although it included works which modern Aristotelian scholars such as Elder Olson classify as melodrama). He treated neither comedy nor the satirical and farcical satyr plays in any depth in Poetics. Thus, his analysis of dramatic structure was, in fact, confined to an analysis of "tragic" structure, with the extension of this structure to all drama the result of the work of later critics (just as his analysis of epic takes no account of the epics of other cultures, or later developments such as the novel). Whether Aristotle would have broadened the base of dramatic structure to include traits such as are found in epic structure

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2 For a full discussion of modern Aristotelian dramatic theory, see Elder Olson, Tragedy and the Theory of Drama (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961).
is unknown.\(^3\) Though Aristotle admits in Chapter Nine of *Poetics* that episodic plots (one of the prime characteristics of epic structure) can exist in tragedy, he disapproves of them, and finds them inferior to plots of causal construction. "Of all plots and actions the episodic (sic) are the worst. I call a plot 'episodic' in which the episodes or acts succeed one another without probable or necessary sequence,"\(^4\)

Whether episodic plots would have been approved in comedy and incorporated into a theory of good dramatic structure in a context larger than that of Greek serious drama cannot be known. In any case, Aristotle's general theory of dramatic structure is different in several significant particulars from his model of epic structure, and the possibility of his incorporating epic structural traits in any meaningful way into the world of things dramatic is remote; particularly since he derived the structure of a form from its surface appearance. This tends to create a more or less absolute relationship between the structure of a work and its generic and surface forms (perhaps even style), a result of Aristotle's notion of the causal relationship among the six elements he defined as the stuff of drama,

\(^3\)The use of the term "epic structure" for drama and for literature such as epic poetry and novels will remain largely undifferentiated in this discussion. The structure itself is very similar in its dramatic, poetic, and prose manifestations; the differences between works in the three media can be accounted for largely on the basis of stylistic modification and the manipulation of formal elements such as language, description, setting, characterization, and time that influence, but normally do not disrupt, the structure; i.e., the selection and arrangement of incidents and narrative elements.

and his determination that "plot," the element which comes closest to encompassing his notion of structure, was the controlling agent of all the other elements. "But most important of all is the structure of incidents. . . . The Plot then is the first principle and, as it were, the soul of tragedy." 5 Aristotle viewed each of the succeeding elements down the list (character, thought, diction, music, spectacle) as the controlling element for those below it, and the material out of which those above it are formed. 6 Such a tight relationship implies that manipulation of the formal and stylistic elements (the lower five) would inevitably alter the structure, hence genre, of a work or body of material, or vice-versa. This would prohibit the existence of dramas with an epic structure, or epics with a dramatic structure, because the functional nature of the relationship between plot and the subordinate elements is such that, in Aristotle's system, a deep, basic incompatibility exists between a given structure (e.g., epic) and the rendering of elements in terms of another generic form (e.g., dramatic). Consequently, in terms of Aristotle's and subsequent Aristotelian theory, drama and epic are two distinct, exclusive, and relatively immutable forms, and the notion that an epic structure could be employed in dramatic writing and theatrical performance, as Piscator and Brecht proposed, is foreign to such a system.

5 Aristotle, Poetics, pp. 25-7.

6 For a full exposition of the relationship between the Aristotelian elements, see Aristotle, Poetics, Chapter VI, pp. 23-31; and Elder Olson, Tragedy and the Theory of Drama, pp. 29-54.
Aristotle discusses epic in Chapters Twenty-three, Twenty-four, and Twenty-six of *Poetics*. He views tragedy as a refinement of epic, and as a higher form.

If, then, Tragedy is superior to Epic poetry in all these respects, and, moreover, fulfills its specific function better as an art—for each art ought to produce, not any chance pleasure, but the pleasure proper to it, as already stated—it plainly follows that Tragedy is the higher art, as attaining its end more perfectly.

In the course of his discussion of epic, Aristotle points out a number of the distinctions and similarities between the epic and dramatic. He initially advocates constructing their plots on essentially the same principles:

As to that poetic imitation which is narrative in form and employs a single metre; the plot manifestly ought, as in a tragedy, to be constructed on dramatic principles. It should have for its subject a single action, whole and complete, with a beginning, middle, and end. It will thus resemble a living organism in all its unity, and produce the pleasure proper to it. It will differ in structure from historical compositions, which of necessity present not a single action, but a single period, and all that happened within that period to one person or to many, little connected together as the events may be.

However, epic poetry permits the poet to "... admit as episodes many events from the general story ...," creating a tale focussed on "... a single hero, a single period, or an action single indeed, but with a multiplicity of parts." Epic plots can be categorized in the same ways as tragic plots (simple or complex; ethical or pathetic if not fully formulated), and employ many of the same techniques (suffering, 

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discovery, reversal).\textsuperscript{10} However, Aristotle notes in passing a distinction which is crucial in establishing the difference between his notion of epic and later ideas, such as those of Brecht. Aristotle comments that, "The parts also, with the exception of song and spectacle, are the same."\textsuperscript{11} This omission is crucial, for the absence of music (song) and spectacle in and of themselves deny epic the possibility of stage presentation by virtue of stripping it of visual and aural elements. Aristotle returns to this theme later, noting that,

Again, Tragedy like Epic poetry produces its effects even without action; it reveals its power by mere reading. . . . And superior it is, because it has all the epic elements . . . with the music and spectacular effects as important accessories, and these produce the most vivid of pleasures.\textsuperscript{12}

Aristotle denies epic those elements necessary for dramatic or theatrical presentation.\textsuperscript{13} By restoring music and spectacle to the other elements in epic structure, Brecht and Piscator brought it into the realm of the theatrical.

Aristotle's chief distinctions between epic and dramatic, however, lie in the realm of language and structure. "Epic poetry differs from Tragedy in the scale on which it is constructed, and in its metre."\textsuperscript{13} The question of language is of only historical interest. However, the issue of structure is one of the vital distinctions between the two

\textsuperscript{10}Aristotle, \textit{Poetics}, p. 91.
\textsuperscript{11}Aristotle, \textit{Poetics}, p. 91.
\textsuperscript{13}Aristotle, \textit{Poetics}, p. 91.
forms, both to Aristotle and today.

As regards scale or length, we have already laid down an adequate limit—the beginning and the end must be capable of being brought within a single view. . . . Epic poetry has, however, a great—a special—capacity for enlarging its dimensions, and we can see the reason. In Tragedy we cannot imitate several lines of actions carried on at one and the same time; we must confine ourselves to the action of the stage and the part taken by the players. But in Epic poetry, owing to the narrative form, many events simultaneously transacted can be presented; and these, if relevant to the subject, add mass and dignity to the poem.\(^ \text{14} \)

Two major points are made in this section. First, epic is defined as narrative (as opposed to dramatic). While Aristotle almost certainly meant to distinguish between narrative and epic on the basis of the possibility of enactment, such a distinction nonetheless raises several thorny issues.\(^ \text{15} \) One of the more important is the issue of narrative within drama, i.e., leaving aside the question of simple narrative exposition, what is the status of plays which are presented in the context of a narrative structure, with a character or characters narrating and discussing events from the past which are enacted onstage (e.g., John McGrath's *Little Red Hen*, discussed in Chapter Six). Connected with this is the issue of the tense, past or present, in which narrative literature occurs. It is generally agreed that dramatic presentation occurs in the present tense. It can be argued that, special miraculous circumstances in the world of the work aside, narration is

\(^{14}\text{Aristotle, *Poetics*, pp. 91-3.} \)

\(^{15}\text{Aristotle later points out that it is impossible to satisfactorily represent several lines of action simultaneously (or, one might imagine, via intercutting) on the stage. He also notes that a wider variety of events can be represented in epic because things which would appear ludicrous if seen on stage (e.g., Achilles' pursuit of Hector) "pass unnoticed" in Epic, allowing epic a larger scope of subject matter. For a fuller discussion, see Aristotle, *Poetics*, p. 95.} \)
inevitably past tense, even when accompanying simultaneous representation (otherwise the narrator could not know what is going to happen). However, it can also be argued that, in terms of aesthetic experience, narrative also occurs in the present tense; i.e., the audience experiences the performance or reading of a past-tense narrative in the present, and therefore, particularly when enacted onstage, the narrative becomes a present-tense event. This is important because, aside from stylistic concerns such as Brecht's theory of acting in the past tense, if epic is to be admitted as a possible mode for dramatic or theatrical presentation, it is necessary to resolve the apparent conflict between its narrative (past-tense) nature and the traditional notion of drama as an inevitably present-tense form. There are several ways of doing this, although ultimately each is more an assertion than a provable fact. The most sensible, and simplest, is to argue that notions of epic as narrative (past-tense) and drama as present-tense are accidents of historical practice, and in no way inevitable conditions of the forms. It can also be argued that, as was stated above, narrative is experienced in the present, regardless of when the narrated events occurred. It is possible to disagree with Aristotle and a good deal of received wisdom and state that narrative is not the only possible mode for epic presentation, as forms such as the French *nouveau roman* suggest. Finally, it is possible to argue that there is no inevitable link between epic or dramatic structures, as traditionally conceived, and notions such as narrative or appropriate tense in works in those forms; i.e., that the tense in which events occur and are perceived by an audience, whether reading or in the theatre, is a matter of surface
form, and is not linked into structure. If that were true, both epic and dramatic structures could serve as vehicles for past- or present-tense literary forms. This final argument is potentially very fruitful; however, it requires the abandonment of the idea formulated by Aristotle and numerous later critics that the connection between structure and surface form is absolute and inevitable, both in specific works and in the relationship between structural models and individual plays or poems. In any case, there is ample reason either to call into question Aristotle's assertion that epic is narrative, and cannot be dramatic, or to suggest that a re-evaluation of traditional definitions and relationships among epic, narrative, drama, dramatic, lyric, etc. structures and modes of literature is in order. That is particularly true in light of the problems occasioned by the inability of traditional Aristotelian definitions of form and generic categories to deal with a large body of literature, much of which was written in the past century. The Aristotelian system is still a dominant critical mode for both the analysis and evaluation of plays, novels, poems, and other forms of literature, and it is necessary to come to terms with it and its vocabulary, definitions, and categories in any critical analysis of form and structure, even if its parameters and method are rejected, and it can be demonstrated to be incapable of fairly and accurately examining a good deal of contemporary literature.

While the issues of narrative and dramatic, epic and drama, are muddy and debatable points in Aristotle's analysis, the second major point he made in his differentiation of epic and dramatic structure, that in epic "... many events simultaneously transacted can be
presented; "..." satisfactorily in a single work, is a most valuable
description of a major difference in epic and dramatic structure.
Aristotle preferred that both an epic and a drama be the imitation of a
single action. However, whereas the dramatic ought to have its inci-
dents arranged causally (i.e., in a probable or necessary sequence),
epic is permitted a somewhat different structure in the appropriate
realization of its form, the episodic. Aristotle permits the inclu-
sion of a number of simultaneous events in epic; events whose rela-
tionship is not probable or necessary, but that they happen to occur at
approximately the same time. The events may have little or no rela-
tionship other than that. This establishes the principle that epic
structures are appropriately episodic, an important distinction be-
tween epic and dramatic in the Aristotelian system. Nonetheless,
certain difficulties remain with Aristotle's formulation of epic struc-
ture, particularly as it relates to its potential combination with a
dramatic surface form, which limit it more than a modern description of
epic would. For example, Aristotle insists that a single event, a
single action, be represented, although it might have several simulta-
neous episodes. He therefore fixes a relatively limited time span for
epic presentation. This is further reinforced by his statement that it
is the province of history to present stories larger than a single

16 Aristotle, Poetics, p. 89.

17 Aristotle admits that episodic plots also occur in drama, but
dismisses them as inferior, and inappropriate for the fullest forma-
lization of tragedy. He further limits drama, even episodic drama, in
scope as compared to epic, and so introduces distinctions based on
scale as well as causality. "Moreover, the art attains its end within
narrower limits..."

18 Aristotle, Poetics; p. iii.
action. "It will differ in structure from historical compositions, which of necessity present not a single action, but a single period, and all that happened within that period to one person or to many, little connected together as the events may be."19 This distinction serves to limit epic presentations far beyond modern conceptions of epic, which allow for works covering many lines of action, many years, and a great deal of space (e.g., Tolstoy's War and Peace, or Brecht's Mother Courage). Aristotle speaks only of several simultaneous stories; he does not discuss long developmental chains or sequences of events, organized around the clear development of a theme or situation through time, nor the presentation of a single situation from a variety of angles, nor the epic or dramatic presentation of history. Consequently, though Aristotle describes a single type of epic structural arrangement, and makes the useful distinction that epic structure is appropriately episodic, not causal, his discussion must be extended considerably to arrive at a modern definition of epic.

Aristotle's distinction between epic structure (and form) and dramatic structure rests primarily on four points which, when developed beyond the narrow compass of Aristotle's work, continue to serve as major distinguishing points between epic and dramatic structure. First, epic is seen as operating on a larger scale than dramatic structure, allowing for the possibility of a larger range of incidents or episodes in epic works (although not as large a range as later literature would make necessary). Second, the arrangement of the incidents need not be, and is appropriately not, causal. This does not mean that the development

19 Aristotle, Poetics, p. 89.
should not be linear; only that several lines of action within the
larger event (the action imitated) can be developed. Third, epic
operates in the narrative mode, drama in the dramatic. In light of
literary developments over the last fifty to seventy-five years, serious
questions can be raised concerning this distinction. However, in terms
of the literary developments of Aristotle’s time, the distinction is
largely valid. It is only in the context of recent history that major
problems have arisen over the questions of epic and dramatic structures
and forms; and the relationship between them. Finally, Aristotle strips
epic of the elements of music and spectacle, a point which must be re­
jected if epic structure is to be adapted into, and seen as part of,
the dramatic literary mode.

The beginning of the modern re-evaluation of the term “epic” and
its relationship to drama dates from 1927, when Bertolt Brecht intro­
duced the term as an alternative to Aristotelian drama in his essay
“The Epic Theatre and Its Difficulties.” Brecht wrote the essay in
response to the need for new staging methods for the new types of plays
he and Erwin Piscator had been staging in Berlin since about 1920.
However, while Brecht makes several innovatory points in his essay, as
John Willett points out, his use of the term “epic” to describe the
structure of the sprawling new dramas of the German theatre in the 1920s

20 Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, pp. 22-3.

21 Perhaps his most significant comment is that, “The essential
point of the epic theatre is perhaps that it appeals less to the
feelings than to the spectator’s reason.” This is one of the earliest,
if not the earliest, steps in Brecht’s development of the theory of the
alienation effect.

22 Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, p. 23.
was not without precedent.

Strictly speaking, "epic" is an Aristotelian term for a form of narrative that is "not tied to time", whereas a "tragedy is bound by the unities of time and place. It is the same loose linking-together of events as we find in the Shakespearean history or the picaresque novel, and it is in this sense that it was used by the eighteenth-century German writers—by Goethe and Schiller, for instance, in their correspondence, or by Buchner's predecessor Lenz. Where English criticism uses the term to convey heroic scale, more or less irrespective of the type of work, and Romain Rolland in France could refer to his revolutionary dramas as "tout un théâtre épique" in German its primary meaning is a particular narrative form.23

While Willett's linkage of tragic structure in particular and dramatic structure in general to the units of time and place, particularly with reference to Aristotle's theory (as opposed to his Neoclassical interpreters) is debatable, his description of epic as a "loose linking-together of events" is quite helpful in establishing one of the basic traits of epic structure; i.e., that it is episodic, non-causal. In discussing causality, it is possible to speak of its presence in drama in two distinct ways. First, in the sequence of events within a play, causality defines a relationship between successive scenes and acts. While Aristotle allows that episodic structure is possible in drama (so long as it is in the context of a single action), he prefers causal structure (at least for tragedy); i.e., one in which there is a probable or necessary relationship between each scene and its successor. In such a system, the selection and ordering of scenes proceeds on the basis of the inclusion of all scenes, and only those scenes, necessary to establish a clear sequence of cause and effect events in the action

of the play. In that way, a full and comprehensible development of the action of the play can be achieved, and the play can create and maintain a maximum of empathy and the fullest possible engagement of the audience's attention and emotions, so that the full realization of cathartic effects such as those described by Aristotle as the proper end of drama can take place. Any scene which does not contribute to the progress of the narrative line and its clear comprehension as a causal sequence by the audience should, in theory, be omitted; just as any scene vital to the development and creation of causal links should be included. The controlling factor in the structure of the play is the creation of causality. Epic structure, while fully accommodating linear, chronological development, fractures the causal ordering of scenes, and constructs the drama on episodic principles. This permits scenes to be selected and ordered on some basis other than the creation of causality, such as the exposition of a theme, the presentation of a sequence of development (personal, social, historical, etc.) through time, or the examination of an issue or situation from a number of angles, or a particular angle. The implications of such a controlling system in the selection and ordering of incidents or scenes for inclusion in stage action include the fact that the analysis of an issue or sequence of events tends to become the center of the play, not the presentation of a story which is suspenseful and engaging (although there is nothing to prevent an episodic play from generating suspense, nor a causally-constructed play from performing significant analysis, in the inherent natures of the structures. It is a question of degree, and the task for which each is best adapted.) As Edward Bond has written,
The dramatist can help to create a new theatre by the way he writes. He should dramatize not the story but the analysis. He will still have to present the story coherently, just as the painter must achieve a likeness, because that represents the experience, the anecdotal autobiography the audience brings to the theatre. But the scenes will not present the story in the way that is traditionally thought to be satisfying or coherent.

The use of episodic construction, particularly if it is controlled by an analysis, also has important implications breaking and limiting the empathic involvement of the audience in a play, and removing their attention from its emotional to its intellectual content, a phenomenon which is central to Brecht's theories of Epic theatre. In any case, epic structure normally abandons the causal ordering of scenes in favor of an episodic construction controlled by some other priority. That controlling element is usually the analysis or exposition of a theme, situation, or developmental sequence, and it typically results in an arrangement of scenes which is chronological, although it need not be.

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25 It should be noted that, in many cases, the decision on whether or not a plot is causal involves some degree of subjective judgment on the part of the analyst, and occasional disagreement is to be expected. The determination of probability or necessity of presented or absent material to the fullest necessary development of a narrative line often is not clear-cut. Consequently, in plays lacking epic sprawl, or a large number of scenes clearly organized around a development or analysis of a theme, sequence, or situation, the question of whether a play is epic, or an episodically-structured work in the Aristotelian mode, could be the subject of debate.

It should also be noted that, while the use of a fictional or mythological narrative as the primary factor in the selection and arrangement of scenes is not uncommon in pre-modern epic drama, the presence of a non-narrative element, such as theme or sequence, as the principle controlling factor in the structure of an epic play is so prevalent in contemporary epic playwrighting as to be almost mandatory.
The second type of causality present in drama involves the relationship between character motivation and action. In a causal relationship, character motivation is translated directly into action, normally in a fashion which is consistent with typical human behavior, given the type of person a character is (good or evil, etc.). This relationship has been typical of drama from the fifth century B.C., and is the one incorporated into Aristotle's theory when, in ordering the six dramatic elements, character is described as the material cause of action (plot). However, in the fracturing of causality in the structure of epic drama, it is sometimes possible for the dramatist to break the coherence of character and action for thematic or analytical purposes. While this is not a trait of epic structure in general, it is found in a number of contemporary epic dramas, including some of the plays of Bertolt Brecht, and much of the work of Edward Bond, one of Great Britain's leading epic dramatists. Peter Holland describes this phenomenon and its effect in his analysis of Bond's *Narrow Road to the Deep North*.

The construction of the plays, then, specifically disavows the coherence of character; they destroy conventional theories of dramatic causality in terms of individual motivation as the factor promoting action. Bond's true purpose is therefore clear: through the series of scenes, Bond offers successive interconnected perceptions of the world, viewed socially and morally. The scene is the presentation of a moment of society (not of character), and is defined as a segment—not in terms of the diachronicity of play-time, but of its synchronic views of real-time.  

In Bond's drama, the center of attention is not the presentation of a story which is believable in terms of the real world, an approach which

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almost demands that some degree of consistency and causality exist between character motivation and action, as much as it is an analysis of social and moral conditions. In dramatizing such an analysis, Bond does not completely detach his characters from a relationship between motive and action which is believable in terms of the real world (nor does he give them motivations which have no base in human reality); however, great emphasis is not placed on consistency of motive and action from scene to scene in a play, because it is more important for each scene to successfully establish a given point in terms of the analysis than it is that absolute character consistency be maintained. Character becomes, or can become, as fluid as the episodic structure, creating a situation such as that in Narrow Road to the Deep North, in which character is shaped to establish points in the analysis of society in the same way that scenes are selected and arranged in the service of that theme.

Again and again Bond appears to be moving toward the establishment of character, only to dissolve it in the next scene. In Narrow Road, for instance, the audience's attitude towards the repressed sexuality and missionary zeal of Georgina is offered initially as an assessment of a particular type of Victorian imperialist feminism. But, in Georgina's sympathy for the children about to be executed, the reverse of Basho's acid sympathy, we are required, in fact forced, to re-evaluate both the nature of Georgina and, by extension, our notion of the constitution of character in the theatre. It is not that character has become incoherent but that character is not what counts.27

In allowing analysis to dictate the choice and content of scenes, the clear and comprehensible translation of motivation into action, at least in a consistent way, is secondary to establishing analytical

27 Peter Holland, "Brecht, Bond, Gaskill," p. 31.
points, and will be sacrificed to the analysis. This treatment of character is not typical of all plays with epic structure; however, it is found in a number of significant works, and demonstrates one of the possible, although not inevitable, ways in which epic structure can affect dramatic characterization and dramatic form.

One of the reasons that the fracturing of causality in character is possible in epic plays is that the basic structural unit in epic structure is comparatively small. In dramatic, or Aristotelian, theatre, the basic unit of structure is normally the act, a long sequence of events, sometimes divided into two or more scenes, and normally occurring within a relatively short time span. In a full-length play, two or more acts, each representing a significant part of the total narrative, are linked together. In epic plays, the scene is the basic unit of structure. The epic drama consists of a series of scenes, each related to the others, but not necessarily in terms of a narrative (although a relationship to a common story is the norm). In dramatic theatre, the basic unit of dramatic meaning is the act; i.e., the sequence of events comes to a temporary closure, or such closure is implied, in the course of a given act. In epic drama, closure is generally attained at the conclusion of each scene. The reason for this difference in basic structural units is that, whereas the central organizational principle in dramatic structure is the story, with meaning being derived from the completion of a significant series of events, in epic the central principle of organisation is an analytical or thematic point, or an incident in a developmental sequence. Such points are generally smaller, and composed of fewer incidents, than the basic units of dramatic structure,
and hence the scene can function as the basic unit of meaning in structural terms. Scenes are discrete units of meaning in epic structure. They frequently can stand comprehensibly as autonomous units, small stories in and of themselves, although this is far from an absolute rule. Such autonomy is rare even among the acts of a full-length play organized on causal principles, and consequently not even the acts of a dramatic play receive the isolation and individual focus accorded the scenes in many epic scripts. This is because action, or plot, is the center of the dramatic, while theme, analysis, or sequence is the center of epic. The dramatic asks that focus be on the long, overall development of a narrative. Epic asks that focus be placed on each of the individual points in an analysis, argument, or sequence, each of which is significant in and of itself, and in its relationship to the other points in the sequence or theme. Each point is typically isolated in an individual scene, and so the scene becomes the basic unit of structure, analysis, and meaning. Peter Holland's analysis of Edward Bond's technique is true of epic structure in general.

In Bond's plays, plot becomes an accompaniment, a necessary part of the exposition of the analysis of society, rather than the primary organizing force in the dramatic structure. . . . The isolation of each scene is in itself a demand for the audience to create the connection, to view the society that the objects make palpable. The accumulation of the segments in a strictly logical order becomes the purpose of the play's structure. The play's exploration of its own duration is a series of auto-reflexive observations, a continuing reanalysis of the critique of society that the play itself offers, a continually rediscriminating gaze on its own analysis. Each successive scene thus refines on the critique to which it adds itself.

The interconnection of the scenes on the level of argument are obviously dependent on clear presentation of that argument. Frequently Bond makes this connection plain by exploring the
interconnections between the scenes ... 28

While the specific referents in Holland's comments to the analysis of society demonstrate only one of the possible uses of epic structure, albeit a very important one, the general principles of the isolation of scenes as units of structure and meaning, and of their unity as points in an analysis, argument, or sequence, are significant hallmarks of epic structure.

There are three additional significant traits of epic structure which must be mentioned if epic structures are to be identified and analyzed. First, epic structure tends to utilize a large number of scenes in a given work. These scenes are frequently selected and organized around significant points in a developmental sequence or analysis of a theme or situation, including the examination of a single event from several points of view. Second, although epic plays can be considerably condensed in time and space, they tend to be very cinematic, taking a free approach to temporal and spatial elements. Piscator commented on this free approach to elements formerly bound and restrained in a good deal of the modern drama just prior to his time when he referred to "... the demands which the new dramatic theories with their extended concepts of time and space made on a theatre." 29 Strictly speaking, epic's cinematic approach is an element of epic form as much as of structure, for while it frequently appears in the surface form of epic dramas, it need not, and so is not an inevitable trait of epic

28 Peter Holland, "Brecht, Bond, Gaskell," p. 31.
structure. However, it is so prevalent that it deserves mention in a list of epic structural principles, and is made possible by the fact that epic employs many scenes and is not bound by Aristotelian or Neoclassical concepts of unity. The presence of cinematic sweep in epic drama is important because, in combination with the organising principles normally employed by epic playwrights, it makes the epic form uniquely well-adapted to the examination of historical and developmental sequences, particularly those which take place over a long span of time. Third, in contrast to dramatic structure, which typically employs a late point of attack, and consequently contains a high percentage of narrated exposition, epic usually utilises an early point of attack, with much of the material that might have been narrated as exposition in a dramatically-structured work included in the stage action as significant points in the analytical or developmental sequence.

Thus, in plays with epic structure, five traits will normally be present. The basic structural unit will be the scene, not the act. There will be a large number of scenes. They will be organised non-causally (i.e., episodically), with the basic principle behind the selection and arrangement of scenes being the presentation of scenes crucial to a full understanding of an analysis, argument, theme, situation, or developmental or historical sequence. There will be a relatively free approach to time and space, and the play will employ an early point of attack.

Epic structure can be adapted to many uses, including the straight and unbiased depiction of history on the stage, the presentation of social, cultural, and political analyses and arguments, and the
exploration of philosophical and psychological questions such as the relativity of truth or reality. In the past decade (1970-80), a number of playwrights representing various positions in the left wing of British politics have used epic structure creatively and well for the analysis and exposition of a variety of social and individual issues and developments in their plays. Their use of epic structure represents a significant increase in the frequency of its use over preceding decades, and is most likely connected to the interests and concerns which attract them as leftist, frequently marxist or revolutionary socialist, artists. Most of this group of playwrights began writing in the late 1960s, and came to maturity in the 1970s, and consequently it is not surprising that there is an apparent increase in the percentage of epic plays reaching print and stage in Great Britain during the past twelve years. However, it is less clear why such a large group of significant playwrights would turn to epic structure when examining questions of concern to them in such a concentrated way in a short period of time. The most important trait common to all the members of this group is their orientation toward leftist politics. Therefore, in order to determine why so many important playwrights would turn to epic structure in a short period of time, it is necessary to explore socialist and marxist aesthetic and literary theory, to see if there is a connection between the socialist approach to art and its function in society and the potentialities present in epic structure for meeting the demands of that approach. Should epic structure prove to be unusually successful in meeting the demands of socialist art and needs of socialist artists, it will be reasonable to conclude that the success of epic structure in
meeting those needs accounts for the dramatic increase in its use among leftist playwrights during the 1970s. First, however, it is necessary to clarify briefly the distinction between epic structure and epic, or Brechtian, style, a form of theatre which is the result of the practical and theoretical work done by Piscator and Brecht in Germany during the 1920s and 1930s, so that confusion arising from the use of the term "epic" in connection with non-Brechtian plays can be avoided.

Epic style, which was also called Epic Theatre by Brecht and Piscator, has two basic traits: epic structure (as defined above), and a series of additional qualities attached to both the dramatic and theatrical modes of presentation by Piscator and, especially, Brecht in their writings and work in the theatre. The two most concise statements of what Epic Theatre is probably are Brecht's "The Modern Theatre is Epic Theatre" (notes to his opera The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny), and his "A Short Organum for the Theatre." In a table in the former, Brecht crystallized many of the principles of Epic Theatre in a comparison of the traits of Brechtian and "Aristotelian" theatre (basically the romantic and realist theatre of his time).

30Despite their co-standing as founders of Epic Theatre, there are a number of significant differences between the theory and practice of Piscator and Brecht. See Chapter Two.

31For a full exposition of the theory, practice, and early history of Epic Theatre, see Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre; Erwin Piscator, The Political Theatre; and John Willett, The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht.

32Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, pp. 33-42.

33Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, pp. 179-205.

34Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, p. 37.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dramatic Theatre</th>
<th>Epic Theatre</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>plot</td>
<td>narrative</td>
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<tr>
<td>implicates the spectator in a stage situation</td>
<td>turns the spectator into an observer, but</td>
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<tr>
<td>wears down his capacity for action</td>
<td>arouses his capacity for action</td>
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<tr>
<td>provides him with sensations experience</td>
<td>forces him to take decisions picture of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the spectator is involved in something</td>
<td>he is forced to face something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suggestion</td>
<td>argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instinctive feelings are preserved</td>
<td>brought to the point of recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the spectator is in the thick of it, shares the experience</td>
<td>the spectator stands outside, studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the human being is taken for granted</td>
<td>the human being is the object of the inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he is unalterable</td>
<td>he is alterable and able to alter eyes on the course</td>
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<tr>
<td>eyes on the finish</td>
<td>each scene for itself</td>
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<tr>
<td>one scene makes another</td>
<td>montage</td>
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<tr>
<td>growth</td>
<td>in curves</td>
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<td>linear development</td>
<td>jumps</td>
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<td>evolutionary determinism</td>
<td>man as a process</td>
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<td>man as a fixed point</td>
<td>social being determines thought reason</td>
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<td>thought determines being feeling</td>
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While some of these pairs indicate differences between epic and dramatic structure (e.g., plot/narrative; one scene makes another scene for itself; evolutionary determinism: jumps), many of them indicate traits that are not linked to epic structure, but are elements of epic style. There are eight of these elements, five of which are the subject of general agreement between Piscator and Brecht, three of which are associated with one, but not the other.

The first element of general agreement among Epic theorists is that it is political. As early as 1929, Piscator wrote,

... the new theatrical style that we had developed to give artistic form to our revolutionary view of the world, the epic (his italics) or political style, was at that time meeting with widespread rejection and misapprehension. ... A definitive explanation and elucidation of the basic facts of epic, i.e., political theatre,
In this passage, Piscator identifies Epic and political theatre as one and the same thing. Brecht, too, in his essay "The Street Scene," linked Epic Theatre with social and political concerns. "One essential element of the street scene must also be present in the theatrical scene if this is to qualify as epic, namely that the demonstration would have a socially practical significance." This linking of Epic and political is interesting and of significance for its bearing on the use of epic structure by politically oriented playwrights in contemporary Britain, the practice of Brecht and Piscator in the 1920s in Germany presaging that of British dramatists in recent years. However, there is no necessary relationship between epic structure and political theatre, as an examination of the use of epic structure in pre-modern drama will make plain (see Chapter Two). The interests of any politically active theatre, especially one which has didactic aims as well, are well served by the isolation of scenes and content, lending emphasis to individual points in an analysis, found in epic structure. Nonetheless; insofar as the relationship is accidental, however appropriate it might be, the political element in Epic Theatre must be considered a matter of style.

A second trait of Epic Theatre is that it is didactic and politically agitational. About 1936, in his essay "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction," Brecht wrote, "Whatever was labelled

35 Erwin Piscator, The Political Theatre, p. VII.
36 Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, p. 122.
"Zeitstück" or "Piscatorbühne" or "Lehrstück" (learning piece) belongs to the epic theatre. In 1948, in the "Short Organum," he wrote,

The battle was for a theatre fit for the scientific age, and where its planners found it too hard to borrow or steal from the armoury of aesthetic concepts enough weapons to defend themselves against the aesthetics of the Press they simply threatened "to transform the means of enjoyment into an instrument of instruction, and to convert certain amusement establishments into organs of mass communication; i.e., to emigrate from the realm of the merely enjoyable." and,

But this makes it simpler for the theatre to edge as close as possible to the apparatus of education and mass communication. For although we cannot bother it with the raw material of knowledge in all its variety, which would stop it from being enjoyable, it is still free to find enjoyment in teaching and inquiring. It constructs its workable representations of society, which are then in a position to influence society.

While Brecht speaks directly of the potential of theatre as an instrument for education, he only hints at its possible use as a forum for political agitation as a means to promote social change. It was Erwin Piscator who directly addressed the hope that theatre could become an organ of effective political agitation. At the conclusion of his discussion of Alfons Paquet's Flaga, one of his first epic productions in Berlin in 1924 at the Volksbühne, Piscator looked toward his future and that of the political Epic Theatre.

Once again the way ahead seemed clearer, a way which would lead to political drama and to the hotly disputed technical revolution in the theatre. But we were not there yet. The first thing I turned my hand to was more political agitation by theatrical means.

37 Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, p. 70.
38 Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, p. 179.
39 Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, p. 186.
40 Erwin Piscator, The Political Theatre, p. 77.
Piscator went on to produce plays which, regardless of their long-term socio-political effectiveness, were the direct cause of a great deal of heated political debate between the German right and left, particularly from 1924 to 1933.\footnote{Obviously, the intended effect of Piscator’s productions was limited; perhaps even counter-productive. Piscator was an avowed leftist, and Germany was, from about 1928 on, progressively gripped by the political right, leading to the formation of a national government by the National Socialist Party (Nazis) under Adolf Hitler in 1933.} In fact, after several of his productions at the first Piscatorbühne in 1927-8, political debate on the productions was considerably more heated than discussion of the artistic merits of his work.\footnote{Erwin Piscator, \textit{The Political Theatre}. See especially his discussions of Toller’s \textit{Himmel, Such is Life}, pp. 206–21; Alexei Tolstoy’s \textit{Rasputin}, pp. 228–47; and Leo Tania’s \textit{Room}, pp. 273–88.} Of the critical comment on his production of Alexei Tolstoy’s \textit{Rasputin}, Piscator wrote,

> Of all the productions of this season—indeed, of all the plays I ever staged—\textit{Rasputin} produced the loudest echo, the clearest effect. Up until now the critics and bourgeois public had repeatedly tried to dismiss the political aims of my productions on aesthetic grounds, and to drag the discussions down to the level of pure Art, but \textit{Rasputin} gave them no chance to do so. The fact that this production was unequivocally evaluated as a political fact, that it exercised the minds of politicians and even the courts more than the gentlemen from the literary reviews seems to me to indicate a positive advantage of this production and to demonstrate that this was the case where I had the opportunity to put my ideas into practice in the clearest and most trenchant form,... The theater had become a political tribune and could be considered only in political terms.\footnote{Erwin Piscator, \textit{The Political Theatre}, p. 240.} 

Epic Theatre as practiced by Piscator and Brecht sought to be, and sometimes succeeded in being, both didactic and politically agitational. Once again, however, qualities such as didacticism and agitational potential must be considered properties of epic style, not
structure. The opportunities for clear presentation of issues and arguments occasioned by the use of epic structure clearly promoted its use by Piscator and Brecht in their drama and productions. Nonetheless, numerous examples of non-agitational plays with epic structures can be found throughout history, and this fact disqualifies such qualities as structural traits, appropriate though they might be as ways of taking advantage of the opportunities presented by epic structure.

Closely connected to the concept of Epic Theatre as political and didactic are the third and fourth stylistic traits: that Epic has an intellectual and rational bias, and that it employs alienation effects, practices designed to break the empathic bond of the audience to the stage action, to direct the attention of auditors away from emotional identification with the characters and their feelings and toward the didactic or intellectual content of the play. Although both Brecht and Piscator spoke of the need for a rational theatre, only Brecht discussed the alienation effect (Verfremdungseffekt) in any detail. Consequently, strictly speaking the alienation effect is a Brechtian concept. However, Piscator used theatrical means such as film and slides to break empathic responses and both to comment on and direct the audience's attention toward the meaning of the scene or play. Given Piscator's widespread use of such devices, it is reasonable to consider alienation a trait of Epic style.

In the "Conversation with Bert Brecht" (a transcription and transliteration of Brecht's words by Bernard Guilleman), Brecht is quoted as saying, "I aim at an extremely classical, cold, highly intellectual style of performance. I'm not writing for the scum who want the cockles
of their heart warned.\textsuperscript{44} This statement, coming in 1926, is one of Brecht's first on the need for an intellectual, non-empathic theatre, a theme which was to become dominant in his theoretical writings from that time forward. In 1930, in "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre," he wrote,

The opera (his italics) Mahagonny was written three years ago, in 1927. In subsequent works attempts were made to emphasise the didactic more and more at the expense of the culinary element. And so to develop the means of pleasure into an object of instruction, and to convert certain institutions from places of entertainment into organs of mass communication.\textsuperscript{45}

In order to do this, Brecht proposed that the spectator, "... instead of being enabled to have an experience, (be) forced as it were to cast a vote."\textsuperscript{46} In other words, Brecht wanted to engage the spectator's intellect in an argument and force him to make a choice, rather than allow him to enjoy an empathic, passive, "culinary" experience. Finally, in 1948 in the "Short Organum," Brecht discussed a new style of acting which would "... leave the spectator's intellect free and highly mobile."\textsuperscript{47} Piscator, too, was concerned with the rational, intellectual impact of Epic Theatre. "What is this thing called Art? What are its elements? Are its elements not the wishes of the human heart, and are its requirements not the conditions of a clear and rational mind?"\textsuperscript{48}

To achieve this rational theatre and style of performance, several

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{44}Bertolt Brecht, \textit{Brecht on Theatre}, p. 14.
  \item \textsuperscript{45}Bertolt Brecht, \textit{Brecht on Theatre}, pp. 41-2.
  \item \textsuperscript{46}Bertolt Brecht, \textit{Brecht on Theatre}, p. 39.
  \item \textsuperscript{47}Bertolt Brecht, \textit{Brecht on Theatre}, p. 191.
  \item \textsuperscript{48}Erwin Piscator, \textit{The Political Theatre}, p. 134.
\end{itemize}
elements were to be used, among them the alienation effect. There are four of these elements, and they constitute the remaining principles of epic style to be discussed. Once again, however, it is necessary to emphasize that, while epic structure lends itself to the exposition of intellectual content via its isolation of scenes and consequent ability to isolate points in an argument or analysis, there is no reason to suppose that epic structure cannot be used equally effectively in the rendering of an emotional potboiler or thriller (e.g., Middleton's *Women Beware Women* or Ford's *The Pity She's a Whore*). Brecht and Piscator's rational bias must be considered a trait of epic style, not epic structure.

The fifth element of epic style is the alienation effect. Brecht defined the alienation effect as "... a representation ... which allows us to recognize its subjects, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar."49 Among the examples mentioned by Brecht were the masks worn by medieval performers and the pantomimic and musical effects in Asian theatre; any device, in fact, which serves as a "barrier to empathy," of "... free(a) socially-conditioned phenomena from that stamp of familiarity which protects them against our grasp today."50 The last phrase refers to the practice of commenting on a scene via the use of music, film and slides, or unexpected occurrences in the dramatic action, such as the appearance of Tiger Brown on horseback to reprieve Macheath at the conclusion of *The Threepenny Opera*. The use of music,

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particularly as an alienation effect, is one of the traits of Epic Theatre associated with Brecht far more than with Piscator. Although Piscator staged a few reviews early in his development of Epic Theatre, most notably the Red Riot Review in 1924,\(^5\) he is not noted for his use of musical elements in production, achieving his alienation effects primarily through the use of film and slides, as well as a particular style of acting. Brecht, on the other hand, placed a great deal of emphasis on the use of music, and included it as an integral part of a number of his plays, frequently with music by Kurt Weill. Among the plays which make significant use of music are Drums in the Night, Baal, Edward II, The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny, The Threepenny Opera, The Mother, The Roundheads and the Redheads, Mother Courage, and The Caucasian Chalk Circle. In his essay "On the Use of Music in an Epic Theatre," written in 1935, Brecht discussed the various ways in which music could function in Epic in general, and in particular as an alienation effect. Of the use of music in early plays, he wrote,

In the first few plays music was used in a fairly conventional way; it was a matter of songs and marches, and there was usually some naturalistic pretext for each musical piece. All the same, the introduction of music meant a certain break with the dramatic conventions of the time; the drama was (as it were) lightened, made more elegant; the theatre's offerings became more like virtuoso turns. The narrow stuffiness of the impressionistic drama and the manic lop-sidedness of the expressionists were to some extent offset by the use of music, simply because it introduced variety. At the same time, music made possible something which we had long since ceased to take for granted, namely "poetic theatre".\(^5\)

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\(^5\) The review as a genre naturally employs a loose, epic structure, and consequently was well-adapted to the political nature of Piscator's theatre. See especially his discussion of reviews and Red Riot Review, Erwin Piscator, The Political Theatre, pp. 81-4.

\(^5\) Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, pp. 84-5.
Later, however, after he had begun to formulate his notion that the various elements of performance (text, music, spectacle) could be separated, and each made to comment on the material of the play in a different way,\textsuperscript{53} Brecht began to use music as an alienation effect.

The most successful demonstration of the epic theatre was the production of The Threepenny Opera in 1928. This was the first use of theatrical music in accordance with a new point of view. Its most striking innovation lay in the strict separation of the music from all the other elements of entertainment offered. Even superficially this was evident from the fact that the small orchestra was installed visibly on the stage. For the singing of the songs (Brecht's italics) a special change of lighting was arranged; the orchestra was lit up; the titles of the various numbers were projected on the screens at the back, for instance "Song concerning the Insufficiency of Human Endeavor" or "A short song allows Miss Polly Peachum to confess to her Horrified Parents that she is wed to the Murderer Macheath"; and the actors changed their positions before the number began. There were duets, trios, solos, and final choruses. The musical items, which had the immediacy of a ballad, were of a reflective and moralizing nature. The play showed the close relationship between the emotional life of the bourgeois and that of the criminal world. The criminals showed, sometimes through the music itself, that their sensations, feelings and prejudices were the same as those of the average citizen and theatre-goer. One theme was, broadly speaking, to show that the only pleasant life is a comfortably-off one, even if this involves doing without certain "higher things". A love duet was used to argue that superficial circumstances like the social origins of one's partner or her economic status should have no influence on a man's matrimonial decisions. A trio expressed concern at the fact that the uncertainties of life on this planet apparently prevent the human race from following its natural inclinations towards goodness and decent behavior. The tenderest and most moving love-song in the play described the eternal, indestructible mutual attachment of a procuress and her girl. The lovers sang, not without nostalgia, of their little home, the brothel. In such ways the music, just because it took up a purely emotional attitude and spurned none of the stock narcotic attractions, became an active collaborator in the stripping bare of the middleclass corpus of ideas. It became, so to speak, a muckeraker, an informer, a nark.\textsuperscript{54}

In short, by commenting on the actions and themes of the play with the

\textsuperscript{53}Bertolt Brecht, \textit{Brecht on Theatre}, p. 38.

\textsuperscript{54}Bertolt Brecht, \textit{Brecht on Theatre}, pp. 85-6.
music, and by playing the style of the music against its content, Brecht was able to use music as an alienation effect in *The Threepenny Opera*. Its repeated use to similar ends in subsequent plays fixed music as a significant element in Brechtian style and Epic Theatre.

Both Piscator and Brecht advocated reform in acting style and technique for the Epic Theatre. This is the sixth Epic trait. Each wanted acting which was intellectual, rational, and aware of the social implications of the role, and each wished to break the actor away from emotional identification with the role, a phenomenon they felt promoted the creation of empathy in the audience and distracted them from the social content of the play. Piscator wrote, "The style used by the actor, the writer and the director must be wholly factual. . . . Everything that is said must be unexperimental, un-Expressionistic, relaxed, subordinated to the simple, un-concealed will and aims of the revolution." He also said, in discussing the Studio at the Piscatorbühne,

Abandoned is the histrionic stylization of the role (the subjective approach) which is still usual today. In its place the objective exploration of the role (objective approach). In this way the danger of vapid, mechanical performances, the abuse of "personal signatures" will be avoided.


It was his belief that the aim of the Epic actor was "... taking the incidents portrayed and alienating them from the spectator."\(^{57}\) To do this, the actor had to do several things. "As against the dramatic actor, who has his character established from the first and simply exposes it to the inclemencies of the world and the tragedy, the epic actor lets his character grow before the spectator's eyes out of the way in which he behaves."\(^{58}\) In other words, where it might be possible for the audience to take for granted that a dramatic actor would respond in a given way in a given dramatic situation, the epic actor, in his portrayal of the character, is alterable and capable of surprise. His character's responses to particular situations, and his way of performing them, can change, not only from play to play, but in the course of a single play's action, allowing the audience to perceive growth. This is particularly significant in scenes in which a character acts in some way markedly different from his behavior in a similar earlier situation. In theory, that difference should alienate the spectator, causing him to ask why the character has behaved differently, and forcing him to come to a conclusion, to make a judgment, about the character and his actions, rather than taking them for granted. In that way, the audience member can be led into an inquiry into the roots, particularly social, of a character's actions, and be led toward a judgment concerning the human traits and social conditions which lead a person, or type of person, to act as they do. Having made that judgment, the

\(^{57}\)Bertolt Brecht, \textit{Brecht on Theatre}, p. 136.

\(^{58}\)Bertolt Brecht, \textit{Brecht on Theatre}, p. 56.
spectator is theoretically in a position to begin to try to take action to rectify unacceptable conditions. Although Brecht assigns the trait of alterability specifically to the epic actor, it is necessary to question whether this was not a reaction on Brecht's behalf to practices and acting styles prevalent in the classical and commercial theatres of his day, and whether, in fact, it is not less a question of epic versus dramatic acting than of a modern style of acting versus a performing style derived from nineteenth century romantic practice (or even of good acting versus bad). Be that as it may, there are other traits of Epic acting that clearly distinguish it from dramatic (or naturalistic) performance. The epic actor is expected to avoid empathic identification while performing his role, although he may use it as a rehearsal tool during the pre-production phases of character preparation. "The actor applying it (the technique designed to bring about alienation) is bound not to try to bring about the empathy operation."\(^59\)

He is also expected to refrain from "living the part," i.e., to avoid emotional identification with his role. The epic actor should perform in such a way that alternative behavior to that chosen by his character is implied, and he should also play in the past tense, as if he were narrating or telling a story about the events he enacts. Finally, the epic actor is expected to "... show attitudes rather than express feelings," to maintain a critical attitude toward society and his character, and to utilize gesture consciously to bring about alienation.\(^60\)

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The result is described by John Willett.

For Brecht believed that it is the actor’s business not to express feeling but to “show attitudes” or “Gesten.” In the accompanying essay on the Dreigroschenprozess he developed this conception of the “Gestus” a good deal further, speaking not only of individual “Gesten” but of “Gestisches Material” and the “Grund-” (or basic) “gestus” of a play. This idea, closely akin to those of Behaviourism, is a central part of his doctrine, but it is hard to make it so in English, for the equivalent term “gest” (meaning “bearing, carriage, mien”) has unfortunately become an obsolete word. It is at once gesture and gist, attitude and point: one aspect of the relation between two people, studied single, cut to essentials and physically or verbally expressed. It excludes the psychological, the subconscious, the metaphysical unless they can be conveyed in concrete terms. “All feelings must be externalized,” Brecht later wrote; hence the silent-film quality of certain episodes in his plays, or the very individual kind of acting which he demanded of Peter Lorre in his self-styled “epic” production of Mann ist Mann in 1931. This led him to defend Lorre against critics who felt that the actor had not given a “powerful” enough performance, and objected to his apparently mannered speech. The fragmentary, episodic style of acting, wrote Brecht in reply, was meant to show a man not as a consistent whole but as a contradictory, ever-changing character whose unity comes “despite, or rather by means of, interruptions and jumps”. The delivery of the lines was broken to show successive “Gesten”; and the whole sequence of attitudes shown demanded a leisurely timing. It was up to the spectator himself to see that they hung together.61

In short, Epic acting is a non-empathic style of acting which employs a variety of techniques to direct the spectator’s attention away from the feelings of the characters, and his own feelings, and toward the intellectual content of each scene and the play as a whole. In a sense, the characters in Epic Theatre should normally be viewed not so much as individuals as functional representatives of types and social positions, with the task of the actor being to make the type and position clear in all its socio-cultural qualifications.

The seventh and eighth points of Epic style are related to scenic production and stage technology. While Brecht and Piscator differed in their scenic practice, in both cases their ultimate aim was to throw attention onto the content or message of the play, and both of their styles of scenic procedure can be considered parts of Epic Theatre (stylistic alternatives, as it were). Piscator's theatre was highly technological, employing turntables, elevators, scaffolds, screens for film and slide projection, and advanced sound equipment. He attempted to use these devices to create theatrical means for realizing and presenting the socio-political and cultural implications of the plays he directed beyond the framework created in the script. For example, in his version of Elsa Walk's *Storm Over Gotland*, a play about the struggle of a communist pirate community against the Hansa League in the late fourteenth century, Piscator employed film commentary to stress the parallels between that and succeeding revolutionary struggles.62

Similarly, in his production of Alexei Tolstoy's *Rasputin*, he began the play with an interjected montage of Romanov tsars on one screen, with a commentary on a separate screen indicating the fate of the individual, such as "Dies suddenly," or "Dies insane."63 He also employed a "Calendar" screen throughout the production to cast the play in the framework of events in the 1914–18 war. So heavy was Piscator's

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62 The most famous, and controversial, filmed segment was a sequence showing Anmus and Störtebeker, two leading characters, and others marching toward the audience as their costumes changed to periods reflecting later peasants' revolts (e.g., 1789, 1848, 1917). Erwin Piscator, *The Political Theatre*, pp. 138–53.

reliance on theatre technology in his production style that he commissioned Walter Gropius of the Bauhaus to design the so-called “Total Theatre” as the home for his Piscatorbühne, incorporating the most advanced and flexible technology of its time. Unfortunately, it was never built. Nonetheless, Piscator managed to use his technology in a politically active, agitational, socially aware series of productions.

In discussing Piscator’s theatre, Brecht said,

“Piscator’s experiments began by causing complete theatrical chaos; while they turned the stage into a machine-room, the auditorium became a public meeting. Piscator saw the theatre as a parliament, the audience as a legislative body. To this parliament were submitted all the great public questions that needed an answer. Instead of a Deputy speaking about certain intolerable social conditions there was an artistic copy of these conditions. It was the stage’s ambition to supply images, statistics, slogans which would enable its parliament, the audience, to reach political decisions. Piscator’s stage was indifferent to applause, but it preferred a discussion. It didn’t want only to provide its spectator with an experience but also to squeeze from him a practical decision to intervene actively in life. Every means was justified which helped to secure this. The technical side of the stage became extremely complicated. . . . The mechanism on the stage weighed so much that the stage of the Nollendorftheatre had to be reinforced with steel and concrete supports; so much machinery was hung from the dome that it began to give way. Aesthetic considerations were entirely subject to political. Away with painted scenery if a film could be shown that had been taken on the spot and had the stamp of documentary realism. Up with painted cartoons, if the artist (e.g., George Grosz) had something to say to the parliamentary audience. Piscator was even ready to do wholly without actors.”

Brecht was echoed by Bernhard Diebold in his article “The Piscator Drama.”

Technical devices as a mode of expression . . . . In this polytechnical framework the most modern media of expression are put to work. . . . They come from the sphere of the semiaesthetic and of the demi-muses; there are fragments and seminal ideas from the

64 Erwin Piscator, The Political Theatre, pp. 180-3.
65 Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, pp. 130-1.
film, from the revue, from dance, from jazz, from the loudspeaker. But whereas these sub-arts previously served the realm of amusement, here they are sobered up, objectified, purified; arranged by the organizing hand according to a higher principle, the idea. Finally, Piscator himself commented on the relationship between technology, style, and the aims of Epic Theatre. "Many people confused the style with the means and called it "technical," but many recognized, quite rightly, that the style was inseparably linked with our basic political principle, and that 'the idea produced the appropriate style.'"67

By contrast, Brecht employed a limited array of technical devices, and frequently exposed the means of production (lights, speakers, fly system, etc.). He did this to remind the audience that it was in a theatre, in order to minimize the empathic response that frequently accompanies the "suspension of disbelief" present in naturalistic and realistic theatre.68 Brecht's notion of appropriate scenery for Epic Theatre is at the opposite extreme from Piscator's in its technical simplicity, if not in its emphasis on the functional. "His (the Epic designer's) sets are significant statements about reality. He takes a bold sweep, never letting inessential detail or decoration distract from the statement, which is an artistic and an intellectual one."69 He did not, however, disavow the use of technology, particularly projections, when they assisted in the presentation of the content of the

69Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, p. 231.
play and comment on it. In discussing *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, Brecht spoke of the contribution of Caspar Neher's projections to the success of the production.

Neher's projections adopt an attitude toward the events on the stage as when the real glutton sits in front of the glutton Neher has drawn. In the same way the stage unleashes the events that are fixed on the screen. These projections of Neher's are quite as much an independent component of the opera as are Weill's music and the text.  

Brecht's quintessential statement on his scenic practice and style, however, was made to Mordecai Gerelick in discussing designs for the New York production of *The Mother*:

> Let's have a platform, and on this platform we'll put chairs, tables, partitions—whatever the actors need. For hanging a curtain give me a wooden pole or a metal bar; for hanging a picture a piece of wall. And I'll want a large projection screen. . . . Let it all be elegant, thin and fine, like Japanese banners, filmy like Japanese kites and lanterns; let's be aware of the natural textures of wood and metal. . . . We'll place two grand pianos visibly at one side of the stage; the play must have the quality of a concert as well as that of a drama. . . . And we'll show the lighting units as they dim on and off, playing over the scene.  

Where Piscator employed high technology, Brecht utilised relatively simple scenic means. Nonetheless, both were concerned that scenic elements should further comprehension of the play and its social environment, and both contributed significantly to the development of Epic scenic style. There are two reasons for their different approaches. First, while Brecht normally wrote and directed his own scripts, and consequently could build a great deal of his commentary directly into the play, Piscator normally directed plays written by others. These

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70 Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 38.

plays often had so little to do with Piscator's aims and political message that he substantially rewrote and restructured them, using his high level of technological sophistication to create the social context and comment lacking in the original scripts. Second, whereas Brecht normally set his plays in the past and allowed the audience to come to its own conclusions about their contemporary relevance, Piscator constantly used film media in his plays to emphasize the connections between the events in the plays and his contemporary scene. In any case, taken together Piscator and Brecht demonstrate the range of Epic scenic style, as well as crystallizing its basic principle: that the scenic and technical elements of the theatre can and should function as effective means for carrying the meaning of a play and commenting on a play's action and characters, and the relationship between those elements and society as a whole.

In addition to epic structure, Epic Theatre has a number of other traits which contribute to its final form. It is politically and socially oriented, frequently agitational and propagandistic, and attempts to fulfill functions as a didactic tool and an instrument for social change. It has a rational and comparatively anti-emotional bias, although Piscator was far more willing to permit emotion in the theatre than Brecht, so long as it did not swamp the intellectual and served as a spur to social action. It employs alienation effects to break empathic involvement on the part of spectators, and to direct their attention toward matters of theme and content. Finally, it employs its own kind of acting, music, and scenic technology and style to further its didactic and rational aims.
Before turning to a discussion of socialist criticism and its relation to epic structure, it will be useful to close consideration of the principles of epic structure and of its relationship to Epic Theatre by briefly mentioning two points. While the term "Epic Theatre" has thusfar been used to refer exclusively to that strain of theatre founded and developed in both theory and practice by Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht, among the contemporary British dramatists under consideration the term is used to connote a somewhat different sort of theatre (hereafter to be designated by small letters, as "epic theatre"). These playwrights, represented most forcefully and articulately by Howard Brenton, regard Brecht with sentiments ranging from admiration, to indifference, to hostility.

First about Brecht: I'm an anti-Brechtian, a Left anti-Brechtian. I think his plays are museum pieces now and are messing up a lot of young theatre workers. Brecht's plays don't work, and are about the thirties and not about the seventies, and are now cocooned and unperformable. I've never seen one that worked. The best of his work is the most militant and in a sense the most unfair and vicious. I mean the early plays, particularly The Mother, which is the one with the most life in it, and St. Joan of the Stockyards. But I think Brecht's influence is wholly to the bad. I've never found it attractive. I've never found it coherent.

The term these playwrights use for the theatre of Brecht is normally "Brechtian." When speaking of epic theatre, they usually mean something closer to the definition of an epic play formulated by Brenton.

I had these notions of an epic in mind: (1) a play that is many scened, the short scenes choosing precise "windows" in a story (2) the "windows" have to be authentic, to ring true and (3) at the same time they must be part of an argument, one illustrating the

other, progressing to a conclusion that is believable, in the simple sense of "men and women would do that" and also be clear in intent and (4) it is the message of a play that comes first. Great acting is only possible if the story acted is true. The story of King Lear is true—the story of many a play with a "great performance" is not, and the acting, when you come down to it, is worthless.73

Brenton's idea of epic theatre comes close to being a direct representation of epic structure, probably in a comparatively realistic style, without many of the components of Epic Theatre discussed by Piscator and Brecht. While Brenton's definition does not correspond exactly with the formulation of epic structure arrived at above, it is close enough to suggest that that formulation is not artificial and does not exist in a vacuum. However, it should be noted that, although Brenton is one of the few contemporary British playwrights, critics, or practitioners who have addressed issues like the meaning of "epic" or "dramatic" structure, he is not the only one, and so there is a range of traits and meanings attached to the term "epic theatre" and what it is thought to represent in contemporary Britain.

The second point which needs to be discussed before moving to a review of socialist critical principles deals with an issue of critical emphasis and the relationship between the epic and dramatic, or Aristotelian. For the sake of clarity, such issues as a comparison between the traits of the two forms have thus far been dealt with as if they were separate, fixed points which neither meet nor have common ground between them. In fact, as Brecht observed, it is more correct to treat their

differences as ones of emphasis or degree, and to view both the structures and individual plays in terms of a continuum.

Many people imagine that the term "epic theatre" is self-contradictory, as the epic and dramatic ways of narrating a story are held, following Aristotle, to be basically distinct. The difference between the two forms was never thought simply to lie in the fact that the one is performed by living beings while the other operates via the written word; epic works such as those of Homer and the medieval singers were at the same time theatrical performances, while dramas like Goethe’s Faust and Byron’s Manfred are agreed to have been more effective as books. Thus even by Aristotle’s definition the difference between the dramatic and epic forms was attributed to their different methods of construction, whose laws were dealt with by two different branches of aesthetics. The method of construction depended on the different way of presenting the work to the public, sometimes via the stage, sometimes through a book; and independently of that there was the "dramatic element" in epic works and the "epic element" in dramatic. The bourgeois novel in the last century developed much that was "dramatic", by which was meant the strong centralization of the story, a momentum that drew the separate parts into a common relationship. A particular passion of utterance, a certain emphasis on the clash of forces are hallmarks of the "dramatic". The epic writer Doblin provided an excellent criterion when he said that with an epic work, as opposed to a dramatic, one can as it were take a pair of scissors and cut it into individual pieces, which remain fully capable of life.

Having dealt with the issues of epic and Aristotelian dramatic form in a conventional way, and in the terms in which critical discussion of the two is usually waged, it might be useful to propose a reorientation or extension of the discussion of structures and genres in a different direction, in order to clear the muddy waters which cloud any discussion of the dramatic and epic which depends on exclusivistic critical structures and categories such as those derived from Aristotelian theorizing through the years (dating back to the Neoclassicists). It will be useful to break away from Aristotelian generic thinking in literary

74 Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, p. 70.
criticism and think in terms of general structural modes (Dramatic, Epic, Lyric), each of which contains a variety of possible surface manifestations (prose/poetry; dramatic, epic, lyric; comic, tragic, melodramatic, satirical, farcical, etc.). Such a shift in thinking could do a great deal toward simplifying general questions of structural categories, and, especially, in clarifying the relationship of individual works of art to those categories and to one another.

In order to understand why epic structures might be especially appealing to a leftist or socialist playwright, it is necessary to take a brief look at socialist aesthetic theory, with particular reference to the interplay between society and art. It is important to realize that leftist aesthetic and literary theory is in no sense monolithic. Any body of criticism which includes theories as diverse as those of Brecht, Goldmann, Lukacs, Stalin, and Trotsky, to name a few, is obviously going to have points of contention. However, it is possible to distill the body of socialist theory down to a number of principles on which there is general agreement, and which indicate why epic structure appeals to playwrights on the political left.

There are four general tenets of socialist criticism which help to explain why epic structure would appeal to playwrights in sympathy with those principles and socialist socio-political aims. First, socialist critics tend to believe that there is a significant relationship between a society and its art products, and that art can be a useful social tool, both for the analysis and examination of a culture, and for changing society. There is some question of how direct the relationship is. Few, if any, socialist theorists would posit that any art,
including theatre, has an absolute correspondence to the social structure (economic and political) of the culture in which it is produced. According to Arnold Hauser, "All art is socially conditioned, but not everything in art is definable in sociological terms." Karl Marx made a similar, even more far-reaching statement. "It is well known that certain periods of highest development of art stand in no direct connection with the general development of society, nor with the material basis and the skeleton structure of its organization." However, as a general rule, socialist criticism proceeds on the basis of a belief in a close, causal connection between society and art, in which the form and content of artworks is significantly determined by the structure of society and its institutions, the limitations and possibilities present in the culture to which an artist responds, and of which he is a part.

... it is important to stress the relationship between the economic structure of a society, in our case a capitalist one, and the political, social and cultural realities of that society. The traditional Marxist way to express this relationship stems from Marx and Engels: "The dominant ideology of a society is that of the dominant class." Traditionally, Marxists have constructed a model of society with an economic base which is capitalist, or feudal, or whatever, and which directly determines the "superstructures" of government, law, education, religion, and the other institutions, including the cultural "superstructure".

Although different individual socialist critics might disagree with the


Marxists on the absolute primacy of the economic structure of society in determining the form and structure of its art and institutions, and among themselves on its relative importance, there is general agreement that society, with its ideas, beliefs, institutions, and structures is a critical factor in the conception and final form of a work of art, and that the art of a culture cannot be understood without reference to the organization of the society itself (and vice versa). Socialist criticism admits the presence and influence of such factors as individual genius (or lack thereof), individual vision, and collective achievement by a small group in advance of the society. In rare instances, such factors could even completely override the impact of social forces. However, as a general principle, socialist aesthetics holds that "...directly or indirectly, art is ultimately determined in various ways by the economic structure and the stage of the social technology."  

Given the relationship between society and art posited by socialist critics, it follows that the art of a society would provide a good means of gaining insight into the values and structures (economic, class, political, legal, etc.) of that society. The theatre and its accompanying drama would be especially useful in this regard since the basic material of much theatre is interaction and conflict between people and one another or their social and natural environment. This introduces the

78 Karl Marx, "Witness the example of the Greeks as compared to modern nations or even Shakespeare," "Production and Consumption," Berel Lang and Forrest W. Williams, ed., Marxism and Art, p. 37.

possibility that art could serve as a means of social analysis, one which could reach large numbers of people in the proper media. In the case of theatre and drama, it would even be possible to undertake a direct analysis of society through the action of plays, whether the society or artwork be contemporary or historical. This is a significant point, for if society can be successfully and effectively examined and analyzed in a play or theatrical performance, it is possible that the theatre could begin to function as an instrument for social change by exposing social ills for the audience's contemplation, and by urging or suggesting actions to rectify unacceptable situations. One of the continual themes of socialist criticism is, in fact, that theatre has a function as an instrument of large- and small-scale social change, and that it can function effectively in that role via its powers to educate and to move the mind and emotions of spectators. The notion that theatre can be an effective implement for social change is the second of the principles of socialist criticism which are significant in discovering why epic structure would attract leftist playwrights, and it is, in fact, in many ways the factor which lies behind and lends importance to the other principles. If theatre, or any other art, can play an important role in rectifying a social condition, or even revolutionizing a society, then it obviously behooves anyone interested in social reform or revolution to investigate its potential and exploit its opportunities.

The mission of art, in particular literature and theatre, was closely connected to the revolutionary social and political cause of the proletariat by Lenin. "Literature must become part of the common
cause of the proletariat, a 'cog and a screw' of one single great Social-Democratic mechanism set in motion by the entire politically-conscious vanguard of the entire working class." 80 Brecht, too, was cognizant of the role of theatre in social movements. " ... (T)he theatre as part of a changing society has to participate in that change." 81 There are two basic ways in which theatre can function as a social weapon, although in a sense both can be reduced to a single base in the faith of leftists in theatre as an effective instrument for education and mass communication, the third point of socialist theory crucial to understanding the attractiveness of epic structure for leftist playwrights. First, theatre can function in a general and comparatively passive role, presenting a picture and analysis of the causes of a social condition, historical process, or even a whole culture, and then allowing the audience to come to its own conclusion about what, if anything, should be done. This is the general educative function of theatre, and can be extended to such a degree that theatre comes to be one of a society's tools for socializing its members. Bukharin felt that theatre, in addition to educating its audiences on given issues or problems, could be used as a tool of ideological education and as a means of "socializing the feelings;" i.e., of building an emotional and intellectual commitment to the forms and policies of a society. "The nature of art is now clear; it is a systematization


of feelings in forms; the direct function of art in socializing, trans-
ferring, disseminating these feelings, in society, is now also clear."

Second, theatre can function as an agent of direct agitation, both on
single issues and in the general revolutionary cause, urging the audi-
ence to take actions which are normally suggested in the action of the
play, although they may only be strongly implied. This is theatre as
agitational propaganda. In both its more passive and directly agi-
tational modes, the underlying assumption is the same; that theatre

82 N. I. Bukharin, "Art and Social Evolution," Berel Lang and

83 Although the term "agitational propaganda," or "agit-prop," has
come to be applied primarily to small-scale, generally single-issue
plays, it has a wider applicability, and can be extended to plays of
any length or scope, since the principle underlying the play and the
way it functions persuasively is the same. There is no need to rehash
the marxist debate on the appropriateness of tendentiousness, or bias,
in works of art. However, it is worth noting that there is a signifi-
cant split among leftist theorists on the issue of propaganda in the
theatre. Critics and practitioners such as Brecht, Piscator, and many
of the British playwrights of the last decade support the notion that
theatre can and should function as propaganda and reflect a clear bias
in favor of a certain position. On the other hand, theorists of what
has come to be called Socialist Realism generally hold that art should
not be tendentious. This difference of opinion could be occasioned by
the fact that Socialist Realism is a product of a society which has
advanced several stages down the road from socialism to communism,
while Brecht, Piscator, and the contemporary British writers worked or
work in societies which are capitalist. The need for direct, biased
propaganda in the theatre of a society which is already socialist is
minimal. It is enough to infuse the vision of reality presented in the
plays with marxist ideology (or, more correctly, to have the vision of
reality conditioned by marxist ideology) to accomodate the theatre's
socializing task in a socialist society. In a capitalist society, the
need for more direct propaganda and agitation/education might easily be
manifest. For a condensed, but complete, discussion of this debate
and the principles underlying it, see Jean-Pierre Morel, "A Revolutionary
Poetics?", Jacques Ehrmann, ed., Literature and Revolution (Boston:
can function as an effective didactic instrument in a variety of ways, fulfilling Brecht's vision of "... the means of pleasure (as) an object of instruction, and ... certain institutions (being converted) from places of entertainment into organs of mass communication."84

In discussing the theatre as a means of education, propagandistic or not, there are two additional issues which need to be addressed briefly: what the nature of a political play is, an issue debated among current British writers; and where this education should be focussed in a capitalist society for maximum effectiveness.

On the first point, there is general agreement that it is not sufficient for a play to be about a political subject for it to be a political play. A work such as Robert Bolt's State of Revolution, concerned with one of the pre-eminent political events of the twentieth century, the 1917 Russian Revolution and its aftermath, is nonetheless not a political play. This is because it is basically a highly individual view of the events from 1910 to 1923, without any emphasis on socio-historical analysis, the ramifications of those events for contemporary society, or the education of the audience about the true nature of revolutionary commitment and action. It is simply a fairly controversial piece of theatrical entertainment, which neither challenges the audience with questions and issues nor seeks to educate them ideologically.85 Theodore Shank defined the difference between plays such as State of Revolution and true political plays.

84 Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, p. 42.
85 The play was attacked in the leftist press for its vision of Lenin and the Revolution.
There are three crucial points in Shank’s definition of a political play. A political play stimulates discussion (and, by extension, action) beyond the confines of the aesthetic event. It presents an analysis, not merely a more or less objective rendering of an action in society. Finally, it analyzes from the point of view of an ideology. The last two points taken together are particularly significant, for, if mishandled by the dramatist, they form the crux of a criticism of the plays of a number of politically-oriented playwrights; i.e., that their plays are merely demonstrations of ideology, and lack a clear and fair analysis of their subjects, causing the dramas to fail as political plays. Charles Marowitz has been particularly interested in this issue. In a review of Howard Brenton’s Weapons of Happiness, Marowitz said,

I expect a political play to be more than the dramatization of an author’s political loyalties. Left-wing propaganda with its heart-in-the-right-place is still propaganda and, as such, nullified as art—unless it transcends its own biases...

My beliefs (and Brenton’s) are irrelevant to an artefact that has to accommodate all the beliefs engendered by the author’s primary conviction. It just isn’t enough to edit out disagreeable or unsympathetic ideas because one doesn’t agree with them or finds them unsympathetic. A play is a place where an author’s central idea is swung, like a cat by the tail, around all the other ideas it would like to banish or deny. But to banish or deny any set of beliefs involves grappling with them—not simply assuming every right-thinking left-winger automatically perceives the lunacy of

Marowitz's requirements for analysis and the presentation of ideas in political plays are stiff. Nonetheless, they are the best standards to employ in judging political drama, for they encourage the creation of plays which are valid both artistically and as political documents incorporating fair and accurate analysis and content. It is important to note what Marowitz says about propaganda. He does not deny that propaganda exists and is valid in drama; however, he insists that it transcend its biases, that it analyse and evaluate fairly and win on relatively objective terms by testing its own assumptions and ideas as well as those of its opponents. The quality of a political play must be determined by a critical consideration of several factors, including aesthetic, political, and analytical, and not merely on its ideological correctness or political fervor. Socialist sincerity is not enough, nor is a bald assertion of socialist principle or the playwright's socialist biases. For a political play to be effective, it must be persuasive in its analysis, and this can only occur if the analysis is fair and principled. The fact that such standards are difficult to meet accounts in no small part for the fact that, for every really fine political play which is written, dozens of mediocre or inept works exist.

The Marxist playwright . . . thinks that because the play itself is part of the class struggle, an object, a weapon in that struggle, that he must first say which side he is on and make that clear, before he proceeds to lay out the ideas of the play as

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fairly as he may. To me this approach is rubbish, it insults the audience's intelligence; more important, it is also a fundamental misunderstanding of what a play is.\(^{88}\)

While a political play is by its nature ideological and educative, its value as a play is not identical to its value as propaganda. Rather, the propaganda in a play, if it is present,\(^{89}\) must function as a natural outcome of the fair and effective rendering of analysis and action in the drama. Any play in which that does not happen is marred, certainly as art, and very probably as propaganda as well.

The issue of where political theatre ought to focus its attention can be broken into two points of view. One group, represented most clearly by John McGrath among contemporary British dramatists and theorists, advocates directing attention primarily at the working class, in the hopes of translating the play's action and message into direct revolutionary political commitment and action. A second group, including playwrights such as Howard Brenton, David Hare, David Edgar, and Edward Bond, while not denying the value of theatre for the working class in principle, generally prefers to aim its efforts at the bourgeois ruling class. The former group is concentrated primarily in politically committed companies which tour the country, playing in factories, pubs, and other non-traditional theatre venues, as well as in theatres. Among these companies, which range in size from a few members to large organizations, are McGrath's own 7.\(^{94}\) Companies, Northwest

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\(^{89}\) It should be remembered that overt propaganda need not be present for a play to still be political; i.e., ideological and analytical.
Spanner, CAST, The General Will, Belts and Braces Roadshow, and Red Ladder. Though these companies may have a small number of large-scale works in their repertory, most concentrate their efforts in small agit-prop plays dealing both with single issues and the creation of a wider revolutionary consciousness. Their general philosophical position and goals were outlined by John McGrath.

... to explain, elucidate, remind, and eventually persuade its audience to act or think differently. It sees a politically conscious working class as the agent of social change—its power as ultimately revolutionary. So it sets about working within that class to raise the awareness of those who may have been mystified or apathetic, or divided against their fellow workers. It sets out to raise their own consciousness of themselves as members of a class with interests in common, the ultimate one being the overthrow of capitalism.90

Through the educational and agitational values of theatre, individuals such as McGrath hope to accomplish the revolutionary politicization of the working class, and thereby to bring about revolution.

Playwrights such as Bond, Brenton, Edgar, and Hare hope to reach and convert the large, bourgeois, theatre-going public. They do this by functioning primarily in the establishment theatres frequented by the bourgeoisie: the commercial (West End) theatre, and, especially, the major subsidized companies, both London and regional, including the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, and the Liverpool Everyman. These playwrights have not entirely abandoned leftist theatre companies in their playwrighting; however, when they collaborate with a socialist company, it is normally with a major company of national reach and reputation, such as William

Gaskill and Max Stafford-Clark's Joint Stock Company, or The Monstrous Regiment of Women, a major feminist group. While they occasionally treat single issues in their works, such as the rise of the neo-fascist National Front in Edgar's Destiny, plays written for these venues by this group of playwrights tend to concentrate on more sweeping analyses of capitalist society and exposes of its ills. Some of these playwrights, such as Edgar and Breton, began by writing small plays, frequently in agit-prop form, for companies such as those represented by McGrath. However, for these playwrights, some combination of the attraction of larger audiences and spaces and disenchantment with agitational, working-class theatre resulted in their turn to larger forms and the opportunities present in the bourgeois theatre.

I used to think that they contributed to the change one hundred percent... What's happened since (1971) has made the choices more difficult. Of course one is providing theatrical ammunition, but I think the nature of that ammunition has, for me anyway, changed. It is more self-critical, in the sense of being critical of the movement of which I am a part—want to be and am proud to be a part. I'd put it quantitatively rather than qualitatively: the influence the theatre has is slower but deeper than I thought four or five years ago.91

By placing plays in the subsidized bourgeois theatres, the commercial houses, and in major leftist touring companies such as Joint Stock or Monstrous Regiment, these playwrights hope to cause social change in two ways. First, particularly on single issues, they hope to raise public consciousness and change minds, thereby influencing the actions of individuals and their governmental representatives. "I dream of a play acting like a bush-fire, smouldering into public consciousness."

Or—like hammering on the pipes heard all through a tenement.  

Second, they hope to participate in a general educational and persuasive effort, presenting socialist ideology, analysis, and solutions to the bourgeois public, thereby functioning as part of the larger leftist effort to change society. "... the realization that socialist playwrights cannot themselves change the world may yet help them to discover ways of contributing and in no small measure to the work of those who can." Thus, these writers hope to affect bourgeois society and the ruling orders both directly and indirectly through their work, in that way creating momentum for social change and preparing the way for the socialist revolution. Their activity does not represent an abandonment of the working class; however, they believe that the greater exposure accorded such theatre by the media, as well as the ability to handle larger and more complex issues in the large spaces and with the greater resources of the bourgeois theatre, make their work in commercial or major subsidized houses of considerable ultimate value to the revolutionary cause. The degree of their success in penetrating the bourgeois establishment is both considerable and demonstrable. In 1978, David Edgar noted that, in the preceding twelve months, five of the eight new plays produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company had been written by "socialist revolutionaries," and Bond, Breton, and Hare, 

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92 Howard Brenton, "Petrol Bombs Through the Proscenium Arch," p. 20.


94 David Edgar, "Ten Years of Political Theatre," p. 25.
among others, have all contributed at least one play to recent seasons
at the National Theatre. Their success in educating and converting the
bourgeois public, however, is considerably less evident and, to say the
least, casts some doubt on the immediate, if not ultimate, value of their
efforts to the revolutionary cause.

The fourth and final point of socialist theory that bears on the
attraction of epic structure for contemporary British leftist play-
wrights, and leftists in general, is a specifically marxist principle,
dealing with the theory of the dialectic, particularly as it operates
in history. Marxism sees historical process and development as a dia-
lectic process of conflict between economic classes. The conflict be-
tween a dominant and an oppressed class in the context of a given his-
torical situation creates movement toward a new situation. Over time,
repetitions of this conflict bring about new dominant classes. In
theory, this process will be repeated until the proletariat achieves
dominance in a socialist society, at which point the process of building
a classless society (communist) can begin. By looking at history, a
marxist would argue, it is possible to both see this process in opera-
tion and discover the principles by which it works. If those prin-
ciples can be uncovered, it then becomes possible to try to alter society
by manipulating them. Though it might be possible to manipulate the
principles directly to bring about or hasten revolutionary change, as a
general rule the value of uncovering the principles of historical change
is that the oppressed classes can be made aware of their operation and
the causes of their oppression, creating one of the major conditions
necessary for revolution to take place. Regardless of whether the
dialectic is actually the process which underlies and controls historical change, it is a major component of Marxist theory, and has considerable implications for theatre.

Given the didactic functions of theatre in a socialist system, it is clear that one of the means by which the dialectic and its principles could be made clear especially effectively is by viewing its operation in the theatre, particularly in plays dealing with history and class struggle. Brecht devoted a good deal of time and space in the "Short Organum" to the relationship between dialectical materialism, the method by which the dialectic operates, and theatre. He felt that the use of the alienation effect would make the theatre a particularly good place for revealing the operation of the dialectic in graphic terms.

This technique allows the theatre to make use in its representations of the new social scientific method known as dialectical materialism. In order to unearth society's laws of motion this method treats social institutions as processes, and traces out all their inconsistencies. It regards nothing as existing except in so far as it changes, in other words is in disharmony with itself. This also goes for those human feelings, opinions, and attitudes through which at any time the form of men's life together finds its expression.95

Regardless of whether the alienation effect is a significant factor in the equation, the theatre, particularly Epic Theatre and others employing epic structure, are a good means for observing the dialectic in a work of art. As an art form, the very nature of theatre is the revelation of process (this is true of any art object which is perceived as unfolding through time), and the presence of conflict as an integral

95 Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, p. 193.
element of drama combined with its nature as a process make it a natural forum for the revelation of dialectical process. The essence of both theatre and the dialectic is the working out of conflict between opposing forces through time (process). The presence of many scenes, and the focus on the scene as an isolated structural unit (hence on the individual conflict or clash contained in the unit), enhance the claims of epic structure as the best means for revealing dialectic principles in operation. Each important stage in the process of conflicts working toward synthesis can be individually and clearly represented and resolved. Thus, it is apparent that the exposition of dialectical process can be well-served by theatrical, especially epic, presentation.

The presentation and exploration of history and historical process and principles are also well-served by epic structure and the theatre. The numerous, isolated scenes and episodic construction of epic allow each significant step in a historical sequence to be presented, and all insignificant events to be excluded. It also allows the operation of historical principles and processes to be laid bare and spotlighted as they work in the structure of scenes and the action of the play, opening the possibility of their being subject to manipulation once they are understood.

The historical conditions must of course not be imagined (nor will they be so constructed) as mysterious Powers (in the background); on the contrary, they are created and maintained by men (and will in due course be altered by them); it is the actions taking place before us that allow us to see what they are.96

By revealing those conditions and processes to an audience, the theatre

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96Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, p. 190.
can both educate and act as an instrument for building a societal consensus: it can help to create a general will. It does this in two ways. First, it can, through historical examination, propagate the notions of class struggle and the inevitability of the triumph of proletarian forces and principles; i.e., socialism. Second, it allows the origins of contemporary situations to be revealed in the past so that root causes can be attacked, and allows parallels to be drawn between historical conditions and those of the present. Examinations of history in the theatre yield to the socialist playwright a weapon for both education and social change. It permits him to both examine societal conditions and reinforce the idea that movement and change are necessary and possible, valuable tools in a theatre dedicated to bringing about revolution.

For five years I have been writing history plays. I try to show the English their history. I write tribal pieces, trying to show how people behaved on this island, off this continental shelf, in this century. How this Empire vanished, how these ideals died, ... When I first wrote, I wrote in the present day, I believed in a purely contemporary drama; so as I headed backwards, I worried I was copping out, avoiding the real difficulties of the day. It took me time to realise that the reason was, if you write about now, just today and nothing else, then you seem to be confronting only stasis; but if you write plays that cover passages of time, then you begin to find a sense of movement, of social change, if you like: and the facile hopelessness that comes from confronting the day and only the day, the room and only the room, begins to disappear and in its place the writer can offer a record of movement and change.97

By showing people the forces that shape their lives, in history or in the present, theatre can educate the public about those forces and give them the means, or at least the knowledge, to begin to try to manipulate

97David Hare, "A Lecture Given at King’s College," p. 66.
then to better their lives. "Theatre is a graphic way of presenting other people's experience—even of re-presenting our own experience and history to ourselves. This is a valid social function of theatre."98

Having established basic socialist socio-aesthetic positions (the value of art as a tool for education and social change, its ability to function, its ability to present social analyses clearly, and the ability of theatre to present dialectical processes, particularly in history), it is possible to see why epic structure attracts playwrights of the political left. Epic structure is especially good for presenting historical sequences, dialectic processes, and chains of argument or analysis. This is because its open, episodic structure, numerous scenes, and ability to isolate scenes or segments of the play clearly allow all of the significant incidents in a line of action to be represented graphically, and all less significant incidents to be excluded, even though they might contribute to a causal development of the action. In epic structure, it is even possible to develop an internal dialectic in the structure of a play to mirror that of the content by properly organizing and presenting the sequence of scenes. These abilities of epic structure can improve the theatre's ability to function didactically. Not only can individual social issues or conditions be clearly exposed and discussed, but general issues of socialist philosophy, and a basic understanding of social and historical processes, principles, and dynamics, can be developed in the populace. Acquiring such knowledge is vital to the development of a politicized,
revolutionary movement or society, for without it it will be impossible to create either the sense of a need for and momentum for revolution, or the ability to manipulate social processes and events in the creation of a new society. Admittedly, theatre is only one of the organs through which such didactic and agitational work can be done, but theoretically it can be an effective and important one. The ability to clearly isolate scenes in epic structure also makes it comparatively easy to isolate points in an analysis or argument to make both the individual ideas and the line of argument or analysis clear and easily understood. Finally, insofar as plays dealing with history often require a cinematic freedom in the rendering of time and space to adequately represent crucial issues and events, the ability of epic structure to operate cinematically places it in a better position to accommodate that requirement than Aristotelian structure. In addition, the isolation of scenes and lack of causality in epic makes it easy for the playwright to take a flexible approach to the introduction and use of characters. In Aristotelian drama, the dynamics of character relationships generally require that important characters appear with some regularity throughout the play so that they and their relationships can develop satisfactorily and comprehensibly. In epic, characters can be brought on in any scene in which they are required, as often and in whatever place in the play it is necessary, without worrying unduly about the kind of intertwined, causal relationships typical of dramatic theatre. Relationships can be developed in that way and treated contiguously from scene to scene, but there is no need for them to be for the play to proceed satisfactorily to a conclusion, or for a satisfactory development of characters and
character relationships to take place. Thus, it can be seen that there is a close correspondence between the didactic and agitational needs, and social goals, of the politically active leftist theatre and the ability of epic structure to meet those needs.

While epic structure is adaptable to many uses and kinds of plays, the playwrights of the contemporary British left have developed it to a high degree for use in three contexts and kinds of analysis, each of which will be the subject of a separate chapter. The first is the examination and analysis of the individual life or psyche outside the context of a close, significant relationship to its society, although the individual's development in the play may serve as a metaphor for a societal condition or development. In this type of play, the writer is especially interested in examining a condition or tracing a development in an individual personality or life, in the process delineating those forces from within and without which cause a person to be what they are (psychological, interpersonal, and social forces). The plays which will be examined in this chapter include David Rudkin's Ashes, an examination of the condition of barrenness in the story of a childless couple's attempt to have children, and the consequences of their inability to do so; David Edgar's Mary Barnes, a study of the disintegration and reconstruction of a schizophrenic personality; and Stephen Polianoff's City Sugar, the story of a disc jockey's manipulation and humiliation of his teenaged fans, and of one girl's coming-to-terms with his actions as she matures, a play which functions as a metaphor for the exploitation of working-class youth by the purveyors of pop culture, although the direct statement of such a theme is muted in the
play so that it becomes, in its impact, very much the story of the fates of two individuals.

The second type of play deals with the examination of social and historical conditions or development through a focus on a representative individual or small group of individuals. In this kind of drama, historical or contemporary social conditions or processes are traced by viewing individuals in the context of events, and generalizing from the effect of those events on the individuals to their effect on large groups, classes, or society as a whole. The interest is generally not as much on the personal problems of individuals, although they may enter significantly into the action of the play, as on either how social processes and institutions affect people, or how the process or condition itself functions and is maintained. In these plays, the individual life is treated as a relief sculpture, standing out from the background of social events, but directly connected to them, and frequently a microcosm of them. The plays to be examined in this chapter are Edward Bond's *The Bundle*, which examines the development of a social revolutionary and the forces which shape him, as well as inquiring into the nature and development of revolutionary consciousness and revolutionary morality; David Edgar and Susan Todd's *Teendreams*, which traces the development of two women, two men, and two teenage girls against the social developments, particularly feminism, of the late 1960s and the 1970s; and Steve Gooch's *Female Transport*, which views capitalist oppression and class structure, and the development of working-class solidarity, through events on a prison transport ship bound for Australia during the nineteenth century.
In the third type of play, social and historical conditions and development are viewed more directly. The playwright of this kind of play treats large-scale developments via large groups of people, and concentrates more on events than personalities, although strong, vivid characters emerge in some of the plays. The processes of change and development, or the social conditions, are seen directly through the events of the plays, rather than through their impact on a group of representative characters or a representative individual. The center of this kind of play is the condition or process itself, rather than individual personalities. In this chapter, the plays treated include Howard Brenton's *Epsom Downs*, which views British class structure and relationships through the events at Epsom Downs on Derby Day; Caryl Churchill's *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, which examines the origins of capitalism in the English Civil War, the causes of that revolution and of its ultimate failure, and the growth of religious fanaticism and cultism from economic despair and the suppression of the Levellers movement in the late 1640s; John McGrath's *Little Red Hen*, which examines the relationship of socialism to the Scots Nationalist movement and the reasons for the failure to develop a Scottish or British socialist state during the twentieth century; and David Hare's *Fanshen*, which traces the process by which the Chinese village of Long Bow was politicized and revolutionized in the days during and after World War II (based on William Hinton's chronicle of those events, also called *Fanshen*).

In selecting this body of plays for study, every attempt has been made to assemble a group representative both of the range of styles and
techniques employed under the umbrella of epic structure, and of political positions on the left, from liberal to socialist revolutionary. There are, however, several factors related to the availability of scripts which tend to pull the list away from being truly representative. As a general rule, it is only established playwrights who receive publication, much less wide dissemination and major productions. As a result, new, possibly significant work by comparatively unknown dramatists is not readily available. Even when scripts by lesser-known playwrights are published in Great Britain, they are seldom distributed to the United States, and frequently are almost impossible to obtain. Even the work of major leftist playwrights such as John McGrath, Howard Brenton, Caryl Churchill, or Stephen Poliakoff, to name a few, is rarely available commercially in America. Finally, the early work of the playwrights under consideration is sometimes unpublished and almost always unavailable. As a result, there are plays which, on the basis of description, seem clearly to employ epic structure, by individuals whose later work is of great importance, which cannot be viewed, and the lack of those potentially significant works serves further to draw the body of plays selected for study away from being fully representative. Nonetheless, most major leftist epic playwrights are represented by a play in the study list, spanning most stylistic and political positions, and a wide variety of contents and approaches, and so the list is sufficiently representative to give a clear picture of the state and practice of epic playwrighting in contemporary Great Britain.
CHAPTER TWO

EPIC STRUCTURE IN DRAMA:

AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW
In looking at the development of, and in searching for examples of plays with, epic structure prior to the twentieth century, it is necessary to bear in mind its basic traits. Almost inevitably, the epic play is a many-scened play. The scene is the primary structural unit, with act divisions being of secondary importance. The scenes are frequently discrete and self-contained, without causal connections to the scenes which precede and follow them. The play is thus episodic, and will often have a very free approach to time and space, with the Aristotelian unities absent on all counts. Although the scenes are normally ordered chronologically, they need not be so, and the selection and arrangement of scenes is usually dictated by the presentation or exploration of an historical or developmental sequence, a theme, an argument, a situation, or an analysis. Finally, the play will probably have an early point of attack.

The earliest extant works which manifest epic structure are Middle Eastern and Central Asian poems such as Gilgamesh, the Enuma Elish, and the Poem of Beal; the Homeric epics (Iliad, Odyssey); and the works of Hesiod (Theogony, Works and Days). While these early examples of epic structure are all found in epic poetry, their probable connection to early drama has been noted by a variety of critics and historians.

These are, of course, among the original examples of Western epic. South and East Asian epic originates in works such as the Indian Ramayana and Mahabharata, and in the development of Eastern and Western epic there is certainly an interplay across Central Asia, particularly during and after the Hellenistic period (fourth and third centuries B.C.), which cannot be discussed in this study. For a fuller consideration of early epic and its place in the development of drama, particularly in the Near East, see Theodore Gaster, Thespis (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1950).
Aristotle himself credits Homer with being the grandfather, as it were, of drama.

As, in the serious style, Homer is pre-eminent among poets, for he alone combined dramatic form with excellence of imitation, so he too first laid down the main lines of Comedy, by dramatising the ludicrous instead of writing personal satire. His *Meggita* bears the same relation to Comedy that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* do to Tragedy. But when Tragedy and Comedy came to light, the two classes of poets still followed their natural bent; the lampooners became writers of Comedy, and the Epic poets were succeeded by Tragedians, since the drama was a larger and higher form of art.²

As Aristotle implies, here and elsewhere, the connection between epic and the developing drama was considerable. As well as providing a linguistic and structural base on which drama could build and from which it could deviate and develop, the Homeric epics and other poetic material furnished a good deal of the subject matter for both early and later Greek drama. "At the time of Aeschylus the drama-novel (epic poem) was still the matrix from which drama sprang."³

By the time of the great Greek tragedians of the fifth century B.C. (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides), the distinction between drama and epic seems to have become firm. The realm of epic included long, narrative works such as those of Homer or Hesiod. Such works could be read or recited in public, but their length and proportion of non-active descriptive passages made direct theatrical performance virtually impossible. What would now be called "drama" included tragedy, comedy, and satyr plays, forms which were written in such a way as to make enactment

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of the work by actors in front of an audience not only possible and a complete aesthetic experience, but the best means of communicating the work to auditors, although the plays could also be read satisfactorily. Aristotle himself distinguishes comedy from tragedy, as he does tragedy from epic, as a separate form. He does so primarily on the basis of differences in the objects of imitation and the ends toward which each form's cathartic activity is directed. Tragedy deals with the actions of "good" men, and the arousal and purgation of fear and pity, or fearful and pitiable incidents, in the action of the play; comedy treats "meaner" men and actions, and the exploration of the ludicrous and ridiculous. However, while some differences in form exist between tragedy and comedy in the Aristotelian critical system, there are sufficient underlying structural and formal similarities to allow them to be grouped together as parts of a single mode, the dramatic, and to mark them as different in both form and structure from traditional epic. Despite certain formal differences, tragedy and comedy have a great deal more in common with one another than either has with epic. Thus, though Aristotle treats tragedy and comedy as separate forms, it is reasonable, even in the context of a discussion of Classical Greek drama, to draw them together with satyr plays under the umbrella of drama and the dramatic, and to treat them as distinct from ancient Greek epic forms.

This is not to say that significant elements of epic structure cannot be found in Greek plays, particularly in comedies, whose structures were not dealt with in any detail by Aristotle in Poetics. However, in terms of a general distinction between epic and dramatic in the Greek literature of the fifth century B.C., the basic difference between epic
and drama lies in the opposition of narrated and enacted works, with
epic lying toward the narrative end of the spectrum, and drama (comedy,
tragedy, satyr plays) toward the enacted.

Though epic and drama were considered separate forms by the fifth
century B.C., neither the process of separation nor the time at which
it was finally accomplished and recognized can be known. The first
significant commentary, Aristotle's *Poetics*, was composed at least 150
years after the fact, and probably closer to 200. Aristotle, and most
critics and historians since his time, saw the process of separation
and the creation of a new form, drama, as gradual, proceeding from epic
and dithyrambic composition and performance, through so-called "Lyric"
and "Old" tragedies, to fully dramatic drama during the time of Aeschy-
lus.4 Some support for this vision of the development of drama from
epic can be found by examining the earliest surviving plays of Aeschylus;

4Such a sequence is outlined by, among others, H.D.F. Kitto in
An alternate view, proposing two "aesthetic leaps" in the times of
Thespis and Aeschylus is propounded by Gerald F. Else in his *The Origin
and Early Form of Greek Tragedy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc.,
1965). It should be noted that the discussion presented focusses on
the potential literary origins of drama. Its theatrical manifestation
owes a great deal more to dithyrambic and improvisatory performance
practice than might be implied, and those factors also influenced its
literary form to some incalculable, but significant, degree. Nonethe-
less, insofar as the object of this chapter is to find and note exam-
pies of epic structural traits through history, and not to account com-
pletely for the origins and development of Greek drama, this issue is
not crucial. Epic structural traits in dithyrambs are epic structural
traits nonetheless. The periods and plays selected for mention from
Greece to the present will be selective, rather than comprehensive, and
have been chosen with two aims in mind: providing a rough outline of
the presence and development of epically structured Western drama, and
to touch on those periods especially significant to the origins and
development of Brecht and Piscator's Epic Theatre and which have been
influential among contemporary British epic dramatists of the left.
e.g., *The Suppliants*, which, despite its comparatively late date of
composition, given by Kittto as 464 B.C., is generally considered a
throw-back to an earlier tragic form, Lyric tragedy. *The Suppliants*
contains a high percentage of lyric, choral passages (narration) among
its lines, a weakly-handled second actor, and the use of a chorus as
the protagonist.⁵ Each of these traits serves to weaken conflict and
lessen direct dramatic action between a protagonist and an antagonist.
Similar results can be seen in other early Aeschylean tragedies, such
as *Prometheus Bound* (c. 465 B.C.) and *The Persians* (472 B.C.),⁶ in
which there is a good deal more narrated action than dramatic action;
i.e., action enacted in the course of the play by its characters,
rather than being described or narrated by them or others. In fact, in
*The Persians* none of the action central to the content of the play, the
defeat of Xerxes by the Athenians at Salamis and, later, Platea, is
actually seen. It is all narrated to the Chorus of Persian Elders,
whose opening, non-dramatic ode encompasses about fifteen percent of
the play itself, and Queen Mother Atossa by a messenger or Xerxes him-
self, or "foretold" by the ghost of Darius. This concentration of
action in narrative rather than enacted form is typical of epic poetry
and prose, suggesting roots in epic for these plays, albeit distant
ones. It also stands in contrast to the dominance of enacted action,
a focus on direct conflict between the protagonist and antagonist, and
decreasing participation by the chorus present in the fully developed

⁵Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound and Other Plays*, trans. Philip

⁶Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound and Other Plays*. 
dramatic mode of Greek literature. There is a distinct possibility that these early Aeschylean plays, called Old Tragedy by Kitto, are an intermediate stage between epic and the full development of dramatic form and structure in the later plays of Aeschylus (the Oresteia trilogy) and, especially, in the plays of Sophocles (e.g., Oedipus the King, Antigone, or Electra). Further evidence in support of this notion can be found in other elements in the plays which serve to de-emphasize enaction in favor of narration. The high percentage of lyric or narrative choral lines in The Persians is one example of such an element. Another is the emphasis on the suffering (in many cases, narrated emotion and narrated causes of suffering) of Io and Prometheus, rather than conflict, in Prometheus Bound, where virtually the only direct conflict occurs in the argument between Prometheus and Hermes in the final scene of the play. Consequently, it is reasonable to posit that, although the precise developmental sequence is unclear, the origins of Greek, hence Western, drama lie at least in part in epic poetry. Early dramatic writing carried a number of the formal and structural traits of that poetry, suggesting that the dramatic mode and epic structure might not be irreconcilable, as Aristotle seems to suggest, but, in fact, stand in a close relationship to one another.

By the time of Aristotle, the separation of epic and drama was complete, and had been for well over 100 years. Insofar as Aristotle derived his descriptions of tragedy and epic from the works extant in his day, it would be reasonable to expect that a more or less absolute

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separation of drama and epic would exist among surviving Greek works, all of the dramas of which antedate Aristotle, precluding the possibility of finding a surviving Greek tragedy that had an epic structure. If there were one, it would almost certainly have been known to Aristotle, who had access to a great many more plays than are extant today, and he would have either altered his descriptions of form and structure to account for it, or criticized it as an unacceptable hybrid. No serious epic plays exist from Greece, although examples of tragedies with episodic structures can be observed in certain late plays, particularly by Euripides (Helen, Iphigenia in Tauris), when tragedy was tending more and more to develop into melodrama. Indeed, this infusion of episodic construction into serious plays was noted by Aristotle, although he disapproved of it. "Of all plots and actions the episodic (eis) are the worst."\(^8\) Be that as it may, there are two areas of dramatic activity in the classical Greek theatre where epic structure, or something approaching it, can be seen. The first is Aristophanic Old Comedy, in which some plays exhibiting epic structure can be found. This is not an especially surprising development. Aristotle does not treat comic structure in Poetics, considering it as separate a form from tragedy as epic. Episodic construction, one of the principle characteristics of epic structure, is discussed in that book in connection with epic, in which it is considered an appropriate method of construction, and inferior tragedy. In light of Aristotle's silence on the matter, it is possible to speculate that episodic construction

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\(^8\)Aristotle, Poetics, p. 37.
might have been considered appropriate for comedy by Aristotle had he completed his projected volume on that form (or had it survived). In any case, episodic plots and epic structures exist among the surviving works of Old Comedy, although not all extant plays exhibit epic structure, and in those which do possess epic structures scenic divisions as units of structure, while present, are not as clear as in later drama. The second area in which something like episically structured dramas can be seen in classical Greece is in the practice of performing trilogies of related plays in the tragedy contests early in the period. The only surviving trilogy, Aeschylus's Oresteia, does not display a full-fledged epic structure, even in its expanded, three-play form. However, it has enough epic traits to suggest the possibility that such a trilogy could be organized around a single story and thematic line in such a way that a long, three-act play with epic structure could be created.

While the Oresteia is composed of, and was recognized by the Greeks as being composed of, three separate plays, taken together the plays can also be seen as three acts of a larger play, or three episodes from an epic tale; i.e., the story of the House of Atreus from the fall of Troy to the exoneration of Orestes of matricide at Athens. None of the individual plays is itself epic; but viewed as a whole, not an unreasonable thing to do considering that they were performed as a whole, the trilogy takes on something like an epic structure, as a chart of the scenes of the plays will show. Note that a great deal of time and space is covered in the trilogy, making it cinematic; that the scenes begin to function episodically as part of a large play, although within each individual play they are ordered causally; and, if looked
at from a particular angle, i.e., as the story of Orestes as an illustration of the nature and growth of a new concept of justice, there is an early point of attack and some justification for saying that a thematic scheme of organization played a part, albeit a limited one, in the selection of scenes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orestes</th>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agamemnon</td>
<td>1-39</td>
<td>Argos; palace roof</td>
<td>before daybreak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40-494</td>
<td>Argos; before palace</td>
<td>few minutes later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>495-1673</td>
<td>Argos; before palace</td>
<td>few days or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choephoroi</td>
<td>1-654</td>
<td>Argos; tomb of Agamemnon</td>
<td>seven years later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>655-972</td>
<td>Argos; before palace</td>
<td>moments later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>973-1076</td>
<td>Argos; &quot;inside&quot; palace</td>
<td>moments later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eumenides</td>
<td>1-234</td>
<td>Delphi; Temple of Apollo</td>
<td>months later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>235-1047</td>
<td>Athens; Temple of Athena</td>
<td>days or weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly, the Orestes possesses a number of the characteristics of epic structure. The events in the trilogy cover seven or more years, and three cities, in eight segments. The trilogy is therefore more or less cinematic, although the approach to time and space, even spread over three plays, is not as free as in, for example, the drama of the English Renaissance or contemporary British epic plays. It also has an early point of attack. The thematic core of the trilogy is the issue of guilt, retribution, and justice. All the major incidents of the trilogy contribute to Aeschylus’s exposition of a new concept of


10Scenes are not really meaningful units in the Orestes, as they become in later epically structured plays. The alternation of choral odes and episodes of action takes no regular account of shifts in time and space, as scenes generally do.
justice, i.e., a movement away from a reflexive eye-for-an-eye approach to crime and punishment, and toward a humane consideration of motives and moral imperatives in determining guilt, innocence, degree of culpability, and just punishment. This process centers on Orestes's revenge for his father's death, and his subsequent exoneration for the crime of matricide in a trial at Athens. The first significant incident in the story of Orestes is the act which causes him to take action: the murder of his father, Agamemnon, by his mother, Clytemnestra. This is the act which sets in motion the sequence of events treated in the last two plays of the trilogy, the works in which the thematic core is exposed most directly. Agamemnon deals almost exclusively with the question of Clytemnestra's murder/revenge as a prelude to the social and moral issues raised in the latter two dramas, although she goes to some length to justify her actions to the Argive citizens at the end of Agamemnon by referring to the sacrifice of her daughter Iphigenia at Aulus. The killing of Agamemnon is also the first significant act of retribution seen in the trilogy, for Clytemnestra and Aegisthus kill Agamemnon, at least in part, for revenge. The murder of his father initiates for Orestes a moral dilemma in the form of conflicting moral imperatives; he is required to take blood revenge for his father, but he must not kill his mother. In deciding that the former imperative takes precedence, Orestes kills Clytemnestra, bringing on his haunting by the Erinyes, and the subsequent trial at Athens, in which he is cleared of culpability for his acts. There is very little action of any significance in the story of Orestes, and Aeschylus's inquiry into justice, prior to the arrival and murder of Agamemnon toward the end of the
first play. Before those incidents, the drama centers on social and character exposition in preparation for the murder. Virtually the only action of major significance to the story of the Oresteia which is unseen and occurs prior to the death of Agamemnon is the death of Iphigenia, ten years before the first play begins, which Clytemnestra cites as one of her chief justifications for her revenge. Because there is so little important action which occurs prior to those events which begin the inquiry into the true nature of justice, as revealed through the adventures of Orestes, it is clear that the point of attack occurs very early in the overall story of the Oresteia, as is typical of epic structure, rather than close to its end, as is typical of plays with dramatic construction.

The selection and ordering of incidents in the Oresteia's individual plays is controlled primarily by narrative considerations; i.e., the clear, comprehensible, expeditious presentation of the action of each play. In that sense, each play shows a characteristic of dramatic structure. However, the selection of incidents for presentation on stage for the whole Orestes saga is controlled at least in part by a thematic element: the exposition of a new concept of justice. In centering his plays on the acts of revenge and the trial, Aeschylus chose those sequences from the overall story which most clearly illustrated his thematic material. Admittedly, those incidents are also generally among the most dramatic in the story; however, it is significant that Aeschylus omitted material such as a vivid demonstration of the madness caused in Orestes by his haunting by the Erinyes. Such material is highly dramatic, and can be very effective theatrically, as Euripides
demonstrated in his *Iphigenia in Tauris*, among others. It could also
function in an important way in constructing a chain of causality in
the *Oresteia*, demonstrating Orestes's motives in seeking relief from
Apollo at Delphi. However, in a play whose focus is the consideration
of a new concept of justice, vivid display of Orestes's madness is of
secondary importance, and could even distract from the clear presenta-
tion of the theme, and so is omitted. In that sense, the trilogy
manifests one of the traits of epic structure: the control of the
selection and arrangement of incidents by an element other than dra-
matic narrative and causality. Similarly, the action of each individu-
dual play is organized causally; i.e., dramatically in its fullest
tragical formulation. However, the relationship between the three plays
is episodic. In the seven year gap between the end of *Agamemnon* and
the beginning of *Choephoroi*, events of considerable significance occurred
which are omitted from the stage action. Missing, for example, are the
scenes in which Orestes learns of the murder, the formulation of the
desire for revenge, and the very important scene in which Orestes seeks
the advice of Apollo in dealing with his moral dilemma. The absence of
the first two situations disrupts the full revelation of the character
formation of Orestes and of the relationship between motive and action.
The absence of the third scene results in the omission of a crucial
link in the creation of the conditions under which Orestes formulated
and carried out his action against Clytemnestra, as well as in the
later action as an element of potential defense for him in *Eumenides*.
In the relationship between the acts of a full-length play, events of
significance can occur which are omitted from direct representation and
presented instead in narrative exposition while causality is maintained. It is theoretically possible that even a seven year span could exist between the acts of a dramatic play without disrupting causality. But such is not the case in the Oresteia, where so many events of significant magnitude occur in both Argus and Phocis in the interval between the first two plays that it is doubtful that causality is maintained. Such a gap functions harmonically with the thematic organization of the trilogy: no events of real importance to a consideration of the development of a new concept of justice occur in that period. However, the gap creates real problems in terms of maintaining causality in plot and character. Each play may be internally causal, but the relationship of the three plays as a trilogy is episodic, and stands as one of several traits in the Oresteia which belong to epic structure.

There are, however, several important traits in the Oresteia which are not epic. Viewing it as a single play, the unit of structure is not the scene, but the act (individual play), a trait typical of dramatic structure. No episode of any play is a discrete whole, a unit of structure, in the way a scene is in epic construction. The number of segments is not especially large (eight), and they are so closely related through the use of choral links that there appear to be only four. Each play is rendered causally, making for a high percentage of causal organization in the trilogy, despite the fact that an episodic arrangement prevails between the three plays. Finally, although theme played an important role in the selection and ordering of scenes in the Oresteia, the narrative line is also very important as an organizing factor, and is arguably the dominant factor. Although the Oresteia as a whole
contains several characteristics of epic structure. Dramatic structural traits are present in significant numbers in the trilogy, and dominate the construction of each individual play, making the Oresteia very much an Aristotelian work. In theory, it would be possible to construct a Greek tragic trilogy which had so many characteristics of epic structure that it would appropriately be considered epic. However, no such trilogy actually exists, and it is fruitless to speculate whether one ever existed. Some meaningful heritage from earlier epic, or presage of later epic structure in drama, can be detected in the Oresteia, but, on the whole, serious Greek drama exhibits the characteristics of dramatic structure with considerable regularity, a fact which is consistent with what should be expected from a reading of Aristotle's analysis of tragedy and epic. A few late plays, particularly by Euripides, show the beginnings of a shift from causal to episodic construction lamented by Aristotle in Poetics, but even in those cases, the prevalent structural form continues to be dramatic.

The second group of plays surviving from Classical Greece which manifest something like epic structure, the Old Comedies written by Aristophanes, come closer to epic structure than do the tragedies, albeit irregularly. Some of the plays in this group, such as The Clouds, utilize more or less a dramatic structure. Others, such as The Frogs, have epic structures. Since Aristotle did not discuss comedy in any measure in Poetics, it is not surprising to find plays deviating from the norms of dramatic structure as he defined them among the body of surviving comic works. The very little Aristotle said about comedy suggests that it was not bound by as tight a set of principles as he
derived for tragedy. That being so, it is not unlikely that some comic works with epic structures should exist. Epic structure emerges in several Aristophanic comedies, including *Lysistrata*, *The Birds*, *The Wasps*, and *The Frogs*.

Before examining the structure of *The Frogs*, it should be noted that the typical structure of Old Comedy in many ways encouraged and accounts for the presence of epic traits in the structure of the plays.

The structure of an Old Comedy normally followed this pattern:

- **Prologue**: including the revelation of the "happy idea", or solution to the problem posed in the play (e.g., in *The Frogs*, lacking a good tragic poet to move the people to demand peace, Dionysus conceives the idea of going to Hades to retrieve the recently deceased Euripides)
- **Parados**: entrance of the chorus
- **Agon**: debate on the merits of the happy idea, ending in its adoption
- **Parabasis**: direct audience address by the chorus leader and, generally, the chorus, and perhaps characters as well; includes socio-political comment and a plea for the success of the play; usually only very loosely related to the action of the play, if at all
- **Episodes**: an alternating series of episodes and choral odes in which the happy idea is put into practice and tested (normally successfully)
- **Exodos**: exit of actors and chorus

The presence of the parabasis is almost inevitably a direct break in any scheme of causality between incidents which might have been constructed. However, since it stands outside the action of the play, it is not unreasonable to consider it insufficient to destroy causality among those incidents by itself, even though it disrupts the direct flow of action. Nonetheless, the testing of the happy idea in a series of episodes, as often occurs, also lays open the possibility of

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episodic structuring, which, in combination with other traits (notably a free approach to the handling of time and space, and the fact that the whole structure of an Old Comedy is basically the testing of an idea, and hence controlled to some extent by a theme or analysis), invites, although it does not demand, the use of epic structure.

The characteristics of epic structure present in *The Frogs* include an early point of attack, episodic construction, cinematic form, the control of the selection and arrangement of incidents by thematic analysis and exposition, and a fairly clear division of scenic units in the play.\(^1\)\(^2\) The structure of *The Frogs* includes ten basic segments, with time in the play being more or less continuous except for the divisions between agon and parabasis, and parabasis and the episodes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Frogs</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 1</td>
<td>7-17</td>
<td>at the door of Herakles, on earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 2</td>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>journey to the lake of Hades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3</td>
<td>19-25</td>
<td>shore of the lake, and crossing it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4</td>
<td>25-31</td>
<td>opposite shore, in Hades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 5</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>Parabasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 6</td>
<td>35-48</td>
<td>Gates of Pluto's Palace—a series of episodes to determine who is Dionysus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 7</td>
<td>48-50</td>
<td>Choral ode, unrelated to the action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 8</td>
<td>50-53</td>
<td>Gates of Palace—exposition by Alakos and Xanthius on upcoming contest between Aeschylus and Euripides, and narration of action which occurred inside the palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 9</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Choral ode, commenting comically on action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 10</td>
<td>55-91</td>
<td>Contest—a series of episodes and choral odes until the winner is determined(^1)(^3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\)\(^2\)The segments of the play are fairly discrete, as might be expected in a play constructed of clearly defined, traditional units. However, the play does not possess scenes in a more traditional sense.

The controlling idea of *The Frogs*, the theme which both influenced the selection and arrangement of incidents and was stated directly in the dialogue and choral odes, is tied to Aristophanes's campaign against the Athenian politician Kleophon and his refusal of Spartan terms for peace with Athens in 405 B.C. Both direct pleas in the language of the play and the happy idea of finding a poet to champion peace and restore public wisdom speak of the impact of this theme on the action of the play. The very basis of the action, the working-out of the happy idea, is controlled by the theme. The selection of incidents for the play, however, is a product of several factors: theme, narrative, the comic structure of the play, and the traditional structure of Old Comedy among them. Consequently, though the epic trait of theme as a controlling element in structure is present in *The Frogs*, it is diluted by several other factors. Other epic characteristics appear in a purer form. The point of attack is very early. Although Dionysus has had the happy idea for rescuing Athens before the beginning of the play, his first exposure of that idea to someone else (his servant, Xanthius) is seen, as is his first step in putting the idea into action (visiting Herakles to find out the way to Hades). The action displays a cinematic disregard for unity of place by representing in dialogue, and presumably by some sort of movement as well, the entire journey from the door of Herakles, to the lake of Hades, across the lake, to the gates of the palace of Pluto in Hades. Episodic construction can be seen quite clearly in three places in the play. The first is in the parabasis.

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The second is the segment following the parabasis, Section 6, which is a comic interlude in which Dionysus, disguised as Herakles, is alternately threatened and welcomed by different occupants of Hades, leading to a series of costume changes with Xanthius and the beating of both by the "janitor" of Hades, Alakos, to discover who is the real god. This scene in no way furthers the central action of the play, retrieving a tragic poet. It is simply a comic interlude, at the end of which the identity of the true god is still undiscovered, and they retire to the palace of Pluto, who will know which is god and which servant. The third major break in causality is the choral ode, Section 7, which follows; an ode which is unrelated to the action, but not the theme, of the play. These three segments, taken together, break causality in the plot, and render it episodic, although with considerably less clarity of division than occurs in later plays, where clearly defined scenes function as units of structure. Finally, though clear scenes are not created in the script, the segments of action are delineated cleanly. This is done in two ways. First, aside from their initial appearance as a chorus of frogs, each appearance of the chorus, in both the parabasis and the choral odes, marks off a segment of action in the play. This occurs both in the segments outlined in the structural chart of the play, and within the final segment, the contest, where three choral odes break up phases in the competition. Second, divisions between segments are occasionally marked by character comments, such as the announcement by Dionysus at the end of the journey to the lake of Hades that they have arrived, and must prepare to embark on the next part of their voyage.15

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15Aristophanes, The Frogs, p. 19
The *Frogs* exhibits many of the characteristics of epic structure, although some occur in a form different from that of the English Renaissance or the twentieth century, the periods in which epic structure was most prominent in significant plays in great numbers. It would be fair to say that *The Frogs*, and certain other Aristophanic Old Comedies, are therefore the earliest extant dramatic works to manifest epic structure since drama emerged from epic and other sources in the sixth century B.C.

The next period in which large numbers of significant epic plays were written and are extant is the English Renaissance, the paucity of surviving drama from Rome and the Medieval period making discussion of those periods difficult, if not impossible. There is, however, an epic phenomenon from the Medieval period which is worthy of brief mention, if only for its probable impact on drama in the English Renaissance. This is the practice of performing cycles of short plays in association with the Festival of Corpus Christi in England from the fourteenth century into the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603), when the custom of presenting cycles was suppressed, probably because of their association with the Roman Catholic church. The individual plays of these cycles were rarely, if ever, epic. Indeed, the only extant scripts from Medieval England which might be considered more or less epic are some of the Morality plays, which seem to date from late in the period. However, if the

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*Stanley J. Kahrl, Traditions of Medieval English Drama* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975), p. 23. Kahrl gives the date of c. 1425 for the earliest of the Morality plays, probably 50-100 years after the onset of cycle dramas. The *Castle of Perseverance*, which traces the life of Man from birth to death and salvation, is a notable example of a Morality play with epic structure.
Medieval cycles are viewed, not as a random collection of individual plays, but as a great epic cycle embodying the Medieval notions of historical cycles and the repeatability of history, and the church's teaching on the prophetic nature of the Old Testament, the cycle can be seen as one great play composed of many episodes tracing the history of the world in Biblical terms.

Certainly the conventions developed by the writers of interludes as well as the historical orientation of such writers as Hall and Holinshed had an influence on both the form and content of the genre of the Elizabethan history play. An equally formative influence, however, the cyclic view of history, derived in the first instance from conceptions of time developed in the early Christian period and later embodied in the English Medieval mystery cycles. Campbell has claimed that "It is on the assumption that history repeats itself that political mirrors of history can be utilised to explain the present." But this assumption is not one of the historical concepts peculiar to the Renaissance. Nowhere can medieval notions of the cycles of history be seen so well as in the civic plays which portray the history of the world from its creation until its end.\(^\text{17}\)

The selection of the incidents (plays), and the structure of the cycles, was determined by two controlling principles: the historical (Biblical) sequence, and an analytic and thematic concern for the presence of divine intervention in human history. These two factors combine to give the episodic cycles, which sometimes consist of over thirty plays, their structural unity.

As we have seen, the purpose behind the institution of the feast of Corpus Christi in the first instance was "to celebrate (his italics) the Corpus Christi sacrament, to explain its necessity and power, and to show how that power will be made manifest at the end of the world." The manifestations of that power which give the cycles their underlying structure are the Three Advents of God.

\(^{17}\)Stanley J. Kahrl, *Traditions of Medieval English Drama*, p. 124.
into human history. . . . These divine interventions into human history provide the conventional opening of the cycles, the plays presenting the life of Christ from the nativity to the Resurrection and Ascension and the traditional ending in the Last Judgment. Here is the working of Divine Providence in its clearest form.

There is a structural and thematic unity which underlies the cycles, and makes it reasonable to view them as a whole. That being the case, the Medieval cycles become, in essence, huge epically structured plays. They are episodic, with clearly discrete structural units (plays in the cycles, but they function as scenes do in shorter historical plays). They have early points of attack (Creation), a cinematic approach to time and space, and the control of the selection and ordering of scenes by a thematic and analytical, as well as historical, sequence. It is not possible to determine with any accuracy the extent to which unification of the cycles' structures according to the principles delineated above was conscious during the Medieval period. However, contemporary analysis of the cycles has revealed a clear correlation between prevailing philosophical notions (divine intervention and the repeatability of history) and dramatic practice, and that fact makes it possible to posit that the Corpus Christi cycles of Medieval England were conceived and perceived on some level as enormous epic plays; plays on a scale greater than anything before or since.

Politically, the English Renaissance began with the death of the last Plantagenet monarch, Richard III, and the ascension to the throne of the first Tudor king, Henry VII, in 1485. Henry VII has been called

by some scholars "the first modern king." Under his rule, however, English culture remained largely Medieval. The real beginnings of Renaissance philosophical and artistic activity in England occurred during the reign of Henry VIII (ruled 1509-47), reaching a peak late in the reign of Elizabeth I. The twenty years preceding the death of Elizabeth in 1603 saw English music, literature, and theatre reach heights rarely achieved in preceding or subsequent ages. Poets such as Spenser and Sidney raised literature to a high level, as did dramatists such as Kyd, Lyly, Marlowe, Shakespeare, and the young Ben Jonson. Led by composers such as Byrd, Dowland, and Gibbons, English music reached perhaps its greatest peak ever. The period from 1580 to 1625 (the death of James I) was probably the greatest in the history of English theatre and drama, with Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford, Massinger, Middleton, and Webster, among others, becoming active about the time of or after Elizabeth's death. It is also the era in which the use of epic structure in drama reached its first great peak, both in terms of frequency of use, and in the quality of the plays in which it was used. From the earliest plays of Christopher Marlowe in the 1580s, to the works of John Ford and James Shirley in the years preceding the closing of the theatres in 1642, epic structure was the dominant structural form in English drama, and was used continually and creatively by the playwrights of the Elizabethan and pre-Commonwealth Stuart periods. It was used in comedies, tragedies, and history/chronicle plays. It appeared in tremendously expansive plays, such as Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Parts I

and II, and in plays which are comparatively modest in their use of time
and space, such as Middleton's *Women Beware Women*, or some of the
Jacobean City Comedies (*Massinger's A New Way to Pay Old Debts*). Virtu­
ally the only plays of any significance and lasting value written in
the period to utilize dramatic structure are some of the plays of Ben
Jonson, the self-proclaimed champion of neo-classical form (*Volpone,*
*Bartholomew Fair*), and even Jonson's use was tempered by certain epic
tendencies, such as the use of a variety of settings (all, however,
within a single city) and a rather large number of individual scenes.
In fact, Jonson's use of non-epic structure was extremely irregular,
for he also produced epic dramas such as *The Poetaster* or *Every Man Out
of his Humour*, albeit on a small scale. Though hundreds of epic plays
are extant from the English Renaissance, one of the plays which best
 crystallizes the use and functioning of epic structure is Shakespeare's
*Anthony and Cleopatra*. This play shows epic structure in the service
of both a private plot/line of development, the romance of Anthony and
Cleopatra, and in a public one, the conflict between Anthony/Egypt and
Octavius/Rome. It also demonstrates the use of epic structure in a
play whose action is both tragic and conditioned by history, in the
manner of a chronicle play. In fact, *Anthony and Cleopatra* is one of
the prime examples in all of drama of the way in which a historical
sequence can shape the selection and ordering of incidents in an epic
play. Finally, it has a broad, cinematic scope, perhaps the most out­
standing epic trait of a great deal of English Renaissance drama. It
is also, of course, by William Shakespeare, the greatest playwright of
his age, and a major influence on twentieth century epic writers from
Brecht to the present (as the entire period has had considerable impact). "In order to treat of great actions we need to study the structure of the classics, particularly that of Shakespeare." 20

There is a general point concerning the use of epic structure in the English Renaissance, in fact in all pre-modern drama, which needs to be noted before commencing analysis of *Anthony and Cleopatra*. Among twentieth century epic playwrights, many of whom are leftist or socialist, epic structure has been used for purposes of direct analysis, dialectic and otherwise. They have also tended to isolate scenes as self-contained units, which advance the story, but primarily embody step by step the points in the analysis undertaken or argument pursued by the playwright. Such structural traits are largely absent in pre-modern drama. The pre-modern epic play has many scenes, and they are the primary units of structure in the plays in which they appear. However, the narrative line of the play tends to be a much more important factor in the selection and ordering of scenes, and consequently the plays tend to be bound together more tightly, the scenes to be less self-contained. Epic structure is frequently used prior to the twentieth century to examine chains of development, both socio-historical and personal, but those chains are normally linked directly into the narrative line, rather than being controlled tightly by a form of analysis. Certainly, the themes of plays continue to be a factor in the selection and arrangement of incidents. But rather than each scene containing or

embodying an individual point in the argument, they usually function cumulatively, with the thematic point being made more broadly through the sequence of scenes and events in the play. Consequently, the importance of narrative as an organizing principle in the structure of individual epic plays can be expected to be greater in any given pre-modern play than in any given drama written by Brecht, or a contemporary British epic author.

Anthony and Cleopatra (1607) was written early in the Jacobean period, at the height of Shakespeare's maturity. It is based on the story of Anthony and Cleopatra from Plutarch's Lives, and is one of the most cinematic and epic of all the works of the English Renaissance. The action of the play covers about ten years (c. 40-30 B.C.) and three continents (Europe, Asia minor, and Africa) in forty-two scenes. It is worth noting that, although Anthony and Cleopatra, like all Shakespeare's plays, is formally divided into five acts, such a division is the work of later editors, and does not reflect normal practice from Shakespeare's time, in which plays were written and printed as a series of scenes. The act divisions in Anthony and Cleopatra, which by now have become traditional, are organized on the basis of units of action, not time or place, nor an approximately equal division of scenes per act. The first act, in five scenes, deals with Anthony and Cleopatra in Egypt and Anthony's departure for Rome to meet the crisis caused by the piracy of Sextus Pompeius from his base in Sicily. Act Two, in seven scenes, is involved with the campaign against and the agreement with Pompey. The thirteen scenes of the third act trace the story from the departure of Anthony from Octavius and Octavia through the defeat
at Actium and the return of Anthony and Cleopatra to Egypt. The fourth
act deals with the Egyptian campaign and the death of Anthony in fifteen
scenes. The final two scenes of the play, which constitute the fifth
act, treat the machinations of Octavius to take Cleopatra to Rome, and
her suicide in the monument. For the sake of convenience, the tradi-
tional act and scene divisions will be employed in examining the struc-
ture of the play. However, it is important to recall that these divi-
sions are the work of later editors, and tend to disguise the degree to
which the scene is the basic structural unit in the play; an important
characteristic of epic structure.

It is not possible to trace out a precise division of time elapsed
between the individual scenes of Anthony and Cleopatra. By referring to
the historical record, however, a rough outline of the blocks of time
involved in the play can be built-up. The agreement between the trium-
virate and Sextus Pompeius to end his piracy, represented in Act II,
scene 6, was concluded in 40 B.C. The action preceding that scene could
easily have occurred within a year; consequently, the beginning of the
play is in 41 or 40 B.C. Act III, scene 1, set in the Middle East near
Parthia, takes place in 39 or 38 B.C., during the campaign conducted by
Venditius against the Parthians. In this scene, Venditius announces
his intention of meeting Anthony in Athens. Act III, scene 2, shows
the departure of Anthony and his new wife Octavia for Athens, and so
must occur at about the same time; as does Act III, scene 3, in which
Cleopatra receives a report of Octavia in Egypt. Act III, scenes 4 and
5, take place at about the time of Anthony's Parthian campaign and
slightly after the death of Sextus Pompeius, and so must happen in 36
or 35 B.C., two or three years after the preceding action. Act III, scene 6, cannot be accurately dated from reference to historical events. However, insofar as Octavius and his advisors are discussing movement against Anthony, it probably takes place between 33 and 31 B.C. The remainder of the play can be dated with considerably greater precision. Act III, scenes 7-10, happen at Actium, in 31 B.C. The rest of Act III, and all of Acts IV and V, take place in Egypt. A small portion of those scenes might occur in 31 B.C., shortly after the arrival of Anthony and Cleopatra back in Egypt after the defeat at Actium. The majority, however, are in 30 B.C., the year of Anthony's final defeat, and his and Cleopatra's deaths. Anthony and Cleopatra covers roughly a decade of time in five blocks. An indication of these blocks will be made in the chart of the structure of the play. Each scene in the play will also be marked with either an "R", which indicates that the scene is primarily connected with the personal thread of the story, the romance of Anthony and Cleopatra; or with a "P", which indicates that the scene is connected to the political, or socio-historical struggle between Anthony and Octavius. Scenes in which the two threads are drawn closely together, as they are when the personal tragedy and the historical story merge, are marked with a "PR".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anthony and Cleopatra</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Nature of scene</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I, 1 (41-40 B.C.)</td>
<td>Egypt; palace of Cleopatra</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I, 2</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I, 3</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I, 4</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I, 5</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Nature of Scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II, 1</td>
<td>(40 B.C.)</td>
<td>Southern Italy: Pompey's base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II, 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II, 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>another part of Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II, 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>another part of Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II, 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Egypt: palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II, 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>South Italy: land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II, 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pompey's ship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III, 1</td>
<td>(39-38 B.C.)</td>
<td>Parthia, Asia Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III, 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III, 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III, 4</td>
<td>(36-35 B.C.)</td>
<td>Athens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III, 5</td>
<td>(Later)</td>
<td>Athens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III, 6</td>
<td>(33-31 B.C.?)</td>
<td>Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III, 7</td>
<td>(31 B.C.)</td>
<td>Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III, 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Actium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III, 9</td>
<td></td>
<td>another part of Actium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III, 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>same as III, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III, 11</td>
<td>(31-30 B.C.)</td>
<td>Egypt: palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III, 12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Egypt: Caesar's camp</td>
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<tr>
<td>III, 13</td>
<td></td>
<td>Egypt: palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV, 1</td>
<td>(30 B.C.)</td>
<td>Caesar's camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV, 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV, 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Soldier's camp</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV, 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV, 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Soldier's camp</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV, 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Caesar's camp</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV, 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Battlefield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV, 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gates of Alexandria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV, 9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sentry post (Caesar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV, 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Battle: Anthony's post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV, 11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Battle: Caesar's post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV, 12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Battle, with Anthony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV, 13</td>
<td></td>
<td>Palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV, 14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Palace (later)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV, 15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cleopatra's monument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V, 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Caesar's camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V, 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cleopatra's monument</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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A glance at the chart makes readily apparent the presence of most of the traits of epic structure present in *Anthony and Cleopatra*. It clearly has cinematic scope, covering nearly eleven years and six major geographical venues, with a number of locations represented within the larger geographical spheres. It also skips freely throughout the play's geography, and leaps through years of time. The drama has an early point of attack. The earliest significant meeting of Anthony and Octavius took place in 44 B.C., and so antedates the beginning of the action by only three or four years. The liaison of Anthony and Cleopatra began even closer to the beginning of the stage action, in 42 B.C.

There is thus very little action significant to the conflict between Anthony and Octavius, or the romance of Anthony and Cleopatra, that takes place prior to the beginning of the play. The primacy of the scene as the basic unit of structure can also be observed. Each scene is a block of action important to the development of the lines of action in the play. The acts, on the other hand, take virtually no account of shifts in time or space in their division, and take only a rough account of blocks of action. The relationship between the scenes is episodic, further reinforcing the epic structure of the work. It is episodic for two reasons. First, there is significant action omitted from stage representation (e.g., the marriage of Anthony and Cleopatra in 36 B.C.), and a far from comprehensive examination of any block of action, and the motives and maneuvering which brought it about. Second, there is a weaving together of two stories, two lines of action, in the play: the romantic tragedy of Anthony and Cleopatra, and the rivalry between their Egypt and Octavian's Rome for control of the empire.
These two lines of action, as the chart reveals, do not begin to merge fully until the scenes at Actium in Act III, and are not fully drawn together until the deaths of Anthony and Cleopatra in Act IV, scene 15, and Act V, scene 2, respectively. While the majority of the scenes and action in the play is devoted to the rivalry between Anthony and Octavius, the early part of the play, before the romance of Anthony and Cleopatra becomes inextricably bound up in the outcome of the political struggle between Egypt and Rome, includes several scenes devoted almost entirely to their relationship. The intercutting of these scenes with the socio-historical conflict serves to break any potential scheme of causality that could exist in either. In fact, no chain of causal development exists, or seems to have been intended by Shakespeare. The controlling factor in the selection of scenes in the play is a historical sequence: the story of the conflict between Octavius and Anthony. Scenes demonstrating significant moments in that conflict are included as it is worked out in the play. Into that historical development are cut scenes showing the romantic and domestic life of Anthony and Cleopatra. There is no real development of their relationship in these scenes. The play begins with their jealous and obsessive love as an established fact. The scenes between them, or with Cleopatra alone in Egypt, do not serve to deepen or develop the relationship. In fact, the only significant developments in their relationship to occur after 40 B.C., their marriage and children, are omitted from the play. Rather, these scenes

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22This fact may be something of a surprise in light of the general impression that the love of Anthony and Cleopatra dominates the play, but this is largely a function of the force of their personalities and love, and of the two famous death scenes.
are used to establish the nature of the relationship and the characters' personalities clearly, so that their actions at the end of the play can be better understood and accounted for. The use of a historical sequence as the controlling agent for a play's structure almost guarantees episodic construction. This is because, in striving to attain the proper balance between full, comprehensible coverage of the events, and sufficient condensation of the sequence to make it comprehensible and interesting in the theatre, a playwright normally can include only those incidents which were most significant in the sequence and its outcome, omitting many less significant events which would be necessary if dramatic causality were to be maintained. This, combined with the fact that there is no movement toward causal development in the romantic story line to counter that fact or introduce a strong element of causality into the drama, give the play its episodic nature. In fact, the relationship between the two strains before they are tied together further alienates the scenes from one another, and increases the sense of episodic development in the play. Consequently, it can be seen that Anthony and Cleopatra contains all of the significant points of epic structure in strong measure, making it one of the finest exemplars of epic structure in all English Renaissance drama.

The English Renaissance is a very important period for any consideration of epic structure in history or in the contemporary period. Not only was it the first great period of epically structured plays, but

23The relationship of Anthony and Cleopatra after his marriage to Octavia functions in the political conflict to provide an excuse for his actions, but there is far more exposure of the relationship of Anthony and Cleopatra than would be necessary to fulfill that function were it the only reason for exposing their romance in the play.
the plays themselves have been highly influential in the twentieth century in general, and on contemporary British epic playwrights in particular. Dramatists such as Brecht, John Arden, Howard Brenton, David Edgar, and Steve Gooch have all articulated their debt to Shakespeare and the other Elizabethan and Jacobean writers. This has been especially apparent in a number of large-scale historical studies, such as Howard Brenton and David Hare's *Brassneck*, John Arden's *The Hero Rises Up*, David Edgar's *Destiny*, and Caryl Churchill's *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*. In fact, Brenton defined his large-scale works in terms of their being "epic" and "Jacobean".

These plays are big, in cast, staging, theme, and publically declared ambition (they do want to change the world, influence opinion, enter fights over political issues); they are "Jacobean" in a mix of the tragic and comic taking pleasure in the surprises and shocks of entertainment the huge stage can arm the playwright with as a showman; they are epic in that they are many scened, full of stories, ironic and argumentative, and deliberately written as "history plays for now."24

Brenton's statement is relevant for both contemporary and English Renaissance epic plays, a demonstration of the affinity between the two periods, and of the impact of the earlier drama on that written today. Though created over 300 years ago, it would be difficult to overestimate the importance of the body of surviving Elizabethan and Jacobean dramas on the epic playwrights of the twentieth century.

Following the restoration of the monarchy in England in 1660, the theatre and form of drama became substantially different. Under the impact of Neo-classicism, with its insistence on the Aristotelian

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unities, English drama became the province of plays with structures which were basically dramatic, although a few epic characteristics occasionally made their way into plays, particularly in comedy, where multiple scenes and shifts of locale were more prevalent. This was also true in France, where the plays of Corneille, Racine, and Molière demonstrated the use of Aristotelian dramatic structure in a series of fine works. Trends in drama toward the use of dramatic structure, particularly in the so-called legitimate forms (comedy and tragedy) continued throughout the eighteenth century, although a number of "minor" forms, such as ballad opera (John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*), manifested epic structures from time to time. In the closing years of the eighteenth century, two new types of drama began to be written; types which broke away from the Neo-classical conventions of the preceding century and a half and began to employ epic structures once again. These new forms were melodrama, in which epic structure was used in free alternation with dramatic structure; and romantic drama, which reached its highest stage of artistic development in Germany in the plays of Schiller, Lenz, Goethe, and Buchner. While the romantic outlook found its strongest outlet among the people in the melodramas which dominated the popular stages of the nineteenth century, its literary and artistic aspirations were represented in the works of the Germans mentioned above, the works of Victor Hugo in France, and in the feeble dramatic efforts of English poets such as Byron and Shelley. The romantic melodrama is ultimately a more important barometer of the theatre of the nineteenth century per se. However, discussion of melodrama will be omitted at this point because it had a comparatively small influence on the development of
epic drama in the twentieth century. A far greater impact on modern
epic authors can be traced to the work of the German romantics, whose
influence on Brecht in structural terms is of no little significance.
Among the most important of these playwrights are Johann Wolfgang von
Goethe (Faust, parts I and II), Friedrich von Schiller (Mary Stuart;
Don Carlos), Friedrich Hebbel (Maria Magdeleina), the early romantic
work of the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen (Peer Gynt), and especially J.M.R,
Lenz (The Tutor; The Soldiers), and Georg Buchner, whose Danton's
Death and Woyzeck had both a direct influence on Brecht, and an indi-
rect one through the German Expressionists. While no play crystal-
lizes both the romantic and epic impulses in nineteenth century drama
as does Goethe's Faust, it is arguably unfair to select it for analysis
since the second part was almost certainly written as a closet drama,
freeing it from the practical considerations imposed on a play by the
limitations of the stage, and the first part may have been so intended
as well, even though it was staged frequently in Germany in the years
after its completion. As an alternative, Georg Buchner's Woyzeck will
be examined, both because it demonstrates epic structure in a romantic,
nineteenth century play (albeit an experimental one for its time), and
because it was so influential in the development of epic structure in
the early twentieth century.

Woyzeck is arranged in twenty-six scenes, without act divisions.
The action of the play all takes place in or about Leipzig, in a period
of several weeks or months in 1824. There are two converging lines of
action in the plot, both of which center on a developing state in the
character Woyzeck, and which come together in the twenty-second scene,
in which Woyzeck kills his beloved Marie because he believes she has been unfaithful to him. The first of these lines of development deals with the experiments performed on Woyzeck by the doctor, including feeding him a starvation diet of peas, which seems to contribute to his developing madness. These scenes will be designated by the letter "A". The second sequence of scenes deals with the development of his obsessive jealousy for and suspicion of Marie, and will be designated by the letter "B". Those scenes in which the two strains of action unite, as they begin to do in Scene 13, when he conceives the notion of stabbing her to death, will be designated with an "AB".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woyzeck</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Line of Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>At the Captain's</td>
<td>Exposition—establishes Woyzeck's need for money to support his and Marie's child, the reason he submits to the experiments. AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>In an open field outside town</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 3</td>
<td>The street outside Marie's rooms</td>
<td>B (A at the end)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 4</td>
<td>At the fair</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 5</td>
<td>Inside a brightly lit booth at the fair</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 6</td>
<td>Marie's room</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 7</td>
<td>At the doctor's</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 8</td>
<td>Marie's room</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 9</td>
<td>The street</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 10</td>
<td>Marie's room</td>
<td>B (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 11</td>
<td>The guard house</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 12</td>
<td>An inn</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 13</td>
<td>An open field</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 14</td>
<td>A room in the barracks</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 15</td>
<td>The courtyard at the doctor's</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 16</td>
<td>The barrack's yard</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 17</td>
<td>The inn</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 18</td>
<td>A pawnshop</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 19</td>
<td>Marie's room</td>
<td>(B) Marie alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 20</td>
<td>Barracks</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 21</td>
<td>The street before Marie's rooms</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 22</td>
<td>A woodland path by a pond</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scene 23  The inn  A B
Scene 24  At the pond  A B
Scene 25  The street  Neither—their child is told of Marie's death
Scene 26  At the pond  Neither—invesigation begins

Several traits of epic structure are apparent in examining a chart of the structure of *Woyzeck*. The basic unit of structure is obviously the scene: Buchner did not even bother to make act divisions. All of the scenes except three (19, in which Marie laments her unfaithfulness to Woyzeck; and 25-26, which occur after their deaths) are tied into two converging lines of action, with selection and arrangement controlled by three factors. First, the telling of the story of Marie and Woyzeck, the narrative line, is an important element. Second, each scene picks out a significant episode in the development of either Woyzeck's madness (a condition which appears to result from the experiments the doctor is performing on him), or of his suspicion and jealousy over the unfaithfulness of Marie with the Drum-major. Finally, many of the scenes demonstrate and are controlled by one of the play's chief thematic concerns: the exploitation of the poor by the better-off. Both Marie and Woyzeck are victims of their economic condition and the exploitation of those with money in the play. In order to earn money to keep Marie, Woyzeck subjects himself to the experiments of the doctor, which ultimately drive him mad, as can be seen in scenes 2, 3, 7, 9, 11,

13-16, 18, and 20-24. Marie is exploited sexually by the Drum-major when she turns from Woyzeck, whose inability to keep her financially secure and erratic behavior turn her from him. Their mutual tragedy is the ultimate result of their economic condition and the fact that they have had an illegitimate child, making them social outcasts, because they cannot afford to be married. Scene 8, in which the Drum-major more or less forces himself on Marie, and Scenes 16 and 17, in which his gloating is reported to, and then seen by, Woyzeck after the Drum-major has successfully seduced Marie are especially clear in their exposition of the merciless exploitation of the socially and economically disadvantaged; particularly Scene 17, in which the Drum-major beats Woyzeck during his celebration of the seduction. Thus, in addition to narrative, a theme and the development of a series of episodes demonstrating a process, two of the elements which frequently control the selection of scenes in an epic play, operate in the structure of Woyzeck.26 This fact is largely responsible for the episodic construction of the play, whose twenty-six short scenes (the longest consists of two pages of a twenty-nine page play) serve a narrative development, but often do not bear a causal relationship to one another; in part because of the intertwining of two lines of action, as in Anthony and Cleopatra, and in part because of the inclusion of scenes whose primary relevance to the play is thematic, not narrative. An example of the latter is Scene 17, which serves no function but to demonstrate

26 The play is loosely based on a historical incident, but detailing a historical development is not really a part of the play's structure.
graphically the abuse of Woyzeck by his superiors. The point of attack in the play is early. Woyzeck's madness has just begun to develop, and he and Marie are still on good terms. Therefore, both of the major lines of action are seen from at or near their beginning. The play is also cinematic in form, leaping through a variety of settings in the space of, probably, several weeks, although it is compressed compared to a play such as Anthony and Cleopatra or Goethe's Faust. Clearly, Buchner's Woyzeck includes all of the traits of epic structure. It is episodic, many-scened, composed of discrete scenes as structural units, structured around a theme and a sequence of development, cinematic, and has an early point of attack. Woyzeck stands today as one of the major and most influential examples of an epically structured play from the early part of the nineteenth century (1837, left in fragmentary form by Buchner and assembled by his editor, Franzos).

The next major steps in the development of epic structure occurred at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, and is connected with the growth of the anti-realistic movements of the period. Occasionally, in a play such as Arthur Schnitzler's Le Rondé, an epic structure can be observed in a basically realistic play. The major thrust of the epic drama of the period, however, was concentrated in the work of the Expressionists. One of the first to employ epic structure in expressionistic drama was August Strindberg, who also used epic structure in his historical sagas from the 1880s onward. In plays such as To Damascus, parts I, II, and III, and The Dream Play, Strindberg used epic structure to explore man's mind and life. However, Strindberg's plays were not as directly influential on Brecht and
Piscator's development of Epic Theatre in the 1920s as was the German Expressionism of playwrights such as Ernst Toller and Georg Kaiser, whose plays of social and political protest during and after the 1914-18 war were the structural precursors of Brecht's plays. Works such as Kaiser's GAS TRILOGY and FROM MORN TO MIDNIGHT predict both the leftist politics and the epic structures of Brecht's plays and Piscator's productions. However, both Brecht and Piscator were basically leftist realists in orientation and outlook, and they rejected the expressionist techniques of drama and staging present in the works of Kaiser and the others, as well as their individualistic content.

While the emotional elements of 1918/19 subsided and the concrete political demands took on sharper contours, while the Dadaists for their part stripped art of feeling or—in the terminology of the day—"cooled it off," or "froze it," a new invasion of emotion came from the O-Mensch dramatists (literally Oh, Mankind plays, expressionist plays dealing with the moral regeneration of mankind, such as Kaiser's THE BURGERS OF CALAI, Hasenclever's ANTIGONE, etc.). This drama was, of course, also a "revolution," but a revolution of individualism. Man, the individual, rebelled against Fate. He appeals to his fellows, as "brothers." He wants the love of all men for all men, humility of every man towards every other. This drama is lyrical, i.e., undramatic. These are dramatized lyric poems. In the misery of war, a war which in reality had been a war of machines against men, they sought a way through negation toward the "soul" of man. So these dramas were deeply reactionary, a reaction against the war, but against the collectivism of war too, a reaction in favor of a newly found concept of the ego and of certain elements of prewar culture. Ernst Toller's TRANSFIGURATION (Die Wandlung) was typical of this trend and its biggest success. It was a mixture of personal experience (lyrical), destiny (dramatic), politics (epic). The predominance of the "poet" in Toller, who formulated not facts but judgments, evaluations, ethical abstractions, and these "poetically", explains why it became neither a clarion call nor a contemporary play which transcended its own time, nor an "eternal value" in the sense of pure art.27

While the Epic Theatre developed in the 1920s by Piscator and Brecht in Berlin had roots in Expressionism in both its structure and its politicization, both of them rejected the social, philosophical, and humanistic idealism of Expressionism, and turned instead toward greater realism in character and action and to a bias toward an intellectual and political content which was frequently propagandistic, if not tendentious:

In the development of Epic Theatre in the 1920s, the productions of Erwin Piscator antedated the first Epic plays of Bertolt Brecht by several years. However, the two are best considered equal partners in the creation of Epic Theatre, for while Piscator did most of the basic work in production techniques, it was Brecht who developed a great deal of the theory and wrote the first consciously Epic plays. Moreover, Brecht was involved in a number of Piscator's projects during the 1920s. Brecht himself noted, "I took part in all of his (Piscator's) experiments," adding, "More than anything else, the involvement of the theatre in politics was Piscator's contribution. Without this involvement the theatre of the playwright (Brecht) is scarcely imaginable." Through the years, the specific form of Epic Theatre advocated by each came to differ in some respects. Piscator's theatre became highly technological, and stressed the infusion of reality and contemporary

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28 This is particularly true of Brecht, who, in his early career, wrote plays leaning toward Expressionism, such as Baal.

relevance in productions, as well as relying to a comparatively small
degree on the actor as an agent of alienation. Brecht eschewed technologically complex production, stressed the importance of the actor in
the alienation process, and left his plays almost entirely in a ficial, frequently historic, realm, without use of films and slides to
draw parallels between stage events and contemporary life. The result
was a difference in both the form and the scenic universe of the typical theatrical works of the two men.

That gave rise to the primary element in Piscator’s approach, the
element that separated his theatre from Brecht’s. Brecht’s approach
remained fictional and circumstantial. It was balladlike, episodic, like the song of a minstrel. Piscator’s epic concept was grounded
in a reality bigger than himself, conjuring up some of the kindred
spirit of the Homeric poem. Brecht, so often referred to as the
creator of Epic style, tied his theatre to the fable, and narrowed
the stage. Piscator, searching for the commandments of the great
builders of humanity, unfolded in epic dimensions and opened up
the stage.

While Ley-Piscator’s comments are somewhat self-serving (she was eager
to build up her husband’s place in the founding and growth of Epic
Theatre, often at Brecht’s expense), her basic perception of the dif-
ference in Brecht’s and Piscator’s brands of Epic Theatre is correct.
Brecht’s Epic tends to create a closed, fictional world, which the
audience is asked to examine for relevance to its own. Piscator tried
to explode the fictional world-of-the-play, expanding it and making its
contemporary relevance clear by infusing it with elements of the con-
temporary real world via the use of film, slides, graphs, placards,
etc. Nonetheless, despite their ultimate differences, in the 1920s in

30 Maria Ley-Piscator, The Piscator Experiment (New York: James
Germany Brecht and Piscator worked hand in hand in the creation of Epic Theatre, and so were co-founders of a form of theatre that has had a significant impact on modern theatre in general, and contemporary British epic playwrights in particular.

Brecht's Epic Theatre productions were almost always mountings of plays that he had written, and so such works were written with epic structures in place. Piscator, however, was not a playwright (although he wrote a few plays and adaptations). Consequently, for his productions he was forced to rely on the plays of other authors, which he frequently found it necessary to alter in production to suit his needs; both through the addition of film and slides to the form of the play, and sometimes by significant structural alterations as well. For example, in his 1927 production of Ernst Toller's Hoppla, Such is Life, Piscator cut all the expressionistic or lyrical portions of the play, and for his production of Alexei Tolstoy's Rasputin later that year he cut the prologue and three of the original ten scenes, and added seven scenes of his own. So great was Piscator's difficulty in finding acceptable plays for his Epic Theatre that he eventually came to divide the Epic dramatic world into two kinds of plays,

... the truly epic plays, which had broken with the tradition of Aristotle and established a loose style of scenes disregarding the inevitable catharsis, and plays which lent themselves to Epic Theatre production because there were elements in their conflict of a basic social philosophy, which allowed an astute director to treat them differently from the conventional play.

31 Erwin Piscator, The Political Theatre, p. 201.
32 Erwin Piscator, The Political Theatre, p. 222.
33 Maria Ley-Piscator, The Piscator Experiment, p. 225.
Consequently, in discussing the place of Piscator in the development of epic structure in the twentieth century, it is necessary to remember that his contribution was made through production and through his influence on Brecht's drama, not through the creation of a body of drama himself. Nonetheless, his importance for the Epic Theatre's drama is great, as Herbert Jhering noted in comparing Piscator with Brecht.

Brecht tried to solve the problem of form, Piscator the problem of content. It is surprising that the poet had more influence on the style in the theatre and the director more on the drama. Most attempts to come to terms with the political and social realities of the present lead us back to Piscator; most attempts to create a new form, to Brecht.34

In the years from 1920-9, Piscator produced and directed a series of Epic productions in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany. A partial list of his productions includes: Flage, by Alfons Paquet, a play with nineteen scenes, which Piscator refers to as "Brechtian",35 and which was probably the first fully realized example of the Epic Theatre (1924); The Red Riot Revue, by Piscator and Felix Gasbarra, also produced in 1924; In Spite of Everything, by Piscator and Gasbarra, with twenty-three scenes, produced in 1925; Paquet's Tidal Wave, in 1926; Who Weeps for Juckenack, and Reffle, by Hans Reffish, in 1926; Rudolf Leonhard's Sails on the Horizon (1926), in twenty-five scenes; Paul Zach's The Drunken Ship, on the life of Rimbaud (sixteen scenes), in 1926; Erna Weik's Storm over Gotland in 1927; Rasputin, by Alexei

34Herbert Jhering, quoted in Maria Ley-Piscator, The Piscator Experiment, p. 143.

35Erwin Piscator, The Political Theatre, p. 68.
Tolstoy, in fifteen scenes, also in 1927: *The Good Soldier Schweik*, adapted from Jaroslav Hasek's novel by Piscator, Brecht, Leo Lania, Gasbarra, Max Brod, and Hans Reimann (Piscator's most famous production, 1928); and Walter Mehring's *The Merchant of Berlin*, in 1929. All of these plays seem to have had an epic structure, and each reflected, or was made to reflect, Piscator's pro-proletarian views. Virtually all of these plays were of little or no literary value in themselves, and have thus gone untranslated, or completely disappeared. However, a scenario for Piscator and Gasbarra's *In Spite of Everything* exists, and it can be viewed as typical of the structure of Piscator's productions, particularly in its integration of live and filmed action in production.

**In Spite of Everything**

**Scene 1** Berlin awaits war/Potsdamer Platz  
Von Wildhagen, von Falkenhausen/Schulze, Lehmann, Franz, Willy, Paul/Newspaper-seller, Berlin public

A newspaper-seller is selling a news extra: "Heir to Austrian throne assassinated at Sarajevo." Social Democrats and right-wingers among the bystanders discuss the chances of war.

**Scene 2** Meeting of the Social Democratic parliamentary party on July 25, 1914.  
Ebert, Landsberg, Scheidemann, David, Langlen, Bauer, Haase, Barth, Dittmann, Ledebour, Liebknecht/Comrades in the parliamentary party

Liebknecht raises a lone voice against a possible war.

**Scene 3** In the Imperial Palace, Berlin, on July 25, 1914.  
Reich Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg, War Minister von Falkenhayn, and an orderly/Proletarians, bourgeois.

Wilhelm II signs the declaration of war on Russia and addresses the people from the balcony.

**Scene 4** Meeting of the Social Democratic parliamentary party on August 2, 1914.  
Ebert, Landsberg, etc./Party comrades, proletarians.
In Spite of Everything

(Scene 4) Film shows mobilization and the departure of the troops. The massacre begins.

The SPD (Social Democrats) votes to approve War Credits, Liebknecht voices his opposition.

(Scene 5) Meeting of the Reichstag on December 2, 1914. (Second vote on War Credits.) Reichstag members of all parties/voices: von Bethmann, Reichstag President Kampf, Liebknecht/Ebert, Scheidemann, Noske, Ledebour, Liebknecht.

Liebknecht defies the SPD line and votes alone against War Credits.

(Scene 6) In a Berlin shell factory. Franz, Willy, Paul, Gustav, the factory owner/workers of radical and moderate views.

Radicals demand a strike, the owner threatens to have them drafted, they capitulate.

(Scene 7) May 1, 1916/Potsdamer Platz Proletarians, Liebknecht, policemen, Becker and Rothke, a police inspector.

Antiwar demonstrations instigated by the Spartacists. Liebknecht addresses an antiwar demonstration with the words, "Down with the war. Down with the government!" and is arrested on the spot.

(Scene 8) Landsberg's speech on May 11 when Liebknecht was deprived of his parliamentary immunity. Landsberg/the Reichstag

Landsberg refuses in the name of the SPD to intercede for Liebknecht.

(Scene 9) Liebknecht before a court martial on August 25, 1916. Liebknecht's voice.

Film: The massacre continues (authentic shots of World War I battles.).

Liebknecht reasserts his pacifism and calls on his hearers to oppose the war.

(Scene 10) In a shell hole. German soldiers, one officer, one French officer.

Film: But the proletariat refuses to go on being exploited.
In Spite of Everything

(Scene 10) Russians rise (October Revolution). Lenin speaks.

Scene 11 The 1918 munition workers' strike/January 30/In Trepтов Park. Paul, Willy, Adolf, Gustav, striking workers, Ebert, Dittmann, a police inspector, policemen.

Ebert addresses the strikers and is shouted down.


A news extra is being sold and bystanders discuss the possibility of revolution.

Scene 13 November 9/In the Reich Chancellor's Palace. Ebert, Scheidemann, Bauer, Landsberg, Noske. On the street. Proletarian demonstrators, Liebknecht.

Ebert and his colleagues discuss how to salvage the monarchy, while Liebknecht proclaims a socialist republic to workers and soldiers outside.

Scene 14 Reich Chancellery/Landsberg's office/December 5. Landsberg, Corporal Krebs.

Landsberg is briefing Krebs, "A Spartacus demonstration is planned in the Chausseestrasse. There will be a shot from the crowd and that will be the signal to open fire—with machine guns into the crowd.

Scene 15 Chausseestrasse/December 6 Spartacus demonstration. The Rotherz battalion.

The shot and machine-gunning of the crowd indicated in the previous scene. (The first counter-revolutionary putsch by the military, who also demolished the offices of the Rote Fahne, was beaten off by workers and the revolutionary naval division.)

Scene 16 Rote Fahne editor's office. Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Radek, Franz, Willy, one compositor, one worker.

Liebknecht, Radek, and Rosa Luxemburg discuss the next moves. The Spartacists failed to prepare adequately for the first Reich conference of councilors and were taken
In Spite of Everything

(Scene 16) by surprise when the delegates voted for an assembly to prepare a constitution, thus effectively ending the power of the workers' and soldiers' councilors. This and the foundation of the German Communist Party at the Spartacus League's conference on December 30 seem to have been the substance of the discussion.

Scene 17 Reich Chancellery/Ebert's office/January 9, 1919.
Ebert, Scheidemann, Braun, Landsberg.

Here, too, the next moves are discussed. Noske has promised to send troops. The scene is the prelude to Spartacus Week.

Scene 18 On the Alexanderplatz.
Franz, Willy, Paul, armed workers.

The workers await the decision of the leadership.

Scene 19 Sitting of the "Committee for the Revolution"/11 January.
Rosa Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Ledebour, the revolutionary shop stewards, the Independents.

The Independent Socialists state willingness to negotiate with Ebert and Scheidemann. Liebknecht protests. The delay and indecision demoralize the militant workers and enable Ebert to bring up troops.

Scene 20 The storming of police headquarters.
Willy, Franz, voices.

Police headquarters are taken. Spartacists are seen defending a room they have occupied in the building. Troops burst in and mow them down.

Scene 21 The final evening/January 15.
Rosa Luxemburg, Liebknecht, citizens' militia.

Rosa Luxemburg and Liebknecht are arrested in hiding by men of the Freikorps.

Scene 22 Foyer of the Eden Hotel/The same evening.
White Guardsmen, Trooper Runge, von Pflugk-Hartung/
Rosa Luxemburg, Liebknecht.

A lieutenant captain makes it clear to Runge that the government wants Rosa Luxemburg and Liebknecht dead. Runge is to take them into the Tiergarten, pretend to have a breakdown and ask them to get out of the car. They are then to be shot "trying to escape."
In Spite of Everything

Scene 23 Tiergarten/At the Neuer See.

Two passers-by, voices: Runge, von Pflug-Hartung, Liebknecht.

A car draws up at the Neuer See. Liebknecht gets out, takes a couple of steps and is gunned down.

Finale March-past of the workers. Liebknecht lived.

About fifty Red Front fighters march on and take up formation on the stage with eight flags.

Closing speech: Ruth Fischer/Final song all together.

The scenario of In Spite of Everything demonstrates all of the traits of epic structure. In Spite of Everything deals with the process by which Karl Liebknecht, the German revolutionary socialist, was radicalized by the war (along with a segment of German proletarian society), and the events which led to his death early in 1919. The action of the play is controlled by the revelation of a historical sequence, although sub-themes such as the effect of war on the public and soldiers, the horror of war, and the betrayal of Liebknecht and the pacifist left wing by the SPD also enter in, and have some place in the selection and ordering of incidents. The action is structured around a historical chain of events, with incidents arranged episodically to represent the significant points in the sequence and to point up the play's themes. The point of attack is early in the overall sequence; about the beginning of the 1914-18 war, and at the beginning of Liebknecht's pacifist activity and his radicalization. The play is cinematic, containing over fifteen locations and nearly five years, and the

scene is clearly the basic unit of structure, as the play is not divided into acts, and each scene functions as an individual block, demonstrating a phase of the overall development. It can be seen that In Spite of Everything, one of the earliest Epic plays and one of Piscator's few scripts, contains an epic structure, as might be expected in a work composed by one of the dual founders of Epic Theatre.

Bertolt Brecht used epic structure in virtually all his plays, dating from the very beginning of his career. Virtually the only exceptions are Drums in the Night (his second play, 1918) and his adaptation of Moliere's Don Juan. All of his remaining full-length plays have epic structures, from his first, Baal, in 1918, through In the Jungle of Cities (1922), The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny (1929), St. Joan of the Stockyards (1930), The Mother (based on Gorky's novel of the same name, 1932), Roundheads and Peakheads (1934), Mother Courage (1939), Galileo (1939), The Good Person of Szechwan (1940), Puntila and Matti, His Hired Man (1941), and The Caucasian Chalk Circle (1945), among others. Brecht rarely used act divisions in his plays, preferring to construct them as a series of scenes, generally organized around an episodic narrative (sometimes historical, as in Mother Courage or Galileo; sometimes not, as in In the Jungle of Cities) working in combination with a theme, so that each episode in the play both advanced the story/historical sequence and illustrated a point in his argument, analysis, or thematic development. The origins of Brecht's use of epic structure probably lie almost exclusively in the works of those whom he considered his direct predecessors in the line of the development of Epic Theatre. "There is an unpublished note of Brecht's
which defines the 'Historic Line of the Epic Theatre' as running 'from the Elizabethan drama via Lenz, Schiller (early works), Goethe (Gotz and both parts of Faust), Grabbe, Buchner. It is a very strong line, easily followed.' 37 To this list might be added other later playwrights whom Brecht cites elsewhere as being crucial to the development of his Epic drama, among them Hauptmann and Frank Wedekind (especially Spring's Awakening). 38 Brecht's drama is basically a combination of three elements: epic structure, as defined above, and found in the works of the playwrights mentioned; revolutionary socialist/marxist politics and sociological theory; and a realistic approach to character in terms of the relationship of motive to action and of character persona to environmentally determined roots, wedged into a non-realistic style of performance. The result of this last characteristic, in a play performed in Brechtian style, is a dual alienation: the actor from the character, and the character from the style, pointing up the theatrical nature of the experience, and resulting in an acting style which should, in theory, appear to be people acting out a story, playing at the characters, rather than living the characters and story. Though all of Brecht's mature plays will demonstrate Brecht's use of epic structure admirably, one of the best, and best-known, is Mother Courage (1939), and it is this play which will be examined to exemplify how


Brecht utilized epic structure in his brand of Epic Theatre.

Brecht's *Mother Courage*, which traces the life of Anna Fierling (Mother Courage) through the Thirty Years War in the early and middle seventeenth century, is composed of twelve scenes, all but one of which is captioned with a summary of the events in the scene, and dated. The selection of incidents in the play is controlled by two concerns: the historical sequence of the war and the progress of Mother Courage through it; and the theme of the play, which shows the relationship between capitalism (demonstrated in the activities of Mother Courage, a roving merchant who feeds and prospers on war) and war. An important element in the story is the way the war affects Mother Courage, who loses her three children successively to it, but nonetheless continues to follow it to sell her wares. The play is cinematic, covering twelve years and several European countries, and also has an early point of attack, as a look at the structural chart of the play will show.

*Mother Courage*

**Scene 1** Spring, 1624. General Oxenstjerna recruits troops in Dalarna for the Polish campaign. The canteen woman, Anna Fierling, known as Mother Courage, loses a son.

**Scene 2** In 1625 and 1626 Mother Courage crosses Poland in the train of the Swedish armies. Outside the fortress of Wallhof she meets her son again.—A capon is successfully sold, and the brave son's fortunes are at their zenith.

**Scene 3** Three years later Mother Courage and parts of a Finnish regiment are taken prisoner. She is able to save her daughter and her wagon, but her honest son dies.

**Scene 4** Mother Courage sings the song of the Great Capitulation. (Undated, but shortly after Scene 3)
Scene 5
Two years have passed. The war has spread far and wide. With scarcely a pause Mother Courage’s little wagon rolls through Poland, Moravia, Bavaria, Italy, and back again to Bavaria. 1631. Tilly’s victory at Magdeburg costs Mother Courage four officers’ shirts.

Scene 6
Outside Ingolstadt in Bavaria Mother Courage attends the funeral of Tilly, the imperial field marshal. Conversations about heroes and the longevity of the war. The chaplain deplores the waste of his talents. Mute Kattrin gets the red shoes. 1632.

Scene 7
Mother Courage at the height of her business career.

Scene 8
In the same year Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, is killed at the battle of Lutzen. Peace threatens to ruin Mother Courage’s business. Her brave son performs one heroic deed too many and dies an ignominious death.

Scene 9
The great war of religion has been going on for sixteen years. Germany has lost more than half its population. Those whom the slaughter has spared have been laid low by epidemics. Once-flourishing countrysides are ravaged by famine. Wolves prowl through the charred ruins of the cities. In the fall of 1634 we find Mother Courage in Germany, in the Fichtelgebirge, at some distance from the road followed by the Swedish armies. Winter comes early and is exceptionally severe. Business is bad, begging is the only resort. The cook receives a letter from Utrecht and is dismissed.

Scene 10
Throughout 1635 Mother Courage and her daughter Kattrin pull the wagon over the roads of central Germany in the wake of the increasingly bedraggled armies.

Scene 11
January 1636. The imperial troops threaten the Protestant city of Halle. The stone speaks. Mother Courage loses her daughter and goes on alone. The end of the war is not in sight.

Scene 12
No title given by Brecht. It is the same day as Scene 11. Mother Courage follows a regiment away. 39

As the chart reveals, *Mother Courage* has an early point of attack (near the very beginning of Mother Courage's involvement with the business of war), and is cinematic, the cinematic construction being used to trace her journeys throughout the war zones of Europe over the dozen years of the play's action. It is also clear that the scene is the basic unit of structure in the play. However, there are some differences in the scenes created by Brecht and those created by playwrights from earlier phases of the development of epic structure. Brecht's scenes are much more self-contained. Each contains a whole story in itself, and relies very little on its relationship to the surrounding scenes to make sense (Scene 12 is obviously an exception). This increases the sense of the play's being episodic. Brecht's scenes are also selected with much more regard for their place in the development and exposition of a theme than those of earlier dramas, where there was almost always a dominance of the narrative line over other considerations in the selection and ordering of scenes. Most of the scenes in *Mother Courage* are included in large part for the way in which they illustrate the theme of the symbiotic relationship between war and capital. The very fact that six of the twelve scenes make reference to business or business dealings in their captions is evidence for this point (Scenes 2, 5–9). The interrelationship is presented most graphically in Scene 8, "Peace threatens to ruin Mother Courage's business," and in Scene 3, in which Mother Courage allows her son, Swiss Cheese, to be killed rather than pay a bribe to obtain his freedom; a bribe which she could afford to pay, but which she considers too high. This latter scene is also an excellent example of the operation of a
major sub-theme, the way in which capitalism and war dehumanize their participants, in the determination of the structure of the play. Brecht took the epic structure utilized by earlier dramatists, refined it in some measure by sharpening the independence of the scenes from the narrative line and one another and by utilizing the scenes as integral units in the presentation of a theme, and in the process took a major step in the evolution of epic structure in drama.

Outside of Epic Theatre, the drama of the twentieth century, particularly in the non-musical commercial theatre, has been dominated by dramatic structure, a heritage of Ibsenesque drama from the late nineteenth century. This has even been true of some of the so-called experimental forms, such as Existentialism, which are more experimental in content than in structure. A certain number of Absurdist plays, such as Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, introduced new structural techniques (cyclic structure), but these were not epic. Nonetheless, a number of significant playwrights have written plays, including some important ones, utilizing epic structure over the course of the century.

In Germany, playwrights such as Ernst Toller (*Man and the Masse*, 1921), Carl Zuckmayer (*The Captain of Kopenick*, 1931), and Kurt Tucholsky and Walter Hasenclever (*Christopher Columbus*, 1932) used epic structure in the inter-war years. The dramatists of the documentary drama movement of the 1960s and 1970s also used this structural form to good effect, including Peter Weiss (*The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade: The Investigation*), Rolf Hochhuth (*Soldiers: The Deputy*), and Heinar Kipphardt (*In the Matter of J. Robert*).
Frenchmen such as Jean Anouilh (The Lark; Becket) and Jean Genet (The Balcony; The Screen) employed epic structure in important plays. American examples of the structure can be found in the Living Newspapers performed by the Federal Theatre Project in the late 1930s (a significant influence on British political theatre in the period from 1968 forward), as well as in the work of playwrights like Eugene O’Neill (The Emperor Jones; Mourning Becomes Electra), Thornton Wilder (Our Town; Skin of our Teeth), Arthur Miller (Death of a Salesman; A View from the Bridge), Tennessee Williams (Camino Real), Arthur Kopit (Indians), and David Mamet (A Life in the Theatre). Another major American source for epically structured drama is the numerous American musicals which have been so prevalent in New York over the past eighty years. Nonetheless, despite the presence of a good number of important plays with epic structure produced in the United States during the twentieth century, American theatre has been, and continues to be, overwhelmingly dominated by dramatically structured, realist comedies and serious plays in the Ibsen/Chехов/Shaw tradition. There have also been a number of good epic plays written in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, despite the fact that the adoption of Socialist Realism as the official style has inhibited its use, and the lack of translation of Soviet and Eastern European scripts makes it difficult to find many examples. Several which have appeared in English translation include Mikhail Bulgakov’s Flight, Leonid Zorin’s A Warsaw Melody, and Anatole Glebov’s Inga, all by Soviet writers; and the work of a Pole, Slawomir Mrozek (Vatslav). Doubtless others exist.
The situation in Great Britain prior to 1956 was similar to that in the United States. A few significant epic plays were written, such as Noel Coward's *Cavalcade*, Laurence Housman's *Victoria Regina*, Sean O'Casey's *Within the Gates*, and Dylan Thomas's *Under Milkwood*. But, aside from musical theatre and reviews, comparatively few plays with epic structure were staged in a theatre dominated by Ibsenesque or Shawian realistic drama (although Shaw's *St. Joan* and *Back to Methuselah* have a number of elements of epic structure). In the years after British New Wave drama began with the production of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* by the English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre in 1956, and the visit of the Berliner Ensemble (Brecht's company) that same year, the frequency with which important playwrights employed epic structure in significant plays started to increase. Prior to 1968, the rate of increase was fairly slow, picking up markedly only with the commencement of a surge of political activity in the Fringe theatres at the end of the decade. Nonetheless, a number of major epic works were written in this period by the finest of the young British dramatists. Among the leaders in this movement toward epically structured plays were a group of writers, each of whom has, or had, an avowed sympathy with the leftist or socialist cause. They include John Arden (sometimes collaborating with Margaretta D'Arcy; *Live Like Pigs*; *The Workhouse Donkey*; *Armstrong's Last Goodnight*; *Left-handed Liberty*; *The Hero Rises Up; The Non-Stop Connelly Show*), Michael Hastings (*Yes, and After*), David Mercer (*Flint; The Governor's Lady; Belcher's Luck; Cousin Vladimir; The Monster of Karlovy Vary*), John Osborne (*Luther; A Patriot for Me*), and Arnold Wesker (*Chicken Soup with Barley; The Four Seasons*).
Their Very Own and Golden City; The Journalists; The Friends; The Old Ones). Others whose political allegiances were less pronounced, but who wrote major epic plays nonetheless, include Robert Bolt (A Man for all Seasons; more recently State of Revolution), David Halliwell (Little Malcolm and his Struggle Against the Eunuchs), Henry Livings (The Little Mrs. Foster Show), Peter Shaffer (The Royal Hunt of the Sun), and John Whiting (The Devils). In the period after 1968, when a good deal of political activity and experimental theatre began to be seen in the Fringe theatres of London, and in the provinces, there was a surge in the use of epic structure in major plays. Among the playwrights who have written significant epic scripts during the years from 1968 to 1981, aside from those mentioned above, such as Arden, Marber, and Bolt, are: Howard Barker (That Good Between Us), Peter Barnes (The Ruling Class), Edward Bond (The Bunker; Ringo: Lear; Narrow Road to the Deep North; The Woman; The World; The Fool; The Pope's Wedding; Saved), John Bowen (After the Rain), Howard Brenton (Wesley; Scott of the Antarctic; Weapons of Happiness; Esben Down; The Romances in Britain; Magnificence; Brassneck, with David Hare), Caryl Churchill (Vinegar Tom; Light Shining in Buckinghamshire; Owners), David Edgar (Blood Sports; The National Interest; State of Emergency; Destiny; Mary Barnes; Teen-dream, with Susan Todd; Nicholas Nicholby), Pam Gems (Piaf), Steve Gooch (Female Transport; The Women Pirates), David Halliwell (The House), Christopher Hampton (Total Eclipse; Savages), David Hare (Slag; Fashen; Plenty), Barrie Keeffe (A Mad World, My Masters), John McGrath (Random Happenings in the Hebrides; Little Red Hen; Joeee Drum; Fish in the Sea; The Chariot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil), Adrian
Mitchell (Man Friday: Mind Your Head), Peter Nichols (Forget-Me-Not Lane: Privates on Parade), Stephen Poliakoff (City Sugar: Strawberry Fields: Shout Across the River), David Rudkin (Ashes), The Red Ladder Collective (Taking Our Time), Robert Shaw (Cato Street), John Spurling (In the Heart of the British Museum: Macrhone's Guevara), Peter Whelan (Captain Swing), Hugh Whitemore (Stevie), and Snoo Wilson (Pignight; Blowjob; Vampire: The Soul of the White Ant). Many of these playwrights are among the group of leftist or socialist dramatists who have been largely responsible for the marked increase in the use of epic structure over the last dozen years. There are three factors which primarily account for their increased use of epic structure. The first is the living heritage of epic structure from the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, eras of a burgeoning popular theatre, to which many of these writers look for inspiration, and whose spirit they would like to recapture in the theatre of today. The second is the plays of Brecht, and the tours of the Berliner Ensemble to London; particularly that of 1956, which, in many ways, helped start the New Wave movement as a whole and the revival of epic structure and political theatre in Great Britain in particular. Third, there is the fact that epic structure is so well-adapted to the interests and needs of a politically and socially committed playwright. This is because the openness of epic structure allows a playwright to encompass more fully the sweep of society and social movements in their entirety and complexity in their plays, as well as relating or basing their structures on a social theme or analysis. As Jack Mitchell points out in his analysis of the plays of the Irish leftist playwright Sean O'Casey,
(In the Brechtian or epic plot) each scene gains a kind of independence, becoming a fully rounded dramatic episode in its own right. . . . In the traditional Aristotelian plot the parts are nothing in themselves but rungs on the ladder that leads with fatal inevitability to the climax or catastrophe. Diverting episodes were frowned upon as blurring the focus and disrupting the unity of action whose duty it is to unfold the central, main-line personal plot. This type of structure had certainly helped to bring discipline into the drama as a way of modelling reality, and, in the hands of a master, could, and perhaps still can, be a productive approach. The disadvantage—and this became more and more obvious in the plays of its latter-day middle-class exponents—lies in its inherent tendency to narrow the drama's ability to embrace society in its manifoldness and the totality of its interrelations.

. . . (Epic structure) gives the playwright a much freer hand to express social totality and complexity. Each episode or scene can now exploit to the full the whole breadth of social implication inherent in it. Organic unity is achieved nevertheless because all the relatively independent "bits" are moulded towards a common point of reference—the underlying social theme or subject of the play. Each makes its special contributions to this grand theme. These factors taken together account for the burst in the use of epic structure in British drama, particularly among the leftist authors of the period from 1968 on; a period which has seen some of the finest English playwrighting since the Renaissance on such a large scale.

While a number of epic plays from the more recent period of activity (1968-81) will be examined in Chapters 4-6, it will be instructive to look briefly at one of the epically structured plays from the earlier period (1956-68), both to demonstrate the presence of the structure in the plays of that era and to establish a point of comparison with more recent works. There are a number of worthy plays, most eminent among them Bolt's A Man for all Seasons, Osborn's Luther, and Shaffer's The Royal Hunt of the Sun. However, rather than turn to any of these fine and major plays, it will be most useful to examine one of

the plays of John Arden. Arden is one of the few of these writers to consistently produce important plays in epic form up until today, and his use of the structure and his socialist political activism have been an example and influence on many of the younger dramatists whose will be examined later. One of the clearest examples of epic structure in Arden's early work occurs in *Left-handed Liberty* (1965), a study of the events leading to the signing of the Magna Carta, and those which followed to the end of King John's reign. While certainly not among the best of Arden's plays (it is far from equalling *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance, Live Like Pigs, or Pearl*), it is a creditable work, and has several other features which make it especially appropriate for study. It has a clear epic structure. It has a historical subject, making it one of the first contemporary British epic plays to examine history seriously and dramatically, although many have done so since. Finally, it has a leftist bias, albeit not a terribly strong one, for Arden did not become a revolutionary socialist until after 1968.

Technically, *Left-handed Liberty* covers a period of twelve years and three countries (England, France/Acquitaine, probably the Vatican); however, only the first scene is set far in the past from the other scenes, in 1204, and the remainder of the play is concentrated into 1215-16. The play has sixteen scenes, plus a prologue, divided into three acts. The act divisions, however, have no structural significance, and serve only to divide the play conveniently for intervals. The play is based on history, but its structure is not based closely on a historical sequence. Rather, the scenes were selected by Arden to illustrate the operation of power politics and the corruption of all ruling classes.
Through the machinations of King John, King Philip of France, the clergy and great barons of England, and the Pope, through his legate Pandulph, Arden examines the nature of political power and corruption in the thirteenth century, offering it as a paradigm for comparison to the state of politics and the ruling classes today. The action of the play is focussed on the barons' forcing John to sign the Magna Carta, baronial corruption, John's attempts to nullify the effect of the charter (with the aid of the Pope), and the opportunism of Philip, who tries to use the state of civil war in England to extend his control both in France and, through a puppet ruler, to England. Most of the scenes in the play illustrate these actions directly; however, there are several scenes in which Pandulph steps out of the action of the play as a narrator and comments on it or provides information to the audience in direct audience address for all or part of the scene (John also addresses the audience directly from time to time). In that way, the development of the play’s action is interrupted to supply background material or make points about the events in a technique reminiscent of a crude version of Brechtian alienation.

Left-handed Liberty

Act I

Prologue  Pandulph in audience address, outside of time or space

Background material on history and John.

Scene 1  A castle in Aquitaine, 1204

Queen Mother Eleanor and John discuss his loss of English possessions in France. Eleanor awaits death.
Left-handed Liberty

Scene 2 Indeterminate (England or Vatican), c. 1215

John addresses the audience directly on the background to Runnymede. Pandulph interrupts and they re-enact John's submission to the Vatican and the restoration of his crown after it had been revoked by the Pope. John is now the Pope's vassal, and infringement of his royal power consequently becomes infringement of the rights of the Pope as his overlord, an important point in the strategies for overthrowing the Magna Carta.

Scene 3 Runnymede, 19 June 1215

Revelation of baronal grievances, and John's defense. Revelation of the political background, especially of the Pope's interests, establishing the climate for the political maneuvering of the next two acts. Signing of the charter.

Act II

Scene 4a Pandulph's chambers in England, later in 1215

Pandulph and the clerk discuss awards under the charter to certain barons and the difficulties in implementing it that are likely to arise. This scene blends into,

Scene 4b Council chambers

Meeting of John, Pandulph, and the Council of Twenty-five Barons (plus others). A personal quarrel between John and De Vesci over John's adultery with De Vesci's wife erupts into full-scale conflict between John and the Council. The Council asserts it is the true ruler of England (the outbreak was also provoked by John's demand that the baronal army leave London). The Council breaks up. The Archbishop of Canturbury, who is one of the baronal party, warns John of the danger that Philip of France will sail into London to support the barons. Negotiations take place. The barons will leave London if John does not import an army of Flemish mercenaries. John makes a show of ordering the disbanding of the Flemings, but secretly sends a letter countermanding the order.
Scene 5  London, near the Tower, shortly thereafter  

Lady de Vesci and De Vesci quarrel, despite the pleas  
of Fitzwalter that they reconcile publicly for  
political reasons (to keep the good will of the Arch-  
bishop and the Mayor of London, who are vital to their  
success). De Vesci begins to beat her, but is inter-  
rupted by Young Marshal, who brings three whores with  
him, but angers De Vesci by courting Lady de Vesci  
in a song. The Mayor arrives, and insists on the  
removal of the barons' army from London. Fitzwalter  
refuses, and Young Marshal and the Mayor leave. The  
barons dispatch messengers to France. Lady de Vesci  
disappears.

Scene 6  Pandulph, outside time or place  

Audience address. Brief discussion of "depravity,  
treachery, and violent self-seeking" on both sides.  
Also mentions the good points of both parties in the  
dispute; the idealism of the Barons, although moti-  
vated by hypocrisy, demonstrates the importance of  
having idealism, even if only as a facade, in human  
affairs, and John has continued to administer the  
kingdom tirelessly and rather well, travelling the  
country hearing cases and disputes.

Scene 7  Gotham, England, later in the year  

The "Wise Men of Gotham" (Parson, Smith, Farmer,  
Miller), to prevent John's coming there on his pro-  
gress around the country, paint such an unappealing  
picture of the place that John's clerk decides to  
have the progress avoid it.

Scene 8  An apple orchard, same time as Scene 7  

John, the Queen, and Lady de Vesci discuss military  
and political conditions in the country. John tries  
a case of adultery, fining both parties, but to  
everyone's satisfaction. Young Marshal arrives  
representing the barons, and accuses John of assem-  ling an army of mercenaries at Antwerp. John admits  
this, to the dismay of Marshal, his supporter, for it  
is a violation of the charter. Pandulph reveals the  
Pope has declared the charter null and void. Young  
Marshal warns that the barons will support Philip if  
he sails into London and asserts his claim to the  
English throne.
Left-handed Liberty

Act III

Scene 9  Canturbury, late 1215 or early 1216

The Archbishop defends and justifies the Magna Carta to Pandulph, who, as Papal Legate, warns him he will be suspended if he continues to support it. The Archbishop determines to go to Rome to explain the charter to the Pope and plead for it.

Scene 10  Pandulph, outside time or space

Audience address. Pandulph discusses the progress of the civil war on the repudiation of the charter by the Pope, focussing particularly on John's military error. He refused to attack London, where there was a large, but poorly organized baronal army with a few French reinforcements. Had he attacked, he would almost certainly have won. Instead, he won a series of minor engagements, which gave the barons and Philip time to organize.

Scene 11  France, April, 1216

Revelation of the French claim to the English throne through Blanche, the granddaughter of Henry II, and wife of crown prince Louis, as well as the political game leading to the French invasion. France cannot invade to support the barons; to do so would bring condemnation and sanctions from the Pope, and invite trouble from the French barons. Philip expressly forbids Louis doing so. France can invade to support Blanche's claim to the throne, and Louis intends to do so with Philip's blessing. This scene reveals the complexity and treachery of religious and power politics.

Scene 12  John's camp, after the invasion of Louis

Strategic discussions. The war is going against John, as the French and Scots control parts of his kingdom, and the barons are still in London. The scene reveals the progress of the war, and John's considerable military problems, many of which stem from his having a small, unpaid army.
Left-handed Liberty

Scene 13  London, near the Tower, later in 1216

Young Marshal and the Mayor discuss what will happen to London if John wins. The French are in London, Blanche having more or less said she will ratify the charter if she comes to the throne. Distrust of the French is rising, however, and Young Marshal departs for John's encampment at Devizes to inform him of that fact and the Mayor's misgivings about the French and the barons.

Scene 14  John's camp at Norfolk, mid-October, 1216

Young Marshal comes over to John's side. The liberation of Norfolk is completed by John. At Young Marshal's word that London will declare for John if he decrees it will not be burned, John calculates to do so.

Scene 15  Outside time and place

Audience address by John and, later, Pandulph and Lady de Vesol join him in general discussion. He discusses the inequities and injustices in the charter, particularly to women, briefly mentioning that the Jews came off poorly as well. Then he begins a general discussion of women, which is interrupted by Lady de Vesol and Pandulph. A long philosophical discussion ensues between the three on the nature of men's and women's relationships, the law and justice, and more on the inadequacies of the charter.

Scene 16  Norfolk Wash, 18 October 1216

While marching on London, John's wagon train is caught in the soft mud of the wash, which he is trying to cross before the tide comes in. The tide comes in and drowns John as he tries to save his (and the crown) jewels.41

Left-handed Liberty exemplifies the "new line of freewheeling epic/documentary" which was created in Great Britain during the 1960s, and includes such plays as A Man for all Seasons, Luther, and The Royal Hunt of the Sun. "The writers in this mode aim at the long perspective that becomes possible only when realism (Ibsenesque drama) is abandoned and a 'superview' printed over the limited view open to characters struggling in the thick of the historical events." Like other plays of this type, Left-handed Liberty exhibits the traits of epic structure. Its sixteen scenes move cinematically through time and space, and even out of it in Pandulph and John's scenes of direct audience address. The play also has, technically, and early point of attack. Scenes 1 and 2, which sketch in the background of the play and show one crucial incident, the submission of John to the Pope as overlord, occur at some length from Runnymede and the signing of the charter. However, these scenes are, in a sense, deceptive in their lending the play an early point of attack from a structural and thematic point of view. Virtually the entire process which led to the demands of the barons and the charter is narrated during the quarrels in Scene 3. Consequently, though the play can still be said to have an early point of attack by virtue of the two early scenes and its carrying through the action to John's death, in terms of a full exposition of the events leading to and surrounding the Magna Carta, especially the abuse of power, the

42 Katharine J. Worth, Revolutions in Modern English Drama (London: G. Bell, 1972), p. 121.
43 Katharine J. Worth, Revolutions in Modern English Drama, p. 121.
attack is later than might be expected in an epic play. The scene is the basic unit of structure in the play, although the connection of several scenes to their predecessors is sufficiently close that each scene does not function entirely as a self-contained whole, a fact that is true of A Man for all Seasons, The Royal Hunt of the Sun, and other plays of this type at this time as well. Insofar as greater independence of scenes is achieved in the epic drama of the 1970s, it may be that this phenomenon in so many of the epic plays of the 1960s can be accounted for by the comparative infancy of the form of British epic at the time of their composition, and an incomplete separation from the dramatic techniques of the prevailing well-made play tradition. Nonetheless, the structure of the play is episodic, and is controlled by two non-narrative factors: a historical sequence, and, primarily, by Arden’s exposition of power political machinations and corruption. The episodic structuring of the play is reinforced by Arden’s use of direct audience address/narrative, both in whole scenes, and as parts of scenes. Such a technique disrupts the causal flow which might exist between the scenes of a play (but which does not in any case in Left-handed Liberty), and provides a means for linking scenes and informing the audience of significant events without actually dramatizing them. Arden’s interest in exposing political corruption and misuse of power by the ruling classes can be seen especially clearly in Scenes 3, 4b, 5, 9, 11, and 13, all of which show the dishonest dealing and corruption of the politically mighty. Thus, Left-handed Liberty can be seen to have an epic structure, and stands as one of a number of significant British works to employ the structure in the years between 1956 and 1968.
Epic structure has been present in Western drama, and been used by important playwrights in great plays, since its beginning in Aristophanic Old Comedy and, in a restricted sense, Greek tragic trilogies. The first great periods of epic structure were the English Renaissance and the accompanying Spanish Golden Age. They were followed, however, by a fallow period of 150 years, until near the beginning of the nineteenth century, while Neo-classicism was the dominant dramatic style. In the Romantic and melodramatic drama of the nineteenth century, epic structure began to re-emerge as a viable structural force in Western drama. This trend continued and broadened in the twentieth century, at first under the impact of anti-realistic forms such as Expressionism, and later in Piscator and Brecht's Epic Theatre. Nonetheless, dramatically structured plays, usually deriving from late nineteenth century Realism, continued, and continue, to dominate Western drama, in spite of the number of important epic plays written during the twentieth century. In the past twenty-five years, a surge in epically structured drama has occurred in Great Britain, particularly among playwrights on the political left-wing. This epic activity is of great importance on the contemporary British, and world, theatre scenes, and stands at the end of a long tradition which has produced some of the greatest works in world drama.
CHAPTER THREE

BRITISH POLITICAL THEATRE: 1968-1981
In order to understand the place and importance of epic structure, and the plays and playwrights with which it is associated, in contemporary British theatre, it is necessary to consider the origins, development, form, and organization of political theatre in Great Britain today. The vast majority of political theatre in Great Britain is leftist in nature, and the parameters of this body of work were well-defined by John McGrath in 1979.

...—let's agree to talk about the theatre that exists somewhere within the shadow (or at least the penumbra) of the ideas of Marx and the Marxists. Let's talk about theatre that has as its base a recognition of capitalism as an economic system which produces classes; that sees the betterment of human life for all people in the abolition of classes and of capitalism; that sees that this can happen only through the rise to state power of the current underclass, the working class, and through a democratization—economic as well as political—of society and of its decision-making processes. A theatre that sees the establishment of socialism, not as the creation of a utopia or the end of the dialectic of history, but as another step towards the realization of the full potential of every individual human life during the short time that every individual has to live. Socialist theatre.

There are other kinds of political theatre. There is the anarchist theatre, for example, which, when it is conscious of anything at all, sees the struggle for state power as a self-defeating aim and appears to insist on every individual making their own bid for revolution and immediate fulfillment. Or the social democratic theatre which, in its rare moments of theoretical insight, sees the betterment of the working class as a process of gradual gains within a basically capitalistic framework, needing no revolution of power or consciousness, merely material improvement which requires as its precondition the health of the capitalist system—all that is to be arranged thanks to the great man in whose hall we now prepare to dig holes and fill them in again.¹

McGrath divides the political theatre of the left into three general divisions: the socialist revolutionary, to which most of the playwrights under consideration belong; the social democratic, to which a few belong (David Rudkin, Stephen Poliakoff); and the anarchist.

McGrath, by virtue of his commitment to socialist revolution, speaks slightingly of the latter two groups; however, that does not prevent them from falling under the umbrella of leftist theatre. In fact, some leftists, such as Arnold Wesker, defend the social democratic theatre as a perhaps more useful and viable tool than the socialist revolutionary theatre espoused by McGrath.

We are not in a revolutionary situation in this country, however unfair is the distribution of wealth . . . you have to face the fact about the nature of art and education that their impacts are not immediate. Their effects accumulate over a period of time. Having accepted this the next question is: can our situation afford us to wait? And though the answer is neither exciting nor romantic, it must be—yes. There is injustice in Britain, but no oppression—we cannot borrow "other people's urgency" . . . . There is no dire circumstance to force us into the excitement of taking to arms, secret plottings, or threats of violence. We might wish we were such people and that the situation was so straightforward, it is not and we are not and there is in the dishonesty of pretending otherwise an inbuilt bomb to explode our hopes, frustrate our energy, disappoint our friends and consign us pathetically to the growing up of left-wing factions while those controlling power more subtly than we have cared to analyse it look on and thank God for our callow fervour.²

Wesker defends the social democratic theatre on the grounds that it can, by a cumulative effect, educate a populace and pave the way for a gradual transition to socialism in a state where conditions are not sufficiently oppressive to encourage a popular socialist uprising. The

ultimate goal of social democratic and socialist revolutionary theatres is much the same: the creation of a socialist, though not necessarily marxist, state. However, they differ on the means, agenda, and timetable of the revolution.

According to McGrath, there are three layers of theatre in contemporary Britain, each related to a socio-economic class and reflective of its ideology, and each related to a stage in the development of a culture's literature (including drama). The three literary stages are:

- the residual, which draws its sources from a previous period but is still effectively alive in the present; the dominant, which exercises hegemony over the period culturally; and the emergent element, by which, and I quote, “new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationships are constantly being created. But it is exceptionally difficult to distinguish between those which are really elements of some new phase of the dominant culture, and those which are substantially alternative or oppositional to it—emergent in the strict sense, rather than the merely novel.”

In contemporary Great Britain, the three literary stages are correlated to the three basic layers of theatrical activity.

There are three different sectors of theatre, each with its own mini-ideology, each with its own relationship with the changing economic base of our society, and each with its own structure: one, the commercial, or West End theatre; two, the orthodox subsidized theatres—the subsidized establishment, the National and Royal Shakespeare companies, the main reps, etc.; and thirdly, the fringe, or touring theatre.

Each of these sectors corresponds very loosely to Williams's categories. The commercial or West End theatre can be seen as in many senses residual, but active. In structure it resembles a nineteenth century small capitalist enterprise, with investors, investors,

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3McGrath's discussion of the three levels of literary evolution in a culture is derived largely from the work of Raymond Williams, especially his Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

4John McGrath, "The Theory and Practice of Political Theatre," p. 44.
with a management, employees on the lowest possible wages, and a product which it hopes to market for a profit. . . . The West End was once the dominant sector of theatre. All the reps in the country would put on re-runs of West End hits, with actors hoping to become West End stars, for audiences who wished they were in the West End. But this has changed. The dominant sector of the theatre now, financially as well as ideologically, is the subsidized establishment: the National Theatre—the British Leyland of showbusiness—the RSC, the major reps, like Nottingham and Sheffield, which echo in style, structure, product, and ideology their big brothers on the South Bank, at Stratford and the Aldwych; and following trimly in their footsteps the lesser reps, the art theatres, the studios, and the more pretentious of the amateur companies.

The correspondence between the changed economic structure of British capitalism, now using a servile state machine to prop itself up, and the economic structure of these theatres, propped up by millions of pounds of public money, is immediately apparent. (What is less obvious is the correspondence between the new ideology of technological social democracy, the servile welfare state, and the ideology of the stuff to be seen on these stages.) . . . As power structures, these theatres reflect the nationalized industries: they are capitalist structures, but without the need to make profits. What they need to make is the individual reputation of the new masters—and to balance their books, give or take a few million pounds. . . . But they are dominant in the sense that their product is recognized generally as what we must all aspire to appreciate, or create, or imitate. . . .

All this preamble is by way of setting out the necessary context for examining the third element, roughly corresponding to the emergent element, in our theatre: the "political" theatre, usually found on the fringe, touring, or in the smaller subsidized companies. . . . There is little point in talking about the fringe as a whole—its components are too various, their raisons d'etre varying from principled Marxist interventionism, via simply providing employment, to unpaid exhibitionism.

But some features of the fringe are significant. Firstly, it is organized in groups or companies, created by an act of will or initiative, and when that original impetus dies or fails to grow, the group usually dies, unlike the larger institutions. Secondly, most groups active on the fringe draw subsidy from the state, via the Arts Council, or from local government via regional arts associations, or a combination of both, and most are dependent on this for survival. Thirdly, most groups are small enough to see themselves as organized on a co-operative or democratic basis. Fourthly, most fringe groups aim at audiences outside those which regularly attend the West End or the National Theatre. And fifthly, most fringe groups demand application of a member's talents, and a degree of involvement, different from that of the other sectors of theatre.

All of these features have positive and negative potentialities. At the negative extreme they could create an egomaniac, subsidy-sucking, pseudo-democratic group of freaks, performing rubbish for
an elite of similar freaks. On the other hand, these features do offer the possibility of a highly principled, creative Marxist cultural intervention, giving back to the public something valuable for a small amount of public money, organized in a genuine democracy, demanding new skills and imaginative efforts to create a new kind of culture of the highest standards, for and of the working class. So enriching the Labour movement and helping to make its ultimate victory a worthwhile victory.

It is because of this potential that the fringe theatre must be taken seriously by Marxist theatre workers, critics, and audiences. It is because of this potential that I would like to categorize it as the emergent element of theatre in Britain today and examine its theory and practice.5

While McGrath locates the center of socialist revolutionary theatre in Great Britain in the "emergent" area of the fringe theatre, in fact political activity occurs in all three of the levels discussed by him, and many of the socialist revolutionary and social democratic playwrights have moved between at least two of the layers; usually the dominant subsidized theatres and the emergent fringe. Playwrights such as Edward Bond, Howard Brenton, David Edgar, and Steve Gooch have all been produced in both fringe venues and at either the National Theatre or the Royal Shakespeare Company, and David Hare has written plays for all three segments of British theatre. Political activity has been concentrated in the capitalist, bourgeois, subsidized theatres at the National and the RSC, although companies such as the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and the Liverpool Everyman have also housed important productions. In the leftist fringe, major activity has taken place in touring companies, with the Joint Stock Company, Monstrous Regiment of Women, and McGrath's own 784 Company being especially important. This concentration of activity in two rather different kinds of theatre has

had an important impact on epically structured political drama. Those plays written for the major subsidized theatres normally are written on a larger scale to take advantage of the large stages, advanced technical facilities, and the opportunity to employ a large cast afforded by those companies. Plays written for the fringe and touring theatres tend to be somewhat smaller in scale, and to emphasize portability, flexibility, and small casts. In the latter set of plays, flexible approaches to the doubling of actors allows the size of character lists to be quite large sometimes, but any given scene is normally limited to six to ten characters/actors. Playwrights such as Howard Brenton and David Edgar have been keenly aware of the advantages of writing for the bourgeois, subsidized companies. Not only can they treat larger subjects in a more satisfactory manner than they would be able to do at a fringe or touring location, but they can also reach a much larger audience, and will not be preaching to the committed, as often happens when leftist touring groups play in factories or pubs, or in theatres, to audiences who seek out the company specifically for its message and style of production. Edgar outlined two of the reasons for his shift in emphasis toward the major subsidized companies in a 1979 interview with Clive Barker and Simon Trussler.

The prestige of small theatres is small, or it certainly was small. And there was a feeling that we were better than that, a natural progression. I don't think people can sit and go through the agony of writing eight hours a day if that kind of ambition isn't somewhere working away. The second point, which is much more substantial, is that Howard Brenton and David Hare and I and a number of other people wanted to write plays about subjects which required large numbers of people, and also about public subjects which did not take place in rooms but in areas, which it is nice to represent. Because streets are larger than houses, and battlefields
are larger than bedrooms. And we wanted the numbers.6 Edgar also addressed the issue of the impact of having a play at one of the "dominant" theatres, and its comparatively greater influence in terms of prestige, the number of people who would actually see the work, and the notoriety which such a play might receive in the press, carrying its message beyond the confines of the theatre itself.

In discussions about Destiny, which occasionally occurred during meetings that I attended to talk about the National Front (a right-wing racist political movement—my note), of which I've done about fifty, quite frequently somebody would ask, why did you let Destiny go on at the Aldwych (London home of the Royal Shakespeare Company—my note)? With its middle-class audience and so on. And the answer to that question was, because otherwise you wouldn't have invited me to speak at this meeting. Which was a slight debating trick, but I think it does contain a truth, in that Destiny had more effect, by virtue of being done at the Aldwych, than anything else I've written. Partly because it's better than a lot of what I've written, but partly because it became an event.7

Brenton was particularly emphatic on the point of the opportunity to address a larger audience, and perhaps to sway opinions among the hostile or uncommitted. "I'd rather have my plays presented to 900 people who may hate what I'm saying than to fifty of the converted."8 By speaking to non-working-class audiences about the left, Brenton hopes to convert them to the cause of the working classes and create a politically active core in the bourgeoisie in behalf of the proletariat.


Writers on the left have to be a vanguard. They have to provide survival kits for people who are active politically. That is how I've seen the work so far. Also their work has to be at the service of the working class. But in ways that are difficult to describe because you are not performing to the working class. Therefore you are addressing them to people who are a potentially political vanguard. And that is why the plays often have painful issues. Like Stalinism; what the party is; what violent action is; the actual reality of working-class life; working-class consciousness, which a lot of people on the left have to be told—that people are up to their knees in concrete out there—which is the subject of Weapons of Happiness.9

In his discussion of contemporary British political theatre, McGrath recognised activity such as that of Brenton and Edgar in the major subsidised companies as one of the three primary functions of political theatre in England at the present time.

This leads me back to what I see as the three main areas of activity of "political" theatre. Loosely speaking, they are: first, the struggle within the institutions of theatre against the hegemony of the "bourgeois" ideology within those institutions; secondly, the making of a theatre that is interventionist on a political level, usually outside those institutions; and thirdly and most importantly, the creation of a counter-culture based on the working class, which will grow in richness and confidence until it eventually displaces the dominant bourgeois culture of late capitalism.10

These activities, which can be roughly correlated to the principles of education, agitation, and the creation of a dominant proletarian culture, form the core of the mission of political theatre. While political theatre activity is an important part of the current British theatre scene, it is by no means a dominant part, even on the fringe, where most of the activity continues to be centered. Some inroads have been

9Howard Brenton, from an unpublished interview with Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 196.
10John McGrath, "The Theory and Practice of Political Theatre," p. 44.
made into the commercial and subsidized theatres, but the political theatre has been, and continues to be, only a significant adjunct to both mainstream and experimental British theatre practice.

The beginning of the contemporary political theatre movement in Great Britain roughly coincides with the birth of the fringe and the expansion of community theatres and centers about 1968, particularly the founding of the Drury Lane Arts Lab by the American Jim Haynes.\(^{11}\)

The importance of the year 1968 has been commented on by a number of contemporary playwrights, among them Edgar and Brenton, although the reasons they give for its significance sometimes differ. Edgar saw it as a year in which general socio-political consciousness was raised, and in which the end of theatrical censorship made the production of radical political plays easier.

There are two reasons why 1968 can be taken as the starting date for the development of political theatre in Britain. The first was the general upsurge of revolutionary, or at least radical, consciousness among students and intellectuals, which affected young theatre-workers just like anyone else (and also affected them in a particular way, as I shall argue in a moment). The second was the abolition of the institution of theatre censorship, practised since the eighteenth century by the Lord Chamberlain. The most obviously irksome manifestation of censorship applied to sex (the writer Joe Orton suffering particularly and amusingly), but political censorship was also involved and the very bureaucracy of script

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\(^{11}\)For a full discussion of British political theatre and its recent history, see Peter Ansorge, *Disrupting the Spectacle* (London: Pitman Publishing, 1975); David Edgar, "Ten Years of Political Theatre, 1968-78," *Theatre Quarterly* 8, no. 32 (Winter 1979); Ronald Hayman, *The Set-up, an Anatomy of English Theatre Today* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973); and Catherine Itzin, *Stages in the Revolution* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1980). The historical outline presented below is compiled from these sources. They will be cited hereafter only in the context of specific quotations.
approval (which took several weeks) effectively pre-empted topical or improvised work.\textsuperscript{12}

Brenton felt the importance of 1968 lay in a somewhat different area; in the disillusionment which arose from the Paris Events of May, 1968.

May '68 was crucial. It was a great watershed and directly affected me. A lot of the ideas of Magnificence came straight out of the writing of that time in Paris, and the idea of official life being like a screen. There's a long speech in Magnificence about that. May '68 disinfected my generation in two ways. First, it destroyed any remaining affection for official culture. The situationists showed how all of them, the dead greats, are corpses on our backs—Goethe, Beethoven—how gigantic the fraud is. But it also, secondly, destroyed the notions of personal freedom, freak-out and drug culture, anarchist notions of spontaneous freedom, anarchist political action. And it failed. It was defeated. A generation dreaming of a beautiful utopia was kicked—kicked awake and not dead. I've got to believe not kicked dead. May '68 gave me a desperation I still have. It destroyed Jed in Magnificence.\textsuperscript{13}

The combination of political ferment and disillusionment, and movement and experimentation outside the commercial and major subsidized theatres, combined about 1968 with a variety of other social and cultural factors to begin the burst in British political theatre activity which continues to exist today.

While 1968 was a crucial year in the development of British political theatre, it would be incorrect to assume that there was no significant activity before that time. Playwrights such as John Arden, David Mercer, and Arnold Wesker all wrote plays in support of leftist or socialist causes. Mercer, in fact, was one of the few avowedly marxist playwrights in Great Britain during the period before 1968, although he

\textsuperscript{12}David Edgar, "Ten Years of Political Theatre," p. 25.

\textsuperscript{13}Howard Brenton, "Petrol Bombs Through the Proscenium Arch," interview with Catharine Itzin and Simon Trussler, Theatre Quarterly 5, no. 17 (March-May 1975).
was not a doctrinaire marxist, and spent a great deal of time and energy criticizing the Soviets later in his career. Edward Bond also began writing socially conscious plays, such as *The Pope's Wedding* (1962) and *Saved* (1964, written; 1965, produced in a private performance at the Royal Court Theatre, for which he was prosecuted). Directors such as William Gaskill and Max-Stafford-Clark began to introduce political comment and content, as well as Brechtian production techniques, into their productions; especially Gaskill, in his mountings of Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* (1963) and, later, *The Beaux Stratagems* (1970) at the National Theatre (chronicled in *Theatre Quarterly* 1, no. 1, January-March 1971); There were also several new political companies founded, and a few established companies which became politically active, in the years from 1965 to 1968. In 1965 CAST (Cartoon Arche-typical Slogan Theatre) was founded by Roland and Claire Muldoon. CAST employed a comic agit-prop style in carrying their theatre directly to workers. It was the first of the avowedly socialist touring theatres, and spawned a number of imitations in both content and form. CAST was founded when the Muldoons and several others left, or were expelled, from the Unity Theatre on account of leftist activities. They began meeting in pubs to plan a new theatre more in line with their political and artistic aims, to create material, and to seek an audience.

It began slowly to dawn on us that the rooms (hired pub rooms) in which we held our exploratory exercises were, on other nights, where our potential audiences sat... We were the first of the contemporary batch of theatre groups to orient itself towards the

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14Catharine Itzin, *Stages in the Revolution*, pp. 91-101. Among Mercer's stage plays, see especially *Cousin Vladimir* and *The Monster of Karlovy Vary*. 
Labour movement. With twelve million people voting Labour, twenty-two million people going to work, with a million belonging to trade unions, it is, to put it simply, a big target. . . . It is clear to us that there are potential audiences throughout the country hungry for the service of the theatre, theatre that is prepared to gear itself to the functions of, for want of a better word, the community. . . . We are invited to union area AGMs, to towns and pubs, to where nothing has ever happened before, to political debates, workplaces, youthclubs, and to the venues we like best of all—working-class socials.15

CAST performed initially in Communist Party folk clubs in the intervals between speakers and other entertainment. In order to keep their audiences in their seats, it was necessary to evolve a lively and eye-catching performance style. As a result, CAST developed the "agit-pop" style, a combination of agitation and music hall.16 They created a character-type, "Muggins," a perpetual loser, and embarked on a celebrated series of performances, perhaps the most important, if not the most successful, of which was the 1968 collaboration of CAST with John Arden and Margaretta D’Arcy in Harold Muggins is a Martyr, an act which marked the real politicization of Arden as a playwright and began to build a bridge between the older and younger leftists. CAST itself went through a number of changes, including at least one period of inactivity, in succeeding years, but it stands as the first and one of the most important of the political theatre companies of contemporary Great Britain.

There were two major events during 1966 as far as the development of political theatre in Britain was concerned. The production of John McGrath’s Events While Guarding the Bofors Gun at the Hampstead


Theatre Club marked the beginning of that organization's association with the political theatre, although it had been active in producing the work of new playwrights for some time. It continues to be an important political theatre venue. Quipu, the first writer's collective, was founded by David Halliwell that year as well. Quipu was "committed to the establishment of a new kind of production organization in which the means of production are owned, controlled, and developed by the artists whose work is being presented." In addition to providing a model for collective company organization, Quipu was among the first lunchtime theatres in London, opening such a venture in 1968. Lunchtime theatres have since been the site of many political plays. However, Quipu's activities have been largely oriented toward artistic experimentation rather than political activism, and its significance is primarily that of a model which has been adapted by other companies for political purposes, rather than as a political organism in its own right.

In 1967, Jennie Harris founded the Brighton Combination, a socially and politically active, though not specifically leftist, organization. Together with co-founders Ruth Marks and Noel Greig, who later left, the Combination, then located in a Brighton cafe, was originally apolitical and interested in the development of the local community, although it was involved even at that time in anti-fascist and anti-racist work. The Combination played host to a number of activities, including the production of early works by such playwrights as Howard

Brenton and John Grillo. It was basically a local arts center, along the lines of Jim Haynes's Drury Lane Arts Lab, founded in London a year later. Haynes had, however, been active in such organizations prior to 1968, and was very probably an influence on Harris in the founding of the Combination. Its theatre activity had a good deal in common with that of CAST and Ken Campbell's The People Show, providing lively, often short, entertainments for popular audiences. The Combination severed its connections to Brighton in 1969, and toured until 1971. They settled briefly in Liverpool in the summer of 1971, doing a good deal of community work, before undertaking an All-England tour in the fall of that year. In late 1971, the Combination moved to Albany, and took up residence in the Albany Empire in 1973. It was their first home in a formal theatre; prior to that time Harris had resisted undertaking management of a formal theatre structure. They continue in that location today, despite a fire in 1977 which was set under suspicious circumstances, apparently by a right-wing organization. Their performance style incorporates music, music hall, cabaret, and political comment in a mix designed for its local audience, as the theatre/arts center continues its strong ties to the community, and continues to try to attract new audiences to the arts.

We are still trying to find a new audience—a non-theatre going, non-intellectual, non-literary, non-middle-class, non-higher education audience. And to find a popular form of drama, that is not just mock-music hall, but contemporary and valid and strong. We are still trying to create a context that isn't a theatre or literary club or a commercial rip-off, a place people feel is theirs and that has an identity. And we are still trying to tell the community we are there. Trying to have some political effect (although) I think we have been lucky because we have been
liberated from the need to try to make our art do everything political. 18

The Combination continues to be free from doctrinaire political associations. It has nonetheless been an important example of a socially conscious community organization, and has had an immense impact on other such organizations throughout Great Britain.

On 2 November 1967, Albert Hunt and the Bradford College of Art Theatre Group produced the first of several politically oriented happenings which they were to do over the next several years. The first of these was The Russian Revolution, and it set the tone for the remainder of these events. Others included the Vietnam War Game, a week-long event in which students created a crisis situation involving the United States, China, and Vietnam; and John Ford's Cuban Missile Crisis, a combination movie western and political expose of the Cuban Missile Crisis, commissioned in 1970 by leftist students at the college to celebrate the Lenin centenary. While Hunt's happenings are interesting socio-political events in themselves, their primary importance for the development of political theatre in Great Britain is the influence they had on a series of important later groups, including The General Will, 7; 84, North West Spanner, and the Women's Theatre Group, organizations which have been in the vanguard of socialist and working-class theatre in Britain during the last decade.

1968 was a crucial year for a number of reasons beyond its political events and the founding of the Drury Lane Arts Lab. It was also the

18 Jennie Harris and Noel Greig, from an unpublished interview with Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 328.
year in which several significant groups were founded. Ed Berman began
to work on lunchtime and community theatres in a system which shortly
became the Inter-Action Network of community arts and theatre activi-
ties. Perhaps his most important activity was a lunchtime theatre
which moved from Bayswater, to Soho, and finally to the Almost Free
Theatre, in London, in 1972. The Almost Free spawned many other groups
in succeeding years, including the Women's Theatre Group and the Gay
Sweatshop. It also branched out into a number of other community
events, and contained a number of theatrical activities under its wing,
from the community group Dogg's Troupe to the international British
American Repertory Company, BARC, founded in 1979. Dogg's Troupe,
which began in 1969 as a children's theatre group, is the most active
of Inter-Action's enterprises, averaging 580 shows per year, both
guerrilla and scheduled, although the group normally appears only where
invited. The company goes on the road in the summer, splitting into
two groups to tour the country with plays that "are all of social sig-
nificance."

Dogg's Troupe has also played at the Almost Free, per-
forming Tom Stoppard's Dirty Linen prior to its transfer to the West
End. The British American Repertory Company is a co-operative of fifty
per cent British and American personnel. It is designed to spend half
its time in each country, with everyone paid equally and with profit
sharing if shows transfer to the commercial theatre. This company com-
misions work on social issues. For a time Inter-Action also contained

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19 Ed Berman, from an unpublished interview with Catharine Itzin,
Stages in the Revolution, p. 57.
OATS (Old Age Theatre Society), a group of senior citizens doing plays about the problems of older people, but that group has disbanded. Inter-Action is housed today in a large building in Kentish Town, and continues to sponsor a wide variety of theatres, community arts, and recreational activities. Although Ed Berman regards the venture as "profoundly 'political'," he does not consider it socialist in the strict sense of the word. Nonetheless, Inter-Action has been a major force in British political theatre, both in its own activities, and through the groups which have spun out of it.

Another major event of 1968 was a meeting sponsored by CAST at the Unity Theatre to form a group to "mediate between cultural groups" and act as a "booking agency" for the various leftist groups that were springing up. This meeting led to the formation of the Agit-Prop Information Service. This service itself formed an agit-prop group, the Agit-Prop Street Players, which later became Red Ladder, as well as forming an index of anyone doing cultural work who would make their services available to the left. They also founded the Entertainment Booking Agency, Lawyer's Group, Publicity Group, Music Group, Special Effects Group (for banners and placards), a library, and print and poster workshops, in addition to arranging conferences. The Agit-Prop Street Players debuted 20 July 1968 in Trafalgar Square, playing John Hoyland's The Little Artist. They shortly moved on to plays performed

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20 Ed Berman, from an unpublished interview with Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 51.

for the Greater London Tenant's Council on the subject of rents. These were twelve to fifteen minute sketches, and highly topical, featuring the struggle of the tenants against the landlord Horace Cutler and the Housing Ministry. In February, 1971, the group played to 5,000-7,000 in The Cake Play as part of the Hyde Park March and Demonstration Against the Industrial Relations Bill. In 1973, the group was retitled Red Ladder, and received its first Arts Council grant. Red Ladder split in two in 1974. The group called Red Ladder moved away from agit-prop and toward realism in A Woman's Work, and into full-length plays in Taking Our Time, a play on worker oppression and the mill strikes of the mid-nineteenth century. The splinter organization, the Broadside Mobile Worker's Theatre, continued to develop the agit-prop format in form and content. In 1974 Red Ladder also moved north to Leeds, where it continues to be a part of Yorkshire life today.

There were a number of theatres important to the political theatre movement which opened in 1968. Perhaps the most significant was the Portable Theatre, which opened at the Combination in Brighton, and was the theatre where Brenton, Hare, Grillo, and many other important playwrights saw their early work produced. American Charles Marowitz opened his Open Space Theatre that year, and the Soho Poly, a particularly important lunchtime theatre, was founded as well. There were two other important troupes founded. John and Sue Fox organized Welfare State at the Bradford College of Art. The company had its origins in Albert Hunt's happenings in 1967, but soon evolved its own direction. While Welfare State was certainly important for its political content, its most interesting trait was the epic nature of its productions. It
was an ad-hoc group until 1972, when a core of eight people formed a commune in Leeds. From that time on, the troupe began a series of works steeped heavily in ritual, myth, and magic, in performances which were "not plays, but epic poems, visual and aural, though virtually without words." Their 1973 performance *The Runway* treated man's evolution through history and culture in twenty-five cantos, with many incidents being presented simultaneously, and with a heavy use of ritual and archetypal elements. Their exploration of the epic in proportion reached a peak in their 1972 and 1973 plays dealing with the character Lancelot Quail, one of which was a month-long processional pilgrimage from Glastonbury to St. Michael's Mount, a trip in reverse of a route of magical significance travelled by Phoenician tin traders, Joseph of Arimethea, and King Arthur. Welfare State has avoided identification with doctrinaire leftist political positions. Nonetheless, their founder, John Fox, has insisted throughout that their work has relevance to wider social problems, and that his theatre is valid and important for the working class.

Much of political theatre is patronising to the working class because it comes from a university intellectual position. . . . The audience doesn't have to be told that landlord is a bastard, they already know it. We are attacked by both the right and the left. The right says we are anarchists and the left says we should be reaching the workers. But if we are about any kind of political statement, it is about being very strong and free individuals. . . . You cannot forever suppress human energy.

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22Catharine Itzin, *Stages in the Revolution*, p. 68.


The other major political group to be founded in 1968 was the Pip Simmons Group. This company operated until 1973, when it disbanded, and then was reformed in 1974. In style, they were aligned to Welfare State, The People Show, and CAST, combining music and energy with theatrical performance. In content, their works featured a strong attack on mainstream liberal attitudes, although it would be difficult to classify them in the mainstream of socialist theatres either. Their first major performance was Superman (1969), a cartoon-style performance about civil rights. The group followed that with Do It! (1971), based on Jerry Rubin's book of the same name, and their highly controversial The George Jackson Black and White Minstrel Show, in which minstrelsy and the Black Panthers were mixed and contrasted. During the interval, slaves which the audience had "bought" at the end of the first act were shackled to them. The end of the play was also stunning and disturbing.

A spotlight focussed upon the red sack in which Jackson was struggling to escape—the sack was raised upwards on a pulley. The sack throbbed, vibrated with activity until suddenly, a hand emerged to signal to the audience. It was the fist of the Black Panther salute. Immediately shots were fired at the sack and inside the body stretched in its death spasm. The show was over.25

The early work of the Pip Simmons Group showed a marked political thrust and a fascination with American society. In 1975, the group produced a highly political play which shifted its focus from the United States to anti-semitism and Nazi Germany: An die Musik. This work contrasted the horrors to which Jews in a death camp were

subjected with the beautiful music they were forced to play for their Nazi tormentors; in particular Schubert, after one of whose songs the play is named. The resultant work was highly ironic, but also highly ambiguous and controversial, for the treatment of the Jews was such that it was unclear if the play was not itself anti-semitic.

The play opened with a prologue—or operatic interlude—of grotesquely caricatured Jews at table. Then the audience watched the camp prisoners perform three pieces of music... at the whip-command of a sadistic SS officer who brutalised and humiliated them—beating them, making them beat each other, beating the rhythms of the music on a woman's bare breasts, and finally gassing them while they played away. In this case the ambiguity was alienating and much too open to misinterpretation; for example, that the material was anti-semitic instead of—as it was no doubt intended—critical of anti-semitism.26

In their later work (Dracula, 1974; The Tempest, 1977; and Wozzeck, 1977), the group’s activity became less overtly political as they turned toward the development of a very individualistic, surrealist style of performance. Nonetheless, in their early work from 1968 to 1973, and in An die Musik in 1975, the Pip Simmons Group created a body of material of considerable importance to the evolution of contemporary British political theatre.

1970 saw three events of some import for political theatre in Britain. In Islington, Dan and Joan Crawford opened the King's Head Lunchtime Theatre at the King's Head pub. This theatre became the sight of several important productions in later years, most notably Kennedy's Children, by Robert Patrick (1974), and Spokesong (1977), by Stewart Parker, a play about Northern Ireland. This venue has also been

26 Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, pp. 74-5.
important because it helped introduce fringe theatre to an establishment audience. In Hampstead, at the Theatre Club, David Hare's first full-length political play, *Slag*, was produced, marking his entry into the ranks of important British playwrights. Finally, Arnold Wesker and John McGrath entered into a long, sometimes bitter correspondence on questions facing the British political theatre. While their correspondence is interesting from a theoretical point of view, it is even more important for its place in helping the theatrical left to develop a sense of self-consciousness and direction and to articulate its principles for itself. This is particularly true of its impact on McGrath himself, for the correspondence helped him to formulate and crystallize those principles on which he would found the 7:84 Company, one of the most important of the British political companies, in 1971. 7:84, which takes its name from the fact that seven per cent of the British population controls eighty-four per cent of the wealth, was one of the first groups to be specifically Marxist in orientation, and to aim to take socialist theatre to the working classes and forge a link between political theatre theory and practice and political reality and change. Their first production, McGrath's *Trees in the Wind*, played at the Edinburgh Festival and then toured on the fringe circuit, which had been developed by that time. The play deals with the conflicts which arise in three women when they embrace Marxism-Leninism and Maoism. They find themselves in conflict with their society and families, and find difficulty in resolving the contradictions between their fantasies and reality. The play is resolved when a working-class man, Joe, forces them to confront the contradictions in their lives, and his, and ends
with an indictment of class society and the capitalism which produces it. In 1972 the company produced three works by Trevor Griffiths (Apricots, Thermidor, and a revival of Occupations), two by McGrath (Plugged into History and Underneath), and two by John Arden and Margareta D'Arcy. The first of the Arden/D'Arcy collaborations, The Ballygoanbeen Bequest, was about English landlords and their oppression of the Irish, and was halted by court injunction when a particular landlord, contending the play was aimed specifically at vilifying him, filed suit for libel. The other play, Serjeant Musgrave Dances On, was a new version of Arden's earlier Serjeant Musgrave's Dance, updated so that the Serjeant returns from Derry, Northern Ireland, after Bloody Sunday. In 1973, the company spun off a new group, Belts and Braces, and the remainder divided into two sections: 784 England, and 784 Scotland. The English company produced Adrian Mitchell's Man Friday in 1973, along with a co-production with Belts and Braces of The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist, a proletarian classic. 784 Scotland began its commitment to treating Scots problems in their plays with a production of John McGrath's The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black, Black Oil. This play related the way in which Scots were forced to leave their homes and land by large landowners in the nineteenth century to provide grazing land for sheep, to the actions of giant oil corporations today, which exploit resources properly belonging to the Scots people without adequate compensation. The play was a great success with audiences, particularly in the Highlands, in part because it used a nineteenth century Scots entertainment form, the ceilidh, as the basis for
its structure (McGrath has used the structure since in other plays.).

A ceilidh is designed to be a means of “reinforcing the Gaelic culture and of a political getting together.” In 1974, 7:84 England temporarily closed down. 7:84 Scotland had a successful year, however, producing and touring two more McGrath plays: *Room*, about North Sea oil, and *The Game’s a Bogey*, which contrasted the life of the Scottish socialist John MacLean early in the twentieth century to life today.

Like *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*, *The Game’s a Bogey* used a combination of songs, pantomime, ribald parody, and comic sketches to tell its story. Both the English and Scots companies had very productive years in 1975, with four of McGrath’s plays appearing for the first time in their repertories. These were *Little Red Hen*, a play which parallels Scottish socialism and Scots Nationalism in two of their periods of ferment, the 1920s-1930s and the 1970s, and warns of the dangers of the Nationalist movement to the creation of a truly independent, socialist state; *Fish in the Sea*, centered on labor strife between the working classes and a ruthless multi-national corporation in Liverpool; *Yobbo Nowt*, about the awakening to political consciousness and activism of a working-class woman; and *Soft or a Girl?*, a retelling of the Romeo and Juliet story in terms of class conflict. In 1976, McGrath’s *Out of Our Heads*, a play on alcoholism and the socio-political conditions which encourage its development, was produced by 7:84 Scotland, while 7:84 England performed his *The Rat Trap*, Shane Connaughton’s *Relegated*, and Steve Gooch’s *Our Land, Our Lives*. In

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1977, the Scottish company did an about-face on the issue of Scots Nationalism, producing *Trembling Giant*, a pantomime which argued the case for an independent Scotland. That year the English company produced *Wreckers*, by David Edgar, and *The Life and Times of Joe of England*. 1978 saw the English company produce a new Arden/D'Arcy play, *Vandaleur's Folly*, while the Scots group produced Dave Anderson's *His Master's Voice*, an examination of the media, capitalism, and the Labour party.

In 1979, they returned to their former success with the ceilidh structure in *Joe's Drum*, by McGrath, a history of the oppression, economic and political, and injustice inflicted on the average and poor Scotsman by the rich and the English, once again raising the issue of Scots Nationalism, if only implicitly. For a decade, the 7/84 organization has been a vital part of British political theatre, and their touring activities and commitment to working-class theatre in England and Scotland have brought their socialist message to hundreds of thousands of working-class men and women since 1971. 7/84 has been, and is, one of the standard bearers for socialist revolutionary theatre in Great Britain.

Two other major leftist theatre groups were founded in 1971: Hull Truck, and The General Will. Hull Truck was more oriented toward the counterculture of the 1960s than to socialist drama; however, they developed improvisational techniques which were widely adopted by other theatres, and their drama had a definite political bias to its content. The General Will was founded at Bradford, with David Edgar as its "resident dramatist". The General Will was basically an agit-prop group, and it was for them that Edgar wrote many of his early plays, including *The
National Interest, about the first year of Edward Heath's Conservative government; The Rupert Show; State of Emergency; Rent, or Caught In the Act; and The Dunkirk Spirit. The relationship between Edgar and the company was close and very interesting, for they co-wrote plays in a fashion which was later adopted by the Joint Stock Company, Monstrous Regiment of Women, and other important groups. Edgar and the company would discuss an idea for a scene, perhaps do improvisations on it, and then Edgar would write the scene for the company. Their style was "pure unadulterated agit-prop", and their aim was to put "contemporary history in a Marxist context... (and) to present a Marxist economic perspective of what was going on..." Their plays frequently had an epic scope and structure. State of Emergency chronicled the year 1972 in a series of scenes demonstrating the major events of that year, and The Dunkirk Spirit traced the history of Britain from the end of World War II to 1973. The company found its early audiences among student groups and arts center audiences, but later found an audience among miners and workers. In 1974 Edgar left the group in a dispute over whether the company should attempt to incorporate more elements of popular culture and a closer relationship with the audience into performance (Edgar felt they should not.), and in 1975 The General Will changed radically. It stopped touring plays of general import, and instead became a community theatre with an emphasis on "gay" issues.

There were four other events of importance to political theatre in Great Britain which occurred in 1971. First, there was the production

28David Edgar, from an unpublished interview with Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 141.
of *Lay By*, a topical play dealing with a question of rape, co-written for the Portable Theatre by six authors, including Howard Brenton, Brian Clark, David Hare, and Snoo Wilson. This play was highly controversial by virtue of its subject and treatment, and brought a great deal of attention to the fringe and fringe writers. Second, a major marxist playwright, Trevor Griffiths, had his initial major success with *Occupations*. Third, the Royal Shakespeare Company opened a small theatre, The Place, in which a number of experimental and political plays have appeared through the years. Finally, organizational meetings began for a number of organizations which united and gave additional political power to fringe and political theatres, particularly in the area of lobbying for increased subsidies from the Arts Council and regional arts commissions. The first of these to come to fruition was the Association of Luncheon Theatres, in 1972. It was followed by The Association of Community Theatres (TACT) in 1973, the Independent Theatre Council (ITC) in 1974, and the Theatre Writers Union (TWU) in 1975, all of them important organizations in the growth and development of a financially and artistically healthy political and experimental theatre in Great Britain.

By 1972 a number of the more important contemporary British political playwrights were establishing their reputations, among them David Hare, Howard Brenton, Edward Bond, David Edgar, and Caryl Churchill. A second group of six playwrights associated with the Portable Theatre co-wrote a play, *England’s Ireland*, which directed more public attention to the political fringe in its controversial production. Two important companies also began to establish themselves during the year. Donald Rees, David Aukin, and Bernard Pomerance founded Foco Novo, and
produced their first play. It was also called *Foco Novo*, and dealt with the Tupamaro guerrilla's kidnapping of an American CIA agent in Uruguay. *Foco Novo* developed through the years until it is now a major touring company. While their work is not strongly socialist, all of their plays have a social problem or concern at their core. Among their better-known works are Pomerance's *Elephant Man* and David Zane Kario-witz's *Landscape of Exile*, a play about Friedrich Engels and the origin of the Labour Party between the times of Marx's and Engels's deaths.

The second company to begin to come of age was Maurice Colbourne's *Half Moon*, which found a home in Aldgate in 1972. In 1973, this company came to prominence with their production of Brecht's *Jungle of the Cities* (or *In the Jungle of Cities*). Under the leadership of Pam Brighton in the early 1970s, and Robert Walker later on, *Half Moon* became one of the leading left-wing London companies. They were particularly associated with the work of the playwright Steve Gooch, who wrote three plays for them: *Will Wat? If Not, What Will?*, on the Wat Tyler Rebellion; *Female Transport*, on the transportation of convicts to Australia in the nineteenth century; and *The Motor Show*, co-written with Paul Thompson. In addition, Gooch adapted Brecht's *The Mother* for the company. After a decade of activity, *Half Moon* continues to be one of the major politically oriented companies in England.

In 1973, two new companies were spun out of established organizations, and both are still active and of great importance. The Belts and Braces Roadshow was created by Gavin Richards from a core of 764 members, and North West Spanner broke off from the parent Inroads company, a community arts project aimed at children. Belts and Braces
tries to combine socialist content with traditional acting, pantomime, variety, and music into an integrated performance. They try to make certain that none of the elements comes to function merely as decoration, but rather aim for "a synthesis of form in order to develop a way in which the political life of our society could be experienced and communicated, . . . to strive to present entertainment which is articulate and socialist." Their early work included Ramsey MacDonald: The Last Ten Days, a successful review on McDonald's sell-out of the working class, which played in pubs in Edinburgh and Glasgow in 1973; The Reign of Terror and the Great Monkey Trick (1973); The Recruiting (Liaison) Officer (1974); Weight (1975), on the 1942 strike at the Betteshanger Colliery in Kent; and Front Line (1975), which was commissioned by a shop stewards' committee in Newcastle. In 1975 Belts and Braces also took a trip to Portugal, an event which served to crystallize the group's political stance and performing style.

Our performance was politicised, as it were. You can't play properly, make yourself really there with the audience, if you haven't got anything to give them. If your only aim in life is to be funny, which is the case for most comics, you find there is a horrific hole which is filled with malagomania. They're feeding the beast in the people, what the bourgeoisie has created in the working class. The only way to fill that hole is with revolutionary content. You've got to think and feel and fight it through for the rest of your days. Because you've got to create a new human and a new language and that can only go hand in hand with the class struggle.

Following their return from Portugal, Belts and Braces became more

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29Gavin Richards, from an unpublished interview with Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 199.

30Gavin Richards, from an unpublished interview with Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 201.
explicitly socialist in content and adopted a performance style closer to that of Brecht than they had used previously. In 1976, in *England Expects*, they explored the crisis in capitalism from various opposing socialist viewpoints through a labor conflict in a modern factory. In 1977, they produced a version of Brecht's *The Mother*, as well as a sequel to *England Expects* called *A Day in the Life of the World*, a truly epic work which consisted of thirty-two scenes, each in a different style. 1977 also saw a rock musical on Northern Ireland from Belts and Braces, called *Not So Green as Its Cabbage*, which they followed in 1978 with a play by the Italian socialist Dario Fo, *The Accidental Death of an Anarchist*. Though originally a spin-off from *784*, Belts and Braces has developed a distinct style and content in their theatre, and is one of the most important touring companies in contemporary Britain.

North West Spanner was created in 1973 as a co-operative theatre group, which was designed to work with unions and tenant associations, and drew its membership from shop floors, tenants, etc. Consequently, North West Spanner has frequently consisted in part of non-theatrical amateurs interested in working on a particular cause through the theatre. Though an important group in their community and as a model for theatre-worker/community co-operatives, North West Spanner is also of importance because of a 1977 subsidy controversy, in which they were the victims of a rightist witchhunt. The Arts Council, in an attempt to de-centralize funding to more accurately meet community needs, had begun to turn authority for granting subsidies over to regional arts associations. The North West Arts Association's Management Council attempted to cut the subsidy for North West Spanner, despite
recommendations to the contrary, because the group was socialist in orientation. The case became a national *cause célèbre*, with major leftists from throughout Great Britain rallying to the cause of North West Spanner against a Conservative councillor and the NAFF (National Association for Freedom, a far-right group). The central point of contention was that the Arts Association had ignored the recommendations of its own drama advisory council to continue subsidy for political, not artistic, reasons. In fact, the NWAA's own publicity leaflets, written by David Meyer, a member of the advisory committee and of the University of Manchester Drama Department, praised the group and its work.

... the plays are pithy, direct, rather unpolished, but humorous, tough, and astringent. The subject matter is timely. There is no trace of condescension. The performers have strong political convictions, but they recognize that their audiences are conservative (not Tory) and view work and economics and politics in terms of their pragmatic experience.\(^3^1\)

The massed British theatrical left held a major rally/conference at Manchester, at which such issues as devolution (the practice of local arts associations apportioning subsidies rather than the National Arts Council) and the subsidizing of leftist theatres were raised. The conference passed a resolution against devolution, and also established the principle that "an investigation of political content is not a valid test of a theatre company's suitability for financial subsidy."\(^3^2\)

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outcome of the controversy was that North West Spanner's subsidy was restored, the process of devolution slowed or reversed, and the principles, solidarity, and power of the left-wing British theatre was established.

1973 also marked the beginning of an important new trend, the movement of political theatre out of the fringe and toward the major subsidized companies. The two productions which began this trend were that of Christopher Hampton’s Savages at the Royal Court, and that of Trevor Griffith’s The Party at the National Theatre, then housed in the Old Vic. The process continued in 1974 with the first transfer of a politically oriented fringe play to the West End, Robert Patrick’s Kennedy’s Children. 1974 also saw the re-emergence of David Rudkin as a political writer with the production of his Ashes at the Open Space, following less successful productions of The Filth Hunt (1972) at the Almost Free and Cries from Casement as His Bones are Brought to Dublin at the RSC (1973). Ashes later transferred to the commercial stage.

In addition, the year witnessed the emergence of a successful commercial dramatist, Tom Stoppard, into the realm of political theatre with his Travesties, which was followed by Dirty Linen (1976), Every Good Boy Deserves Favour (1977), and Night and Day (1978). Stoppard’s politics are, however, largely mainstream liberal, and it would be incorrect to count him among the playwrights of the committed left. The National Theatre commissioned a play from Howard Brenton in 1974, although the work, Weapons of Happiness, was not staged until 1976. The Royal Shakespeare Company opened a second small theatre, The Other Place/Stratford, which was followed in 1977 by their opening of The Warehouse
in London. Both theatres have become the site of important productions of political plays. Finally, one of the most important of the regional touring companies, the Joint Stock Company, was founded by William Gaskill, Max Stafford-Clark, and David Hare. Their original aims were more artistic than political; namely, to experiment with new ways of writing plays by altering the traditional relationship of playwright to company so that works were discussed and outlined in improvisation and company research prior to the dramatist's sitting down to write the play. The group was politicized in 1975, with their production of Hare's *Fanshen*, based on William Hinton's account of the development of revolutionary consciousness and community in the Chinese village of Long Bow in the late 1940s. The company approached the play from a dialectic and political point of view.

When you say, what is the political point of the scene to an actor, he tries to find out and then tries to demonstrate it. And you start to get epic acting. Something changes. I suppose I've always understood it in a way, but never so simply or profoundly. ... When we were working on *Fanshen* we were part of a political process ... you couldn't really do it in any other way, because, that is the way the political meaning is made clear. ... The aesthetic theory came as a consequence of getting the political line.\(^{33}\)

The politicization of the Joint Stock Company in working process and dramatic content begun in the production of *Fanshen* continued to influence all their subsequent work. In 1976, they produced *Yesterday's News*, a play about the recruitment of British mercenaries for Angola. The play was constructed from interviews with a mercenary, Roche, and

\(^{33}\text{William Gaskill, from an unpublished interview with Catharine Itzin, *Stages in the Revolution*, p. 221.}\)
built up by the actors into the story of a seventeen year old East Ender, called Keith Jones in the play; a false name, although the incidents on which the play was based were true. In the play, the young Jones, out of disillusionment with his society and community, goes to Angola to train troops despite having no previous military experience. They also produced Caryl Churchill's *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* in 1976, employing a workshop approach prior to and after the completion of a script. Such a production approach continued to be employed in all four of their 1977 plays: Tony Bicat's *Devil's Island*; Wallace Shawn's *A Thought in Three Parts*, a highly controversial examination of male-female relationships; Barrie Keeffe's *A Mad World, My Masters*; and Howard Brenton's *Epsom Downs*, a treatment of British class structure through a day at the races. Joint Stock has moved toward a slightly more traditional production arrangement in more recent plays (Stephen Lowe's adaptation of Robert Tressell's novel *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist* (1978), and David Halliwell's *The House* (1980)), but the company has continued its commitment to its brand of leftist theatre. The company does not view itself as a socialist mouthpiece or instrument of doctrinaire propaganda. "Joint Stock does not set out to indoctrinate." Nonetheless, both in its working methods, which are among the most communal and democratic in all British theatre, and in the content of its plays, Joint Stock has demonstrated its importance to the leftist political theatre in contemporary Great Britain.

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In 1975, three new companies were spun out of two older ones. The Almost Free gave birth to Gay Sweatshop and the Women's Theatre Group, a feminist organization which had had quasi-official status since 1971, but now emerged on its own. Both of these theatres continue to exist today, although with almost all new personnel and direction. The Broadside Mobile Worker's Theatre split off from Red Ladder to continue to develop the agit-prop form when Red Ladder moved toward longer plays and larger issues. Three new political playwrights came to public attention for the first time: Howard Barker, Barrie Keeffe, and Stephen Poliakoff. In Dublin, John Arden and Margaretta D'Arcy saw the first, and only, full production of their six-part epic The Non-Stop Connolly Show, a play dealing with the life of the Scots revolutionary James Connolly. Finally, the political theatre engaged in two separate campaigns to free prisoners. The Half-Moon company produced George Davis is Innocent, O.K.?, by Shane Connaughton, in the service of a campaign which ultimately succeeded in freeing Davis. A second effort, led by the Theatre at New End, to free George Thatcher (through the production of Thatcher's own play The Only Way Out) failed. Nonetheless, the Half Moon's efforts once again demonstrated the power of the leftist political theatre to influence public policy and events.

About 1975, a number of the established fringe political playwrights, such as David Edgar and Howard Brenton, began to express a desire to move their work into larger spaces, so that they could tackle bigger subjects before larger audiences. The first play of the leftist dramatists, outside of Edward Bond, to attain large-scale production on a big stage was Edgar's Destiny, in 1976, at the Royal Shakespeare
Company. This was the first of many such plays, with others including
Brenton's *Weapons of Happiness* at the National later that year, and
David Hare's *Plenty*, also at the National Theatre, in 1978. 1976 was
the year in which, after considerable delay, the National Theatre
opened its new facility on the south bank of the Thames, as well as
being the year of a subsidy crisis which resulted in the temporary
closing of the ICA (Institute for Contemporary Arts) Theatre in Decem­
ber. The ICA company had earlier been the target of death threats
during dress rehearsals of Roger Howard's *History of the Tenth Struggle*,
a play which focussed on the struggle in China between Mao and Lin
Piao in the years from 1948 to 1971, and which happened to coincide
with Mao’s death. The play was presented as scheduled with heavy
police security. Controversy also surrounded the Foco Novo production
of *The Nine Days and Saltley Gates*, a play about the 1972 miners’
strike, presented on the fiftieth anniversary of the 1926 General Strike.
A major fuss occurred when the *Daily Telegraph* raised the perennial
question of government subsidies for a militant leftist group dedicated
to supporting radical trade unions and, ultimately, the overthrow of
the government which supported it. The state of affairs was aggravated
because the performance was done at the request of the South Wales
National Union of Miners, and because a Conservative Scots M.P. chose
to make an issue of why the Arts Council was subsidizing "Marxists"
without ever seeing the play. John Hoyland, who co-authored the script
with Jon Chadwick, defended the work in print. "Some of the characters
are extremists and some are moderates. Neither side is presented as
more worthwhile or better than the other. We are telling people about
what happened, not spreading propaganda." The complaints of the Scots M.P. forced the Arts Council to investigate, but no action was taken against the Council or Foco Novo. Some felt that the incident had no ramifications beyond the publicity it generated for the production. Others, however, considered it a worrisome omen of governmental repression of leftist theatre to come.

The final major event of 1976 was the founding of a socialist-feminist group, the Monstrous Regiment of Women. The primary thrust of the company's work was feminist; however, they were also dedicated socialists, and three of the company's founding members were also members of the Communist Party. Their goal was, and is, "to shift consciousness in the area of women's relation to society."

As part of their effort, they endeavored to develop a working relationship with playwrights similar to that evolved by the Joint Stock Company, and undertook a search for new forms to compliment experimentation with old ones. Their first production was SCUM—Death, Destruction, and Dirty Washing, about the part women had played in the events of the 1870 Paris Commune uprising, by C.G. Bond and Claire Luckham. As part of the working process, they completely scrapped the original second act of the work, and, through a series of discussions and exercises,

35 John Hoyland, quoted in Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 262.

36 Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 262.

37 Susan Todd, from an unpublished lecture given at King's College, Cambridge, Conference on Political Theatre, April, 1978, quoted in Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 274.
developed a new second act "that showed the rapidity of the impetus of those events and a sense of the possibility of a radical change of consciousness occurring for the women." Their second production, in 1977, was of Caryl Churchill's *Vinegar Tom*, a play which drew parallels between seventeenth century witchcraft and the suppression of women via charges of witchcraft at that time, and the suppression of women today. That was followed by Susan Todd and Ann Mitchell's *Kiss and Tell*, which concerned violence between the sexes; *Floorshow*, a cabaret co-written by Caryl Churchill, Bryony Lavery, Michelene Wendor, and David Bradford, which turned the traditionally sexist humor of the cabaret inside-out; another cabaret, *Time Gentlemen Please*; and, finally, *Teendreams* (1979), co-written by David Edgar and Susan Todd. *Teendreams* traced the progress of women's consciousness over the decade 1968-78; from the hope of the early years, to the disillusionment and despair which began to overcome women and the movement toward the end of the period. Through its five years of existence, Monstrous Regiment of Women has continually addressed women's issues from a socialist slant, pursuing the goal and image outlined by one of their founding directors, Susan Todd. "We see ourselves not as seeking to reproduce bourgeois ideology, but to undermine it, to challenge it . . . the personal is the political." In pursuit of this goal, Monstrous Regiment has maintained both a political commitment and a commitment to artistic quality which has made

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38 Susan Todd, from an unpublished lecture given at King's College, quoted in Catharine Itzin, *Stages in the Revolution*, p. 275.

39 Susan Todd, from an unpublished lecture given at King's College, quoted in Catharine Itzin, *Stages in the Revolution*, p. 274.
them one of the most widely respected groups on the left in British theatre.

There were two major controversies in the political theatre in Great Britain during 1977. One was the North West Spanner situation involving the attempt to cut their subsidy. The second revolved around the production of Robert Bolt's *State of Revolution*, a chronicle of the Soviet Revolution from 1910 to Lenin's death in 1924, as "seen" through the eyes of Anatoly Lunacharsky, the first minister of education. Though written about the Russian Revolution, Bolt's play was in fact a critique of Soviet Marxism, arguing that it was fatally flawed because Lenin's socialism ultimately produced Stalin's repression, and because it was based on a cult of personality surrounding Lenin. Bolt's drama, which was produced at the National Theatre, was heavily attacked from the left for "the glorification of the individual, for the reduction of mass revolution to the idiosyncratic actions of a few individuals, and for the presentation of historical events as indisputable historical fact, of 'creating the fantasy of fact'." The play's critique of marxist ideology was especially resented because Bolt is among those writers whom the socialist revolutionary authors consider a "wishy-washy" social democrat. In any case, the play created a considerable stir in the theatrical left, and touched off debate on a number of points, leading writers such as Edgar and McGrath to begin formalizing leftist theatrical theory in articles such as Edgar's "Ten Years of Political Theatre, 1968-78," *(Theatre Quarterly* 8, no. 32, Winter 1979)

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The other outstanding event of 1977 was the emergence to prominence of two new political playwrights: Pam Gems, whose works delved heavily into sexual politics; and the South African dramatist David Lan, a politically active writer who won the 1977 John Whiting Award. Gems's earliest produced work was *The Amiable Courtship of Ms. Venus and Wild Bill* (part of the Women's Season at the Almost Free in 1975), and two lunchtime plays, *My Warren* and *After Birthday*, also at the Almost Free. Her first major success was *Dusa Fish Stas and Vi*, which premiered in 1977 at the Hampstead Theatre Club, and was subsequently transferred to the Mayfair Theatre in the West End. She also had *Queen Christina* produced in 1977 at The Other Place, and the Royal Shakespeare Company performed her *Piaf* in 1979. Lan's concerns as a playwright have been focussed on the issues of apartheid and censorship, and he has also been an active force in the Theatre Writers Union. His London debut was at the Almost Free Lunchtime Theatre in 1974 with *Painting a Wall*. His *Winter Dreams*, at the Royal Court in 1977, won the Whiting Award. Both Lan and Gems continue writing politically important plays today, with Lan expanding his concern for the "black impasse" to New Guinea in his latest play, *Sergeant Ola and his Followers* (1980).

The Theatre Writers Union, which had been founded in 1975, began to flex its muscles in 1977 in a dispute with the National Theatre over a basic contract for playwrights. The union successfully blacked-out the National over the issue of wages and contracts, and won a standard contract in the fall of 1979. They also got contracts with the ITC and
TACT companies, ensuring that British playwrights would be fairly and adequately compensated for their efforts in future. In 1978-9, the Theatre Writers Union also turned their attention to the effort to increase direct subsidy to playwrights from the Arts Council, an on-going battle.

In 1978, the fire at the Albany Empire, home of the Combination, threw the community arts and theatre movements in Great Britain into the light. After an arson fire on 13 July, apparently set by right-wing extremists, the Albany Empire re-opened in December to begin serving its community, Deptford, once again. Other important community theatre ventures include the East End Abbreviated Soapbox Theatre, Free Form Arts Trust, and Covent Garden Community Theatre, all in London; the Interplay Community Theatre, in Leeds; Word and Action, in Dorset; rural Devon's Medium Fair Theatre Company; The Emerging Dragon, in Somerset and the South West; Open Cast, in Wales; East Anglia's Key Perspectives; and Red Ladder, in Leeds.

1979 was a crucial year in the life of British political theatre, and one the implications of which still have not become clear. The smashing Conservative victory in the parliamentary elections left the political and theatrical left wings in disarray, and created an unsympathetic social and political climate for socialists and socialist theatre. Not only was the future of leftist theatre unclear, particularly in light of the likelihood of reduced subsidies, but some of the stalwarts of the leftist theatre, such as David Hare, had begun to publically question the impact and usefulness of political theatre, sparking off a new debate. Some groups and individuals continued to
defend the notion of political theatre whole-heartedly.

If you believe in the fight for socialism, then, of course, political theatre is relevant. And it is your job to make it so. When you drive through places like Skemersdale, when you know that kids of sixteen will never get a job and are likely to turn to the National Front, then you know what you’ve got to tap into. And you know what you’ve got to fight. Theatre is a way you can do it. Other, such as Hare, openly despaired of the political theatre’s having any real long-term impact, particularly in the creation of a socialist consciousness.

The urban proletariat in this country knows better than we ever can that they are selling their labour to capital; many of them know far better than we of the degradations of capitalism. Of the wretched and the inadequate housing into which many of them are born; of the grotesque, ever worsening imbalance in the educational system whereby the chances of progress to examinability even at “O” level, even at CSE level, is still ludicrously low; of the functional and enslaving work they are going to have to do; of the lack of control they are going to suffer at their own workplace. Of all these things they know far more than we, and most importantly, they are familiar with socialist ideas which see their sufferings as part of a soluble political pattern.

Yet, the proletariat turned its back on socialism, and toward the Tory program in the elections. Hare attributed part of the problem to lack of freshness in the techniques of political theatre, which he called "the slaves of Marxist fashion," and also condemned the simple-mindedness of marxist playwrights who felt that it was sufficient to display their marxist or socialist credentials to win an audience, rather than undertaking tough, basic, political analysis in their plays.

41 North West Spanner, from an unpublished interview with Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 294.


43 David Hare, "A Lecture Given at King's College," p. 63.
The Marxist playwright... thinks that because the play itself is part of the class struggle, an object, a weapon in that struggle, that he must first say which side he is on and make that clear, before he proceeds to lay out the ideas of the play as fairly as he may. To me this approach is rubbish, it insults the audience's intelligence; more importantly, it is also a fundamental misunderstanding of what a play is.  

In their zeal to educate their audiences and make their own positions clear, political playwrights often may have over-simplified their subjects and insulted or alienated their audiences. Hare did, however, ultimately decide that, though the political theatre had been in many ways a failure up to that time, it was necessary to carry on, and that some good could come of their efforts.

I write about politics because the challenge of communism, in however debased and ugly a form, is to ask whether the criteria by which we have been brought up are right; whether what each of us experiences uniquely really is what makes us valuable; whether every man should really be his own cocktail; or whether our criteria could and should be collective, and if they were, whether we would be any happier. However absolute the sufferings of men in the totalitarian Soviet countries, however decadent the current life of the west, the fact is that this question has only just been asked, and we have not even the first hundredth of an answer. To give up now would be death.  

Hare's position was echoed by David Edgar, who, even while concluding that in many ways the political theatre of the 1970s had been a failure, felt that "the realisation that socialist playwrights cannot themselves change the world might yet help them to discover ways of contributing, and in no small measure, to the work of those who can." Edgar saw hope in the emergence of consciousness-raising groups aimed at

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44 David Hare, "A Lecture Given at King's College," p. 63.
45 David Hare, "A Lecture Given at King's College," pp. 19-70.
46 David Edgar, "Ten Years of Political Theatre," p. 34.
particular issues, especially praising Monstrous Regiment of Women for its quality entertainment and its focus on the area of sexual politics, a subject he felt could be treated with some positive impact in the theatre. Nonetheless, as the 1980s arrived, the British political theatre was in a more precarious position than it had been in ten, or even five years earlier. Inroads had been made into the bourgeois theatre, particularly at the National and Royal Shakespeare Company; and continue to be made, as can be seen by the production of Howard Brenton's *The Romans in Britain* at the National in 1980. However, these penetrations were merely in the form and content of production, and did not have a real impact on the structure, power base, or prevailing ideology of the organizations. State subsidies, on which many of the companies depend for their existence, are unreliable, at best. Most important, "the political theatre movement had failed to reach and convert or mobilize the mass of the population, even if it had managed to raise the consciousness of many individuals in pubs, clubs, and workplaces."*\(^47\) Consequently, the specter of a massive failure looms before the British political theatre as it moves into the 1980s; one which reflects the possibility of a fresh embracing of bourgeois and rightist values by the British populace. In many ways, the situation seems to confirm the model of the life of a political theatre movement discussed by CAST's Roland Muldoon in 1977. Muldoon said that political theatre in contemporary Britain would fall into four periods. The first, which lasted from 1964 to 1969, was "the period of protest, into which we

were trying to insert a dialectical analysis. 48 The second period encompassed the early 1970s, in which, under a Tory government, Arts Council subsidies of the fringe began, and there was a strong movement toward working-class theatres and working-class interest in class politics. The third period, which Muldoon saw occurring in the late 1970s, was one of a "social contract" between the IMF and Labour Party to halt the rise in the standard of living of the working class. Muldoon saw a collapse of social democratic reformism coupled with a rise of grassroots fascism as the result. Finally, in 1977 Muldoon predicted a fourth phase, the arrival of a Tory government committed to class warfare and the destruction of the left and working-class power; a situation which may be suggested by the policies of the current Thatcher government and the inner-city riots of the summer of 1981. If Muldoon's paradigm is correct, both the fate of British political theatre and the course of British politics and society could run toward the same kind of ending as occurred in the political theatre and society of Germany in the period from 1918 to 1933. Contemporary Great Britain shares a number of traits with early inter-war Germany: high inflation and unemployment, a rising right-wing and racist backlash, strong tension between the political left and right, and an activist left-wing theatre, on both broad and specific issues, opposed to the dominant class in society and their government. The rise of a repressive rightist, perhaps even racist and fascist, government in Britain, while not likely, is also not impossible. Indeed, such a scenario has been the subject

of a recent play by Howard Barker, *That Good Between Us* (1978), as well as Howard Brenton's older script *The Churchill Play* (1974). If that were to occur, it would certainly be the death of leftist political theatre in Great Britain in the 1980s, as it was in Germany in the 1930s. More likely, however, and a much greater danger, is that the progressive disillusionment and despair brought about by worsening socio-economic conditions will continue to drain the political theatre movement of its energy and resolve, and that, combined with increasing funding difficulties and declining interest in the working class, will leave it an empty, impotent curiosity.

Before briefly introducing each of the playwrights whose works will be examined to determine their political allegiances and place in the British political theatre movement, there are a couple of general points which must be made. First, as David Mercer pointed out, one of the contradictions which haunts many politically conscious playwrights is that most of them are not working-class in the more strict political, economic, and ideological senses of the term. They are certainly workers, and may identify themselves with the class struggle and the working class, but they are seldom actually members of it either by birth, upbringing, education, or current circumstance. There is therefore a certain distance, a filter, between the playwrights and the day to day reality of the people they write about and whom they often hope to reach. This fact could lead to the conclusion that the plays of

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these writers are not truly working-class, not truly revolutionary, but merely bourgeois visions of proletarian reality, made sympathetic through sentimental identification with the working class on the part of the writers. This, however, is not necessarily the case. The fact of the matter is that, as Trotsky pointed out, "It is untrue that revolutionary art can be created only by workers." The plays written by these contemporary British dramatists were, by and large, written in the service of the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie; and while they may or may not be examples of working-class art, in most cases they are certainly examples of revolutionary art. The exceptions, of course, are those works of social democratic authors, whose aims tend to be the reform of the capitalist system toward a gradually-realized socialist state, rather than its immediate overthrow.

The second point deals with the frequent criticism that the plays of these authors are often polemical and tend to simplify their arguments and the forces of good and evil in the plays; i.e., to view the world entirely in black and white, and to rob their plays of the richness of life, with its ambiguities and gray areas, particularly in the areas of conflict and character construction. As a general rule, these criticisms are valid when applied to most, but not all, of the plays under consideration. However, there are a number of factors which explain the presence of these traits, and perhaps makes their occurrence in the plays more tolerable from a critical point of view. First, the

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characters and situations in many of the plays are ultimately derived from agit-prop, in which a simplification of conflict and character is the norm. Indeed, David Edgar, among others, began his career as an agit-prop author, and the characteristics of that type of drama have remained in his work to some degree. Second, the epic political playwrights often conceive of character less in terms of a development which takes place over the course of the play, and more in terms of its function in a series of individual scenes. In such cases, it is more difficult to achieve a full rounding of character and a continuity of character and character motivation throughout the play. Third, these plays are written to be persuasive. They have a certain propaganda purpose and value, and in order to make their points cleanly for a mass audience, and the manipulate the emotions, hence opinions, of their audiences, working-class or bourgeois, simplification in terms of good and evil is common. Fourth, the socio-political theory which underlies these plays, and which they attempt to present, is quite complex, and playwrights are inclined to simplify it for presentation on stage. Otherwise, it might well not be grasped at all in dramatic presentation. Finally, although these playwrights seldom really employ a classical dialectic structure (thesis and antithesis in conflict to produce a synthesis), many attempt to utilize a dialectic to some degree in their work. This, in combination with complex subject matter and a feeling on the part of the writers that they must clearly demonstrate their political loyalties in the works, frequently leads to a rendering of conflicts and class/social forces in black and white terms. As a result, these is sometimes a sacrifice of solid, accurate, complex
analysis of social and historical processes in favor of an emphasis on the plays' propagandistic values; a fact which is not altogether unexpected in a culture which is not socialist, but which the artists under consideration are trying to make socialist. Consequently, in analyzing individual plays, it will be taken for granted that many of them will manifest some degree of simplification in terms of character and the conflict of positive and negative forces. This is, perhaps, simply one of the hazards of political theatre; a trait which must be reckoned with as an element in an overall analysis of a play, just as certain traits must be considered as mitigating factors in the attainment of the highest possible fulfillment of dramatic potential in any form or style of theatre, such as classical or tragic. These traits will be extensively discussed in consideration of individual plays only in cases of significant deviation from the norm, or of significant abuses of it; i.e., where it damages the artistic integrity of the play to an abnormal degree. The characteristics outlined, it must be conceded, mark the ultimate artistic and real political value of the plays in which they appear; however, they may enhance the dramas' immediate propaganda value, a trade which a number of the playwrights under consideration have been willing to make. In any case, they have little to do with the actual use and functioning of epic structure in the works beyond sometimes operating as a factor in the selection of scenes. As Jean-Pierre Morel pointed out, ideology is almost inevitably a factor that serves to distort and simplify reality in plays in which it is
present, and that fact certainly holds true for contemporary British leftist dramatists.

Each of the playwrights whose work has been selected for study is, to a greater or lesser degree, a playwright of the left. Some, such as Howard Brenton, David Edgar, David Hare, and John McGrath, are committed socialist playwrights; indeed socialist revolutionaries. Others, such as Stephen Poliakoff, are of the left by virtue of their concern for leftist issues and the slant in the content, analysis, and outlook in their plays toward socialist or social democratic positions, even though they do not align themselves formally or directly with militant leftist organizations and the revolutionary cause. Since the analytical method and critical categories which have been set up focus on the plays in terms of groupings by function, there will be no discussion of the lives or corpus of the individual playwrights in Chapters Four through Six. However, it will be helpful to briefly introduce each of the dramatists whose work is under consideration, both to establish his or her position on the left as a point of reference, and to identify any elements of content or technique of special interest in their plays.

Of all the playwrights of the contemporary British left, Edward Bond is the most Brechtian in terms of technique and approach to material. In fact, J.L. Styan has called him "Britain's resident Brechtian."

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The influence of Brecht on Bond is not, however, so much direct as through the filter of Bond's association with William Gaskill during the early 1960s at the Royal Court, where Gaskill was a director and Bond a member of the playwrighting workshop, as well as later, when Bond edited *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1966) and translated Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (1967) for Gaskill productions. Gaskill was one of the earliest and most notable promoters of Brechtian drama and theatrical technique in England. He produced the first truly successful British production of one of Brecht's scripts (*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, for the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Aldwych in 1962), and incorporated Brechtian elements into his productions of classic scripts such as Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* (1963) and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1966). From his association with Gaskill, Bond arrived at his understanding and version of Brechtian theatre, although Bond himself wavers in his assessment of his Brechtian heritage.

Bond himself is unsure about the influence of Brecht on his work. He agrees that *Narrow Road to the Deep North* is "somewhat Brechtian in shape and so on", but, he continues, "Saved for instance uses the same technique, it just happens to be set in a different age. There's a Brechtian tie-up there, but that's purely because the original on which it was based happened to be that. So I don't think I'm influenced by Brecht at all."

Despite Bond's reluctance to assert Brechtian influence, as Peter Holland points out, Brecht and Bond share a number of important traits. These include: a heavy use of historical material or fables as material

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53 Peter Holland, "Brecht, Bond, Gaskill, and the Practice of Political Theatre," *Theatre Quarterly* 8, no. 30 (Summer 1978): 27.

54 Peter Holland, "Brecht, Bond, Gaskill, and the Practice of Political Theatre," p. 27.
for their plays; a dramatic structure based on the use of a gestus (Brecht) or objects (Bond) which, in their changing relationship to different characters or a single character, carry out and embody the analysis presented in the script, an analysis which is presented via the use of the individual scenes as the basic unit of both analysis and structure in the play; an approach to character which makes it flexible and subservient to the needs of individual scenes, hence points of analysis, rather than striving for a full rounding and consistency in characterization over the course of the play (i.e., a de-emphasis on the coherency of character and the consistency of character motivations in service of clear and accurate analysis); the use of transactions between characters over objects to define the nature of their relationships to one another, the society, and the world of the play; a reliance on theme, or argument/analysis, to provide the connections between scenes and the unity of the play; and the deliberate fragmentation of dramatic structure to direct audience attention to the individual scene and its content. There are certainly parts of Brecht's theory and practice which Bond does not use; there are, for example, few instances of a full use of alienation effects in his plays, particularly in the area of acting. Nonetheless, on the whole the similarities between the plays of Brecht and Bond are sufficient to establish a significant link between them, and to make Bond the most Brechtian of Britain's contemporary playwrights.

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From the beginning of his career, in works such as *The Pope's Wedding* (1962) and *Saved* (1964–5), Bond's plays demonstrated a sympathy for and concern with working-class people and problems, as well as for the problems of violence and dehumanization in human relationships. Leslie Smith's summary of Bond's *Lear* capsulizes a good deal of Bond's drama: "Brecht's social and political purposiveness allied to Strindberg's tormented vision of man's self-destructiveness." The first play in which Bond realized a full expression of socialist revolutionary consciousness, however, was *The Bundle*, in 1977; although *The Woman*, written just before, but produced after, *The Bundle* viewed sexual politics as inseparable from either capitalist or socialist politics, and so was a significant step in the direction of true socialist playwrighting.

*The Bundle* . . . clearly marked a turning point for Bond. In it, with full political consciousness, he employed an innovative method of "dramatizing not the story, but the analysis". *The Bundle* was also Bond's most politically important play in not only showing society as it is, but in suggesting a solution. Bond: "We mustn't only write problem plays, we must write answer plays. . . . The answers aren't always light, easy or even straight-forward, but the purpose—a socialist society—is clear." In *The Bundle*, the bundle by the river at the beginning is an abandoned baby, at the end, the bundle is rifles. Bond's answer in *The Bundle*: armed insurrection.

He followed *The Bundle* with *The World*, an inquiry into the relationship between capitalism and terrorism. In retrospect, it is possible to see

56 Leslie Smith, "Edward Bond's Lear," *Comparative Drama* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1979), 65.

57 Catharine Itzin, *Stages in the Revolution*, p. 79.

58 Catharine Itzin, *Stages in the Revolution*, p. 79.
a social consciousness (indeed, even a socialist consciousness) throughout the body of his work, from 1962 on. However, Bond was unable to articulate it clearly until *The Bundle*.

I would say that I always had a political attitude, but that I did not have any vocabulary or ideas to express it. I was aware of the injustice and in that sense had a class attitude to it, but I wasn’t aware of it conceptually. I had no conceptual language with which to enlighten myself or others.59

Though Bond has always been a political playwright in a certain sense, the course of his career, particularly from *Narrow Road to the Deep North* (1969) through *The Bundle* (1977), was one of the development of an instinctive socialism into a fully conscious, intellectual one. As a result, Edward Bond stands today not only as Britain’s leading Brechtian playwright, but as its leading socialist dramatist as well by virtue of the combination of the content and quality of his plays.

While Edward Bond began his career at the Royal Court in the early 1960s, and was largely established as a playwright prior to the birth of the fringe movement in 1968, all of the remaining playwrights, with the exception of David Rudkin, emerged to prominence from the political companies of the fringe. Howard Brenton, the first fringe playwright to have a play commissioned by the National Theatre (*Weapons of Happiness*) began his career at the Portable Theatre, a co-operative of playwrights founded at the Combination in Brighton in 1968, and one of the most important of the early political theatres. His early plays, though political in content, were seldom realistic in form. Many, such

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59Edward Bond, from an unpublished interview with Catharine Itzin, *Stages in the Revolution*, p. 79.
as *Revenge, Christie in Love*, and *The Education of Skinny Spew* used crime and gangsters as a metaphor for the capitalist state, and employed a style derived from cartoons and a parody of gangster movies. Beginning with *Magnificence* in 1973, Brenton shifted his style toward greater realism in action, conflict, and characterization, and toward an epic structure and scale. His desire to write large plays for large stages was fully realized in *Weapons of Happiness* (1976), and though he has subsequently written an epically structured, but small-sized, play in *Epsom Downs* (1977) for Joint Stock, he has continued to work in large forms; most recently in *The Romans in Britain* (1980), another play commissioned by the National Theatre. Given Brenton's standing as one of the leading young playwrights in Great Britain, it is likely that, if he chooses to continue working on a large scale, he will continue to be able to find spaces for production at the major subsidized companies. While the scale of his plays has increased with the years, Brenton's commitment to the socialist cause has not changed. About 1970 he began to phase out the gangster metaphor, and since 1973 most of his plays have dealt directly with the relationship between a repressive, capitalistic, class society and the people who are oppressed by it, including the revolutionaries who try to change it. (The plays from 1970 to 1973 were mostly concerned with historical subjects.) His plays are now staged primarily in the major bastions of bourgeois art, the National and the RSC; however, Brenton continues to see himself strictly as a socialist writer, serving the creation of a socialist state.

> My plays are written unreservedly in the cause of socialism. Broadly speaking, naturally. I'm a straight, traditional writer, trying to write truthfully about the society I'm in and trying to
intervene to help the good in it and discourage the bad. All writers—those who are not hopeless hacks—do that.  

Caryl Churchill began her writing career in the early 1960s, with her radio play, The Ants, appearing on the BBC in 1962. However, it was not until 1972, when her play Owners was staged at the Royal Court, that she turned from writing for radio and television to writing for the theatre. Since that time, plays such as Objections to Sex and Violence (Royal Court, 1975), Light Shining in Buckinghamshire (Joint Stock, 1976), Vinegar Tom (Monstrous Regiment of Women, 1976), Traps (Royal Court Theatre Upstairs, 1977), and Cloud Nine (Joint Stock, 1978–9) have established her as one of the leading socialist and feminist writers in Great Britain, as well as one of the major figures in the exploration of new relationships between author and company in her productions with Joint Stock and Monstrous Regiment. Churchill does not consider herself a politically sophisticated writer,

If pushed to labels, I would be prepared to take on both socialist and feminist, but I always feel very wary. (I have) a massive sense of my own political uneducatedness—a feeling of having started personally and emotionally and still groping towards finding what that means in political terms.  

Nonetheless, like Bond, the content of her plays shows, in retrospect, a movement from an initial emotional and instinctive political position to a more conscious one. Owners, her first stage play, focusses on the way that capitalism and its accompanying prevailing acquisitiveness damage the individual personally and human relationships generally. It

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60 Howard Brenton, "Howard Brenton: Introduction and Interview," p. 135.

61 Caryl Churchill, from an unpublished interview with Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 279.
is largely an individualistic, personal play, with only a tangential reference to the class system and its place in the dehumanizing forces of capitalism. In her later work, she became much more aware of and explicit about the relationships between the capitalist system, class structure, and the exploitation and oppression of individuals and the underclass. This is especially apparent in her 1976 plays *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* and *Vinegar Tom*. In each of these plays, Churchill turned to the seventeenth century to establish and explore parallels between that period and the present one. In *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, she examined the origins of capitalism in the English Civil War, and demonstrated how the capitalist merchants and landlords, such as Cromwell, used the poor populace to overthrow the king, and then established an equally, or more, oppressive regime in its place despite their promises to the contrary. It was simply a case of one ruling class being replaced by another, with the people still the loser. *Vinegar Tom* showed how the scares about witchcraft were used in the seventeenth century to suppress strong and independent women in the underclass. In both of these plays, Churchill skillfully used an epic historical structure to lay bare the evils of capitalism and class structure. However, she has not confined herself to such structures in her plays, for she has explored similar themes in a contemporary setting in *Owners* and *Trans*, plays which are basically realistic, although each has a more open structure than might be expected in the traditional realistic play. In fact, the structure of *Owners* is an epic structure scaled down to suit a domestic play. Although Caryl Churchill might have initially felt about her drama that, "My attitude then was
entirely to do with self-expression of my own personal pain and anger. It wasn't thought out.”62 Her more recent work demonstrates her ability to "analyse and to understand her own personal experience in terms of class society."63 This fact, combined with her artistic skill, has made Caryl Churchill one of the most important political playwrights in contemporary Britain, and one of the most important bridges between the socialist and feminist causes.

In many ways, David Edgar's career has epitomized that of the successful political playwright in contemporary Great Britain. Initially politicized by the events of 1968, he began his career writing small-scale agit-prop plays for a specific political company, the General Will. About 1973, he began to try to work in larger forms and to experiment with various types of political theatre. This process culminated in the production of Destiny by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1976 (an epic play for a large stage performed by one of the major bourgeois subsidized theatres), and in its presentation on BBC television in 1978. Having established himself in the dominant theatre, since that time Edgar has split his time between theorizing, writing for the bourgeois theatre and television, and writing for political companies (Wreckers for 7/84; Our Own People for Pirate Jenny; Teendreams for Monstrous Regiment of Women). As his work has grown in scale, so, too, has it become more realistic in its approach to

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62Caryl Churchill, from an unpublished interview with Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 279.

63Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 279.
character and action, although much of his work continues to contain traces of agit-prop, a form in which he served a long apprenticeship (about five years), and one for which he retains some affection, even though he has abandoned the form in his own writing. "I do like agit-prop, and I'm fond of my agitprop plays. I'm fond of that period. There may again be a period when agitprop will have more relevance than I believe it does now. But I don't think I'll ever go back to it, because the sort of subjects that I want to deal with now won't take it." He was also one of the earlier proponents of writing plays in active collaboration with the company for which they are intended, having done so in his earliest work with General Will, and as recently as 1979, with Teendreams for Monstrous Regiment of Women.

The National Interest (his first play) I wrote completely by myself. We (he and General Will) then developed a system of writing which is really the way, broadly speaking, I've written with collective companies ever since—that is, I write the words, but the process of deciding what each scene is to say (and, indeed, the way it is to be said) is a collective process. Though it must be said that the writer contributes more to the process than most other people.

Today, David Edgar stands near the top of the list of important British leftist dramatists. However, his career also demonstrates a dilemma facing many of the important socialist playwrights of the 1970s. After a decade of political activism inside and outside of the theatre, Edgar saw the British public swing to the right in the late 1970s, a process which culminated in the working class's abandonment of the labour

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movement in the Conservative victory of 1979. In the process, Edgar became disillusioned, and skeptical of the value of political theatre as a weapon in the class struggle, at least in the short term (see his article "Ten Years of Political Theatre, 1968-78"). Nonetheless, at the conclusion of that article, Edgar determined that there was still hope that the political theatre could have some impact, particularly in dealing with certain types of consciousness-raising problems over the long term. Espousing the activities of companies such as Monstrous Regiment of Women, Edgar decided to continue the struggle for a socialist society through the theatre. The dilemma is, however, should British society as a whole continue its swing toward the right, or fragment seriously and develop a repressive rightist government, can and will successful playwrights such as Edgar resist the temptation of the rewards of writing for the bourgeois establishment theatre, and continue, in the face of considerable disappointment, to write in service of the political left? That is a question which remains to be answered.

Though not one of the better-known of the British political playwrights, Steve Gooch has had a significant impact on the leftist theatre both as a playwright and worker in left-wing companies (particularly Half Moon, for which he wrote three plays and adapted or translated several more), and as a theorist/critic. His lack of notoriety, particularly in the United States, is chiefly because he has had only

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Like Bond, Gooch’s basic approach is Brechtian, emphasizing the way in which the economic situation determines the lives of his characters; using songs and slogans to set scenes, and to develop the narrative and comment on the characters, action, and society; and emphasizing the use of historical settings and events with a contemporary relevance in such plays as Will Not? If Not, What Will?, set during the 1381 peasant rebellion; Female Transport, on convict transportation in the nineteenth century, and The Women Pirates, on two eighteenth century female rebels.67

However, unlike Bond, Gooch has consistently demonstrated an interest in the interplay between socialist politics and sexual politics in his plays (Female Transport; The Women Pirates; Our Land Our Lives), making him another of the links between socialist and feminist activism. Had he produced fewer plays for the political companies, and more for the commercial or bourgeois theatres, Gooch might well be a better-known dramatist today, for the quality of his work merits attention. Nonetheless, his importance in the political theatre is considerable and secure, for throughout the 1970s he was “one of the most active of the activists in the political theatre movement.”68

David Hare is, on the whole, one of the most important figures in both political theatre and theatre generally in Great Britain today, as he has been since 1968. Not only is he an important playwright, he is

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68Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 163.
also a noted director, and has been a co-founder of two of the most important political companies of the period: the Portable Theatre in 1968, and Joint Stock in 1974. In addition, he has made at least one important theoretical statement on socialist drama, his speech at the King's College, Cambridge, Conference on Political Theatre, and, through his association with Howard Brenton and Joint Stock, been one of the leaders in exploring the field of collective authorship of plays. With Brenton, he co-wrote Brassneck in 1973, and was joint organizer of the group writing of Lay-By (1971) and England's Ireland (1972), both for the Portable Theatre. His work with Joint Stock, Fanshen, is one of the archetypal examples of a play which is thoroughly socialist, from its content and structure, to the way in which it was created, to the process by which it was rehearsed and mounted. Yet, paradoxically, Hare is one of the few political playwrights to have made a mark, not only in the political companies and bourgeois subsidized theatres, but in the commercial theatre as well, through productions of his Slag, The Great Exhibition, Knuckle, and Teeth 'n' Smiles in the West End between 1971 and 1975. He is also one of the few, along with Bond and Rudkin, not to spend a good deal of time writing short plays for the fringe theatre prior to writing a successful long work, Slag being his third play. His plays have been written in a variety of styles, ranging from traditional realism (The Great Exhibition) to full-fledged epic (Fanshen and Plenty, the latter commissioned by the National Theatre in 1978), and he has written in each of those styles with some success. Hare was one of the most outspoken of the disillusioned political playwrights in the late 1970s; but, like Edgar, determined to
continue the struggle, although he was highly critical of his compatriots for wearing their political hearts on their sleeves and trying to spoon out easy answers rather than undertaking tough, fair, and even self-critical political analysis in their works. In short, Hare's career, and he, have been a bundle of surprises and paradoxes. Nonetheless, throughout it all, Hare has been one of the most important leaders in the political theatre movement. He has led it through his organizing political companies, his plays, his directing, his theory and criticism, and his leading the encroachment of political authors on the commercial and subsidized theatres, and British political theatre would be different today had he not been involved in it.

John McGrath is another of the crucial figures in the socialist revolutionary theatre by virtue of the range of his activities since the late 1960s. He is a noted and important playwright, and has been since the 1966 production of his Events While Guarding the Bofors Gun at the Hampstead Theatre Club. That production represents one of the earliest successes of a leftist play in what was then, and basically still is, a bourgeois theatre, although it is one that has housed a number of important political plays and fringe groups in its history. He founded perhaps the single most important working-class theatre and touring organization in the political movement, 7;84, and has led it as playwright and director since its inception in 1971. He is currently a director in the 7;84 company in Scotland, as well as being one of the leading theorists of the socialist theatre, as was demonstrated in the 1970 correspondence between he and Arnold Wesker, and his 1979 article in Theatre Quarterly, "The Theory and Practice of Political Theatre." He
was even an innovative television writer during the 1960s, particularly in the 2 Cars series, although he has since abandoned television as irrelevant in the socialist struggle. Perhaps his outstanding traits as a playwright are his socialist commitment (his works being among the strongest polemical statements in the leftist repertory) and his willingness to experiment with a wide variety of forms, and to do so successfully. McGrath has written realistic plays (Events While Guarding the Bofors Gun), musical plays in both traditional (Soft or a Girl?) and ceilidh-derived (The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black, Black Oil; Joe's Drum) form, epic plays (Random Happenings in the Hebrides; Little Red Hen), domestic plays (Fish in the Sea), and short, agitational pieces (collected as Unruly Elements). McGrath's contribution to the political theatre, especially to the touring companies aimed at the education and entertainment of working-class audiences, has been tremendous, and he is one of the few political writers of his generation to avoid both the despair of the late 1970s and the temptations of writing for the large subsidized theatres in London and Stratford. He is truly one of the political theatre's indispensable figures.

The preceding writers all fall squarely into the class of socialist revolutionary dramatists; i.e., their works are written in the cause of bringing about the overthrow of the capitalist system and its replacement with a socialist form of economy and a classless society. The final two authors to be discussed, Stephen Poliakoff and David Rudkin, fall more toward the social democratic, reformist pole; although Rudkin skirts the edges of the socialist revolutionary position from time to time, and has done so increasingly in recent years. Both seem less
interested in overturning the current system than in reforming it so that it is more equitable, and both are more inclined to point out problems in their plays than to suggest solutions. Stephen Poliakoff is one of the youngest important writers in Great Britain, having been born in 1952, and having had his first play, *Day With My Sister*, staged when he was nineteen (in 1971, at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh).

His first major success came with a play about the officer class in World War I, *Clever Soldiers*, at the Hampstead Theatre Club in 1974, and his first commercial success came in 1975-6, when *Hitting Town* and *City Sugar* played at the Bush Theatre and were transferred to the West End. In 1976, at the age of twenty-four, he was writer in residence at the National Theatre, and he has written three plays for major subsidized companies: *Strawberry Fields* (1977) for the National; *Shout Across the River* (1979) for the Royal Shakespeare Company; and *The Summer Party* (1980) for the Sheffield Crucible. Poliakoff does not consider himself a socialist revolutionary, but does identify himself generally with the left.

I'm not in any way a Marxist—I hardly would be considering that my father's family fled from the Soviet Union—and I don't think there will be a violent revolution. I think quite a lot of political drama is very remote from anything the audience can identify with. I'm concerned with individuals reacting to the pressures on them—authority, environment, that sort of thing—rather than with political theories or themes. I'm writing about what's happening now, about people searching for beliefs in what is no longer a religious country, and about how individuals of charisma and power can polarise things... There's an anarchic streak, a high energy level, a frenetic feel. I'm not an anarchist, but I'm reflecting the uncertainty of our time. Until about 1968 or 1970 everyone assumed that things were going to get better, that there would be inevitable progress towards more freedom, love not war, all that sort of thing. The belief in the future disappeared very very quickly—it was killed mainly by violence in Northern Ireland and by the economic crisis at home. Now people are casting around to
discover where we are going; a lot of students and young people are very right-wing, even joining the National Front. Look at some pop stars saying they're quite happy to be thought fascists! I suppose it's quite possible we may get a right-wing government, and in that case I'll probably find myself moving further to the left. *Strawberry Fields* illustrates the danger of wishy-washy liberal attitudes—it shows how easily well-meaning people can be defeated by determined, strong-minded fanatics. I'm very conscious of that danger. My characters always refuse to be trampled on—even the girls in *City Sugar* are not totally destroyed or made into zombies.69

Poliakoff's lean toward the left can be seen in many of his plays: in the examination of the inhumanity of capitalism through the pop music business in *American Days*; the threat of the neo-fascist right in *Strawberry Fields*; the effects of poverty and social deprivation on the families, and particularly on the youth, of the underclass in *Shout Across the River*. His characters and situation are generally realistic, and structurally he moves between realistic, causal structures (*Hitting Town: The Summer Party*) and condensed epic structures (*City Sugar; Strawberry Fields; Shout Across the River*). Stephen Poliakoff is one of the finest young dramatists writing in Great Britain today; and while he cannot yet be considered a socialist revolutionary writer, he is clearly a writer of the political left.

In contrast to Poliakoff, David Rudkin was the first of the authors under consideration to achieve a major success in the theatre; in 1962, with *Afore Night Come* at the Royal Shakespeare Company. This play, about a ritualistic murder in the orchards of North England, examined racism (in this case, anti-Irish) and class xenophobia among a group of

pickers, conditions which were the result of their social and economic deprivation. Rudkin posited no solutions in the play, nor was he explicit in his condemnation of the class system and capitalism, and it was the last play he was to write for the theatre for ten years, and his last successful play until Ashes (1974). In the meantime, he turned to writing for television. Ashes deals with the problems of a childless couple and their attempt to have children, focusing especially on the impact of the condition of barrenness on them and on their relationship to the official systems which they encounter trying to remedy their situation (National Health Service, Adoption agency). In the play, there is an attempt on Rudkin’s part to parallel the impotence of the couple with the hopelessness of the political struggles in Northern Ireland, but the attempt is not very successful. It seems inorganic, wedged into the play to widen its social significance. It did, however, employ interesting narrative techniques, vaguely reminiscent of the music hall turns in Peter Nichols’s Joe Egg, and a skillfully condensed epic structure. Rudkin expanded the epic structure considerably in his next stage play, The Sons of Light, produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1977. The play was a tale of power politics laid over a sub-text of psycho-social concerns, but, “As with most of Rudkin’s plays, the political elements were secondary to personal and psychological matters.”

Though Rudkin’s plays demonstrate a genuine political concern, and have a general leftist orientation, he can hardly be considered a socialist revolutionary in the sense of a McGrath or a Brenton.

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70 Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 185.
The future of the political theatre, hence political playwriting, in Great Britain is unclear. Activity continues on several fronts; in touring theatres, such as 7i8^* Joint Stock, or Monstrous Regiment; in the major bourgeois companies; occasionally even in commercial production. There are, however, three immediate problems which cloud the future of the political theatre. First, there is the potential loss of government subsidies, which have made much of the political theatre activity of the last decade possible. Second, there is the conservative turn in the British populace, which in turn has disillusioned and discouraged many leftist playwrights and theatre workers, and may lead them to drift away from the socialist cause. Finally, there is a chance that the very success of the major political playwrights in the large subsidized companies and the commercial theatre could deprive the left of a core of its most important figures. It is typical of the bourgeois theatre to absorb any kind of successful innovation, in either form or content, into its mainstream in a filtered form, and into its body in its purer variety. Witness the example of Brecht, many of whose techniques are now standard practice in bourgeois theatre art, and whose plays are an accepted, if small, part of the repertory. It is conceivable that, as the bourgeois theatre-going public finds the works of authors such as Bond, Brenton, Edgar, Hare, and Poliakovf increasingly acceptable, their work will come to be valued and performed for its artistic merits, but ignored for its political purpose; and thus these major political theatre figures could find themselves neutralized by their own artistic success, even if they do not succumb to despair of political success of their own accord. Nonetheless, for the present
politically significant playwrighting continues in Britain, and many leftist playwrights can still join with Howard Brenton in saying, "My feelings at the moment? Feelings of revolutionary socialism." 

71 Howard Brenton, "Petrol Bombs Through the Proscenium Arch," p. 20.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE USE OF EPIC STRUCTURE
IN PLAYS FOCUSED
ON PERSONAL AND PRIVATE ACTIONS
Among contemporary British leftist playwrights, epic structure has been used in a variety of ways. One of the more important has been to examine themes and developmental sequences involving individual human beings and private relationships, including those psychological and social factors which shape human development. Three plays, all written between 1970 and 1980, will serve to provide some idea of the way epic structure operates in this context, and of the range of topics which have been treated through its use. These are David Rudkin's *Ashes*, David Edgar's *Mary Barnes*, and Stephen Poliakoff's *City Sugar*. These plays focus on the individual, and the impact of diverse forces on him or her. They do not undertake a meaningful examination of society itself, either directly, or by closely tying the individual and his development to a historical or cultural process. Occasionally, the individual life will serve as a metaphor for a social or historical force or phenomenon, or some loose parallel will be set up between them; but the relationship between the two will not be central to the action of the play. The realm of these scripts is the personal, and frequently the psychological, and the social factors present in the plays operate in service of the examination of the individual, without being examined for their own sake.

Plays of this type are the rarest of the three types under consideration, a fact which might be accounted for by the socialist principle that the individual as an individual is not the proper subject for revolutionary drama, particularly when the focus of the play is on individual, idiosyncratic psychology (indeed, two of these three plays are
by social democratic writers). Early socialist theorists held that the individual psyche and its development or problems should be discarded in drama in favor of an examination of the great social and historical forces which shaped men and their relationships with one another.

"Tragedy based on detached personal passions is too flat for our days. . . . The tragedy of our period lies in the conflict between the individual and the collectivity, or in the conflict between two hostile collectivities in the same individual."¹ In his theory, Trotsky does not deny that the individual can legitimately sit at the center of a revolutionary play; however, he does not recognize individual passions as a primary concern of socialist drama. Erwin Piscator went even further, advocating that the individual be removed from the center of drama in a discussion of Erich Muhsam's Judas.

I should like to point out here, with great personal respect and sympathy for Muhsam, who had shared imprisonment in Neider-Schonfeld with Toller, and had written the play there, that the type of drama which an active political theatre requires must, in my opinion, be based on quite different subjects and written in a different form. What we have here is the transference of an individual psychological problem, a spiritual conflict in spite of its political motivation, into the atmosphere of the movement. A drama in the traditional sense, a variation on an individual case. Muhsam will not fail to understand when I say that I think this is wrong. In his Sacco and Vanzetti he took a step forward in the one direction which I consider to be fruitful, toward a great historical subject. Political drama must, if it is to fulfill its pedagogic aim, make documentary evidence its point of departure, and not the individual. On the contrary, it must maintain the most impersonal, "objective" attitude to the characters in the subject, not in a neutral sense, but in the sense of a materialistic conception of history.²


In place of the individual, Piscator wished to substitute the masses. "It is no longer the private, personal fate of the individual, but the times and fate of the masses that are the heroic factors in the new drama."\(^3\) Contemporary British socialist playwrights generally agree with Trotsky that, at the very least, the individual psyche and its development should not function as the center of the drama. Howard Brenton said, "I've always been against psychology in plays. I think that psychology is used like a wet blanket by many playwrights, and as a very easy explanation and I wanted to stop that dead in its tracks."\(^4\) Brenton's basic objection to a concentration on individual psychology was that it made it possible for the playwright to ignore socio-political analysis, and to account for the characters' actions, and that of the play, in purely personal, psychological terms, without reference to social and historical factors such as the class system or capitalist economics. Some dramatists, such as David Rudkin, have maintained that it is possible to expand out from the individual personality, using it as a metaphor for social movements. "I believe the dramatist's function in a society to be to transmute the idiosyncrasies of personal life experience into metaphors of public, political value to mankind."\(^5\) Nonetheless, most British leftists eschew the realm of the personal.

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idiosyncratic, psychological development of the individual in both theory and practice, although they may use the individual as a focal point around which to examine larger movements and issues (See Chapter Five). One of the few exceptions is Arnold Wesker, who put the case for studies of the individual in socialist drama in his epilogue to the play *The Four Seasons*, a study of human love and loss of love and their effect on individuals.

The second, there is an argument which says that individual or private pain can have no relevance in a society where man's real tragedies are bound inextricably with his social environment; a story unrelated to and ignoring social and political events is a story that has no truth or validity. To which I make this reply: If compassion and teaching the possibility of change are two of the many effects of art, a third is this: to remind and reassure people that they are not alone not only in their attempts to make a better world but in their private pains and confusions also. The terrible smears and ridicule that private pain in art has attracted from socialists has helped create the intimidating image of the socialists as cold-hearted and relentlessly chastising, and is perhaps why so many people on the left manifest the same puritanical attitudes toward art and the artist which are shared by a perplexed, narrow-minded bourgeoisie. There is no abandoning in this play of concern for socialist principles nor a turning away from a preoccupation with real human problems; on the contrary, the play, far from being a retreat from values contained in my early writing, is a logical extension of them in that a connexion exists between, for instance, Sara Kahn's cry "love comes first, you can't have brotherhood without love" and Beatrice's lament that "without love I have neither appetite nor desire, I'm capable of nothing."

Deny plays such as this as a part of socialist literature and you alienate all men and women who need to know and be comforted by the knowledge that they are not alone in their private pain. You can urge mankind to no action by intimidating it with your eternal condemnation of its frailties. *The Four Seasons* was written because I believe the absence of love diminishes and distorts all action.6

Wesker's discussion is one of the clearest statements of the place of

the drama of the individual in socialist playwriting. His insistence that our ability to perceive and take comfort in solidarity with other individuals in our efforts and our pain is a valid and valuable process to take place in the theatre is the basic theoretical justification for plays like *Ashes* or *Mary Barnes* in the leftist theatre. By his treatment of personal problems and psychological development, the socialist playwright can increase the awareness of and compassion for the sufferings of others among the members of his audience, build a sense of solidarity between them, and perhaps ultimately spur audience members into action to relieve the social, economic, and political conditions which cause such human suffering and unhappiness. This is the basic socio-political function of plays of personal concerns and individual psychology in the plays of leftist authors in contemporary Great Britain.

Of all the playwrights and plays under consideration, David Rudkin tries to draw the clearest parallel between the personal and social elements of his story in *Ashes* (1974).7 In treating the attempts of a childless couple to have a child, Rudkin parallels their impotence with the impotence of the individual, or, indeed, the state, to do anything about the troubles in Northern Ireland. He also points to a relationship between the sense of hopelessness in Colin and Anne at the end of the play, and the sense of hopelessness in general about finding a solution to the Irish problem. However, Rudkin’s attempt to create a

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parallel between the two circumstances is largely a failure. As Anthony Masters pointed out, the metaphor of the couple's sterility for that of society/Ireland is too broad, and does not work. This is partially because the two strands, the couple's attempts to have a child and the problems in Northern Ireland, do not co-exist throughout the play, coming together into a unified statement at the end. Rather, the thread concerning Ulster is not introduced until the very end of the play, near the time when the couple's last hope, adoption, has failed. Rudkin tries to build the relationship between the two concerns through two long speeches. In the first, Colin discusses what happened when he returned home to Northern Ireland to attend the funeral of his Uncle Tommy, who had been killed in a bomb attack on a pub (pp. 46-9). The connection between the two story elements is made most clearly toward the end of his speech, when he discusses his feelings of isolation when the family and community, who resent his not having returned to Ulster for many years, refuse to allow him to help bear his uncle's coffin.

Colin: In the morning, the men all came to carry him to his grave. I went to put my shoulder to the coffin to do my share of the bearing. The men pushed me aside. And Sam said, "You'll carry no Ulsterman's coffin to no grave. Stay here wi' the women." The drum beat. Up the street, to the Orange Hall then to the grave, went with that coffin all my--belonging... The women did not speak to me. I felt so severed. I know it is the strongest feeling in the world, to be alone. And I did feel strong. Yet, the land, from whose earth I belong, the clan, from whose loins I come, had turned me out; to my own loins no child of tomorrow shall come; and I felt so--severed. (p. 48)

Colin's sense of isolation and sterility, and the parallel between his

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8Anthony Masters, "Ashes," Plays and Players 21, no. 6 (March 1974), 47.
and Anne's barrenness and that of the land (Ireland), is reinforced in Anne's speech immediately following that of Colin. In it, she reveals a dream she has had. After a coupling, during which her lover (Colin) died,

Anne: I came out across the marsh. The sky was red like blood. The land was black. The cabbages had been blasted from their stalks, the stalks stood gnarled and knotted in rows, unnaturally gleaming. I was weak. I could see my body was turning scaly as his had done. I dragged myself to where I could lean against a thorn tree. I lay there. A child came. No child that I would call a child. A child of ice, moving without seeming to move, crossing the black flat of the marsh beneath the red sky. He—she—it, featureless, white, its head in a dome like a child from space. I was so frightened, so weak I could not lift myself at all; I felt I was going out, like water down a drain: into extinction . . .

(p. 50)

The grotesqueness and sterility of Anne's dream, her isolation in a strange land, parallels the experience of Colin in Ulster. Her description of the child is even very much like that of Colin's of a young woman who had been horribly maimed in the bombing which killed his uncle. Anne's speech reinforces the sense of hopeless impotence both in their child-bearing attempts and in the ability of people to cope with a political problem as huge as that in Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, coming as they do without sufficient preparation at the end of the play, the speeches seem inorganic, and fail to integrate the individual problem of childlessness with the social problem of Ireland. Rudkin's attempt to inject large-scale social relevance into Ashes actually only serves to weaken a play which otherwise functions as a powerfully moving expose of damage done to two people by their sterility and their encounters with "the system" as they try to overcome it. Ashes functions best as a play dealing with individual concerns, and begins to fail when
Rudkin tries to expand it out. Fortunately, the war is a comparatively slight one, for it occupies a small percentage of the play, and an attempt is made in the section to show that Colin's experiences in Ireland have contributed directly to a new understanding of his personal situation and the need to, and way to, go on. "So. There's another—'self' for the rubbish heap with all the rest. My self as 'tribal son'. Yet: if we do not change, tomorrow has no place for us." (pp. 48-9) Anne comes to a similar realization through her dream. "I woke. A voice overlapped from the dream: the child's and mine: the same. 'Take off your dead.'" (p. 50) In terms of the way it functions, if not in terms of Rudkin's intent, Ashes is an epic play that deals with the problems and development of individual human beings. They are people with whose pain we might identify and empathize, and whose story certainly has social relevance; but the play as a whole is not concerned with large-scale social or historical processes, and it is best considered a drama of personal life.

Ashes is composed of three sections, each of which is made up of a series of episodes. Sometimes these episodes are independent. In other cases, they are connected to one another by narrative sections in which a character or characters address the audience much in the manner of a Renaissance soliloquy of aside. The three large sections are played continuously, and do not function in quite the same way as the acts of a dramatically structured play, although they serve a functional, structural purpose by dividing the action into three units demarking the three phases of Colin and Anne's story. The first deals with the various treatments and tests they undergo in their attempt to become
pregnant. The second treats Anne's pregnancy and miscarriage, and the loss of her womb, and any hope of bearing a child naturally. The final section includes their attempt to adopt, Colin's trip and Anne's dream, and the revelation of their rejection for adoption and reaction to it. The play is interesting from the standpoint of the operation of epic structure because it uses elements of the structure to do so many things: to examine change in Colin and Anne; to examine change in their relationship; to develop and explore the situations and conditions which meet a sterile couple, including the effect of the bureaucracy on them and their relationship. To do this, Rudkin adopted a narrative framework composed of a large number of episodically arranged scenes, or episodes. In Ashes, the term "episode" is more correct, as some units are very small, and clear scenic divisions are neither marked in the text nor created by playing. The play therefore lacks a clear division of discrete scenes, one of the normal traits of epic structure. However, the episodes function much like scenes in embodying discrete units of action or steps in developmental sequences. Moreover, the play is fairly short, and its three divisions function not so much as acts containing a series of causally related incidents, as frames for a series of individual episodes which both advance the plot and, more important, allow the playwright to explore various situations and conditions in a variety of aspects. Small episodes, rather than large blocks of action, constitute the basic structural units of Ashes, and in that respect it operates much more like an epic than a dramatic script. These traits, combined with its early point of attack and structural organization around the analysis of conditions
and processes, make *Ashes* an epic play in terms of its structure.

**Ashes**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 1</td>
<td>7-25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Episode 1</td>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>Colin and Anne’s bed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Banter after love-making. Jokes about Colin’s former homosexuality. Anne expresses hope that they have successfully conceived this time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Episode 2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Doctor’s office/Days or weeks later</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Anne examined by Doctor. Exposition that she and Colin have been trying to have a child for two years, that both are healthy, and that, apparently not for the first time, they are to collect post-coital samples.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Episode 3</td>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>Bed/Couple of weeks later</td>
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<td>Colin and Anne awake before dawn for lovemaking so that the post-coital test can be done. Shows dehumanization of sexual relationship to automatism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Episode 4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Doctor’s office/Next morning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collection and analysis of post-coital sample. Reveals that all sperm are dead, and Colin must be seen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Episode 5</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>Doctor’s office/Some days later</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Colin examined. He is normal and in good health from all appearances, and is sent to a clinic for a sperm count.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Episode 6</td>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>Clinic/A day or two later</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>First narrative link of play, as Colin does comic imitations of his encounters with receptionist and lab assistant. Reveals in part the insensitivity of clinic staff to his problem in discussion of billing and revelation that neither the venetian blinds nor the door of the room in which he is to masturbate can be secured. Comic section follows in which Colin tries various ways of positioning himself to masturbate into the ludicrously small container they give him.</td>
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Colin has difficulty masturbating, and is interrupted by a young girl just as he has begun to be successful. His homosexual tendencies revealed again as he decides to look at construction workers in hopes of becoming aroused.

Colin's sperm deficient in number and activity to make conception probable. Doctor prescribes measures to increase chances (showers, not baths; boxer shorts, not tight briefs; eating less; bathing testicles in cold water twice daily for six weeks), then another sperm count.

In sensitivity of medical system seen again as Doctor drops sperm sample into waste-basket before Colin, Colin has comic narrative section of audience address on difficulty of bathing testicles in cold water.

Return visit to clinic for second sperm count. Again, insensitivity of medical staff revealed (room called "wanker's paradise"). Also further revelation of Colin's homosexuality: he brings magazines featuring nude young men and women with him as "visual aids".

Narrative section by Anne covering several months and topics. Reads letters of all her old friends who are having babies. Colin's second sperm count normal. False pregnancy symptoms appear when Anne's period is overdue. When it begins, time shifts to the present and active mode for one line and a bit of action, Colin fails to respond to her disappointment with any real tenderness when period begins. Strain and distance seem to be growing between them.
An expensive seminologist, Guru, introduces himself in a brief, narrative link.

Colin discusses his sexual orientation with Guru, revealing his fears that his sexual ambivalence is the reason they cannot conceive. Guru dispels the notion of this or any other psychological cause. Asks for additional post-coital test and sperm count. Revelation of medical system's inadequacies in previous applications of testing procedures and poor quality of clinic. Guru teaches them, with the assistance of his receptionist, a rear-entry position, which he believes will facilitate conception. Makes Colin and Anne take the position on the floor, treating them as "clinical objects".

Colin and Anne in narrative re-enactment of several events over a couple of months of time. Colin mocks himself in long narrative section over his infertility. Colin and Anne "wearily posture themselves" on the bed in position Guru advised. Revelation Colin has functioned adequately each time required except for night of post-coital test, on which occasion Anne resorted to, for her, extraordinary measures. Mood in scene shifts from Colin's self-mockery, to mutual sarcasm, to deeply erotic, to bitterness.

Colin's sperm normal, but they are killed almost immediately after ejaculation because Anne is too acid. Guru prescribes alkaline douches.

Colin and Anne joke over douche to cover discomfort. "They lark with douche; suddenly as though afraid of losing their sexuality forever, are in desperate, almost childish play. They adopt posture to make love without tenderness or real desire."
Anne and Colin frozen in posture, wondering why sexual reproduction can't be done as amebas do it. Their desperation growing. Meddling of relatives revealed.

Anne and Valerie, very pregnant and with one child in a pram, discuss Anne and Colin's problem. Scene reveals incapacity of people to understand real situation, as Valerie recommends numerous absurd, folkish cures (different-colored nightgowns, a romantic holiday, athletics), despite Anne's repeated assertion that the problem is chemistry, not the love-making. Scene ends with Anne's bitter diatribe against equating one's worth as a woman with child-bearing.

A second revelation of ineptness in medical system; in several years of consultation, no one has checked to see if Anne is actually ovulating. Also, Colin's sperm tests and treatment were incomplete/insufficient. Doctor dispenses charts, containers for samples, and explanations to Colin and Anne.

Anne despair over charts, Colin over tests and results which lead them nowhere. Both comment bitterly on the hypocrisy of saying neither is to blame, and then doing tests to see which is at fault, particularly since each is variously found guilty and exonerated.

Tests reveal both are normal enough to conceive if they continue douches and cold water treatments.

Anne takes temperature, finds she is ovulating, and wakes Colin for lovemaking.
### Ashes

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<th>Scene</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Episode 23</td>
<td>24-25</td>
<td>Doctor's office/Some weeks later</td>
<td>Revelation that Anne has conceived.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 2</td>
<td>26-40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Episode 24</td>
<td>26-27</td>
<td>A country picnic/About three months later</td>
<td>Idyllic picnic. Colin makes overtures for lovemaking. Sharply broken off when Anne begins passing clots of black blood.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Episode 25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Bedroom/An hour or so later</td>
<td>Doctor (from early episodes) advises Anne, now three months pregnant, to remain in bed for forty-eight hours as she is now a pregnancy at risk.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Episode 26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Outside bedroom/Hours or so later</td>
<td>Short narrative by Colin. Discusses quantity of bleeding. Though child has not been formally lost, he reveals he has given it up in his heart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Bedroom/A couple of days later</td>
<td>Doctor examines Anne, the bleeding having stopped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Bedroom/Non-specific</td>
<td>Short narrative by Anne disclosing that that night she began bleeding again, this time fresh blood, a process that was repeated several times over the next days. Scene blends into . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 29</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Bedroom/Several days after Episode 27</td>
<td>Doctor resists giving Anne a drug to prevent bleeding and miscarriage, feeling it is better that she miscarry because there is probably a reason for that to happen. She expresses the fear that, as she is nearing thirty, she is becoming too old to have children; a fear the Doctor dismisses. He gives her a fifty-fifty chance of not miscarrying.</td>
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Colin brings breakfast to Anne. Forgets several items, then they spill it. Anne still bleeding. She begins eating. When she breaks egg, finds it is a fertilized egg, and recoils from the bed, Colin sees it as well, and chokes with nausea. Seeing it leads Anne to wonder if she is carrying a monster or a Mozart. She then wonders aloud if there is a Will which guides action, and if so if it is wild, merciless, and senseless. She concludes by wondering what if there is no purpose, logic, or love at the heart of things.

Anne lounges in garden, bleeding mildly. She and Colin discuss the nerve system of dinosaurs, which was very slow to communicate pain to the brain, in an attempt to overcome their anxieties through talk. However, it breaks through when Colin says, "What danger-signal is the human brain not getting?" (p. 32) Valerie enters. Her behavior is described by Rudin as follows: "Her cruelty throughout this scene is pure animal; she deceives her better self she is trying to make Anne feel a welcome new member to the suffering-wife-and-mother club; she would be ninety per cent horrified if someone were to tell her she was doing the cruel opposite."

Valerie makes almost pointed references to Colin's homosexuality and their difficulty in conceiving, opposing them to her fecundity (she seems to be pregnant again for the third time). She leaves. Anne feels her belly anxiously, and she and Colin discuss their anxiety over the bleeding, which is contributing to their feelings of "irremediable personal separateness". Anne says she thinks the baby has died, Colin tries to distract her by having them peel potatoes. They play a word game. Colin goes in to turn on the oven. Anne feels something, and wipes with a tissue, but there is no blood. She begins peeling again, tries to adjust headrest on loungers, and it and she fall flat. She spills potatoes and water and collapses onto her knees. Colin re-enters. Anne tells him her waters have broken in the womb.
Long soliloquy by ambulance driver as he prepares Anne for transport to hospital. He comforts her alternately with direct audience address, narrating her feelings of closeness to death, revealing that twenty per cent of British pregnancies end in miscarriage, and also commenting on how stupid weeping people look, how weak, and of the ambivalence that creates in a witness. "It tears your heart in two for pity, and your right hand itches to strike that stupid face."

(p. 37)

Direct audience address by Colin on unfairness, the unrightness, of what has happened; the blind cruelty of nature; the fact that nature uses death to create new life, but all that will be destroyed in a final annihilation. The grimmest statement of hopelessness in the play.

In hospital, in a narrative address to audience, Anne tells what has happened over the course of several days. They seemed to have saved the baby at the hospital, but she continued to bleed. There was a false call to Colin by the hospital informing him she had gone into surgery when they called him instead of Mr. Harvey (revealing again the inefficiency of official health system). Finally, Anne miscarries.

Colin visits Anne, bringing flowers. She tells him there were two babies, one good and one bad, with the bad one bringing the good out with it. This is what she seems to believe, not necessarily what was true. Anne complains that they won't tell her if it was a monster or not. Colin tries to comfort her by saying it will be alright next time. She tells him they have had to remove her womb. The doctor has introduced the notion of adoption to her when he told her. Anne buries her head in Colin's chest and apologizes for not being able to give Colin children. He tries to
Scene  

(Episode 35) comfort her and share her pain, telling her it is not a question of her "giving children" but of their "having children together". In her grief, she speaks of seeing the smoke from the incinerator where they burned her womb. Colin laments it is all gone, but emphasizes all he and Anne can do now is to make the best of what remains.

Section 3 41-51

Episode 36 41-42 Adoption Services Agency/Some months later

Long speech by Social Services Officer on the lack of children available for adoption, and how few of those who want even handicapped or racially mixed children will be accepted. Warns couples to expect little, and that if they are rejected, they will not be told why.

Episode 37 43 Colin's room/Non-specific

Colin dressing to go to funeral of Uncle Tommy in Ireland. Lament for Tommy turns into self-depracatory speech on his sterility, and ends by blaming himself for Anne's loss of her womb, indicating a growth of guilt and loss of self-esteem. Then turns to adoption applications, interviews, and process, which engendered hope in him for a child, but which apparently has not been satisfactory. He is described by Rudkin as pallid, in contrast to his healthfulness at the beginning of the play. He speaks "self-mockingly".

Episode 38 43-46 Adoption Agency/Non-specific, but shortly after Episode 37

Anne's interview with Mrs. Jones, the area officer. They discuss a variety of topics, including Colin (the strength and complexity of his desire for fatherhood, something hinted at in Colin's earlier speeches, pp. 16-7 and 43; his sexuality, which seems a definite mark against them, but which Anne defends; his reaction if they are refused, which would be bitter, but which he would accept and move on from); their relationship, which Anne concedes is now "rather bad" because of the strain, but which she asserts ultimately will last; and their view of life, which will allow them to pursue another road if that of having children is proved conclusively to be a wrong one (as was the case with their original career choices).
Episode 39 46-49 In a van driving home from airport/After Colin has returned from Ireland, several days after Episode 37

Colin's long narrative in which he tells of the events in Ulster, the funeral, and his sense of isolation and aloneness.

Episode 40 49-50 The garden/Days or weeks later

Long narrative by Anne in which she tells her dream.

Episode 41 50-51 The garden/Continuous to Episode 40

Colin brings in the letter from the county that their application for adoption has been rejected. They stand together to set out on another road.

As a brief glance at the structural chart of Ashes reveals, the play fulfills all the general requirements of epic structure. It is cinematic, encompassing several years and a dozen locales in its forty-one episodes. It has an early point of attack, coming close to, but not right at, the beginning of Colin and Anne's consultations over their problems in having children (Episode 2 suggests that they may have had previous post-coital tests). The use of an early point of attack and cinematic construction allows Rudkin to tell as much, and all, of the story as he deems significant in direct dramatic representation, rather than through conversational exposition, as would be normal in a dramatically structured play. Certainly, some exposition in Ashes, as in any epic play, is done via dialogue, either through conversation between characters, or via narration. However, in Ashes the preponderance of scenes important to the subjects treated by Rudkin are presented to the audience directly, rather than through conversation.
between characters after the fact. These include such varied concerns as change in Colin, Anne, and their relationship; the nature of the condition of barrenness, and its effect on Colin and Anne; the process by which they try to rectify their situation, and the effect of the treatment on them and their marriage; and thematic questions such as the validity of and damage done to people by pressures, internal and external, to have children, or the ineffectiveness and callousness of the official health care system in treating problems such as sterility.

In several instances, notably Episodes 32-34 (the ambulance ride through Anne's miscarriage), Rudkin employs narrative to describe crucial events rather than dramatizing them directly, but these episodes differ markedly from the type of exposition typical of plays with dramatic structure, particularly those set in a realistic frame, by consisting of soliloquies or asides to the audience by characters who discuss or dramatize what is happening or has happened to them. They are set aside from the dramatically presented action by breaking the fourth-wall relationship which obtains, as a general rule, throughout the remainder of the drama. There are occasional asides during what are otherwise fourth-wall scenes, but these are comparatively rare. Examples include Anne's comment to the audience, "Dignity," in Episode 13 (p. 15), while Guru has she and Colin on the floor teaching them a rear-entry position to facilitate insemination; and Colin's two asides during Episode 7 (p. 11): "What are yous expectin to see, then," when he turns his back to the audience as he drops his trousers in preparation for collecting his sperm sample; and "Was ever fella so abused," when a young girl suddenly bursts in and begins to giggle. These
narrative sections allow the characters both to describe events and to address the audience on their thoughts and feelings concerning the incidents. They also allow Rudkin to condense action and avoid direct representation of scenes which might be repetitious or too difficult to render on the small stage for which *Ashes* is written (It uses minimal scenery, only props and light, and Rudkin specifically states in his notes to the play (p. 6), that "A small auditorium is preferable.").

Although *Ashes* bends realistic convention, and utilizes only the minimal scenic elements necessary to set scenes and carry out action, those objects which are used are rendered and treated realistically. There is no conventionalized use of object or gesture suggested by Rudkin; e.g., taking a few steps to symbolize travelling a great distance.

Shifts in time and space in the play are accomplished by narrative linkage of scenes or blackouts between them (specifically called for in the script); traditional means of moving through time and space, particularly in epic plays. Given the basically realistic, if minimalistic, approach to objects and gesture/staging suggested by Rudkin, actions such as the ambulance ride, miscarriage, and Anne's operation would be difficult, if not impossible, to stage satisfactorily; a fact which is also true of Colin's long monologue describing his trip to Ireland, which would necessitate a large number of people (the play is written so that it can be acted by four) and technical resources greater than the play wishes to accommodate. By utilizing narrative and audience address, Rudkin is able to show the characters' reactions to significant incidents without presenting the incidents directly, as well as condensing the action to manageable playing time; the latter an important
consideration since he specifically asks that the play be done without interruption. "In any case, for the sake of the play's three movement form, it should be given without interval." (p. 6) Though the play as a whole is not set within a narrative or story-telling framework (both the first and last scenes are played without audience address and in accord with fourth-wall conventions), Rudkin effectively uses narrative sections to condense action, avoid staging difficulties, link scenes, and to allow intrusions into the flow of fourth-wall scenes, internally and between scenes, for the purposes of character revelation via comments on the action and their reactions, and thematic enrichment (allowing Rudkin to introduce scenes and comments tangential to the narrative flow of the story, but important to his themes). This use of narrative and audience address is not present in all epic plays; however, it is a technique easily accommodated by the form, both taking advantage of and increasing a sense of its episodic construction, and one which is used creatively and effectively in Ashes.

An early point of attack and cinematic construction permit a playwright to present any scenes or information he deems important to his subject directly, rather than through exposition via conversation between characters or narration by, for example, a chorus, as in Greek drama, whose choral odes stand outside the causal flow of action, although they may comment on it. He may choose, as Rudkin does in Ashes, to include narration to accomplish particular ends, but in theory he can directly present any incidents he pleases. Given that fact, two important points follow. First, an early point of attack and cinematic construction almost inevitably demand that the incidents or scenes of a
play be structured episodically; i.e., that there not be a probable or necessary relationship between succeeding scenes (although some scenes might have such a relationship) but only a possible, or accidental, one. The chief reason for the relationship between scenes being only "possible" is generally that some of the incidents or scenes which would be necessary to create a causal relationship are not present, not that the playwright has randomly mixed or selected scenes. An episodic structure permits a playwright to exclude scenes which might be necessary in the creation of a causal chain, and would therefore be present in a dramatically constructed play, but which are irrelevant when the primary focus of the work is not the telling of a tightly wrought story; as, for example, when theme, analysis, or tracing a historical sequence are of prime importance. It also allows him to include scenes which would disrupt a causal flow, which might in fact stand completely outside the main narrative flow of a work, but which contribute to its thematic or analytical development. This freedom makes it possible for the dramatist to bring his thematic and analytical concerns into sharper relief, and to build a structure which is at the service of, and perhaps even embodies, the points of his analysis or argument. An episodic structure also allows the dramatist to isolate his scenes, turning them into discrete units which form the basis of his structure or analysis, and which are the basic units through which the audience perceives and understands the action and meaning of the play. Again, this fact creates the possibility that a sharper focus on a theme, argument, or analysis can be generated than in causally constructed works. In an episodic structure, the playwright can, if he wishes, use the discrete scenes to
emphasize his points by crystallizing important ideas or steps in his analysis into individual scenes, with each scene containing a single point or idea leading to the conclusion. In addition, some scenes can function to pull points together, or to juxtapose one idea with another in succeeding scenes. Such processes are difficult in plays with dramatic structure, where the basic unit of structure and perception is the act; a unit so large that several ideas or arguments must be contained in each one, with a subsequent reduction in focus of any individual idea. It should be noted that not all epic plays take advantage of the opportunities offered by scenic isolation. In *Ashes*, Rudkin isolates some incidents by blackouts, but uses narration to link or blend others, and also mixes his points in such a way that some scenes contain several important ideas without especially focussing on any. This is particularly evident in Episode 13 (pp. 13-6), in which he brings up the internal pressures on people to reproduce; the dehumanization of the process they are involved in; the inefficiency of the health care system; as well as introducing a lecture on sexuality and homosexuality. In addition, some scenes in the play serve no thematic purpose. Rather, they simply provide technical information for understanding the condition and process; important considerations for a full understanding of the action, characters, and what they go through, as well as preparation for scenes in which they deal with the temptation to assign fault or guilt for their predicament, a part of the destructiveness of the process in which they are involved. In any play, some mixing of themes is inevitable, no matter how hard a playwright might try to achieve isolation of individual points in single scenes. In fact, it would be
disadvantageous if this did occur, for it could lead to a loss of richness in the play, a dry, formulaic feel, and audiences could conceivably miss or forget important points if they were never repeated. However, when using episodic construction, mixing can be effectively minimized where desired without damaging the richness of theme and incident in the play, and without reducing the drama to a series of dry, trite, easy arguments or analytical points. By allowing each scene to have a major theme, which may be repeated elsewhere in the play as a major or minor point of focus, and one or more minor themes, a balance of clarity and richness can be struck which allows the play to be both entertaining and persuasive. Had Rudkin tried to present his analysis and develop his themes without some device to compensate for the loss of focus occasioned in Ashes by his frequent mixing of themes in single episodes without giving real prominence to any, and his use, in some parts of the play, of a number of short scenes in rapid succession (which makes it hard to grasp and lock away a point), he would have severely impaired the ability of his work to accomplish its thematic and analytical goals effectively. However, Rudkin employs a technique similar to that described above to overcome this potential problem. Each major theme or point of analysis is repeated a number of times, sometimes in isolation, sometimes in combination with other points, weaving through the action of the play much as a theme might in a piece of music. Though Rudkin did not take advantage of the opportunities for clear thematic presentation offered by scenic isolation, he compensated adequately by utilizing his episodic structure and large array of episodes to return to the themes time and again until they were well-established.
The fact that *Ashes* is episodically constructed can be most easily established by looking at the relationship between episodes in Section Three of the play, Episodes 36-41. Episode 36 is a long speech by a Social Services officer on the lack of children available for adoption and the slim chances of anyone receiving one. It functions as a comment on a number of social issues in itself, and also as preparation for Colin and Anne's not being able to adopt. This episode is followed by one in which Colin dresses to go to his Uncle Tommy's funeral in Ireland. It includes self-deprecation for their sterility and a section in which he blames himself for Anne's loss of her womb. There is also a section on the adoption procedures and his feeling that he is not performing satisfactorily there. There is a relationship between the two scenes in their mutual concern with the adoption process, and thematically through the first attempts to bind the state of barrenness in the couple with the political situation in Ulster through his guilt and sense of isolation; however, there is no probable or necessary relationship between the adoption speech in the preceding scene, or the process itself, and his going to Ireland. The relationship is only possible, a matter of chance or circumstance; a coincidence, in which one event happens to follow the other in time. This is followed by Episode 38, Anne and Mrs. Jones in interview at the adoption agency. This scene is very important for the insights it lends into the deterioration of Colin and Anne, both individually and in their relationship; for insights into their characters; and as part of the tracing of the process through which they move. However, this episode has no real link to that which precedes it beyond amplifying some of the comments about adoption.
initiated there, particularly Colin's sense of failure. Anne: "When he got home I asked him how it went. 'Lousy,' he said, 'I reckon I talked our child away.'" (p. 44) It bears a closer relationship to Episode 36, the long adoption speech, but even there no probable or necessary relationship is established. The conversation follows the long speech in time, and so logically comes after it in the play; but the long speech does not cause this interview, nor any of the things said or done during it. Episode 39 is Colin's long narrative on his trip to Ireland. Again, this episode ties together a number of the play's thematic and analytical concerns, as does Anne's narrative of her dream, Episode 40, which follows it immediately. However, neither bears any but an accidental relationship to the interview. Colin's Irish experience is totally unconnected to Anne's experience at the adoption agency. It merely follows it in time. Anne's dream could conceivably have been caused by her reaction to the interview. However, coming as it does on the heels of Colin's report, it seems far more likely that, if anything in particular from preceding action caused her dream, it was his description of events in Ireland, which might have set off a process which crystallized the whole experience for her as the trip did for him, but on a subconscious level. The fact that her dream picks up on some of Colin's imagery increases the sense that some relationship between the two episodes might exist. This is especially true of his description of the maimed girl, "The head bald as an egg, half the features blown away." (p. 47); and Anne's account of the baby in her dream, "He-she-it, featureless, white, its head in a dome like a child from space." (p. 50) Be that as it may, the final episode, Episode 41 (the
report that they have been rejected for adoption), although it is immediately connected to its predecessor in time, cannot be causally linked to that incident. Neither Colin's trip nor Anne's dream caused them to be rejected. It is just a coincidence that the letter arrives at that moment. Looking back to Episode 38, even that incident cannot be causally linked to Episode 41, because no reason for their rejection is ultimately established. Their frank admission of problems in the relationship and Colin's homosexuality, discussed by Anne and Mrs. Jones, would seem to be the probable cause. Neither, however, is ever actually established as the cause, and no direct attribution made, either by the letter or the characters themselves. In Section Three, as in the first two sections of Ashes, the relationship between the scenes is certainly possible, but virtually never is it necessary, or even probable in the strict structural sense of the term. The sequence of scenes, and the relationship between them, is controlled by two factors: the chronological unfolding of their story, as seen through the representation of successive steps in the medical and adoptive processes, or the process of change in Colin, Anne, and their relationship; and theme, via the inclusion of scenes which reinforce one of Rudkin's concerns, but do not directly operate in the progression of the narrative. An example of this latter factor is Episode 17, which is non-specific in time, and in which Colin and Anne, frozen in posture on the bed, articulate their frustrations and resentments at the pressures on them to have a child. Rudkin clearly takes advantage of the opportunities epic structure offers for episodic construction in Ashes. This is an important point, for had he been bound by the necessity for the tight construction that
causal structure nearly inevitably demands, a fact which accounts for the adherence to the three unities in many dramatically structured plays, and limited movement in time and space in most others, Rudkin would have been unable to represent directly many of the incidents so important to the full realization of his dramatic and thematic ends. He would also have been unable to repeat and interweave significant points via the presentation of similar situations through time to the extent he does in the play, most notably in the first section, in scenes dealing with the health care apparatus (Episodes 2, 4–8, 10, 13, 15, 19, and 21, all of which show Colin and Anne in contact with the system). That would have weakened the thematic thrust of the play, as well as the full revelation of the process and its effect on them, particularly if Rudkin had found it necessary to limit scenes in the pre-conception process to one or two visits in a single location, as might have been necessary in a play which dealt with the same concerns via a dramatic structure. To fully comprehend the dispiriting effect of the process on the two, it is necessary to see it grind at them again and again over a long span of time. It is important to realize that, for subjects such as that dealt with in Ashes, and for a variety of other themes and topics as well, an episodic structure may serve the needs of the playwright far better than a dramatic structure. In those instances it is not justifiable or fair to criticize the play for not having a dramatic structure; i.e., to criticize it as structurally weak for not meeting Aristotelian structural standards it neither pretends to nor wishes to meet. Rather, it is necessary to realize that both epic and dramatic structure are best used in particular contexts, and to direct
critical attention to questions such as whether the structure employed by the dramatist is appropriate and well-constructed by the standards applicable to such structures. In that way, a better appreciation of the merits and flaws of plays with epic structure, such as Ashes, can be attained.

The second point raised, at least in part, by the opportunities opened to the epic playwright by an early point of attack, cinematic construction, and the freedom to select and arrange from a wider variety of incidents, times, places, etc., than is normally available to a playwright using dramatic structure, relates again to the critical approach to these plays; particularly the relationship between the incidents selected and the way they are organized, and the subject matter tackled by the playwright. The chief critical basis, and point of central analytical interest, in approaching epic scripts must be how and how well the dramatist has used that freedom and openness of form in the selection and arrangement of the incidents to develop his theme, or present his argument or analysis of the condition or process, with maximum effectiveness. As in any play, it is in the relationship between the content of the play and its structure that the groundwork for success or failure is laid. An inappropriate structure for the content of a play will almost always result in a bad drama, while an appropriate meeting of content and construction will boost a play toward success. In some plays, the chief interest of the playwright is to tell a story effectively and achieve a maximum of empathic involvement and emotional catharsis. In such instances, plays which utilize dramatic structure are generally better than plays which do not; even when the dramatist
fails to achieve causality, and instead uses episodic construction, as often happens in melodrama and other plays which fall toward the middle of the spectrum linking fully epic and fully dramatic scripts. This is because dramatic structure accommodates the compression which allows for the creation of tension, the intensification of conflict rising through the action to a climax, and the maintenance of audience interest in a narrative line, as well as their empathic or emotional involvement in it, better than does epic structure. On the other hand, for plays in which the primary object is the exposition of a theme, the presentation of an argument or analysis, or the examination of a process of development and change (historical, social, cultural, or personal) over a sizeable span of time, epic structure is normally a better choice for the playwright because it gives him the freedom to select and order his play for the most effective and clear presentation of those concerns. He can present any and all significant steps or points in his exposition, and omit any less significant ones, regardless of how they relate causally to the incidents presented. He can also free himself of the necessity of paying undue attention to the shaping of dramatic action in a tight curve of increasingly intense conflicts to maintain the audience's empathic involvement in the play and bring about catharsis. This is not to say that the epic playwright should not, or can afford not to, consider the effective dramatic development of his action when constructing his play. He will certainly want to observe generally the principle that dramatic action ought to become increasingly tense, that conflict become increasingly great, as the play progresses. Interesting characters in conflict, in interesting situations; such traits are
central to the success of virtually any drama, and clumsiness in handling characterization, conflict, dialogue, etc., will damage an epic play as much as any other. However, the epic playwright has greater freedom to digress, to deviate from the narrative progression, to include incidents which serve little or no purpose in the development of dramatic tension, but which are important for other reasons. Criticism of epic plays must focus on how well the dramatist has used that freedom for the maximally effective presentation of his content, while still maintaining an effective rendering of character, conflict, etc. With that in mind, it is possible to look critically at the way in which Rudkin utilized epic structure in treating his diverse concerns in Ashes.

In analysing the relationship between content and structure, it is necessary first to isolate those concerns treated in the play which control the selection and arrangement of scenes (or episodes). Only then is it possible to examine how effective the playwright has been in choosing, rendering, and ordering scenes to best exemplify his points, build his argument or analysis, or represent the sequence under consideration. In Ashes, there are six strands which are the primary controlling factors in the structure of the play. These are: the analysis of a condition, that of being unable to have children; the analysis and revelation of a process; that by which Colin and Anne try to rectify their situation; the process of change wrought by those two factors in Colin and Anne as individuals; the process of change in their relationship; the examination of those pressures, internal and external, which operate on childless couples to make them feel they must have children;
and the inefficiency and callousness of the official health care system in dealing with problems such as barrenness. Each of these topics has a substantial impact on the selection of scenes and their ordering in the play through Rudkin's need to include particular incidents in a particular order to develop his themes clearly and effectively, and in a dramatically satisfying manner.

Obviously, the six controlling elements in the structure of Ashes are closely interrelated, and separating them for analytical purposes both difficult and artificial. Consequently, it will be most convenient and clear if, in two instances, these concerns are paired for discussion. The first pair is the analysis of the condition of being unable to have children, and the process by which Colin and Anne try to change that situation. The majority of the action dealing with these concerns takes place in the first section of the play, prior to Anne's pregnancy, although some portions of the third section, dealing with adoption, obviously relate to their being unable to conceive after Anne has lost her womb, and so trying to adopt a child to take the place of the one they can never have. The analysis of the inability to have children (as distinct from its psychological and physical effect on the two, or the theme of the pressures which make them undertake the whole process) is largely technical in nature, dealing with the possible causes of Colin and Anne's barrenness. Similarly, the process by which they try to change the situation deals primarily with those tests and treatments undertaken to diagnose the problem and increase their fertility. The development of the two concerns is prefigured in the first episode, when, after lovemaking, Anne says, "Perhaps we did it this time." (p. 8)
The first scene in which they become a dominant element, however, is Episode 2, a physical examination given Anne by the first doctor. In this episode, it is revealed that they have been trying to conceive without success for two years, that Colin seems to be potent, and that Anne's cycle is regular, thus eliminating any overt cause for their difficulty. In order to probe deeper, the doctor suggests a post-coital sample be taken for testing. This leads Colin and Anne to rise early for a very unromantic coupling in Episode 3, and hence to Episode 4, in which it is discovered that all the sperm are dead. That suggests a possible cause for their infertility, that Colin is sterile, and leads to Episode 5, a physical examination for Colin. Insofar as nothing abnormal can be immediately discovered in that examination, it is necessary for Colin to have tests run; chiefly a sperm count. That is accomplished in Episodes 6 and 7, at the clinic. Episode 8 reports the results of the test: that Colin's count is deficient, and the sperm not sufficiently motile. The treatment for his condition is also outlined: loose clothing, and bathing his testicles in cold water twice daily. In Episode 9, a comic section, Colin discusses in audience address the difficulties of the procedure, and then his return visit to the clinic for a second test. This time the sperm motility is sufficiently improved for conception to be possible. In Episode 10, Anne reports briefly on a false alarm, in which she was five days overdue on her period. With Episode 11 commences the second part of their process, consultations with a new doctor, Guru. That episode is a short narrative introduction by Guru himself. In Episode 12, Colin asks Guru if his homosexuality could have anything to do with their problem,
but is told that, so long as he functions physically in bed, it could not be; nor is stress, or an emotional or psychological problem a likely cause. Guru reveals that the problem may not lie in either Colin or Anne, but in an incompatability in their body chemistries. He suggests an additional post-coital test and sperm count (the latter owing to the unreliability of the clinic to which Colin had been sent); that Colin continue his cold water treatments, but limit them to two minutes; and that Colin and Anne adopt a new posture, that of "performing dogs", during lovemaking to increase their chances for conception.

Episode 14 is a narrative section of direct audience address shared by Colin and Anne. They discuss, and demonstrate, the posture Guru has had them adopt; one which they dislike so much that Colin is unable to perform the night before the post-coital test, and for him to reveal that he sometimes fantasizes about men to help him in the posture.

Anne: . . . In this posture, He probably has to pretend I'm some sailor from his misspent youth.

Colin: The acts don't resemble, lovey. Though it is possible to fantasize; which, frankly, at times has helped me. (p. 17)

Despite their distaste, they awaken in the night and manage to produce the post-coital sample. This time the test reveals, in Episode 15, that Anne's body is killing most of Colin's sperm. Although no reason can be definitely established, Guru posits that Anne is probably too acidic, and prescribes alkaline douches as a remedy. Episode 16 incorporates their reaction to the douche, which is uncomfortable, although they use it. Episodes 17 and 18 depart from direct representation of these concerns and deal with the pressures on childless couples, although the last part of Episode 17, and the first part of 18, contain
sections dealing with folk remedies for their condition (changing curtains in the bedroom, different colored nighties, a romantic holiday), and the inability of other people to understand or accept that their problem is chemical, not a flaw in their romantic relationship. The third portion of their process begins with Episode 19, as they consult a gynaecological surgeon. In this scene, the doctor suggests two additional problems for which tests must be run: that Anne is not ovulating (for which she must keep a chart), and that Colin, though his sperm are sufficiently motile, is not producing enough of them. Episode 20 is concerned primarily with their frustrations with the process, and other themes as well. In Episode 21, the surgeon reveals that the tests are generally satisfactory, and that they should conceive soon. Episode 22 has Anne waking Colin to make love when her temperature reveals she has ovulated, and in Episode 23 tests reveal they are pregnant.

Sections Two and Three of Ashes deal with Anne’s pregnancy, miscarriage, and the loss of her womb, and their attempt to adopt, respectively. These sections are more important for their revelation of the effect of the condition of barrenness and the process of change in Colin and Anne, and so will be discussed below. Their reactions to the doctors and treatment are also more closely related to the revelation of the process of change in the two and their relationship, and will be discussed later as well. There is obviously no discussion of the condition, nor the process of rectifying their childlessness, during her pregnancy. There is, in Episodes 27 and 29, consultation with the doctor, in the latter of which he declines to give her a drug to prevent miscarriage on the grounds that, if she is to miscarry, there is a good,
natural reason for it. "Our pharmacy shelves are full of it, we never
prescribe it now. It seals you up. If you insist . . . But if there's
a good reason for a foetus to miscarry then miscarry we must let it."
(p. 28) The adoption process itself, their last "treatment" for altering
their childless condition, is treated very sketchily; only enough to
show their reactions to it. There are, of course, episodes dealing
with the effect of being physically barren from the miscarriage in Epi­
sode 34 forward. However, these are non-clinical in nature, and again
are best considered in terms of the process of change in Colin and Anne.
Consequently, the discussion of the condition of barrenness and its
treatment can be confined to Section One, with the proviso that psycho­
logical factors, particularly the social and personal pressures which
make people feel they must have children, will be discussed later.

The organization of these two concerns in Ashes and its structure
involves an alternation of episodes in which causes of barrenness are
discussed with episodes in which tests are taken and treatments pre­
scribed. These alternating pairs basically fall into seven units in
the first section of the play, and can be diagrammed as follows.

1. Condition: Anne cannot conceive, though she is physically
healthy and normal. Cause unknown, (Episode 2)
Test: Physical exam for Anne, and discussion with the
doctor, (Episode 2)
Treatment: Post-coital test, which shows sperm are dead.
(Episodes 2-4)

2. Condition: Sperm dead, (Episode 4)
Test: Physical exam for Colin, (Episode 5)
Treatment: Sperm count (Episodes 6 and 7).

3. Condition: Colin's sperm insufficiently motile, (Episode 8)
Test: None.
Treatment: Loose clothing and cold water, leading to a second
test, in which treatment shown to be successful,
(Episode 9, +10)
4. Condition: Anne and Colin still have not conceived, so they consult Guru. Problem could be incompatibility in body chemistries, or some problem in their coupling. (Episode 13)

Test: Additional post-coital and sperm count tests. (Episode 13)

Treatment: Use of new position: "performing dogs". (Episode 13, +14)

5. Condition: Anne's body killing Colin's sperm, probably because of acidity. (Episode 15)

Test: None.

Treatment: Alkaline douche. (Episode 15, +16)

6. Condition: They still haven't conceived. (Episode 19)

Test: Test Anne for ovulation, Colin for sperm density. (Episodes 19-20)

Treatment: All normal: keep trying. (Episode 21)

7. Condition: Anne has ovulated. She and Colin make love. (Episode 22)

Test: Urine test for pregnancy. (Episode 23)

Result: Anne has conceived. (Episode 23)

As the chart reveals, Rudkin does not isolate the units themselves, nor the parts of each, in a strict one-to-one relationship with the episodes of Section One; i.e., each condition, test, or treatment does not occupy a single corresponding episode by itself. Rather, he tends to allot a sequence of two to four episodes to each unit, and to allow the parts of the unit to overlap within the episodes given to it. There is only one instance where two units overlap: the boundary between units one and two, where the results of the treatment prescribed in the first unit, a post-coital test, reveals that Colin's sperm are dead, the condition treated in unit two. Unit two is the only one in which each of the three parts of the unit (condition, test, treatment) are isolated in discrete episodes (condition in 4; test, 5; treatment, 6-7). In all other units, at least one of the episodes contains two of the three sections, with little regularity in the way in which sections are
combined. The only exception is in unit three, which omits the test sequence, and gives treatment two episodes. As is readily apparent, Rudkin does not take advantage of the opportunity afforded by epic structure for a clear isolation of each point. However, this is not necessarily a weakness or disadvantage in Ashes. A structure based on, for example, seven units of three scenes each, each episode isolating one of three steps in an unvarying sequence, could easily become trite, formulaic, and rhythmically boring. Rather, Rudkin isolates the larger structure in terms of a unit of discrete episodes, and then freely varies the components for variety. In the process, he occasionally omits a step (e.g., the test sequence is absent in units three and five), and regularly combines condition/test, test/treatment, condition/treatment, or all three (e.g., unit four) in a fixed order distributed among the episodes at his disposal. In this way, he avoids the problem of a lack of variety, or the sense of a formula underlying and being embodied in the structure, while retaining the sense of pattern and repetition necessary to establish the condition of barrenness and process of its treatment as an endless round of similar events leading to frustration, and even despair, for those caught in it. Epic structure is particularly useful in meeting the needs of this kind of structural patterning because it allows the playwright to isolate each progressive unit for individual examination; to roam through time and space, creating a series of similar encounters, but building variety through variations in locale, characters, etc.; and to generate a sense of repetition in the sequence, a sense of the same thing happening over and over, contributing both to an understanding of the process itself, and of its
effect on the people involved, and how it makes them change. Had Rudkin tried to create this sense of repetition by using dramatic structure, he would almost certainly have failed, for he would necessarily have had to limit his encounters to two or three scenes at most, and would consequently have lost the ability to render the repetitiveness of the process, one of the major roots of the characters' frustration, in dramatic action. The minimum lost in such a case would be the audience's full, empathic understanding of the characters, and particularly of the sources of their frustration and pain. In the case of Ashes, a good deal of entertaining action would also have been lost, and several of Rudkin's other concerns could not have been developed fully, had a non-epic structure been employed. In the service of the exploration of the condition of sterility in its physiological manifestations, and in the revelation of the process of treatment, epic structure was well-adapted to meet Rudkin's needs, and he used the structure creatively and well to meet his ends. As will be seen, the structure also served will the consideration of the effects of the condition and process of treatment on Colin and Anne, and the process of change in them and their relationship, considerations which go hand in glove with those discussed above.

Inextricably linked to the presentation of the medical process in which Colin and Anne are involved is Rudkin's presentation of the theme of the callousness and inefficiency, even ineptitude, of the health system. Again, this theme is most fully developed in the first section of the play; however, there is a significant coda to this action in two episodes in Section Two. It is not developed in any detail in the final
section, in which the adoption officials are treated, if not entirely sympathetically, at least as decent and reasonably kind human beings. This theme can be considered a controlling factor in the structure of Ashes, rather than as a subcategory of the exploration of the treatment process, because there are a number of incidents, and several episodes, that would almost certainly not have been included in the play were it not for Rudkin's desire to develop this theme.

The first episode in which this theme is raised is Episode 6, a narrative section in which Colin describes his arrival and experiences at the clinic for his sperm count. After imitating the woman receptionist, he launches a send-up of the lab assistant.

Colin: Here y're then, friend; a room apart. Produce your sample, bring it back to the lab when you've done. We send you the bill for two smackers, your doctor the result in twenty-one days. Venetian blind don't work, I'm sorry to say, but nobody to overlook you. Lock on the door don't work either, I'm sorry to say, but they all know here what this room is for. (confidential) Some blokes has to get their wives to help them wi this at home, then bring the product in to us by buz. Take your time. (p. 10)

The lab assistant is clearly, on the basis of his accent, of the lower classes, and probably undereducated as well. His lapses in grammar can be taken to indicate this: "Lock on the door don't work," and, "Some blokes has to get their wives..." Although these could conceivably be as much the products of dialect as anything else, it is clear that education has not removed them. These considerations are significant primarily because doubt is cast on the quality of work at this clinic later in the play, and the quality of the staff is conceivably one of the reasons for their poor work. The lab assistant's approach to Colin's problem is, if not unkind, at least insensitive. He is loudly
direct in most of his speech, dropping down into a confidential tone
only for a section at the end which, in light of the rest of his speech,
probably indicates he is revealing what to him is one of the slightly
dirty tricks-of-the-trade, or some off-color gossip: "Take your time."
His lack of sensitivity is manifest in the entire clinic, which has
failed to provide operational blinds and a working lock for the door of
the collection room. Despite the assistant's assurances that everyone
knows what the room is for, this latter situation leads to a young girl
walking in on Colin during the next episode and catching him just as he
is beginning to have success. (p. 11) They even fail to provide a suita-
ble container for collection of the sperm sample. "Colin takes out
of his pocket a tiny glass or plastic container—two inches deep at
most, neck barely an inch across, with blank label... And an anat-
omical problem: how to address an erection to this ludicrous jar?"
(p. 10) This leads to a comic pantomime as Colin tries to figure out
how to manage the sample. The general insensitivity of the clinic
staff is manifest in a mild way in the following episode, Episode 9,
when the doctor tosses Colin's semen specimen into the waste basket
before his eyes. "Doctor disposes (discretely, but the moment is not
lost on us) of Colin's semen specimen into waste basket; goes." (p. 12)
Episode 10 includes a comic narrative by Colin on the difficulty of
carrying out the treatment prescribed by the doctor; i.e., bathing his
testicles twice daily in cold water to increase his sperm count and
motility. Aside from its comic value, the scene is included in the
play primarily for its place in the theme of the pressures on people
which make them feel they must have children; however, there is an
implied criticism of the doctor in the very fact that he has given Colin no instructions for implementing the treatment, nor any time limit on each session (as another doctor later does). There is also a more specific criticism of the medical system at the end of the narrative, when Colin describes his second encounter with the lab assistant when he returns six weeks later to have a second sperm count taken. The lab assistant makes a joke of the procedure this time. "Six weeks on the cold water then, have you, friend? Mind you, can work a charm. In you get, then: wanker's paradise. Not my idea of one, though. Still: they find it easier the second time." (p. 12) In this speech, the lab assistant reduces the process to the level of a vulgar joke, a "wanker's paradise". He also once again adopts a slightly patronizing tone with Colin, particularly with his use of the term "friend" in a form frequently used with those whom one considers inferior but wishes not to offend. The total effect of the encounters with the clinic has been to trivialize the process and Colin's condition, hence his pain. The clinic staff, and even the doctor, display a consistent lack of discretion and sensitivity to Colin's problem; as is seen later, a lack of etiquette as well. In any case, after the false alarm described by Anne in Episode 11, she and Colin decide to consult a seminologist, Guru, their consultation with the general practitioner having brought no satisfactory results.

The scene with Guru, Episode 13, has two interesting points bearing on the inefficiency and callousness of the health care system. Just prior to it, however, there is a short narrative link, Episode 12, which is present for no reason other than the light it sheds on Guru
and his attitude, indeed, on the attitude of the doctors and technicians throughout the play, who observe the forms of kindness and politeness with Colin and Anne, but remain aloof and haughty, assured of their superiority. This attitude is also reflected in Valerie, a laywoman/friend, and the ambulance driver, and so can be taken to indicate a general feeling in society that those who are barren are somehow inferior or less worthy. In introducing himself to the audience, Guru says, "I am an expensive seminologist. My two new patients dub me the Guru because they get the impression I think I am omniscient. Indeed, I do occasionally speak as though I personally had invented the first idea of everything, including coitus itself." (p. 13) This attitude is made manifest in his treatment of Colin and Anne in two specific instances (although, in fairness, he deals with Colin's fears that his homosexuality or a psychological abnormality are at fault kindly and sympathetically; pp. 14-5). The first occurs in Episode 13, when he uses Colin and Anne themselves as models to illustrate the "performing dogs" position, treating them precisely as his nurse does the plastic model she uses to illustrate the advantages of the position for insemination. During this section, Guru, having dealt with Colin's fears sympathetically just minutes before, turns his confession of homosexuality on him, making a slighting reference to Colin's past: "You entering from behind. Which may, in your case, revive certain unorthodox memories." (p. 15) Moreover, at the end of the episode he begins to leave, as "Colin and Anne remain postured: clinical objects." (p. 16) Guru does not consider Colin and Anne's feelings as he forces them to assume the position on the floor. He treats them clinically, like the
plastic genitalia with which he and the nurse simulate intercourse. This betrays an attitude which, if not callous, is certainly less than fully humane. The second instance in which his attitude is clearly manifested comes in a later episode, Episode 15. After having postulated that Anne may be too acid for Colin’s sperm to survive in her, she interrupts him, saying, “If I shove my fanny full of bicarb before we sex, would that do any good?” (p. 18) At that point, Rudkin indicates that Guru grows colder toward her, because he “does not like being anticipated.” Again, his feeling of superiority prevents his being as supportive and sympathetic as might be desired. The second significant thematic point illustrated in these episodes with Guru touches on the ineptitude, the poor quality of care, in the health system. As he is leaving, Guru returns briefly, saying, “Mr. Harding, one other thing. We may of course be wrong in assuming your sperm count adequate—I’m not altogether satisfied with the procedure at that clinic.” (p. 16) This final condemnation of the clinic is hardly surprising. What is ironic, however, is that, in Rudkin’s words, “Receptionist follows, bringing to Colin a specimen-jar of contrasting, but equally impractical, design.” (p. 16) In this way, Rudkin casts some slight doubt on Guru’s procedures as well. This doubt is fulfilled in Episode 19, in which Colin and Anne, after Guru’s treatments fail to help, consult a gynaecological surgeon. The specific treatments prescribed by Guru and the general practitioner are upheld by the gynaecologist, although he limits the cold water treatments to two minutes each, and tells them to abandon the “performing dogs” posture unless they enjoy it. “It makes mechanical sense, but has not, in my
experience, significantly increased the chances of conception in a case like yours." (p. 21) Nonetheless, it is revealed that both doctors have failed to perform two vital tests: a count of sperm density, not just motility, for Colin, and a check to see that Anne is actually ovulating. The gynaecologist comes off better than either the family doctor or Guru; however, even he is colored by his charging them an extra eighty pence for a thermometer and charts. This linkage of a discussion of money with the examinations, an indication of some degree of a lack of sensitivity, is a recurring motive in Section One, occurring four times: with the lab assistant (p. 10); with Guru on two occasions (p. 16; p. 19); and with the gynaecologist (p. 22). The gynaecologist orders another sperm count, which occasions the last example of insensitivity in the medical profession/process presented in the first section. After having given the sample, Colin phones some time later to find out when the results will be known. His phone conversation reveals that, not only will they not tell him the results, but they will not even give him an idea of when they will be available, causing him enormous frustration.

Colin: I want only to find out if you have the result yet. . . . But it has been rather a long time— . . . It was not a motility test, madam, it was a density test— . . . Hell, the analysis must surely have been done by now, the figures must be somewhere . . . I am not trying, madam, to tell Pathology their job; I merely wish you would credit other professions than yours with some scintilla of intelligence . . . All I want to know—(Pause) I appreciate you cannot tell me over the public line. Even if we could be sure the line was not tapped I accept entirely your reason for that; but I am not asking for the result, I am merely trying to establish whether there yet is one, and when my doctor can expect to receive it. (Pause) I am aware your wheels rotate at an inflexible speed—God, this is England all over: (Bitter memory) "We must preserve an empty mind"—Can you
merely estimate roughly how long, from donation of sample, a man must wait for the alimentary process of your hospital to excrete a result?—For the Lord's sake, woman, it is my sperm... (pp. 22-3)

The rigidity found in the health-care system, even when it is painfully damaging to those whom it has in its care, is revealed in Colin's speech of anger and frustration (Episode 20); yet another example of the insensitivity of the system. In numerous episodes and incidents, in a variety of ways, Rudkin demonstrates the inefficiency, ineptitude, and callousness of the health-care apparatus in dealing with problems such as those of Colin and Anne.

Rudkin finishes off his indictment of the health system in the second section of the play. This section is, in many ways, a study of pregnancy and miscarriage, much as the first section is a study of the condition and treatment of barrenness; although the focus in Section Two is shifted more toward the impact of events on Colin and Anne's personalities and relationship. Rudkin explores this theme in two devastating scenes in Section Two: Episode 32, a long soliloquy by the ambulance driver; and Episode 34, Anne's narrative of events at the hospital. In the first, the monologue of the ambulance driver as they prepare to take Anne to the hospital, Rudkin ties together and intensifies the motive of the split fashion in which Colin and Anne are treated: with kindness on one hand, and with callousness, or even cruelty, on the other. The ambivalence of the ambulance man is typical of that present throughout the system. He is moved to sympathy and pity by their, particularly Anne's, plight. Yet he also feels that there is something "wrong" in or with them, provoking in him a sense
of discomfort, leading him to emotions such as impatience, a sense of superiority, and even revulsion and anger. Most of these emotions play across the driver’s speech.

Driver: Now don’t you worry, dear. We’ll get you there quick as we can. By the smooth road, we know all the bumps in the County, don’t you worry. (gently helps Anne on to stretcher) This lady now sees, for the first time she fully sees: she’s in danger of death. Some’s about our sympathy, in how familiar we are with her condition, in how serious and careful it makes us of her, strikes the scale from her eyes. (Brings a red blanket to spread over Anne) From her bed, from her room, from her little house now we bring her, gentle, gentle on the stretcher... Easy then, Albert. Easy... (He draws stretcher backwards, Anne’s head first, toward rostrum) Out to the ambulance... Ambulance; common enough thing, you say. But to her, to this woman, this ambulance is the valley of the shadow, that sad little shadow through which one in five of British mothers pass.

(Climbs backward up on to rostrum as though up step into ambulance itself; raises stretcher-head, to display Anne to us like a straw guy, undignified, helpless)

Don’t she look like a witch, eh, on her ladder? Or a Jewess, trussed on her tray for the boiler? Her turn now; where others have gone, now she. What other people have, now here to suffer. Alone.

(Leans stretcherhead on rostrumfoot, crouches on rostrum or ground, face close to her. To us)

Look, a tear. Swells up out of nothing in the socket of her eye. The salt drop from the gland; fills, bulges, quivers. Makes her look so stupid. Weak face, stupid, helpless; slack jaw, so helpless, stupid. It tears your heart in two for pity, and your right hand itches to strike that stupid face. (Utterly straight, without pretence)

There, dear, lie still. We’ll get your things together, don’t you worry. (To us again) Beginning to shed; so shove her in gentle. (Shoves stretcher up along rostrum; into darkness) Close the doors. (pp. 36-7)

The ambivalent attitude of the driver is clear. He comforts Anne and treats her gently, confiding that the sight of her “tears your heart in two for pity.” Yet, he is reminded of a witch, or a Jewess about to be shoved into a crematorium, a cold, even heartless echo of Auschwitz, when he looks at her; and he is so repelled and angered by her tears
that he has a strong impulse to "smash her face." His ambivalence is an extreme version of that attitudinal split observed earlier in the medical personnel (as well as in her friend, Valerie; see below). They try to be kind and sympathetic, but underlying their behavior is either discomfort (which might account for the boisterousness of the lab assistant, by way of overcompensation), or a sense of superiority (especially evident in Guru). Colin and Anne's whole encounter with the health system, the mixture of sympathy and disdain, is crystallized by the ambulance driver here, as well as in Anne's speech just two episodes later, when she describes to Colin the doctor and his telling her she had lost her womb. (Episode 35)

Anne: I said to the doctor, I won't go through all this again. Oh, he's a patronising bastard, the nurses queue up to kiss his arsehole—he's only a doctor! I won't go through this again, I told him; bugger this for a tale. Next time I start to bleed I'll go down to my husband's school and hire the trampoline.

Colin: Next time we'll be in there. This happens to one couple in five first time. We'll be in there next time.

Anne: He said— he said— "There isn't going to be a next time, Mrs. Harding. I'm sorry. We have had to take the womb away" (Pause) "I'm sure your GP will recommend you for adoption."

(p. 39)

Though the doctor's words themselves are far from unkind or unsympathetic (although they may be unnecessarily direct), there is something in his behavior and attitude that overrides other considerations, causing Anne to characterize him as a "patronising bastard", and epitomizing the unsatisfactory nature of Anne and Colin's contacts with the medical profession in the course of their ordeal.

The inefficiency, the blundering, of the health system is crystallized by Anne's narrative in Episode 34, in which she describes events
Anne: We thought we'd saved it. The cervix contracted, it almost closed. One of the doctors, had hobnailed boots on his fingers; whenever he examined me—(breath fails in remembered pain) I'd only to see it was him on the wards, I'd start to bleed, . . . But we thought we'd saved it. They even told Colin: "Come in with her clothes tomorrow, she'll be all right." But when he came, with the suitcase, "We're sorry," they said, "she's had a bad night; she must stay a while longer." One morning they rang him. "Your wife's going down to the theatre," they said. He saw what that meant. "I see," he said, "for the scrape, you mean," "Scrape?" they said. "Well, if we've lost the baby—" he said. "Baby?" they said, "What baby?" They looked in the records: "It is Mr. Harvey?" "Harding," he said. "Oh, Harding. Oh, no, Mr. Harding, oh I am sorry, oh no, Mrs. Harding's perfectly all right—". (p. 38)

The confusion over names, leading to the phone call which must have caused Colin some apprehension and pain, is the last in a series of insensitive, inefficient encounters with the health system; the largest and most meaningful one, perhaps, but basically no different in kind from the inoperative door-lock, blinds, and specimen containers at the clinic, the failure to perform all necessary tests at the beginning of the process, the prescribing of unpleasant and ineffective treatments (particularly Guru's "performing dogs" posture), and Colin's phone encounter with the hospital laboratory, in which he was unable to find out if his tests had even been performed. Throughout the process of treatment, Rudkin presents the health care system as almost a model of ineptitude and callousness via a series of encounters planted in over a dozen episodes, in the process creating an indictment of the National Health Service nearly as withering as that of Peter Nichols in The National Health.
The role of this theme in determining the structure of Ashes is best seen in the presence of incidents and episodes which would not be present were it not for the need to adequately develop the theme. The most obvious of these are Episodes 6 (Colin at the clinic), 7 (the same), 10 (second trip to the clinic), 12 (Guru's introduction of himself), 20 (Colin on the phone to the hospital laboratory), and 32 (the narrative of the ambulance driver). Each of these scenes illustrates the insensitivity or ineptness of the medical profession (excepting Episode 32, which deals with the ambivalent attitude noted above), but serve little or no function in any of the other concerns developed in the play. Episodes 6 and 7, the initial collection of the sperm sample, also function as part of the treatment phase of the second of the seven units describing the process of treatment of their condition, but their primary function lies in their comic depiction of the inefficiency of the clinic and the less than professional behavior of the lab assistant. Episodes 10 and 12 have no function but the service of this theme. In Episode 20, the first half of the scene is devoted to a depiction of Anne's frustration with the charts and the fact that, though everyone says that their condition is no one's fault, blame for the state of affairs is constantly shifted from one to the other. Consequently, that portion of the episode is a part of the concern for the impact of the treatment process on Colin and Anne. The latter half of the scene, however, though it shows Colin's frustration, and so parallels Anne's feelings in the first part of the scene, is directed at the insensitive medical establishment, and so fits into the theme of its inadequacies. There are also a number of incidents and lines in scenes whose
primary controlling element is some factor other than this theme. However, the presence of these six scenes, or major parts of scenes, is sufficient to establish its importance as a controlling factor in the structure of the play; just as Rudkin's ability to bring the theme up in a number of places and contexts via the use of the cinematic and episodic construction traits of epic structure to present and reinforce the theme effectively is a justification for and tribute to his use of epic structure in Ashes, as well as a demonstration of the way epic structure can be used effectively to present and develop a theme.

The second theme which is a controlling factor in the structure of Ashes is the revelation of those pressures, internal and social, that impel people toward having children. This theme is related to the examination of change in Colin and Anne, and their relationship, and develops along the same lines; i.e., it deepens and becomes more damaging as the play progresses, operating as one of the important factors in their disintegration. The theme is first introduced in a light, comic episode, Colin's narrative of the difficulties of bathing his testicles in cold water. At the end of the section, he says, "The things a silly sod'll do for fatherhood. Or is it fatherhood? Might it not rather be, for the myth of manliness?" (Episode 9; p. 12) This comment, which occurs comparatively early in the play, merely introduces the notion that there might by psychological or social pressures, such as the need to prove ones manliness, operating to reinforce a genuine desire to have children; factors which might, in fact, even be the origin of that desire. This theme is immediately repeated in Episode 11, which treats, again lightly, some of the pressures operating on Anne; namely,
that all of her married friends are mothers or expectant mothers.

Anne: Enter wife, reading aloud for audience's benefit several convenient letters, Marj is expecting, Valerie is expecting, Cynthia's in pod again, None of them planned for. Wendy miscounts on the pill; Hilary's Albert comes home from a police course randy as hell, no time for precautions, whom bam thank you, ma'am, hey-ho another bottle shot from the shelf. Click from a man's pants, some women. (p. 13)

This speech begins to touch on the notion that it is the normal, "right" thing for young couples to do; that having children is somehow a necessary part of a successful relationship. In Episode 14, Rudkin again brings in the pressure on Colin to somehow prove his manhood by fathering a child; this time, however, in a more lacerating tone. In a long narrative address to the audience prior to joining Anne in bed, Colin ironically twists and inverts the traditional equating of male fertility with manliness.

Colin: Up again, down again; Jack found fecund, now his fecundity in question, now branded barren. (Developing a tone of mocking self-laceration) So, if Jack's lust does after all lack living spore, this seems to Jack wondrous like Nature does not select him for the Club of Man—to live with that emotion a long time since. Yet: might not Nature's very discards of Jack rank Jack a little higher than the genital beast in Man? More man than Reproductive Man? Paradox. Think. Jack's seed, qua sterile, is fit for transcendental sport alone; made not for breeding, but delight alone; to be shot singing out, anarchic, athletic, milk in itself, free up vagina and glad up lad-arme, knob leaving cunt for joy alone, splitting sphincter and reaming rectum for joy alone, his bags drained dry through holes in walls by unseen men's mouths; the naked jissom, dis-Communion-ized, for play alone. (Quieter) Perhaps there is some sort of evolution here: man's sex emancipated from the shackles and the mire of Propagation; a sexuality dis-familied, detribalized, fraternal: in this sterility, the seed of that? (pp. 16-7)

The tone of "mocking self-laceration" which Rudkin indicates should be present in this speech, as well as the quietness he scores in at the end,
show that Colin does not really believe this rationalization for sterility himself, and that he is still pressured by the need to reproduce to prove himself a member of the "Club of Man". In the following episode, Guru articulates one of the pressures which could conceivably operate, although it does not seem to be one which is a major factor for Colin and Anne, when Anne expresses doubts about their continuing to try to have a child.

Anne: Maybe we should just accept our infertility as our part played in easing an overpopulated world.

Guru: And be content to leave the breeding to village yobs, clapped-out royalty and Papish slums? While the psychopaths that misgovern our globe make waste and slag of its sufficiency?

Anne: I don't like to think of people in terms of absolute worth.

Guru: Then start to think so. You know your Malthus as well as I do: the one inheritance Man is short in is Reason. Even if you and your husband look like the back ends of buses, you've more than an average share of Reason to bequeath. That is your duty to the world. If Man is to survive, he must evolve out of his mythic mire; and soon. So tell your husband to keep up the cold water treatment and the diet; and you combine the posture and the alkali. We'll get you a bun in the oven for Hagmany. (pp. 18-9)

In a general sense, Guru is arguing for reproduction for the evolutionary improvement of the species, an argument which is unlikely to operate as a significant emotional or psychological factor for many people. However, he also mentions a point which might have a subtle, but important, role to play in the complex of pressures which weigh on childless couples; i.e., that their child might be special, and that it is therefore their duty to mankind to reproduce. This is a variation on the "what if Beethoven's parents had decided not to have a child/to have an abortion" argument, and, as a line of reasoning, never seems to develop much force where Colin and Anne are concerned (although Anne wonders if her child might be a monster or a Mozart in Episode 30, pp. 28-31).
However, it ties in loosely with a feeling which arises in Colin after Anne has lost her womb and he has come back from Ireland: that his marriage's infertility is a sign of and factor in his being disinherited from his "tribe"; that he has somehow let his people down. (See below.)

The theme is picked up again in the following episodes. Its appearance in Episode 16 is very limited, and really functions only as a prelude to a fuller exploration of the pressures in Episodes 17 and 18, which are devoted entirely to the exploration of a variety of forms of social pressure. In Episode 16, comment is limited to Anne's desire that they be able to "get back to sex for kicks again." (p. 19) Episode 17 articulates their frustration with the whole process.

Anne: Why can't we make like the amoeba?
Colin: Split in two?
Anne: Or freeze in a cyst, then explode in little hundreds.
Colin: Defeat the object, wouldn't it?
Anne: What is the object? (pp. 19-20)

It also introduces the pressures and meddling of well-meaning relatives. Anne mimics them: "Try changing the wallpaper,' they say. Aunts, mother-in-law, sisters. 'It's nothing to do with the function,' I tell them; 'that part of it's all right.'" (p. 20) This kind of pressure is echoed in Episode 18, in which the meddling of friends, and the sorts of pressures they apply, are exposed.

Valerie: Try buying some different-colored nighties, dear.
Anne: I've told you, Valerie; that part's in order.
Valerie: Get him away, a romantic holiday, a second honeymoon—or would it be the third or fourth, dear, including those you had with him before you were married?
Anne: It's nothing—
Valerie: George had his troubles, too. A warm climate's the thing—
Anne: It's chemistry, Valerie. Not the sex, the chemistry.
Valerie: Perhaps he should take up football. On second thoughts, perhaps not, knowing his past. (p. 20)
The desire of relatives and friends to see the couple reproduce, manifest in their well-intended, if not altogether sensitive, advice, forms an additional source of pressure on Colin and Anne. Lying behind this is yet another kind of pressure, one which comes from both within and without Anne: the notion that she cannot be a "real" woman until she has had a child (the female equivalent of the sentiments explored by Colin in Episodes 9 and 14). Immediately upon Valerie's departure, Anne has a long narrative on the subject.

Anne: (almost tearful) . . . Women. Young Marrieds. Shriek to each other across their prams. Joggle their dummy-stuffed spoils of the sex war up and down. Trundle along their suburban bellies bloated with the booty of the "ed. "How far are you on, then, Doreen? Five months? Oh, I'm six," Cows. The only function they're up to, so they crack it high: cows, cows. They look at me. "You haven't pillaged your breadwinners basket in the dark when he thinks he's polishing the top sheet with his arse; you haven't ignited a brat; you're no woman, you're inadequate." I get to hate my parasitic sex. (p. 20)

Anne's resentment of this state of affairs, with its simultaneous indication that she is prey to this kind of pressure, is an echo of a statement made by Colin toward the end of Episode 16. "Four stages of a childless marriage. 'Children?' (Mild) 'Not yet.' 'Children?' (Slightly rebuking) 'Give us time.' 'Children?' (Gentle, sad) 'No.' 'Children?' (Defiant, i.e., Should there be?) 'No.'" (p. 20) In this sequence of three short episodes, Rudkin demonstrates both the pressures family, friends, and received social notions (i.e., that women must have children to be "fulfilled") can bring to bear on a childless couple, and the ill effects those pressures can have on them in making them frustrated and discouraged, making them, in fact, feel unhappy and fundamentally unfulfilled. He also uncovers the most insidious kind of pressure of
all through their inability to convince anyone that the problem lies in an incompatibility of body chemistry, and is not the fault of either or a problem in their relationship or themselves, i.e., the impulse to reproduce in order to prove that they are normal, and that everything is alright with them and their marriage. This final pressure is explored more explicitly in Episode 20, in which Anne laments, "They assure us it's neither's fault. Yet now it seems because of his deficiency, now because of mine. That gets at you. The combination of our chemistries, they say. Yet now it seems his fault, now it seems mine." (p. 22) With that comment, Rudkin concludes his treatment of the theme of the pressures on a childless couple to conceive a child in Section One. In this section, those pressures ultimately devolve onto a single point; that one cannot be a normal, fulfilled man or woman unless he or she reproduces. With Anne's pregnancy, these pressures disappear; at least temporarily. However, the theme reappears in slightly varied form later in the play, when Colin and Anne must cope with the miscarriage and the prospects of never being able to have children at all.

The first stage in their attempt to cope is, of course, Colin and Anne's coming-to-terms with the loss of her womb and any chance of having children out of her body. This process is represented in very abbreviated form in the play. However, the short incident which is presented crystallizes the whole process, including the movement from guilt, to sharing the responsibility and loss, to acceptance of the loss, even with the pain still attendant. This process is represented in the last moments of the second section, Episode 35.
Anne: I'm sorry, love. I'm sorry—

Colin: (stunned) Why "sorry"—?

Anne: (something indistinct) (i.e., About giving children—)

Colin: (can find nothing to say but) No . . . No . . . (i.e., Stop saying sorry)

Anne: (something indistinct) (i.e., About wanting to have his children)


Anne: (constrained movement, orchestrating her pinned anguish) I can see the smoke. From the incinerator. Burning my womb—!

Colin: (They remain, motionless, silent. At last: very quiet) Gone then. Gone. Gone. We must do what we can with what remains. All that, is gone.

Anne: (Utters one inaudible gasp of grief. Shakes bitterly, silent)

Colin: (deathly quiet) Gone. (pp. 39-40)

To delve into this process further would be basically superfluous: the core of their acceptance of the loss is presented in these few lines.

The next step, accepting the possibility of an adopted child as their own, as a means of fulfilling their impulses for children, is sketched in during the speech by the Social Services Officer which constitutes Episode 36, the first of Section Three. During his speech outlining how improbable it is that they will receive a child, and why, he says:

Officer: You come to adoption because you have had to accept that natural parenthood is a common, human, heritage from which you are shut out. You have had to rethink parenthood; perforce matured, into seeing a possible child of yours, not as a product of your self, but as an infant person already possessed of his or her own history, bringing it with him, absolute in his own right. You have learned, a hard way, that in true parenthood there is no fantasy, no self-extension, no fond notion of vertical inheritance of what you think is best in you; you leave such fatuous hopes behind, evolving perhaps toward something more like a parenthood of tomorrow. For some sociologists tell us, that tight little knot of domestic mirrors we call the Family, is a unit Man might now need to question and reject; that the family of tomorrow might possibly be something broader, more mixed—horizontal, fraternal. If so, then you, who have thought and fought your way through a peculiar disappointment and peculiar grief to some such—perhaps stand today more firmly on this threshold of tomorrow than those conventionally blest. (pp. 41-2)
Though the specific historical/philosophical reasons for accepting adoption as a viable alternative to natural parenthood given by the officer have very little to do with how or why Colin and Anne came to seek to adopt, the essence of his message, that rearing a child from other parents can nonetheless be a meaningful way to satisfy the impulse to be a parent, is something Colin and Anne seem to have accepted in pursuing this process. However, the very low chances of their receiving a child make it necessary for them to also come to terms with the possibility of an absolutely childless marriage; of never being parents in any sense at all. Colin begins to address this issue in Episode 37. While he is dressing to go to Ireland for the funeral of his Uncle Tommy, he muses on his and Anne's sterility, and on their attempt to adopt, still with hope, but without real confidence (as can also be seen retroactively when, in Episode 38, Anne reveals that Colin, after his interview with Mrs. Jones, felt that he had "talked our child away."; p. 44)

Colin: What sort of son am I, to such fine fathers? White sterile son, dead branch of the tribe . . . No, No. All that's behind me. Progenitive fantasy, all behind me. For fatherhood I was not made. Nature was wise, she cast me from the start; dead seed, best fit to mix with excrement—ashes to ashes, (sarcastic) But I knew better, "I knewed better," I would be a "mahn". A "father". With cold water and bicarbonate of soda, chart calender and clock—"Hi, oul' bitch, Nature!" I said, "I'll worst ye yet!" If I had been content—(pauses) Content . . . (sees truth of it) Content . . . my wife would have her womb this day. "Application for Adoption, Name, birthplace, address, profession, religion—none; average income, size of house, medical history—likelihood suddenly to die; biographical remarks—(self-mocking) I wrote them half a novel there . . . Two independent referees outside the family . . . First interview, the two of us, here. Next interview, there, myself alone: "Mr. Harding, how genuinely motivated for parenthood do you think you are?" (He is dressed now. Sits on chair, black suit emphasizing his pallor, his longing;) A child to come to us, absolute in his own right, his own inheritance, free of
There are several significant points to be observed in Colin's speech. First, there is his continuing sense of guilt over having caused Anne to lose her womb because he wanted so strongly to be a father, against, he feels, the dictates of nature. This ties in to his overall disintegration in the play; a point emphasized by his "pallor". (See below for discussion in more depth.) Second, his lack of confidence in the success of their attempt to adopt can be seen in his sarcastic, self-mocking approach to the discussion of the adoption procedures. Third, there is his acceptance of adoption as a meaningful thing for him, his hope for and fear of its success, seen in "his longing", expressed in the final lines of the speech. Finally, there is his deep desire for fatherhood; a desire which obviously survives the end of the possibility of his physically fathering a child by Anne, and is now manifest in his desire to adopt a child. His attempt in the speech to talk this issue into the past, "For fatherhood I was not made.", is, in a sense, the strongest confirmation that he has not been able to put it out of his mind, or give it up. There continues to be pressure on him to be a father. The strength, and complexity, of his desire, and the pressure, is re-emphasized in the following scene, the interview between Anne and Mrs. Jones, in which the depth of both their desires is noted.

Jones: Mrs. Harding, How strongly do you want to become a parent?
Anne: I think our history answers that.
Jones: You have shown remarkable perseverance. When I spoke to your husband, he said how much he admired your willpower when you lay there—how did he put it?—"willing your foetus to stay in place". I thought he, too, had from the
beginning shown quite frightening willpower. Why do you think he did so?

Anne: For fatherhood.

Jones: Simply that?

Anne: (thinking) For Colin, fatherhood isn't a simple thing. Whenever I come to an interview I end up talking about him. It was the same when I was trying for the stage: at auditions we ended up talking about him. He used to write plays.

Jones: (faintest wintry humour) We talked about you last week.

Anne: Yes. When he got home I asked him how it went. "Lousy," he said, "I reckon I talked our child away."

Jones: (silent, Then) How do you think he would react, if we were to turn down your application, knowing that with it there almost certainly goes your last chance?

Anne: (thinks, Then) He'd be very bitter. Then he'd accept. What else? We'd both accept. Then move on.

Jones: Away?

Anne: Oh no. I mean, if we're not to be parents, move on to what we can become. (pp. 43-4)

The complexity of Colin's need for fatherhood, hinted at in his previous speech when he spoke of himself as the "dead branch of the tribe," is linked to a large set of feelings, those of being disinherited, severed from his roots, as can be seen in his long narrative on Ireland in Episode 39. However, it is very important to note the final lines of this exchange between Anne and Mrs. Jones, for it points toward what Rudkin feels is the necessary and proper course for childless couples, and perhaps their families and friends as well: to shed their illusions, accept their situation, and move on to whatever it is they can be.

Rudkin reinforces the notion that people must find the right path toward what they can do and be a few lines later, when Anne speaks of what her reaction would be to their being turned down.

Anne: It would all seem part of the—evolving pattern. When our careers collapsed, his and mine, we began to read it as a sort of message, if you like: that we ought—to take a different road. We came out here; we went back to teaching, for which we'd both been trained; we became rural and domestic. Soon the idea of children became important. Well, you
Anne’s sense that, if the wrong road has been chosen, one must go to a new one is echoed by Colin at the end of his speech on Ireland, in the same lines as make it clear that his impulse toward fatherhood is tied up in his sense of dispossession. After the family has several times excluded him from participation in the events of the funeral, and told him pointedly that he is not one of them because he has stayed safe in England while they have fought to survive in Ulster (p. 47), they do him the final indignity of forbidding him to help carry Uncle Tommy’s coffin, telling him to stay with the women and children. In recalling his feelings as they carried the coffin away, Colin says:

Colin: Up the street, to the Orange Hall then to the grave, went with that coffin all my—belonging . . . The women did not speak to me. I felt so severed. (No self-pity, but an absolute new clear-seeing) I know it is the strongest feeling in the world, to be alone. And I did feel strong. Yet, the land, from whose earth I belong, the clan, from whose loins I come, had turned me out; to my own loins no child of tomorrow shall come; and I felt so—(at last) severed. (Long silence; he takes out, lights, a cigarette. Peers out of sidewindow into dark. For him, though a sorrow, it is also a setting free!) So. There’s another—"self" for the rubbish heap with all the rest. My self as "tribal son". Yet; if we do not change, tomorrow has no place for us. (pp. 48-9)

Though Colin is dispossessed of both tribe and the chance for fatherhood, he is also freed to be able to change and become something else. That is, essentially, the good Rudkin sees in the situation, if only the people involved can accept and take advantage of the opportunities.

The need to accept and put aside the past, and look to the future, is re-emphasized in the final two episodes of *Ashes*. In Episode 40,
Anne has a long narrative, the first half of which compares the growing barrenness of their rural area and garden under the impact of Dutch Elm Disease and wheat rust, and potato blight, respectively, with their childlessness. The second half is a dream which Anne retells. At the conclusion of the dream, as she is waking, she reveals that she heard a voice which was both the child's in the dream and hers, saying, "Take off your dead," (p. 50) certainly a message that the ghosts of the past must be left behind. In Episode 41, Colin appears with a letter from the County, informing them they have been rejected for adoption. In his final lines, which close the play, Colin indicates his acceptance of the closing of the final door to parenthood, and begins to look toward the future.

Colin: (Not cold, but inly stricken of all expression) That's it. Another "us" to shed: mummy and daddy... (A there-it-is tone) Laughter of children in our house, not for us. Whatever is.

(Yes. Whatever is. This road must now be abandoned also. Anne sees it; inly she has known it all along. It is pitiful but they are released. Their hopes for parenthood lie in ashes, but on some other road must lie whatever is for them. After a moment she turns herself, without standing, toward Colin; and now he must learn to look at her, frank in his inadequacies, his reality, just as he is, all male personnae shed. A Beginning.) (p. 50)

In Colin's closing lines, and Ruddin's note, it is made clear that, with their acceptance of the closing of their chances for children and of themselves as human beings, with all their flaws, as people with other potentialities, it is possible for Colin and Anne to be released from the pressures of childlessness and to overcome their disappointment and begin again on a new road into the future. They must bear and deal with pain, but there is hope for a better tomorrow.
As was the case in examining the structural importance of the theme of the inadequacy of the health service, it is in the inclusion of incidents or episodes which would not otherwise be necessary that the significance of the themes of the pressures which lead people to have children and of the necessity of moving ahead when parenthood is cut off can be seen. The scenes which are included primarily to further the presentation of these themes are Episodes 17, 18, and 37, with significant portions of Episodes 20, 38, 39, and 40 also relating primarily to these problems. (Each of these episodes is also closely related to the process in which Colin and Anne are changed by their circumstances.) Episodes 17 and 18 are concerned largely with the pressures placed on childless couples by well-meaning relatives, and friends, respectively. Episode 18 also contains Anne's speech in which she reveals how having a child is equated with proving a woman's worth and her fulfillment as a woman. Episode 37 shows Colin trying to accept and deal with Anne's loss of her womb, and his responsibility in it, as well as with their barrenness and his feelings of alienation from his family. The presence of these scenes helps to establish the importance of the themes of the pressures on barren people to reproduce and the importance of accepting barrenness and moving on to other things when all recourses are closed off. However, these scenes, and themes, are closely linked to the depiction of the process of change in Colin and Anne, and their relationship; their disintegration under the impact of the condition, treatment, and pressures from others and themselves to reproduce. All of these phenomena are important factors in the process of change in the two. Consequently, in order to fully appreciate the
significance of the scenes in which these themes and concerns are depicted, it is necessary to consider the final two factors in the matrix of elements that control the structure of *Ashes*: the process of change in Colin and Anne as individuals, and the process of change in their relationship. These two processes are closely related, occurring side by side throughout the play; and, through they are technically separate, with each sometimes operating as the sole element controlling a scene, they are so closely linked in the play that the two process are best dealt with together. This is because the same pressures which hurt Colin and Anne as individuals also work to the detriment of their relationship, with each major change in them correspondingly bringing about some alteration in their life together. Consequently, even though the implications of changes may be depicted primarily as they influence one tract or the other in any given scene, discussion of Rudkin’s exposition and analysis of the process will be combined.

The study of the process of change in Colin, Anne, and their relationship occurs over the course of the entire play. However, within the overall movement, which is basically one of deterioration, there is an internal division of this action into three parts. These parts correspond to the three structural divisions marked in the script by Rudkin (labelled Sections One, Two, and Three), and they follow a general pattern. Each segment begins in hope and ends in failure and discouragement or despair. The only exception is Section One, in which Colin and Anne are last seen in a discouraged attitude, but which ends hopefully with the announcement of her pregnancy. Each segment also ends with the closure of one path, and the embarkation on another. Section One
closes with the end of their attempts to become pregnant, and the beginning of the road toward parenthood. Section Two closes with the end of the possibility of their conceiving, opening the path to the adoption process. Section Three closes off any possibility for any kind of parenthood, opening up an unknown path ahead. The overall process of deterioration in the two is seen via a focus on several specific elements which recur in the play, as well as a couple of general movements which are not studied in detail, but which are noted by Rudkin or manifest in his writing. Examples of the latter include the deterioration in the health of Colin and Anne, and their progressive loss of a sense of and use of humor in the play. In Episode 2, it is established that both are healthy. In Episode 37, Rudkin emphasizes Colin's pallor; and in Episode 38, he notes that Anne is "pale and nervous." (p. 43) In terms of a progressive loss of humor, a reading of the script will reveal that there is a good deal of humor in Section One, some early in Section Two, and almost none by Section Three. Examples of the use of recurring elements to trace the process of deterioration in some detail include the change in their attitude toward sex and their sexual practice, and their attitude toward and treatment of each other. Others include their response to external pressures to have children, their adjustment toward the acceptance of adoption and their hope in it, and their loss of faith in the medical establishment/process. The use of recurring elements such as those noted above is crucial to establishing the importance and uses of epic structure in treating the examination of a process in Ashes, or any other play, as well as Rudkin's skill in using it. This is because it is the freedom to use many scenes with a free
approach to time and space, a freedom afforded by epic structure, that makes it possible to study a long and often complex process via a focus on important points in that process and the isolation of significant details. It is also vital to an appreciation of how Rudkin's skillful use of that freedom in *Ashes* both revealed the processes fully and comprehensibly, and resulted in an entertaining piece of theatre.

Colin and Anne's sexual relationship, and attitude toward it, before the beginning of the play cannot be established with any accuracy. The only reference to it is Colin's comment in Episode 17, "To think we were a year on the pill before we married." (p. 20) This indication that they were lovers prior to marriage (reinforced by Valerie's comments on p. 20, Episode 18) is the only real hint about them prior to the time of the first episode, which begins as a lovemaking session is ending. At this point, they have been trying to have a child for some time, and there are signs of a tension in the relationship, despite the humorous exchanges between them in the scene. At the end of the episode the following lines are exchanged,

Anne:  (pausing) Getting heavy, love.
Colin: (put out) Sorry.
Anne: (pause; quieter) Hop up now.
Colin: Ay, Load delivered, back to yard. Cold half of bed.
Anne: (They have separated, Long pause) Perhaps we did it this time. (pp. 7-8)

While there is no overt conflict, there seems to be an edginess between them, a tentativeness in their relationship, and an impatience (Colin is described at one point as "put out."), that probably derive from their desires for and uncertainty about conception. In any case, from this point on their sexual relationship declines steadily in the play,
excepting only an indication at the beginning of the second section that it grew healthier after Anne conceived. It is made clear by Rudkin that this deterioration is the result of two factors: the pressures they feel to conceive, and the tests and treatments they undergo to increase their chances. The first example occurs in Episode 3, in which Colin awakens Anne for intercourse in the middle of the night so that they can produce a fresh post-coital sample.

Anne: (Yawning) God, what an hour. Why so early?
Colin: Specimen, love.
Anne: Mm?
Colin: Specimen. We have to provide a characteristic sample of our mixture. Fresh.
Anne: (miserable, tired) Oh fuck—
Colin: Something like that.
Anne: I'll have to have a pee. (Anne heard stumbling away off)
Colin: *fire on, love.
Anne: (grumbling, moving) Mouth like a bloody parrotcage . . .
(Slow, dim glow as of electric barfire; form of Colin crouching before it. Loud on speakers; urine trickling into water; rip, scuff of tissue paper; chain pulled)
Romantic.
Anne: (dim shape returns there, shuddering) Right then, Man, I'm all cold and pissy for you; come and give. (lies, head toward us, raising opened legs) (pp. 8-9)

As early as the third episode of the play, Rudkin demonstrates how the pressures and treatments begin to eat away at their sexual relationship, and their general relationship with one another. Colin's sarcastic "Romantic." and Anne's almost clinical approach to intercourse in this scene show the beginnings of the deterioration that accelerates later on. In Episode 11, after Colin has undergone a series of treatments to increase his fertility, Anne reveals that she was several days late on her cycle, leading them to hope that she had conceived. When she began to menstruate, Colin's reaction to his, and her, disappointment is indicative of the frustration and growing distance between them. Rudkin
presents this moment, not in lines, but rather in his directions for the physical moment between them.

Colin: Bad one? (He doesn't need telling. He reaches, touches her; but there is nothing in the touch; in the tenderness is something hard, hurt. Anne turns her head from him, moves her Colinward hand across herself from him; remains so, frozen, unpresent.) (p. 13)

In a moment of mutual discouragement, there is no real tenderness between them; not even any real, human contact. They are isolated, alone in their pain, unable to touch or help one another. Even before consulting a specialist, Guru, for treatment, Colin and Anne are showing the deliterious effects of their barrenness, and beginning to show the negative effects of the treatments and failures to treat their condition.

In Episode 14, a combination of narrated and enacted events which takes place in their bedroom, Colin and Anne begin to reveal the depth of the damage being done to them and their relationship. The episode begins with a long speech in which Colin develops a "tone of mocking self-laceration" as he speculates that nature may not want to continue his "kind," and that his sterility is a form of natural selection rejecting him from the "Club of Man." (p. 16) By this point, they have been introduced by Guru to the "performing dogs" posture, and told to use it to increase chances of conception, as they do in this scene. The episode is a re-enactment of the night when Colin initially failed to function in bed before her post-coital test with Guru the next morning.

(Colin goes up to bed, kneels behind Anne upon it; wearily they posture themselves)

Anne: He functions to order every time. Only once, for the Guru's PC, he couldn't stay hard, it wouldn't penetrate--Surprised? You try it to order on two or three fixed nights in the
cycle: knowing "Tonight or never; the love-blend must be there for the doctor tomorrow; or for hope of conception this month. Or for doctor anyway." In this posture, He probably has to pretend I'm some sailor from his misspent youth.

Colin: (Makes to mount her) The acts don't resemble, lovey. Though it is possible to fantasize, which, frankly, at times has helped me. (Suddenly sighs, falls away, lies wretched) (p. 17)

This scene is instructive for three reasons. First, Rudkin indicates their weariness with the process and, especially, the posture in his stage directions; a point which is reinforced in Anne's comment, "In this posture." Second, she speaks of the pressures on them to function to a clinical schedule, regardless of their other feelings (probably to abstain at certain times in spite of their feelings as well). She also discusses the difficulties this occasions, both in actually functioning and, by implication, in dealing with the emotional consequences of a failure to function (again, reinforced by Colin's lying "wretched"). Finally, Colin's frank admission that he sometimes has to fantasize about men to have intercourse with Anne in this posture is indicative both of the problems the treatment is causing in their relationship, and of a certain growing hardness in Colin's feelings for and treatment of Anne. All three of these facts demonstrate aspects of deterioration in their relationship because of their barrenness and their attempts to rectify that condition. The mounting pressure, and the clinical, unromantic, unemotional nature of the posture for them can be seen in this episode. The scene goes on to show the negative effects of those phenomena on Anne when, after she has successfully aroused Colin and they have had a particularly erotic encounter during the middle of the night, she breaks the mood, saying, "I thought after that one, I thought if the
quality of the act itself has anything to do with it and we haven't clicked this time, then there's no fucking justice in the thing. (Bitterly lies away)" (p. 17) Anne's bitterness, her comment on the injustice of the situation, indicate that the pressures are eating away at her, even as they are at Colin when he mocks himself for his lack of fecundity.

The next episode in which Rudkin presents a stage in the process of disintegration in their sexual and personal relationships is Episode 16. In Episode 15, it is revealed that Anne's body is too acidic for Colin's sperm to survive, and she is given an alkaline douche by Guru. When Anne opens the package containing the device, she and Colin "lark with douche; suddenly, as though afraid of losing their sexuality forever, are in desperate, almost childish play." (p. 19) This indication that they fear some fundamental change in their sexuality and sexual relationship is taking place is emphasized by Anne's line following their playing with the device: "I wish we could get back to sex for kicks." (p. 19) That there is real difficulty in their relationship is made clear when Colin, after a joke in which he impersonates Guru, says, "Give Fanny her gargle, then." with, as Rudkin puts it, a "new note of hardness ill-suppressed." (p. 19) Another complaint against the posture is registered in this episode, when Colin says, "To say nothing of the fact this bloody posture is giving me piles—" (p. 19). It is also revealed that their lovemaking has now largely dispensed with either tenderness or foreplay. As Anne goes off to apply the douche, Colin says:

Colin: While I lie, lashing up salacious thoughts of utmost crudity to sustain my erection, my heart knocks like a stone
with the false effort... Till you come from the bathroom, cold as ice—

Anne: (Anne returns, adopts posture on bed—) To squat before my lord, my arse on high like Table Mountain . . . .

Colin: And I must start upon her straightaway... And get my pint pulled up you straightaway—

Anne: Being not sure how long or short the antacid effect of the bicarb will last— (p. 19)

Colin and Anne's sexual relationship has been reduced to a quick, cold clinical coupling, devoid of romance or desire, and full of fear and even hardness. This is almost wholly the result of the treatments they have undergone for their sterility, and the frustrations of their seeming failure: treatments which it is later revealed (Episode 19) are either unnecessary (the performing dogs posture has practically no effect on the ability to conceive), or have been insufficiently explained (the douche is effective for hours). How deeply the treatments, and the pressures to perform and which make them feel they must have children, have scarred them as individuals is made clear in the following two episodes, Episodes 17 and 18. Rudkin begins Episode 17 with the sound of a one-armed bandit being played without success over and over, its sound "rhythmic, dry, mechanical, luckless." (p. 19) Anne and Colin then express their frustrations. Anne wishes they could reproduce without sex, like "amoebas" or "cysts". She also reveals she is no longer certain what the reason for all their effort is: "What is the object?" (p. 20) Colin details the growth of bitterness in a childless couple in his revelation of the four stages of a childless marriage (see p. 265). In Episode 18, Anne lashes out at the unwitting cruelty of other, and pregnant, young women, and their perception of her as somehow inadequate because she has not borne children. She concludes
by saying, "I get to hate my parasitic sex." (p. 20) It is clear, however, that her feelings are motivated in large part because she herself feels inadequate and is hurt by her inability to reproduce, a condition which has certainly been aggravated by the effect of their treatments on her relationship with Colin.

Beginning with their consultations with the gynaecological surgeon in Episode 19, a number of the pressures on their sexual relationship are, in theory, relieved when the doctor allows them to abandon the offensive posture and to douche at leisure early in the evening. He prescribes additional tests which cause them additional frustration; Colin over his inability to get test information from the hospital lab, and Anne over the seemingly endless round of blame and exoneration which falls on them. However, some of the pressures on the relationship's sexual side are lessened, at least temporarily. Rudkin provides no indication that the relationship improves as a result, however. Instead, he focusses attention on how personal reproductive pressures, their failures, and their frustrations with the health system and their lack of progress are harming them further. These feelings are summarized by Colin in Episode 21, when, after the doctor assures them they should conceive "before the end of the year," and that their patience and pertinacity will be rewarded, Colin replies in an aside: "Aye, in time to pick up our Pensions on the way." (p. 24) In that episode, the doctor had added an additional treatment to their regimen; that Anne should monitor her temperature so that they could have intercourse at the right moments in her ovulatory cycle. The results of that, as might be expected, are unhealthy for their relationship (at least
sexually), as can be seen in Episode 22. Anne awakens Colin with the news that "An innocent ovum has descended the Fallopian."; to which he replies, "I see. I'm in for a week of phallic martyrdom then, am I?" (p. 24) His reply, his almost sardonic tone, indicate his lack of faith in the process, and his lack of enthusiasm as well. By Episode 22, Colin and Anne's personal and sexual relationships have deteriorated significantly under the pressures of distasteful treatments and their lack of success; a deterioration that can also be seen in the frustration and discouragement they display, and in their mocking, cynical attitudes toward themselves. Nonetheless, in Episode 23 it is revealed that Anne is pregnant, and things begin to look up for them.

The above examination of the process of deterioration in Colin and Anne's sexual and personal relationships, and of the changes wrought in them as individuals, over a period of time is sufficient to demonstrate how epic structure can be used to present and examine processes or sequences of events in plays so that they can be more readily understood and appreciated by audiences (particularly since tracing processes will occupy the majority of time in the analysis of the two remaining plays in this chapter). The playwright's ability to select and represent a number of significant points or incidents in the process makes it possible for him to show both the important events themselves and the connections between them, as well as exploring the causes and effects of the incidents and processes represented where desired. Rudkin's direct presentation of the decline in Colin and Anne's sexual relationship concludes with the end of Section One of *Ashes*, although the examination of the declines and shifts in their fortune, health, happiness, etc.
continue through the remainder of the play. However, there is obviously a shift in focus during Sections Two and Three. In Section One, the process of change in them and the relationship is linked to the decline in their sexual relationship under the pressures of barrenness and distasteful treatments. In Section Two, that process, or those processes, of change are linked to the pressures of a difficult pregnancy and Anne's miscarriage; while in Section Three the effects of the adoption process and Colin's feeling of alienation from his family at the funeral are explored. It is interesting to note that, at the end of the play, Rudkin once again uses the state of their personal and sexual relationships as a barometer for establishing that they (at least Anne) recognize that things are not entirely good between them. In Episode 38, during the interview with Mrs. Jones, Anne is asked about their relationship.

Jones: Is your marriage satisfactory, Mrs. Harding?
Anne: Bed, you mean?
Jones: Among other things.
Anne: Not always. In fact, it's rather bad just now. The tension all this has put us under. And the fact that I shall never conceive does—to begin with, anyway—make some difference. He's not the great greasy bollock of my dreams, what woman's husband is? It's probably better to find your man tolerable company for fifty years than to be hooked on his cock. I don't even like my husband all the time, but for good or ill he's in my belly now. (p. 45)

In this way, Rudkin echoes a concern from earlier in the play, and completes charting the decline in Colin and Anne's relationship, in this speech from late in Ashes. It is also interesting to note that, just as Rudkin left a ray of hope in other scenes, and the end of the play, when he emphasized Colin and Anne's philosophy that it is necessary to move ahead when paths are closed, so, too, does he leave a bit of hope
in Anne's comments here. Despite the fact that their relationship is on hard times, Colin is "in her belly," and there seems to be the possibility that they can continue their life together and heal their wounds even in the darkest times.

As has been seen, David Rudkin used several devices as controlling elements in the selection and arrangement of incidents for the structure of _Ashes_, including themes, the rendering of processes, and the examination of conditions. In a sense, however, all of these controlling agents are aspects of a larger concern which is the ultimate controlling factor in _Ashes_ - the examination of the condition of barrenness and its impact on people. Each of the concerns addressed above, the callousness and incompetence of the medical profession, the social and psychological pressures to have children, the need to adjust to childlessness, the process by which they try to alter their condition, the processes of change in Colin and Anne, and their relationship, is but an aspect of the larger concern of the condition of barrenness itself as a phenomenon. It is the fullest possible exposition of the condition in all its significant aspects that really controls the structure of _Ashes_. In examining the condition, Rudkin utilized the freedom allotted by the episodic, cinematic construction of epic structure to select and present all the important incidents and points illustrating each of his concerns as it progressed and in its various aspects; simultaneously omitting any incident or point which, though it might have contributed to a causal development of action, was not vital to a rendering of his concerns. In doing this, Rudkin wove his various concerns together so that, by a judicious selection and arrangement of the
various elements of his play, he was able to produce a vivid, varied, interesting, and by all accounts accurate portrait of what it is like to be unable to have children; a fact which is not surprising considering that the play is based in large part on Rudkin and his wife’s experiences, with research done by the director and actors of the initial production verifying the accuracy of the play on virtually all counts. In many ways, Ashes is a tribute to a playwright’s ability to realize the potential of epic structure in the examination of a condition, be it personal or social; for, had Rudkin not been able to move cinematically through time and space, or repeatedly raise a concern in its different aspects to reinforce his points and arguments, or show all the important aspects and incidents in diverse processes, it is very doubtful that he could have treated the condition of childlessness and its impact on childless couples successfully, if at all. Ashes is clearly not only a very fine play, but an excellent example of how epic structure can be used, and how it can be the most effective dramatic structure for treating certain kinds of material in the theatre, despite the small scale of the play scenically, technically, and in terms of acting personnel.

David Rudkin’s Ashes is one of the most complex of the contemporary British epic plays, both in the number of scenes (episodes), and in the number of important controlling factors in the structure. In fact, Ashes contains samples of almost all the controlling elements utilized

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in epic structure except the presentation of a historical sequence or the direct dramatization of an argument. The play itself is controlled structurally by the examination, the analysis, of a condition, and thematic concerns and the presentation of processes are significant elements in the selection and arrangement of incidents to accomplish that analysis. Insofar as neither the presentation of a historical sequence nor the dramatization of an argument is a primary controlling element in the structure of any of the other plays dealing with personal conditions or concerns which will be examined, the remaining plays in this section will be discussed more selectively than was *Ashes*, with an eye to emphasizing important points already raised about the way particular kinds of controlling factors operate, or to treating particular interesting and important points previously unmentioned, so that needless repetition can be avoided. Both of the remaining plays, David Edgar’s *Mary Barnes* and Stephen Poliakoff’s *City Sugar*, take the examination of some type of process as a primary controlling structural factor. However, each also either has some element or trait which it is important to note in an overall consideration of epic structure in contemporary British theatre, or treats a kind of process which is different, or differently handled, than that seen in any other work under consideration. Accordingly, the first play to be treated is David Edgar’s *Mary Barnes*, a play which examines the condition of schizophrenia and the process by which one victim of the disorder, Mary Barnes, was successfully treated in an experimental community.

Structurally, *Mary Barnes* is a much simpler, straight-forward play than is *Ashes*. It is focussed primarily, though not exclusively, on
one condition and one process: the schizophrenia manifest in Mary Barnes, and her road to recovery. In a sense, the play is a documentary drama, for it is the story of a real woman who suffered an almost total disintegration of her ego and personality, and of her efforts to reconstruct a person from herself with the assistance of the staff of an experimental psychiatric community into whose care she commits herself. The play is based on the book Mary Barnes: Two Accounts of a Journey Through Madness, written by Barnes herself and Joseph Berke.

It begins in 1965, and the main action of the play lasts for about four or five years, although there is a coda to the play which takes place many years later, explaining what became of the community which occupied the house in which the play takes place. Mary Barnes is quite cinematic in its approach to time, picking out and examining significant points in Mary's life and that of the group over several years, but is much more restrictive in its approach to space: there are few scenes outside the rooms of the home. It is episodically structured, centering on significant moments in Mary's process of recovery, as well as exploring aspects of schizophrenia and elements of the group's existence, and consists of three acts. The act divisions serve some structural purpose, but not a major one. The play is divided into twenty-nine scenes (eleven in Act I, eight in Act II, and ten in Act III) of widely varying length.
Mary Barnes

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<tr>
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<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>Lecture room of a hospital or university/Time indeterminate</td>
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Lecturer, nurse, and patient seen. Lecturer discusses typical theories of origins of schizophrenia and typical treatments; electric shock and chemicals. Discussion of the case of the patient, who is Mary's brother Simon, includes revelation of the fact he was hospitalized after going into his sister's room and saying he wanted to touch her. Scene establishes context in which schizophrenia is usually treated and methods of treatment for contrast with that received by Mary at group home.

Scene 2 | 12-20 | Group home, common room/1965 |

Group moving into home. Includes Douglas, Brenda, Hugo, and Zimmerman (therapists), and Mary (patient). Also present is Keith, a community resident and member of a rock band that rehearses in the basement. Mary, a nurse, arrives, maintaining pretense she is to be employed as a nurse. Is revealed Mary may not know she is ill, at least at times.

Scene 3 | 20-21 | Group home, Mary's room/A few days later |

Mary, in room, is visited by Douglas; who, along with Hugo, are initially her primary therapists. Mary initially maintains pretense that she is working on an article for The Nursing Times and has prospective employment. She suddenly announces to Douglas that she has come to have a breakdown.

Scene 4 | 21-24 | Common room/A few days later |

Arrival of Eddie, another therapist, and his friend Beth. Hugo and Mary enter, Mary having had a bad dream about having swallowed a bomb, on their way downstairs to Zimmerman's "box" (he is a Reichian psychologist), where she wants to sleep to the bomb can melt away. The bomb comes to function as a vital symbol in her conceptualization of her condition. It stands for sin, hers and the world's, which she internalizes, feels guilt for, feels evil over. The process of her treatment is, in part, one of getting rid of her guilt and
Mary Barnes

Scene 4

Pages
Scene 5

Place/Time-frame
24-25 Indeterminate; Mary in black box in spotlight/
That night

Scene 6

Page 25-28 Common room/A few days later

Scene 7

Page 28-30 Mary's room/Minutes later

her taking responsibility for anything bad that happens regardless of whether it involves her or not. A second part is helping her deal with the anger she feels and which she directs strongly inward, leading to self-hatred and her abasement of herself.

Hugo in audience address sketches in biography and medical history of Mary, who is now forty-two. Important details include that her illness dates from childhood, when she couldn't speak in school; that she is a convert to Catholicism; that four years after her conversion she was in a mental hospital for under a year; that two years prior to the opening of the play she was in a hostel, where the therapist told her that her masturbation was alright while the priest told her it was mortal sin, complicating and forming a new basis for her illness in that conflict; that she was obsessed with her masturbation; that she clung to her sanity for a year waiting for the group home to be formed, nearly breaking down several times; and that, going into the box in the basement, she has entered, in some extent, a pre-natal state.

Discussion between Douglas and Hugo reveals Mary is now a foetus, and wants to be fed through a stomach tube, which the staff cannot manage. They fear she will starve, but she insists on being fed like a foetus. It is also revealed she has been painting breasts on her walls with her own feces, and so they theorize she wants the breast; i.e., milk. Also that the whole painting/sculpting syndrome may be connected to sex, and that she may be choosy about who feeds her. Eddie volunteers to try.

Brenda tries to get Mary to eat, but she insists on tubes. Mary feels they are punishing her by denying tubes, and says that, for going against her therapy, she has "killed" Brenda. She accuses Brenda of trying to stop her from "going down" (Mary's term for the regression/regrowth process) to Eddie. Eddie reassures
Mary Barnes

(Scene 7)  30-35  Mary's room and common room/Days or weeks later

Eddie brings a spider in to Mary's room, a large rubber spider on a string, and wakes her, telling her the spider has come to get her. She grabs it and plays with it. He offers to race her downstairs. They romp, growling and biting as crocodiles. Eddie goes to the phone, leaving Mary in room with Beth. Beth asks Mary if she wants to help her lay the table, and Mary throws a chair at her. Eddie returns, and Mary tells him Beth was "coming in on her." Eddie explains to Mary that she is angry with him for leaving, but Mary denies this angrily, denying that she could be angry with Eddie. Eddie induces her to hit him in the chest, then squeeze him as tight as she can. He explains to her that her anger does not hurt him, and does not hurt her either. They then play a disappearing game with a cloth, at the end of which he tries to point out that he and Mary can come and go without hurting one another.

(Scene 8)  36-40  Common room/Days or weeks later

Community eating dinner. Group discusses outmoded ideas about mental disease, especially schizophrenia. Mary is cold because central heating is acting up. She asks Eddie what she did, thinking she is being punished for some wrong. She also thinks Eddie is punishing himself because he eats salt on his food, and asks why he is punishing her. She questions eating, especially dessert, saying it seems wrong to eat. Eddie tells her she is angry because he is talking to the others. She verbally assaults Beth. Suddenly, people from the neighborhood begin to break the windows in the house.

(Scene 9)  40-41  Common room/Next morning

Keith explains the community broke the windows because of fear and a lack of understanding.
Mary tries to prevent Eddie from going to clinic for three hours. She is afraid he will not return, and says he is punishing her, and asks what she has done. She clutches him, whines, and threatens to run naked into the street screaming. Eddie turns to go, she screams, and he punches her in the face, giving her a bloody nose. Eddie feels terrible, but Douglas informs him Mary is delighted, because she feels that the badness bomb is coming down out her nose. Eddie leaves. Mary, alone in her room, says, "This is my body. This is my blood. This is Mary Barnes." This phrasing in terms of the eucharist and of Catholic ritual is significant for upcoming developments.

Act II

Scene 1 44-49 Common room/Weeks later

Laurence, a new patient, is present. He likes to play a stereo at loud volume, but normally only plays the first few seconds of the record over and over. Mary is bringing a number of her paintings and drawings in, most featuring the devil tempting or attacking Christ, saints, etc. Also paintings of Virgin Mary. She is distributing them around the group home, a fact which Douglas is concerned with. Mary and Laurence fight after he throws her things off a chair to sit on it. Mary is in rebellion against all authority except Eddie. She wants to paint the walls of the games room, but the group seems to object enough to reject the notion, despite Eddie's supporting it. At end of scene, Mary identifies Brenda with her mother, and her mother with a black spider.

Scene 3 49-55 Common room/That evening

Dinner. Douglas proposes that the community reject its founding principle of no rules, and that it now be run according to a set of regulations, with those who cannot abide by them being expelled. This is an
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<td>Scene 3</td>
<td>Attempt to control Mary's behavior, with which he has become impatient. The group is not altogether in favor of his approach, particularly when he suggests that there be a medical director to make decisions (presumably himself). A rivalry between Mary and Laurence is apparent. Mary accuses Laurence of urinating in the games room and putting blood on her paintings. She insists her paintings must stay up, although Douglas clearly wants them removed. Laurence goes out, takes down the paintings, brings them in, and hurls them to the floor, telling Mary she is hurting him and blaming him for her illness (she seems to identify him to some extent with her brother, Simon). Mary and Laurence fight again, with Mary ending by accusing Douglas and Hugo of betraying her, hurling bread (the body) and wine (the blood) at them. Douglas orders Eddie to either give Mary rules and make her obey them or to take her out of the house. Douglas, Beth, and Hugo go out to a pub, leaving Eddie and Brenda to clear up.</td>
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<td>Scene 4</td>
<td>55-56 Mary's room/A few minutes later</td>
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<td>Scene 5</td>
<td>56-59 Common room/Later that evening</td>
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Brenda and Eddie discuss the situation with Mary. He observes that her paintings are a plea for love and are the only way she can communicate, as she has no words to articulate her feelings, and that the community has stigmatized her. Mary comes down, covered with her own faces, and naked. She tells Eddie he is her goodness. Eddie feeds her an onion, telling her to spit it out, and that that is her badness coming out. He feeds her a spoon of honey, telling her it is goodness going in. Douglas enters, and sees Mary and Eddie going upstairs to clean up. Brenda observes to him that Mary "takes upon herself, the shit of the whole world."
Scene 6  59  Common room/Indeterminate

Mantra being sung offstage. Douglas enters, carrying clothing and suitcase. He dresses and leaves, apparently leaving the community, as he does not appear in the rest of the play.

Scene 7  59-60  Common room/Some weeks later

Discussion reveals that for some weeks Mary has fasted until she hangs on the edge of life and death. She does this to try to prevent Eddie from going on a three week trip. He goes, nonetheless.

Scene 8  61-63  Common room/Some days later

Mary remembers feelings of dissociation from herself as a child. She begins drawing figures and holding conversations between them. She draws herself exploded, draws figures going to the sky and to heaven. She speaks of the bomb in her, of the urge to spew it out, and how the more she tries to tear it out, the more it sticks. She says she has to lie with it, work it through, and advises herself to "Stay in the dark. Be empty. Nothing. Void. Hang on." Hugo asks her if she must suffer so, but she says that it is he who is suffering, not she anymore, and that she is no longer alone. At the end of the scene, Angie, aged twenty, a new patient enters from a peace demonstration "strangely energized." She sits, suddenly has terrible pain in her face, pess herself, and collapses. Mary crawls over and holds her.

Act III

Scene 1  64  Common room/Some time later—1968

Audience address. Mary tells a story she wrote which is a metaphor for her therapeutic experience; i.e., that she went back down to the lowest place of life she could and tried to begin again with a new life.

Scene 2  64-66  Common room/Indeterminate—1968

Audience address by Angie, who tells her life story and the history and causes of her illness, which lie in a disintegration of her personality and dissociation.
Mary Barnes

Scene | Pages | Place/Time-frame
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(Scene 2) | from herself under the impact of criticism and contradictory input from her family and her lover.

Scene 3 | 66-71 | Mary’s room/Some weeks later

Mary sharing her room with Angie. Mary reveals she once “killed” her mother in her heart. Angie would like to do the same. For much of the scene, Angie articulates such feelings, and Mary assures her she has felt the same things. This is significant for it is the first time Mary reaches out to help and engage someone other than herself or Eddie. Mary tries to get Angie to "go down", and to get Eddie to make her "go down". Angie’s love-hate relationship with her mother is made clear. At the end of the scene, Angie breaks down. Mary holds her as a child, giving her her breast, Angie calls Mary her mother, Mary calls herself Angie’s Mother Mary.

Scene 4 | 71-75 | Common room/Days or weeks later

Angie’s birthday. Her mother and brother are there. She has called them to take her to a hospital for conventional therapeutic treatment (shocks, drugs), Hugo tries to prevent her from going, but she goes. Mary is not present.

Scene 5 | 75-76 | Common room/Later that day

Mary returns. She has gotten an exhibition for her art, Hugo returns, and gives Mary the rosary she had given Angie. Mary asks that Eddie arrange for her to see her brother, so that she and he can “go down” together.

Scene 6 | 77 | Art gallery/Days or weeks later

Simon and Mary meet. She asks him to come and stay at the group home. He says he will come to visit, but not to live. Eddie tells Mary not to smother Simon.

Scene 7 | 77-81 | Mary’s room/Days or weeks later

Tea with Mary, Simon, and Eddie. Simon discusses his life at the hostel where he lives, his work, and his treatments. Mary tries to convince Simon to come stay. He resists initially, but reveals he is thinking of
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<tr>
<td>Scene 7</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>Scene 7</td>
<td>Moving from the hostel and changing his job. Simon agrees to seriously consider moving in. The horrors of his treatment (chemicals to counteract the effect of chemicals, etc.) are revealed.</td>
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<td>Scene 8</td>
<td>81-82</td>
<td>Common room/Months later</td>
<td>Simon has moved in. Laurence playing records at loud volume. Simon appears, looks at him. Laurence raises volume. Simon turns and leaves. In a blackout, record and player are smashed.</td>
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<td>Scene 9</td>
<td>82-85</td>
<td>Common room/Minutes later, or next morning</td>
<td>Laurence heaps blame on himself for Simon leaving. Mary laments his loss, noting he had improved, but blames the therapists for letting him and Angie go. She expresses anger, and openly admits for the first time that she is angry with Eddie, finally directing her anger out and not heaping it and guilt onto herself. There is a recurrent game of &quot;Knock, knock&quot; in the play between her and Eddie, and here for the first time she calls herself Mary Barnes instead of just Mary. She thus has restored her identity and come to accept herself and, for the most part, deal normally with a situation. Eddie reveals the lease on the home is up and will not be renewed, so the home will shortly come to an end, forcing Simon into a hospital again whether he returns now or not. Zimmerman wonders whether Mary's Catholicism will not continue to cause her problems, discussing the contradictory messages her psychologist and priest had given her over her obsessive masturbation some years earlier. Eddie says that that is her path, and she must be allowed to follow it, and also that she is much better than she had been years before, and without drugs or electro-shock therapy. The therapists muse on the home, and the changes wrought in them by the experience. At the end of the scene, Simon returns.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 10</td>
<td>85-87</td>
<td>Common room/Several years later</td>
<td>Keith comes into the house with Angie, who is trying to reconstruct her past after electro-shock therapy had wiped out her memory to a large extent. The house has been deserted for some time, and much of the neighborhood torn down. Angie finds a painting leaning...</td>
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(Scene 10) against the wall as they are preparing to leave.
Keith tells her it is by Mary Barnes. Angie tries, but cannot quite place the name.

As the structural chart clearly shows, Mary Barnes is an epic play. Although its use of space is restricted largely to two rooms, its approach to time is free and cinematic, covering about four to six years. Its point of attack is early, coming at the very beginning of Mary's therapeutic process. It is a many-scened play (twenty-nine scenes), and the scenes have a fairly high degree of isolation (i.e., are fairly discrete), although in some sections of the play several scenes are linked together to form short narrative units; notably Act II, Scenes 2-5. Nonetheless, the scene clearly functions as the basic structural unit of the play, with act divisions of secondary importance. The organization of scenes is episodic, and the selection and arrangement of scenes is basically controlled by three interconnected concerns: the examination and revelation of the process of Mary's illness and cure; the revelation of the life of the home (in a sense, charting a historical process); and the exploration of the theme of the nature and treatment of schizophrenia as it is commonly viewed and practiced, and as it was done, almost certainly better and more humanely, in this one case. The episodic nature of the scenes can be observed both in the inclusion of scenes which stand outside the main concern of the play

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10 David Edgar, Mary Barnes (London: Eyre Methuen, 1979). All citations are from this edition.
(the process of Mary's treatment and recovery), and in the fact the
main concern is treated via a focus on significant, isolated points in
the treatment process, without an attempt to draw causal connections
between the stages of the treatment, or even to provide a clear picture
of its gradual progress through narration. As a result, Mary's regenera-
tion appears, not as a process of slow, more or less continual progress,
but as a series of dramatic leaps forward. In fact, Edgar himself
characterized the structure of Mary Barnes as, "a kind of trampoline,
or linear row of pegs, on which various things would hang." Such a
structure was adapted by Edgar in part because he was working from an
extant, narrative source, Mary Barnes's autobiography, in creating the
play; a fact which would tend to encourage the use of epic structure.
However, the condensation and intensification necessary to create an
effective play also made it necessary for Edgar to alter the book and
process by telescoping, combining events and characters, and focussing
on dramatic points or breakthroughs. "Second, the exigencies of time
and clarity forced me to telescope and even alter many of the events in
the book, to combine functions and people, and to find ways of making
publicly clear what was occurring in the privacy of people's minds and
souls." The result of this telescoping and intensification is an
increased sense of the dramatic leap forward, and a decreased sense of


steady progression; a phenomenon which further accents the isolation of scenes and events. That, combined with the intrusion of scenes outside the main narrative line, such as Act I, Scene 1 (a general exposition of current theories of and treatments for schizophrenia), or Act I, Scene 10, in which Keith explains the community's attack on the group home, give *Mary Barnes* its episodic construction. It is clear therefore that *Mary Barnes* possesses an epic structure in virtually all significant respects.

*Mary Barnes* differs from Rudkin's *Ashes* in several ways. It has a greater degree of scenic isolation, and each scene tends to be focussed more directly on a single concern, although there are certainly some scenes which accomplish ends important to more than one of the primary concerns of the play. It is also a play which focusses on growth, on human reconstruction, rather than deconstruction or decay. Most significant, however, is the fact that the play is centered on, organized around, a single concern to a much greater degree than is *Ashes*; i.e., the process by which Mary Barnes recovered from her disabling schizophrenia. Though there are scenes which focus on the life of the community, or on the symptoms, theory, and treatment of the disease, these topics in the play are adjuncts to or provide contrasts for the process of Mary's treatment and the specifics of her condition, and are by no means as important as it. In looking at *Mary Barnes*, it is possible to see how epic structure can be focussed on and used to closely examine a single, central concern, rather than simultaneously treating a variety of themes, conditions, or processes.
Mary Barnes's schizophrenia is centered on her taking on the responsibility for her own and all the world's evils, internalizing that sense of evil as personal evil and guilt, creating a sense of worthlessness and anger which she is unable to direct out, and which she consequently turns against herself. The process of the cure which the play examines is one in which the therapists, particularly Eddie, learn that, then treat it, so that Mary is cured (or, to a considerable extent, is able to help heal herself). The problem for Eddie is to make her unreal vision of the world clear to Mary, and impress on her how incorrect it is. This is usually done through a system of metaphorical gestures (play with the spider; striking his chest in anger; feeding her onions to spit out badness, and honey to take goodness in) similar to the metaphorical language she employs, and then using that language to initiate changes in her outlook and behavior. Edgar examines this therapeutic process by tracing its course through a series of scenes in which an aspect of Mary's illness is uncovered and a treatment initiated. The process begins in Act I, Scene 2, in which it is simply revealed that Mary does in fact have an illness. This is made clear in an exchange between Keith, a community youth whose rock band rehearses in the basement, and Hugo.

Keith: Eh. She's looney.
Hugo: Yes, that's right.
Keith: But she—
Hugo: She doesn't—
Keith: Doesn't?
Hugo: Know. She doesn't know—
Keith: She doesn't know?
Hugo: She's—
Keith: Looney. Doesn't know she's looney.
Hugo: Yes. Precisely.
Keith: Ah. Oh. Right. (p. 19)
Later in the same scene, the importance of Mary's coming to an awareness of her condition if she is to be made well is emphasized by Hugo in conversation with Douglas.

Douglas: Should she?
Hugo: Should she?
Douglas: Know.
Hugo: Yes. Yes, she should. (pp. 19-20)

However, in the next scene, Act I, Scene 3, it becomes clear that Mary both knows she is ill, and realizes why she has come. This is done in a short exchange with Douglas.

Mary: Duggie.
Douglas: It's OK.
Mary: I've come—
Douglas: Don't worry—
Mary: Come to have a breakdown. (p. 21)

With that, she finishes a last piece of correspondence, takes the pins from her hair, and announces, "I'm cold." (p. 21) Her breakdown and course of therapy have begun.

The first steps in the revelation of her illness and in her therapy occur in Act I, Scene 4. In this scene, Mary begins to internalize and make concrete her burden of guilt and sense of personal evil in her dream about the bomb which she has swallowed. Her dream is told by Hugo.

Hugo: She's had a nasty dream. She's walking down the road. Sees men in berets, in a wire compound, and they're going to test the bomb. So down she goes, this passage, deep inside, where she'll be safe. But she's not safe, because she is the passage and the bomb's inside her. She has swallowed it, can't spew it up, or shit it out. It's going to explode. And so she wants to sleep, down, in the box, so it can melt away. (p. 23)

This dream contains a couple of significant metaphors in Mary's own language about her illness. First, there is the bomb inside her, which
she hopes will melt away. Later, in Act I, Scene 11, it is made clear that this bomb is her "badness," which she wants to melt away, but which she is afraid will explode and destroy her. Her moving into a passage suggests regression to the womb, which is, in fact, the first step in the process of "going down" that she undertakes at the end of this scene by going to sleep in Zimmerman's box in the basement. Finally, her having swallowed the bomb suggests the internalization of evil from outside herself that is one of the major roots of her problems: the compounding of her sense of real, personal guilt by also taking on the sins of the world (she even refers to herself in Christ metaphors later in the play, in Act I, Scene 11). This dream crystallizes both Mary's illness and the general process to which she turns for healing very early in the play, in its fourth scene. She goes to the basement, sleeps in Zimmerman's box, and begins her regression to childhood and her regeneration as a human being.

Act I, Scene 5 traces the history of Mary's illness up to her arrival in the group home, but does not contribute directly to the development of her disease and treatment except for a comment by Hugo that equates her internal agony with the bomb (p. 25). Act I, Scenes 6 and 7, however, begin to develop her regenerative process more fully. Basically, her "strategy" is to regress to a pre-natal state and begin to live her life anew. In these scenes, Mary demands a pre-natal form of feeding (via a stomach tube) during a period when, as Hugo says, "She is a foetus. That's what she's experiencing." (I, 6, p. 25) This is an impossible condition for the group home to manage; however, they contrive to feed her milk from a bottle, and Eddie takes over the task
of feeding her. In this way, Eddie becomes a sort of parent to her, and takes over as her chief therapist, although Hugo continues to have an important supportive function. A significant source of Mary's illness is also revealed in Scene 7: her ambivalent, but primarily hostile, attitude toward her mother, and her guilt over those feelings and the feeling of wishing her mother dead. Brenda, whom Mary comes to regard much as a mother figure, tells her she cannot have the tubes. At that point, Mary responds by bursting into tears, feeling she is being punished for something she has done and is being betrayed by the community.

Mary: What've I done.
Brenda: You haven't done anything.
Mary: Why you gone against yourself.
Brenda: I haven't gone against myself.
Mary: You gone against my therapy. You're punishing me. I killed you. Wrong, wrong, wrong. I killed you. (p. 28)

Following this exchange, Mary agrees to feeding by bottle when Eddie arrives, marking an advance into a childhood state from a foetal state. She also rapidly develops an attachment to and dependence on Eddie, an attachment that is jealous (she spits milk on him when he smiles at Brenda), and which regards separation as punishment. As Eddie is leaving, she furiously asks him, "Why are you so angry with me, Eddie?" (p. 30) In Scenes 6 and 7 of Act I, Mary's illness begins to be fleshed out, she advances from a foetal to a young-child stage of growth in her development, and she establishes her basic therapeutic relationship; significant points in the process examined by Edgar in the play.

In Act I, Scene 8, Mary has advanced into a stage of childhood marked by very active, roaming play with Eddie. Early in the scene, he introduces the metaphor of a spider to her through the use of a huge,
black rubber spider on a string. He later uses the spider to show
Mary that "... the spider's outside you, Mary." (I, 8, p. 35) Mary
later picks up on the spider metaphor herself and uses it to describe
Brenda and her mother. The play with Eddie revolves around animals,
with Mary pretending to be a crocodile, and she and Eddie biting one
another, to Mary's delight. Mary's dependence on Eddie, her desire for
an exclusive contact with him, is reinforced when, after Eddie leaves
to take a phone call, Mary throws a chair at Beth when, as Mary says,
Beth tries to "come in on her" by inviting Mary to help lay the table
(p. 33). When Eddie insists to Mary that it was her anger with him
that made her attack Beth, she angrily denies this. She says, "No, you
know I'd not be angry with you, Eddie!" and then beats him on the chest
and squeezes him tightly in her fury, with him egging her on (p. 34).
When her anger is over, Eddie uses the incident to teach Mary that her
anger is alright, and that it can and should be released out. He says,
"You bit my ear, You hit me, Yuh? And I'm still here. And I bit you,
And you're fine. Anger doesn't hurt me, and it doesn't kill you either.
Both OK." (p. 34) These points, the need for Mary to be able to deal
with her anger, and to feel neither guilty nor punished for it, are
significant points, for they lie at the heart of her problem, and her
coming to terms with and accepting them are a major focus of her rege-
neration. Eddie also tries to begin to develop independence in her,
and to take away her fear that she will be deserted, by playing a game
with her involving a cloth that makes her "invisible". At the end of
the game, Eddie tells her, "See. She can go. And she comes back again.
And Eddie, goes, and Eddie comes right back again. (He puts his finger
in her mouth, and then takes it out) And Eddie comes in Mary, and she
isn't hurt; and Eddie goes out, and she isn't hurt." (p. 35) These
initial steps toward self-acceptance and independence are small, but
they are significant, and her ability to follow a path toward them
occupies much of the remainder of the play.

The final two scenes of Act I demonstrate how slow and tentative
Mary's progress is. In Scene 9, she feels she is being punished, or
ought to be, at dinner, primarily because Eddie is talking to people
other than her. In Scene 10, she has a fit when Eddie tries to leave
to go to the clinic for three hours. Eddie becomes so frustrated with
her he punches her in the face, giving her a bloody nose. This de-
lights Mary, because she feels it has released her evil. As Douglas
explains to Eddie, "She says you brought her badness out. Her badness,
bomb, all down her nose it came." (p. 42) This scene establishes that
Mary is still highly dependent on Eddie; and further, that she still
feels a sense of being punished, even persecuted, for, at the end of
the scene, alone in her room, she seems to identify herself with
Christ at the last supper, saying, "This is my body. This is my blood.
This is Mary Barnes." (p. 43) Her identification with Christ and other
Christian figures, particularly the Virgin Mary, is expanded in the re-
mainder of the play, and becomes one of the major metaphorical paths
through which she expresses her feelings in paintings and words, and
works out her therapy. This scene contains a significant step forward
in beginning that process. However, her initial reaction, that her
badness has been released, proves to be fleeting, for in Act II, Scene 8,
she once again speaks of the bomb being inside her.
In Act II, Scene 1, Eddie brings Mary some crayons, beginning her on the preoccupation with artwork that functions as a means for her to articulate feeling, giving her a language with which to communicate that which she cannot say. It also gives her a means of, in a sense, speaking to herself, so that she can work out her internal conflicts. The importance of the artwork to her, and her desire to communicate through it, are seen in Scenes 2 and 3. In these scenes, it is revealed that, having already drawn on the walls, she wishes to paint murals on the walls of the games room, and that she wants to, and is engaged in trying to, hang her work all over the house; much to the dismay of some of the members of the community, particularly Douglas. Her problems with her mother are brought up again in Scene 2. When Douglas complains that she has already drawn a "criss-cross spider web all over" everything in the games room (p. 48), she explains, "My mother said—don't paint outside the lines. I splashed about. I shouldn't paint outside the lines. My mother was a spider. You are like a Mother to me, Brenda." (p. 49) Her problems with her brother are introduced in Scene 3, when her strong and often antagonistic relationship with Laurence is established; and, especially, in Scene 4, when Mary explicitly links the two, and establishes her response to Simon's intrusion into her room many years before as a source of her guilt and other problems. "I mean, I mean to say. I had to look the door, you were away. I had to look the door. Quite a relief, they came, in their white coats, with jacket for you, long white jacket, with long arms and bits of string. A great relief. And so you went inside. You've gone inside. And you won't melt inside. (In great pain)" (p. 56) Her last phrase is symptomatic of how
she identifies with and internalizes the "evil" of others, taking, as Christ, on herself the sins of the world. This process of taking on all of sin and evil is represented graphically in the following scene, in which she comes downstairs covered in her own feces. As Eddie takes her upstairs to clean up, Brenda comments to Douglas, "She takes upon herself, the shit of the whole world." (II, 5, p. 59) Before he takes her up, however, Eddie tries once again to demonstrate to her that she is not evil, and that she can get rid of the badness in herself. Making her place an onion in her mouth, Eddie tells Mary, "OK, now, creature. Spit it out. (She does) Now that is badness coming out. And this— (spoons honey into her mouth) Is goodness going in. That's better. Good." (II, 5, p. 58) As in Act I, Scene 10, her success in purging herself through Eddie's metaphorical gesture is small and incomplete. However, it is a reinforcement of the notion that she can discard the bad and take in the good, and is especially significant in light of the fact that, in the concluding two scenes of the act, her dependence on Eddie and sense of guilt are brought to a head, and she begins to break them down in a relationship with Angie.

The depth of Mary's dependence on and possessiveness of Eddie is seen in Scene 7, in which it is revealed that she has fasted near to the edge of death in an attempt to prevent Eddie from taking a three week trip.

Beth: Hey, did she eat today?
Brenda: She drank some water.
Beth: Yuh, D'you think she—
Brenda: Very thin.
Beth: Sure is. Hugo says, she has this kind of instinct, stops her going off the edge. (p. 59)
Nonetheless, Eddie goes, and in Scene 8 Mary is seen drawing and holding a conversation with herself by speaking to and speaking as the figures she draws, almost as if she were drawing a cartoon representation of her internal dialogue, with the cartoonist as one of the characters. This scene establishes a number of significant points. Mary begins it by describing a sense of dissociation from herself she had as a child. "Remember, as a child, strange feelings. Feel apart. Not here, not anywhere, a thing. All clumpy, weary. Head all big and fuzzy. Bits of me." (p. 61) She then has a long conversation among the figures she is drawing about being blown apart and going to heaven, metaphorically speculating on the bomb/evil inside her, and on her chances of salvation. Her self-prognosis is rather gloomy. She calls herself a "Dead thing. The dead don't feel." She also describes herself as "blown apart," and concludes by saying, "No, no. The sky's gone crimson. God oh God why have you . . ." (p. 61) Presumably, she is paraphrasing Christ's "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" in her broken-off final line. That she might be feeling hopeless and forsaken, by Eddie as well as God, is reinforced in the following comments, which occur outside the conversation with the figures she is drawing. She speaks of the bomb within her, and how hard it is to get out. "And the urge to spew it out, the bomb. But more you tear at it, the more it seems to cling, to stick inside you. Got to lie with it, and work it through." (p. 61) Though she clearly feels the difficulty of her therapeutic task, a positive development can be seen in her determination to see it through. Nonetheless, she concludes this section of the scene by returning to the figures and having them address God in a series of lines
which also draw together her metaphorical identification with the God/Christ that she, as a Catholic, addresses.

Mary: Hey, you!
    You up there. Come down.
    If you're so great, so clever, come on down.
    He can't.
    Well, ask him why. Can whisper.
    Can't. Can't talk.
    He's sulking, in a paddy. Cos he can't come down.
    I won't.
    I won't come down.
    Stay in the dark.

As she works through her feelings, she seems to come to a dead, gloomy end; a sense of nothingness. However, this is not so, for after Hugo asks her if she must suffer so, she asserts she is no longer suffering; that she has found something or someone, is no longer alone, and that it is he who suffers.

Mary: No, Wrong. Not suffering.
    No more. It's you who's suffering.
    Not me. It's you who's stretched and bleeding, up against
    the golden sky.
    Not finished. Not alone.
    You're not the only one.
    Not on my own. (p. 62)

Mary has made a significant step in her recovery by finding some reservoir of strength on which she can draw to ease her pain. Presumably, this is a faith in God, for she consistently works out her regeneration within the context of her Catholicism, as Eddie notes in Act III, Scene 9: "That's how she is. That is her journey. That is real and right and true for her. That's all." (p. 84) However, that is not all that comes to Mary in this scene. At the end of Act II, Scene 8, Angie arrives at the home. Angie is an ill young woman of twenty. She comes late at night, and collapses. Mary crawls over to her and begins to
hold her. This is the start of a relationship in which Mary tries to
care for and help Angie get better; the first time she reaches out and
opens to a relationship with someone other than Eddie since her collapse
three years before.

Mary's efforts on Angie's behalf are condensed into Act III, Scene
3. Prior to this scene, Mary has a narrative to the audience in which
she tells a story metaphorically summarizing her process of "going down",
of regressing to the lowest possible state so that healthy growth can
take the place of illness. As part of the speech, she indicates that
personal rigidity might have been one of the significant causes of her
illness as well, and that she is learning how to "bend to other trees"
(her story concerns a tree) (III, 1, p. 64). Angie also has a narrative,
Scene 2, in which she describes how she came to the house and the course
and causes of her condition. During Scene 3, Mary comforts Angie by
assuring her that many of the things Angie feels are things that she,
Mary, felt, including the desire to kill her mother, even though it
would "feel like suicide" to do so (p. 66), cover herself in ashes, and
eat trash (Mary comments that she had in fact eaten her own feces). She
also tries to convince Angie to "go down," and tries to get Eddie to
force her to do so, but he tells Mary that Angie must find her own way.
Most significant for Mary's recovery, however, is the way in which her
relationship with Angie helps Mary to resolve her feelings for her mo-
ther by taking on the mother role where Angie is concerned. Twice in
the scene, Mary holds and cradles Angie as a child. The second time,
she and Angie explicitly agree on Mary's identity as Angie's (surro-
gate) mother, even if the relationship is to be short-lived (Angie has
already called her real mother to come get her).

Angie: Oh, I like it here.
Mary: You do?
Angie: Yuh, Do, (pause) Gimme your tit. (Mary gives Angie her breast, cradling her in her arms,) You are my mother, Mary. (Long pause. Angie down, lets Mary's breast go, Mary sits there, looking at Angie.)
Mary: I am your Mother Mary. (p. 71)

In this scene, Mary is seen to open up a relationship with a person other than Eddie, successfully engaging in a larger society for the first time in a long while, as well as coming to terms with her mother and the image of Mother by taking on that image herself (interestingly, very much within the context of Catholicism in her calling herself "Mother Mary"). Angie leaves the community in the following scene. Nonetheless, her presence was a spark for major progress in Mary's regeneration.

The next scene in which Mary's progress is seen is Act III, Scene 5, which takes place a few days later. Three significant events occur in this scene. First, Mary has received a showing of her paintings at a local gallery. Second, for the first time since her collapse, Mary has gone outside the house, indicating an increasing ability to cope with the world, and has done so by going with Zimmerman, not Eddie, indicating increased independence from her therapist. Finally, Mary indicates her desire to begin to come to terms with her brother and their relationship. At the end of the scene, she tells Eddie, "Please, Eddie, find my brother. Want to go down with my brother." (p. 76)

Her meetings with Simon occur in Scenes 6 and 7. Although the process by which they really come to terms with one another is not represented by Edgar, Mary's concern for Simon, her willingness to care for him,
are seen in her trying to convince him to "go down" as she had done,
and in her success in at least getting him to come live in the house.
By Scene 9, the final scene in which Mary appears, she has succeeded in
resolving her problems with her family, and is well on the road to
recovery.

The final step in her regeneration involves her ability to deal
with anger: to feel it toward others, admit it, and not feel guilty or
punish herself for it, as well as her ability to break with Eddie. This
occurs in Act III, Scene 9, in which she becomes angry with Eddie, and
expresses it, after Simon has left because of Laurence’s noise (he
returns at the end of the scene). Her anger stems primarily from the
fact that, though he is better, the therapists cannot cure him, and in
leaving, he will return to the conditions she brought him to the home to
escape.

Mary: He just, wanted to be left alone. Be quiet, to make his
food, and eat it, do the things he does, precisely, orga-
nize his day.
Hugo: He’ll come back,
Mary: Gone. This is the END.
Hugo: It’s not the end.
Mary: He’ll be destroyed.
Brenda: Mary, Simon’s different, he hasn’t got your painting and
your writing—
Mary: Painting? Writing? That’s not important. What’s impor-
tant is my brother. And you helping. (She shouts at the
others) You know him better than he knows himself!
Eddie: You know that isn’t true.
Mary: It’s just the same as Angie. You just let them go.
Hugo: Oh, shut up, Mary.
Mary: The lot of you. You’re therapists, aren’t you? You’re
healers, aren’t you? Well, then, do your job. And CURE
HIM.
Eddie: Oh, for Christ’s sake, Mary . . .
Mary: Oh, I’m so angry with you, Eddie—
Eddie: Are you? Are you angry?
Mary: Yes!
Eddie: Then say it—
Mary: I am angry—
Eddie: Once again—
Mary: I am very angry with you, Eddie—
Eddie: Knock, who's there—
Mary: It's MARY—
Eddie: Mary who—
Mary: IT'S MARY BARNES
Eddie: That's good.
Mary: Oh, I'm so angry with you Eddie! (Mary storms out. The others smile)
Eddie: Very good indeed . . . (pp. 82-3)

In this way, Mary comes to be able to accept her anger and herself, effectively purging herself of those problems and conditions that crippled her through her illness. The play closes with Mary Barnes restored to something very close to a fully healthy human being.

In *Mary Barnes*, David Edgar uses epic structure to examine a process, the regeneration of Mary Barnes, by selecting significant incidents and episodes from the course of her treatment and rendering them in a series of discrete, episodically arranged scenes, taking full advantage of the ability to move freely through time, if not space, in order to accomplish his goal of treating the process fully and comprehensibly. The nature of the subject matter and the process he chose to examine made Edgar's use of epic structure, in a sense, inevitable, for it would have been virtually impossible to represent such a long process, with so many complex and significant developments, clearly using any other structural form. In *Mary Barnes*, Edgar focuses primarily on a single line of development, unifying his play around that line, with all other themes, processes, or conditions that are examined taking a very secondary role. In *City Sugar*, Stephen Poliakoff utilizes epic structure to present a story in which there is no single, dominant unifying factor in the play, but rather three factors of approximately
equal importance which converge in the climactic scene of the drama. These are: the process of growth in the character of a young girl, Nicola Davies; the examination of a condition, the pathological personality of a disc jockey, Leonard Brazil; and the examination of a theme, the way in which popular culture is used to exploit the working class, particularly its youth, by the forces of capital. These factors are drawn together through the framework of a contest, which Leonard rigs to get Nicola into the studio finals as part of his plan to humiliate one of the teen-aged girls who are his fans, and whom he loathes. The structure of the play, the selection and arrangement of its incidents, is controlled by these three factors operating through the matrix of the contest, with none assuming such a dominant role that it can be considered the primary structural control in the play, although the third element, the theme of the exploitative use of popular culture, is the factor which underlies and binds the other two together, giving their relationship a socio-cultural and political significance that raises it above the level of the purely psychological and mundane.

City Swear is a relatively compact play, consisting of nine scenes, divided into two acts. The nature of the controlling factors in the script, and the way in which they are handled, is such that, had Poliakoff concentrated strongly on any of the three primary factors, he would probably have written an episodically constructed, but dramatically structured play (it is, in fact, quite conceivable that he could have written a causally constructed work, as a very similar theme is treated causally in his American Days). However, in combining the three without giving real primacy to any, Poliakoff produced a script which is
ultimately epic in its structure, though it comes close to being dramatic, and might well have slipped over into that structural category had Poliakoff strengthened one of the controlling factors, particularly the second or third.

City Sugar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Place/Time-frame</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act I</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>35-40</td>
<td>The studio, Leicester</td>
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<td>Leonard broadcasting. Introduction to Rex, his engineer, whom he abuses at length throughout the play. Nicola calls in and receives a record for correctly (more or less) answering a call-in contest question. Leonard announces Stage One of the &quot;Competition of the Century,&quot; a meeting with a rock band and four day trip to London, will be revealed the next day.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>40-43</td>
<td>Supermarket/Next day</td>
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<td>Nicola at work. Friend Susan visits from another department, forcing them to hide her from a camera that watches for employee misconduct. Nicola misses the announcement of the first stage of the contest when the loudspeaker is interrupted for an announcement by the management. She frantically uses a phone reserved for management trying to learn details, even ignoring the camera to do so. Fails, but hears details when they are repeated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 3</td>
<td>43-48</td>
<td>Studio/Couple of days later</td>
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<td>Brazil's hatred/disgust for his fans begins to be articulated. Abuses Rex, and jokes ill-naturedly with John, the newscaster. Tries to disrupt newscast from out of microphone range, but fails. Selects postcards for those who will go on to Stage Two, including Nicola's (basically the first twenty he picks up, although he is specially interested in hers), and announces that they are to make full-size models of one of the members of the rock band The Yellow Jacks, whose visit has prompted the contest.</td>
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Scene 4  48-51  Nicola's room/A day or so later

Nicola and Susan making the model. They denude Nicola's room of objects to stuff in the doll and fill it out. Susan constantly discourages Nicola, but she persists.

Scene 5  51-57  Studio/A day or so later

Leonard and Rex in studio, during a twice-weekly evening show Leonard does. Call-ins part of show. Off-mike, Leonard again articulates his dislike for audience. He abuses Rex viciously, finally firing him. He selects the two finalists, Jane Harris and Louise Prentiss, then spots Nicola's entry, which he somehow senses is hers. He changes his mind and makes Nicola a finalist with Jane. He does so because he has "picked her voice out" and "been using it." They reach Nicola on the phone to tell her (she notes that Leonard talks to her longer than anyone else on the phone in another scene). Leonard launches a long diatribe, a regular feature called the "13 Spot," which has to do with the decline of the country, and people needing to shout out to make things better (including music, which he constantly notes has declined through the last ten years in the play, 1966-76). Some of Leonard's loathing for his job and what he plays on the air comes through, a hint of the self-loathing beneath.

Act II

Scene 1  57-59  Nicola's bedroom/A day or two later

Nicola prepares to go to the contest. She makes it clear that she cares more about getting into the radio station than about winning the contest. Leonard calls for a brief chat on the air, mostly as a promotion. Susan forces Nicola to eat a sandwich to get her ready to go.

Scene 2  59-74  The studio/Later that day

The contest. Leonard announces to John and Rex that he has, as was rumored earlier in the play, been offered a job in London, which he may accept. Leonard's spartan life-style discussed by John and Rex. He lives alone, with almost nothing but books in his apartment.
Rex manages to coax Leonard into allowing him a few moments on the air. Nicola arrives, then Jane, and the contest is set. They go through a series of questions, with Leonard giving both, but especially Nicola, a hard time at some moments, and going soft in others. Contest ends in a virtual tie, so Leonard allows home audience to phone in and vote on the winner. Jane is declared the winner. Whether any voting has anything to do with it is unknown, but Leonard later explains to Nicola that she had made it through because he had chosen and been using her as his image of his average listener, and that she really couldn't have won because, since she had previously won a record, the contest would have looked rigged if she had won. He also tells her the prize is, in fact, a bit of a fraud, at least as far as contact with the rock group is concerned. Jane goes off to an interview and meeting with Ross, leader of the group, which Leonard tells Rex he should conduct, revoking his firing. Leonard stays with Nicola, tells her how he picked out her "slightly dead, empty sort of voice" as his average listener. He asks her how she can bear the life she leads and music she hears, launching a diatribe against both. She remains calm and seemingly unaffected, although she holds her own by refusing to really talk to him. He leaves, telling her of his job offer and explaining he has to think it over. She leaves.

Nicola arrives to pick up Susan. Store has closed, and they are alone. There is great tension and anger in Nicola; Leonard's diatribe seems to have shaken or affected her in some way she was earlier unwilling to show. She stuffs her model of Ross in the freezer, pulling out and destroying packets of fish-fingers in the process. Susan proposes that they wreck the store, but Nicola tells her maybe some other time.

Leonard announces on the air he is going to London. Maintains his DJ persona throughout, telling his audience things will get better, to listen to him when
The first of the controlling factors used by Poliakoff in *City Sugar* is the process of growth in the character of Nicola Davies, a teen-aged girl from Leicester. In a sense, this element is almost more a character study than a study of real growth, for the movement in her character is not great, and is often implied more than seen. Her real growth does not occur until Act II, Scenes 2 and 3 (the contest, and after), the scenes in which she appears prior to that functioning, in terms of this element, as preparation for that shift and to establish the base from which her personality moves. The first introduction to Nicola occurs in Act I, Scene 1, when she phones in to the studio as part of a contest to win a record album. Only two facts are established in this conversation with Leonard. First, it is clear that Nicola is extremely soft-spoken. Three times Leonard has to ask her to speak up so that she can be heard (p. 39). Second, she seems extraordinarily unemotional, almost drained of emotion. When she initially gives the wrong answer, she calmly corrects herself; and when Leonard awards her the prize despite her answering incorrectly, she simply responds by saying, "Oh, good—thank you." (p. 39) A clue to her lack of emotion in this scene occurs later in the play, when, in the climactic section of Act II, Scene 2, Leonard tells Nicola that "I picked you out, do you

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know that, homed in on you . . . I picked out that voice, that slightly
dead, empty sort of voice. Picked it out as Miss Average—which in
fact you probably are not, and I followed that flat voice, each an-
nouncement was aimed at it." (II, 2, p. 73) Her lack of real engage-
ment, particularly of her emotions, with anything outside her self is
indicated by her lack of enthusiasm in this early phone call to Leonard.
It is when she becomes interested in the "Contest of the Century" that
some engagement, some commitment, begins to form, and she begins to
take the first steps in the process which leads to her growth later in
the play.

Nicola's interest in the contest is made clear in Act I, Scene 2,
when she desperately tries to get through to the studio when the store
intercom interrupts the program as the contest details are beginning
to be announced. Three times she tries to phone on a telephone for-
bidden to all but management personnel, risking detection by store ca-
maras and dismissal from her job. Ostensibly, the prize she seeks is
four days in London and a meeting with a rock group, the Yellow Jacks.
However, Nicola's real motive in entering the contest is not the trip,
or the meeting with the group, but rather, as she explains to Susan in
Act II, Scene 1, to "get into there anyway—into the radio building.
(slight smile) I'm going there." (p. 57) Nicola's commitment to the
contest is further emphasized in Act I, Scene 4, where she reveals that
she has been going without lunch to save money for paint with which to
build the life-size model of one of the members of the group required by
Leonard.
Susani: How did you get all this paint?
Nicola: Saved lunch money.
Susani: (startled) What you been eating?
Nicola: Haven't. Don't need to. So I go for days without eating if I have to. And can. (p. 49)

She is also prepared to denude her room of ornaments in order to fully stuff the model.

Susani: Put this in anyway. (She crumbles the huge centrefold picture of the pop star. As she does so, they both suddenly look up with a jolt and stare at all the posters and ornaments in the room. The same idea hits them both.)
Nicola: Yes! Come on. Everything . . .
(They suddenly tear down all the posters and ornaments—everything in the room—and throw it into the stomach of Ross. The action begins swiftly and ends furiously. It lasts under a minute.) Come on down,
Susani: (joyful) Yes. It's coming down. What's that poster? Come on, (and Susan rips it down)
Nicola: (takes everything off the chest of drawers, all her funny ornaments) He's got to be full.
Susani: (loud) Yes, (pp. 50-1)

However, Nicola's reaction to Leonard's phone call in Act I, Scene 5, makes it clear that, however much she is willing to commit to the contest materially, she maintains a remove from the events, refusing to invest much hope in it. Her conversation with Leonard indicates this fact.

Leonard: Hello, there Nicola—I don't know if you've been listening to your radio, but I've rung to tell you, in front of the listening thousands, that you have reached the Final, the final round, of Competition of the Century—
Nicola: (Pause; flat, unsurprised) Have I . . . Oh good.
Leonard: (louder) Did you ever think you could make it, Nicola?
Nicola: (matter of fact) No, . . .
Leonard: I'm looking forward to meeting you, Nicola Davies, tremendously. Aren't you?
Nicola: Yes, I am, I am Leonard . . . (flat) . . . very much. . . (p. 55)

Under the impact of her impassive reaction to this news, it becomes clear that, despite her commitment to the contest as a means of getting into
the radio station, Nicola's seeming enthusiasm in Act I, Scene 4, is primarily a product of Susan's infectious energy, rather than anything from inside Nicola. She remains impassive even when on the verge of accomplishing her primary goal.

Nicola's comparatively emotionless state begins to break down in Act II, Scene 1, on the morning of the contest, as she gets ready to go. She begins to invest hope and desire, not merely in going to the contest, but in actually winning; i.e., she raises her goal and strengthens her emotional commitment.

Nicola: I'm going to win, you know. (quiet, determined)
Susan: Yes; well if the other one wins we'll really do her, won't we? We'll finish her. (She moves away)
Nicola: (sharp) Why don't you ever keep still?
Susan: Because I don't.
Nicola: You're always doing that. (Nervous) Please . . . (p. 59)

Nicola's nervousness and determination indicate a growing desire for and commitment to victory in the contest. During the contest, Nicola and Jane react as might be expected to the stresses placed on them by Leonard and his manner, particularly in the face of questions they are not equipped to answer (Nicola must answer a question about King Lear) and tasks which are designed primarily to humiliate them (having to scream on the air and sing bits of songs). It is after the contest, when Leonard, alone with Nicola in the studio, launches into an attack on her and her values, that Nicola comes to the self-realization that constitutes her real growth in the play. Though she responds to Leonard's harangue only with responses such as "Yes," "I see," and "I (don't) know," his words ultimately have a strong effect on her. At the end of the scene, she stands up to him, refusing to go when he orders her to,
waiting until he has left the studio before she takes her purse and leaves. When she does, she goes to the grocery store where she works, taking her model of Ross, the singer, with her. However, before examining that scene, and Leonard's attack on her which precedes it, it is necessary to look briefly at the second of the controlling elements in City Sugar, the examination of Leonard's personality, and its allied concern of his manipulation of the contest as part of his plan to humiliate one of his "average" listeners. In that way, it will be possible both to understand the events during and the aftermath of the contest scene, which impel Nicola toward her growth, and to approach the third controlling element, the thematic consideration of the use of popular culture to exploit the working classes, which underlies and controls the interaction of the first two elements.

Leonard's plan to have his "meeting" with one of his listeners, specifically Nicola, is easily traced. It begins in Act I, Scene 1, when Leonard, for no apparent reason, awards Nicola a prize despite her having initially answered the question incorrectly. During that encounter, he also speaks to her at unusual length, as Nicola points out in Act I, Scene 4, when she tells Susan: "You know, I think he liked me a bit or something when I rang in... He spoke to me longer than the others, different." (p. 49) The thread is picked up again in Act I, Scene 3, when he selects and reads Nicola's postcard for the first stage of the contest on the air.

Leonard: . . . and Nicola Davies of 35 Poole's Road—rather a grubby postcard isn't it, Nicola—says she'd like to go to Kenya with Ken, that's a Nicola-type joke, and go on safari because Ken looks so good in a sun-tan and so I'm sure, would you, Nicola. You're all the way to Stage Two, Nicola Davies. (p. 47)
That Leonard is singling Nicola out becomes clear in Act I, Scene 5,
when he seeks out Nicola's model of Ross and includes her in the finals
of the contest.

Rext: Which two are you going to choose . . . ?
Leonard: These two'll have to do.
Rext: (Looks at the cards) Louise Prentiss and Jane Harris. A
good choice.
Leonard: All right, get hold of them quickly, get this dealt with
and . . . (He suddenly looks up) Whose is that one?
Rext: (looks at the card) Nicola Davies.
Leonard: Really—Nicola Davies, I thought so. Well let's have her
instead shall we. Scrub that one.
Rext: Why—you chose the other one.
Leonard: Do as you're told.
Rext: (Pause) Have you got a thing about her or something?
Leonard: Not. Of course not. (Pause) I picked her voice out,
that's all. I've been using it. (p. 54)

Having placed Nicola in the finals, Leonard phones her at home on the
day of the contest to remind her of details. It is apparently not the
first call, for Susan asks Nicola, "What's he ringing you up again for?"
(II, 1, p. 58), and later comments, "Can't leave you alone, can he?"
(p. 58) His motive for ensuring that she is in the finals becomes clear
toward the end of Act II, Scene 2, when Leonard explains that, in his
treatment of her at the contest:

Leonard: There was a touch of revenge, don't you think . . . I
must want a little revenge . . . I glanced at you before
the first question and saw that stare, that blank, in-
flatingly vacant gaze, and then it just happened. I
wanted to see just how far I could push you, how much
you'd take—I was hoping you'd come back—that something
would come shooting back, that you'd put up a fight Nicola.
That you'd explode Nicola, you'd explode. Do you see,
why didn't why don't you? . . . (Suddenly very loud) What's
the matter with all you kids now, what is it? Come on,
answer me, you know what I'm talking about, you're not a
small child, you know what I mean. (Pause, abrasive) Are
you going to talk to me? (p. 74)

Though Leonard attributes his treatment of Nicola to an immediate cause,
it is clear that he views, and has viewed, Nicola as representative of her kind, and selected her, as he says, as "Miss Average." Leonard has selected Nicola as a victim to his anger and disaffection, and manipulated the contest to bring her into a position where he can examine and attack her, and her type through her.

Leonard's attack on Nicola is typical of his behavior throughout the play, and the examination of Leonard's character is the second prong in the three factors that control the structure of City Sugar. A great deal of time in the scenes in the studio is devoted to the exploration of Leonard's personality, particularly in his relationship with Rex, his sound engineer/side-kick. On the air, Leonard confines his abuse of Rex to a series of jokes about Rex's being fat, when, in fact, he is not (a fact that bothers Rex so much he takes time in Act II, Scene 2, during his segment on the air, to refute Leonard; p. 71). Off the air, Leonard continually mistreats Rex. His most vitriolic attack comes in Act I, Scene 5, after Rex questions Leonard's assessment of his idea of the models for Stage Two of the contest as "unpleasant, incompetent, lazy trash."

**Leonard:** Why?

**Rex:** If you can't see that there's no hope for you

**Leonard:** (smiles) No hope for me is there?

**Rex:** I need somebody that's going to think, think, don't I—

**Leonard:** Yes, Leonard, I—

**Rex:** Not just a callous, unquestioning, secret police vegetable . . .

**Leonard:** It isn't my fault . . .

**Rex:** (carrying on—a real outburst) You'd be one of the first to come and take us away, wouldn't you. Wouldn't you. Come here.

**Leonard:** It was your idea, Leonard.

**Rex:** You're an abortion really, aren't you—with absolutely no imagination. Nothing! A complete abortion.
Leonard's treatment of Rex is an extreme variation on his treatment of everyone with whom he has contact, particularly Mick and John, two other station employees. Vignettes illustrating this occur in every scene in which Leonard appears to examine and flesh out his personality. Leonard is presented time and again in scenes which serve no purpose but to show him in action assaulting others. The roots of this behavior appear to lie in a sense of bitterness and disaffection arising from his feeling that the good times have gone, that he is pandering trash, and that he is a hypocrite for doing so; i.e., in a sense of self-loathing generated by a hatred of what he has to do. He speaks of his feelings to Rex in Act I, Scene 5.

Leonard: What do you think? (Abrasive) Remember before the rot set in, I'm not in any way nostalgic about that time. . . . No I'm not, I'm certainly not one of those mooning left-overs wallowing backwards all the time. . . . I know exactly what it was like. . . . But it's undeniable, Rex, that the music we were producing on that label, seven or eight years ago, was alive. That is incontestable. It had gut, it was felt, and it kicked, sometimes savagely. Because, of course, everything seemed possible. I was even quite militant in a quiet way. We thought things were changing and all that romantic crap. . . . You should have been at the open air concert at the weekend. It was vile. It was a perfect example. A gray shabby echo of the time when festivals were celebrations. Everybody was lying about in lifeless heaps, mumbling apologetically, getting bitten by horseflies. You felt you could have turned them over with your foot, and they wouldn't have been able to get up. I saw one girl, a large girl, with a very big face, she wasn't very young, wandering through a patch of long grass. Her face and also her lips were
sort of swollen, and completely ashen, almost blue, in fact, as if she was actually physically dead. I almost wanted to go up and touch her; I felt that if you touched that face it would probably flake into nothing. (p. 53)

Leonard's image of the girl's face and the people at the festival as almost dead and certainly impotent crystallizes the way he feels about the world, and what he has to deal with on a daily basis; a fact which is amplified in his comments to Nicola as he begins his attack.

Leonard: You can't really like this shit, can you, do you really, deep down inside, like this music? . . . You know, Nicola, if, ten years ago, five years ago even—(mock voice)—when things were very different, I'd been told that I'd be doing this job, playing this mindless milk chocolate pap endlessly to kids like you, I wouldn't have thought it remotely possible. (Loud) Not at all, it's not exactly what I imagined happening, not even in my greyest moments. It's extraordinary really that things have resulted in you! Do you know that? (II, 2, p. 73)

Yet, feeling as he does, Leonard hypocritically pretends to like the music, pushes it, and hypocritically tells his audiences that things will get better in the future. The whole of the final scene of the play, his farewell over the radio in Act II, Scene 4, is a testament to his hypocrisy, as he continues to sell the pop culture he loathes even as he leaves Leicester for London and, probably, more of the same on an even grander scale.

Leonard: . . . I'm going to London where all the action is—where I'll be giving a few jokes and all the hits and more, all the sounds and more, all the luck and more, where I'll be seeing us through our present troubles, obliterating the bad times—that's a Big Word—and remembering the good times, oh yes, and letting people remember and letting them forget. Drowning all our sorrows, yes I said drowning, till we're emerging out of the clouds, of course. And now I hope my voice is reaching out, spreading to the four corners of our area, across the whole city, through the blackness, swooping into cars on the motorway and down chimneys, and through brick walls and across pylons. Over the whole domain, until it reaches you.
Because I want to say, I'm sorry folks, but there it is. I'm sorry to leave you folks; but it's how I've always wanted things, of course—what I wanted! Don't spit on the animals. I'm speaking to you now, I am, remember this, when you're in London, don't forget to give us a ring, want to hear from you, over the air, at the very least don't forget to tune in. Yes tune in! What are you doing Brazil—tell us—what on earth is he doing—He's saying Goodbye and Don't forget. We're going to lick it, of course we will. No need to worry, no need to be sad, Shout that out. So tune in, I said tune in, Because I'll take your mind off things, oh yes. I will. (p. 76)

Despite his realization that it is eating him alive, Leonard continues to push and exploit pop culture and those who are caught up in it, turning himself into a bitter and sadistic man. In scene after scene, Poliaikoff presents the actions and consequences of those actions to Leonard, as well as those around him, which arise from his hypocritical relationship with popular culture; a relationship that engenders in him both self-hatred and a desire for revenge on those who patronize that which he both represents and hates: pop culture, and, in a very real sense, himself.

The three basic structural threads of *City Sugar*, those elements that control the selection and arrangement of incidents/scenes, are brought together in Act II, Scene 2; particularly in the final pages, when Leonard confronts Nicola. His loathing of popular culture, and his desire to avenge himself on it and its devotees, leads him into a confrontation with Nicola in which she comes to realize the way in which she is exploited by that culture and its personalities, such as Leonard Brazil. Her realization may be incomplete and inarticulate, and certainly she is given nothing by Poliaikoff with which to replace her devotion to pop culture, but she begins to realize how hollow and
empty it is, and to rebel against it. At the end of the confrontation, for the first time in the play, she stands up and pushes back at Leonard, refusing to speak to him or to leave when he orders her to do so (p. 74). When she goes to the supermarket to get Susan, dragging her model of the pop singer with her, she is angry and assertive with Susan, and "her mood is of contained violence." (II, 3, p. 75) After berating Susan for not listening to the whole contest, Nicola begins to display her awareness of the exploitative and hollow aspects of pop culture. She pulls a leg from the dummy she made, saying, "Hey, look at that. It fell off. That's what they made me make . . ." (p. 74) Then, dumping it into the freezer, she says, "Could put it in here, watch it go hard, freeze it, then pull it to bits easily." (p. 74) The fragility of the model, which now is little more than junk, mirrors the fragility and worthlessness of popular culture, both of which are falling apart for Nicola, and both of which she seems to be rejecting. Her rebellion against the exploitation deepens as she realizes how worthless the pop culture is; certainly unworthy of the exploitation to which its devotees are prey. She rejects the notion of going and standing in line for the Yellow Jacks concert, in part because they would be hopelessly late, but, significantly, because she realizes, as she asserts to Susan, "Anyway it's not worth it. It really isn't." (p. 74) This scene represents only the beginning of Nicola's awareness of the exploitativeness of pop culture and her rebellion against it. However, more is promised, for her violence and will toward destruction grow as the scene progresses, and with it the possibility that she soon will grow strongly away from her position as an exploited victim of the culture, and gain some
measure of autonomy from its fads and trends. Leonard’s attack on her, a product of his bitter personality, awakens in Nicola an awareness of the hypocrisy and exploitative nature of popular culture, beginning a process of growth away from it (suggested by Nicola’s actions in the closing scenes). In that series of events, the exploitative nature of popular culture is made clear, emphasizing that theme in the play. The way in which that theme mediates between the other two lines of action which control the play’s structure also becomes clear in the final three scenes, clarifying the way in which the theme functions as a structural agent in City Sugar. Not only is it primarily responsible for the presence of particular scenes and incidents (especially Act II, Scene 4), but it also is a major factor in shaping and controlling the other controlling elements, making it, in a sense, the basic controlling element in the play, despite the fact that it surfaces as the primary control on scenes and incidents comparatively infrequently in the play.

In City Sugar, Stephen Poliakoff utilized epic structure and three organizing elements to treat the topic of “a radio disc jockey and his exploitative relationship with his young listeners.” By examining Leonard Brazil’s character in some detail, particularly in treating the roots of his disaffection, Poliakoff makes clear the destructiveness of popular culture on its purveyors, and, in a sense, how they, too, are exploited by it. He crystallizes the exploitative relationship between the purveyors and consumers of that culture in Brazil’s

"stalking" of Nicola so that he can attain revenge on those who patronize the culture, and thus keep him in a business he hates. Finally, he introduces the notion of the possibility of growth and freedom from popular culture in the character of Nicola in the final scenes of the play, even as he showed something of its ill effects in her impassiveness and inability to show any real commitment to anything worthwhile earlier in the work. Poliakoff does not utilize a very cinematic construction in City Sugar, although the shifting of scenes among three locales and spreading out the time over a week or ten days certainly fall within the general limits of the cinematic. His scenic structure is episodic, and his structure within scenes especially so, as can be seen by the intrusion of episodes such as those with John in Act I, Scenes 1 and 3, and Act II, Scene 2. Episodic intrusions into the scenic structure are represented by Scenes 1 and 4 of Act II, both of which lie outside the strong, direct line of necessary, causal action. The scenes are not as discrete as is frequently the case in epic plays, in part because the narrative is carried forward in nearly every scene in some significant way, making the links between the action of succeeding scenes strong. In fact, had Poliakoff not balanced the three primary structural factors as much as he did, and had he given a greater emphasis to the narrative line (particularly the contest and Leonard's maneuvering to get Nicola to the finals), he would probably have written a play with dramatic structure, albeit episodic construction. A play such as City Sugar demonstrates how close to dramatic structure epically structured plays can fall on the continuum between the two. Had he unbalanced the play in that way, however, and shifted
the structure toward the dramatic, he would have considerably weakened, and possibly destroyed, the metaphor which holds his theme, and which underlies and to a considerable extent controls the operation of the other two structural elements which immediately shape the play. As Jonathan Hammond pointed out, lying at the thematic core of *City Sugar* is a tale of capitalism and class tension, with Leonard Brazil as the capitalist representative who is contemptuous of the working class, represented in the play particularly by Nicola. The play explores the relationship between capitalism and the working class through the metaphor of the disc jockey's exploitation of his listeners, and is "a savage indictment of the way in which modern capitalism exploits a section of the working class by conning them into accepting 'pop culture,' a shabby, third-rate set of values represented by Leonard's highly glossed trash." Admittedly, it is not quite a tale of simple exploitation of the "good" working class by the "bad" capitalists. Nicola becomes aware of and begins to rebel against the exploitation and the culture at the end of *City Sugar*, and Poliakoff does not hesitate to break down concepts of "black" capitalists vs. the "white" working class by showing the ill effects of the culture on Leonard, who, in his way, is as much a victim of the product he purveys as are his listeners. This metaphor, the examination of this relationship/condition, lies beneath the surface action of the play, working through the theme and the

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other two controlling factors to manifest, in the surface action, the meaning of the play. Whereas David Rudkin was not altogether successful in setting up and carrying out a metaphor between the couple’s sterility and the barrenness of hope in Northern Ireland in *Ashes*, *City Sugar* stands as an example of a very successful use of a story dealing on the surface almost exclusively with personal concerns embodying a tale of wider social significance on a metaphorical level.

David Rudkin’s *Ashes*, David Edgar’s *Mary Barnes*, and Stephen Polia­koff’s *City Sugar* all demonstrate the way in which epic structure has been used by contemporary British leftist playwrights to treat subjects which are, at least on the surface, concerned almost exclusively with the problems and lives of private individuals. These plays of personal concern may function metaphorically to take in topics of general social significance and social developments of some scope; however, the basic movement of the plays is focussed on the private lives of the characters as they work through personal, frequently psychological, private concerns. These playwrights have utilized epic structure, particularly its cinematic and episodic construction, to treat fully and comprehensibly long chains of development (sequences), such as the treatment of Mary Barnes’ conditions, such as barrenness (*Ashes*); and themes, such as the exploitation of the working class by capitalists via popular culture. In so doing, they have demonstrated how a socialist drama can focus meaningfully on the problems of individuals and still maintain the com­mittment to drama of general social significance postulated by major leftist critics. However, there is also a body of plays from contem­porary British theatre that utilize individuals or small groups of
people as a focus through which to view larger social movements or conditions more directly than through the use of metaphors as comparatively abstract as that in *City Sugar*, and which focus a good deal of attention on the social forces which shape and act in the lives of the people represented in the plays. These plays fall far closer to the classic definition of socialist drama than those examined above, and it is they which form the focus of the next chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE
THE USE OF EPIC STRUCTURE
IN PLAYS WHICH TREAT PUBLIC ACTION
THROUGH A FOCUS
ON A REPRESENTATIVE INDIVIDUAL
OR A SMALL GROUP
One of the traditional ways of treating society and social processes in drama is through the use of a character or small group of characters who, set against the backdrop of social conditions, serve as typical examples of the way given social forces and processes operate or effect human beings. By focussing on single individuals whose experience is sufficiently universal to allow them to function as microcosmic examples of larger groups, the playwright is able, if he wishes, to both examine a social condition, force, or process, and show how that phenomenon effects or acts in the lives of people. Leftist dramatists in Great Britain, with their natural interest in social concerns, have used epic structure in numerous plays which treat society and its processes by focussing on one or several individuals, be they private citizens or public figures, and by presenting their experience as typical of the groups or classes they represent, or society at large. Playwrights such as Edward Bond (The Bundle), David Edgar (Teendreams, with Susan Todd), and Stephen Gooch (Female Transport) have used this technique of expanding from individual experience to general experience to examine topics such as the process by which revolutionary consciousness is created and revolutionary action carried out (The Bundle); the analysis of rational, proper moral concepts in society and revolution (also The Bundle); the shifting nature of social, particularly feminist, consciousness and action from 1968-78 (Teendreams); and the nature of class structure and the process by which working-class solidarity can be achieved (Female Transport). Each of these playwrights selected one or more characters to represent a class, group, or type of person, and
dramatized that person's experience in contact with and against the backdrop of significant social forces operating in the specific world/society of the play. In that way, each was able to examine forces which function in shaping society in the real world, as well as the way those forces make an impact on the lives of human beings.

In The Bundle, Edward Bond utilizes a pair of controlling factors in determining the selection and ordering of scenes. Superficially, the play deals with the process by which Wang develops a revolutionary consciousness and carries out a successful social revolution. Underlying that, and more significant for the final structure of the play, is Bond's dramatization of an analysis.

In The Bundle I tried to find ways of dramatizing the analysis. The play is not best understood as a story of hero Wang but as a demonstration of how the words "good" and "bad", and moral concepts in general, work in society and how they ought to work if men are to live rationally with their technology, with nature and with one another.¹

In Bond's structural scheme, not only is each scene the embodiment of a point in his analysis, but the ordering of scenes, the juxtaposition of one scene with another, and parallel action in separate scenes, is also controlled by the analysis.

But the connection between the scenes is essential because it is part of the analysis. Scenes cannot, it is true, relate to one another merely for the purposes of the story, because audiences can no longer passively interpret stories and so the dramatist cannot confront the audience with truth in this way. Instead, the choice and ordering of scenes is decided by the analysis—that is, the analysis will dictate the structure of the story, but care must be taken, as I have said, that it does not swamp it. . . . The epic's

structure must have meaning—-it is not a collection of scenes showing that meaning is logically possible. The epic must have a unity based on practical truth, just as once it was based on mythological coherence. This unity comes from the analysis, which demonstrates, embodies cause and effect in a coherent way. The scenes in The Bundle were chosen and ordered for this reason.  

While Bond emphasizes the importance of the analysis in determining the structure of The Bundle, it would be incorrect to discount entirely the importance of the story, the rendering of the process by which Wang becomes aware of the need for revolutionary change, develops a revolutionary consciousness and morality, and takes steps to bring about a revolution. This process is not represented as fully as it might have been had it been Bond's sole concern, and it is ultimately clearly subsumed into the analysis, for a number of the steps in the process are omitted that would be significant enough to dramatize were the process the primary interest of Bond and controlling factor in the play. Similarly, there are a number of scenes which are relatively insignificant in terms of Wang's development as a revolutionary, but which are vital to the clear development of the analysis, which are presented in the play. Nonetheless, the process of revolutionary development in the drama is an important secondary controlling factor, and one which must be considered in any discussion of the structure of The Bundle.

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### The Bundle

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<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>River bank, at the ferry</td>
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Ferryman takes Basho, who is leaving the village to seek enlightenment, across the river. Basho will not pay him, feeding him platitudes about suffering and grace. They find a child abandoned by its parents by the river; a common practice among the poor who cannot feed the children they bear. They hope someone will rescue it before it drowns in the river. Basho refuses to take the child. The Ferryman tries to leave it, knowing he cannot afford to take it, and that taking it will mean deprivation and hardship which will shorten his wife's life. Nonetheless, he rescues the child, unable to overcome his feelings of humanism, and takes it home despite the hardships it will cause, rationalizing his actions by saying the child will help him as a worker in a few years.

| Scene 2 | 5-10 | River bank, at the ferry/Fourteen years later |

Wang, the baby from Scene 1, and the Ferryman are fishing illegally at night. Wang asks many questions about why they must steal fish, and the landowner's taxes. Basho returns from his journey (quite by accident; he does not realize this is his village) without having attained enlightenment. He is distressed that he has somehow returned here, and twice faints. The second time, water is thrown on his face, and Basho believes he has found enlightenment. Two of the landowner's keepers arrive to arrest the Ferryman and Wang for fishing, but they manage to convince them that they have merely come to pick up a fare (Basho); in part because, prior to his leaving, the landowner had asked Basho to become a judge for him on his return. The keepers release Wang and the Ferryman, and take Basho to the landlord.

| Scene 3 | 10-21 | Village burial hills/Some months later |

River is in flood, forcing the villagers to take refuge on the burial hills. The refugees include Wang, the Ferryman and his Wife, an elderly couple, Pu-tol (a farmer), Kung-tu (a middle-aged shopkeeper), and Lu (a young girl). They are in rags and near starvation from this exceptionally bad flood (floods on the river are apparently frequent). The two keepers arrive in the Ferryman's boat, which is owned by the landowner. They
### Scene (Scene 3)

**Pages**: 23-29  
**Place/Time-frame**: Another part of the river bank/Nine years later

In this scene, the bundles prepare to take the people off the hills, as the flood is going to rise even higher; but they charge a fee to do so. This consists of money from some, clothing from others. Kung-tu's hat pays for Lu when the keepers confiscate it after he insults her. The Ferryman offers to help them as his and his family's fee, but the keepers want to charge them ten years of slavery for Wang in exchange for the trip and saving them. The Ferryman tries to bargain, but they will reduce the fee only to nine years. Initially, Wang refuses the bargain, condemning his family to drowning. But as the boat leaves, the Wife, who is ill, pleads with Wang, and he relents, agreeing to serve as a slave for nine years.

### Scene 4

**Pages**: 22-29  
**Place/Time-frame**: Another part of the river bank/Nine years later

On this day, Wang's term of slavery is up. The landowner had given him to Basho, who has trained Wang and taught him much. He asks Wang to remain as his servant and friend, but Wang refuses. They find an abandoned baby. Wang tries to convince Basho to take it, but Basho will do so only if Wang agrees to stay with him. Wang rejects the bargain, and Basho departs. The mother of the child arrives to see what has happened to the baby. Wang accosts her, and tries to force her to take it back, or at least to explain why it was abandoned. She tells him her husband forces her to abandon the children she bears now because they have too many to feed already. She begs Wang to take the child. He cannot, as he is going away. He gives her Basho's writing equipment (keeping the poems Basho had written) in payment for the child to relieve her of guilt and restore her self-respect. He debates on what to do with the child. Finally, he flings the child into the river, knowing that if he takes this one, it will tie him down and many more will be left by the river to die; but if he lets this one die, he might save many more later on.

### Scene 5

**Pages**: 30-39  
**Place/Time-frame**: Swamp/A week or so later

A group of bandits is dividing loot. They are Tiger, Kaka (both young men), Tor-quo (an older man) and Sheoul (a girl). Tiger's right arm ends in a stump, but he is quite vicious, and apparently the leader. He and Kaka fight over a bell. When Wang approaches,
The Bundle

(Scene 5) Tiger lies down and pretends to be hurt, with the other three hiding. Wang laments what he has seen in the past week: rich preying on poor, poor preying on one another. Tiger attracts his attention, but far from helping him, Wang begins to beat Tiger for being poor and allowing himself to be robbed. The other three capture Wang and tie him up. They sit to eat, waiting for Tiger to come to. Tiger threatens Wang, and tells him his (false) story of how he heroically lost his arm. Wang points out to them that they have left no lookout, nor have they searched him. They post the lookout and begin to search. Finding Basho's poems, they think Wang is a messenger from the emperor, and beg his pardon, insisting they rob only the poor. They release Wang. He tells them he is not from the emperor, but rather has come to the swamp to escape the soldiers, intending to find a gang of bandits to join. Tiger tells him no, but Wang says he would not join them even if they asked, for they are "fleas under an elephant's tail." He insults them all, but apologizes when they threaten him, and tells them he was the servant of a great thief. He impresses them with his tale of the great thief, the landowner, and his great servant, the river. He plays out a charade with them, pointing out how the landowner took advantage of the people by making them pay for protection from floods even while he seemed kind to do so. He shows them exactly how the landowner works, in the process beginning their revolutionary consciousness and its development.

Scene 6 41-50 Ferryman's house/Some months later

Wang now heads a band of revolutionaries. Basho, now a judge and leader of soldiers, visits the Ferryman. Basho tries to get the Ferryman to become his agent against Wang, and the Ferryman seems to agree. Basho departs. Wang and Tiger arrive. They tell the Ferryman they are arming the villagers with rifles, and ask him to ferry them across the river, three at a time, in his boat at night. The ferryman tells them of Basho's visit, and they agree to go on anyway, using the Ferryman to feed Basho useless information to divert suspicion from him. The Ferryman is reluctant, in part in deference to his very ill wife. She tells the Ferryman to do as Wang asks, and that decides the issue. Wang tenderly departs from his mother, even
The Bundle

Scene | Pages | Place/Time-frame
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(Scene 6) though he knows it is necessary to jeopardize her for the sake of the revolt.

Scene 7 50–60 Roadside between villages/Days or weeks later

The woman from Scene 4 is being guarded by two soldiers. She has been arrested for stealing food for her husband, who is ill and hungry. She wears a heavy stone cangue about her neck. Two watersellers appear and fight over the right to sell their water at this spot. Wang and Tiger arrive, disguised as priests, on their way to a meeting with village elders. They pause here and wait. As they sit, Tiger says he wants to kill the soldiers and free the woman. Wang forces him to sit and wait, despite their anxiety to help her immediately (Wang bites the inside of his mouth and bleeds profusely from the strain of sitting and doing nothing). He explains to Tiger that morality is relative, as is kindness, and that their kindness in freeing her while killing the soldiers would do evil to their cause. A rice-cracker salesman appears, followed by Kung-tu, who buys crackers and water for the prisoner and her husband. The soldiers hurriedly depart when they are recalled to the fortress, as the landowner is leaving for the capital; news which shakes both the soldiers and Kung-tu. Wang and Tiger now prepare to break the cangue and free the woman, for they have undermined the landowner to such a degree that he is fleeing, and it is now safe to take such actions against his authority openly. The woman resists, believing they will kill her (when they see Tiger's stump and realize who he is), or get her into trouble for escaping. Wang and Tiger break the stone, freeing her, and depart, Wang telling them to remember who put the stone on the people's neck, and who took it off. The three vendors debate what to do, realizing that they cannot go to the soldiers because Wang and Tiger saw them, and that the soldiers also saw them, so that they are "caught between two tigers." They give the woman and her husband water, amazing themselves at their act of kindness and generosity. They determine to hide themselves from the soldiers, and to show the stones in the villages as evidence of Wang's action; thus, in effect, joining his cause.
Tiger has been captured, and told the authorities of the ferrying of the rifles. Basho arrives and lays a trap for Wang: two soldiers will lie in the bottom of the boat when the Ferryman goes across for the rifles. Wang awaits by the river with Pu-toi and Sheoul. The Ferryman succeeds in warning them of trouble by dropping his pole in the river, and they depart. On returning, the soldiers tell Basho they found no one, incidentally mentioning the dropping of the pole. Basho realizes that this was a signal, as the Ferryman could never drop his pole accidentally. He orders the Ferryman drowned as a warning to all the rest.

Basho sits writing. There is a battle outside. Kung-tu arrives and asks why the soldiers are not defending the village. To Basho’s surprise, the soldiers have been ordered not to defend the village, but to retreat to the provincial capital if attacked. Kung-tu tries to get the soldiers to take him and his family and stores with them, but his efforts are futile, as the Captain refuses, telling him that they must move quickly and that, in any case, the soldiers would loot all he had. Kung-tu starts to depart to get his family, all the while calculating what they could carry on their backs. Basho asks the soldiers to wait until he has packed his poems, but is told he must carry them in his head. Basho sends his servant to tell the revolutionaries he will receive them. The scene closes with Kung-tu rushing after the soldiers, without his family, lamenting his lost money, and with Basho trying to collect and pack his poems.

The revolution has ended successfully. Wang, Pu-toi, Sheoul, Lu, Kaka, Tor-quo, San-ko, and others are eating during a break from work on the levies they are building to control the river and its floods. They discuss the fear many have of the river, and how it will be safe once they have built the locks. Basho wanders through, nearly blind, clutching a few charred manuscripts, begging that someone show him the way to the deep north,
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<td>(Scene 10)</td>
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<td>the way to enlightenment. The body of Tuan, a worker, is pulled from the river, where he fell during the work, and drowned. He is carried out. Wang tells the story of the man who lived by a river, and spent his life carrying a dead king on his back. Basho wanders out, and Wang concludes speaking of the times and what it means to be human.</td>
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As the structural chart shows, The Bundle consists of ten discrete scenes, which function as the basic units of structure in the play. Bond divided the play into two parts after Scene 5 for the sake of providing a formal interval, but this division has very little structural significance. The action of the play is clearly cinematic, ranging over at least twenty-five years, and seven locations. The relationship between scenes is episodic. Many events of significance to the narrative line, the progress of Wang and his revolution through the overthrow of the landowner, are omitted, including most of his activity in recruitment and indoctrination of revolutionaries and virtually all conflicts with the governmental forces. Rather, Bond selects scenes to sketch in the development of Wang as a revolutionary and the revolution's progress by depicting a few moments of great significance, concentrating instead on presenting scenes which embody and illustrate his analysis of the nature of correct, moral action in a revolutionary situation. The structure of the play is organized around an analysis, rather than the depiction of a dramatic story in a clear, causal fashion. It can therefore be

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3Edward Bond, The Bundle (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978). All citations are from this edition.
seen that, given these traits and its early point of attack (near Wang's birth), *The Bundle* possesses all of the traits of an epic structure.

The two main elements that control the selection and arrangement of scenes in *The Bundle* are the development of Wang's revolutionary consciousness and his revolutionary activity, and the analysis of revolutionary moral and ethical action, particularly in its differences from sentimental bourgeois and capitalist ethical systems. First, however, it is necessary to examine briefly the nature of the society in which the play takes place. Although the play is set in the Orient in the seventeenth century, the period of time in which the great Japanese haiku poet Matsuo Basho lived, the society represented in the play, as well as the events depicted there, bear no genuinely direct relation to any real society of the period. In fact, the play itself takes place in no possible historical place, for while Basho was Japanese, all of the other characters in the play possess Chinese names, and the Ferryman's speech to Wang in Scene 2 indicates that the play takes place in China. "But if they'd sunk the landowner's boat they'd have been hunted down to the ends of China." (p. 6) This fact is reinforced a few lines later, when Basho appears, saying, "Tap tap tap through China. I've worn out seventeen walking sticks." (p. 7) Thus, the action of the play takes place in a fictional location, although the implements, weapons, and general life-style and social organization of the people adheres closely to the norms of the seventeenth century in Asia. Similarly, the social structure represented in the play superficially corresponds to the kind of feudal society typical of both China and Japan in the period, when much local power was held by the landowners of large estates, and
society consisted of a huge peasant population, which supported the
landowners and their military organizations, a few middle-class mer-
chants, and a population of priests. There is an absence of strong cen-
tral authority typical of the Tokugawa shogunate of seventeenth century
Japan; however, the situation corresponds more closely to that in China,
which underwent a period of national instability during this era, re-
sulting in the institution of the Ch'ing dynasty in 1644. Be that as
it may, in line with Bond's analytical structure, the society repre-
seated in The Bundle, regardless of its accuracy with regard to seven-
teenth century social structures, functions very well on a metaphorical
level as a depiction of a contemporary capitalist society, viewed from
a revolutionary socialist point of view. Under this system, the land-
owner, who remains unseen and acts in the play only through his agents,
represents the forces of big business and technology (so often anonymous
in contemporary society), and hence power, with the soldiers and keepers
functioning as those who serve his interests and maintain the status
quo (police, soldiers, etc.). His chief weapon for maintaining control
over the power structure and his place in it is his control over the
technology and its effect on the people; symbolized in this play, as
Catharine Itzin pointed out, by the river.

Bond intended to show this (the need for political and social change
as technology changes to produce a rational society) in The Bundle—
"to demonstrate that the economic activity by which they all live—
the water (symbol of industrialization)—actually controlled their
cultural life and their social life, and in order to change this
they have to capture the river (or industry) which is the economic
stratum of their society." 4

4Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution (London: Eyre Methuen,
In order to maintain control over the people, the landowner allows the river to flow freely, not building locks, so that in times of flood he can charge exorbitant fees for protection against the water, effectively enslaving the people and ensuring his wealth for as long as the river is untamed. Similarly, so long as technology and industry remain in the hands of a few, and out of control of the people, those few can control the economy, exercising power over the many and maintaining their wealth. This is particularly true if, as in the play, they can create a fear of the technology by maintaining the myth that it cannot be controlled, or only a few can control it, and that only they can save the people from its force. Having realized that the river can be tamed and the people freed by building a series of locks, giving people control over the river/technology/means of living, the action of the latter half of the play deals essentially with Wang's achieving the power or means to attain this control through the only avenue which seems possible; armed insurrection (although most of the actual fighting occurs offstage, allowing the play to focus on the moral interplay raised by the drama and its situation). While the soldiers and keepers represent the brutal face of the repressive social system, Basho represents its more humanistic mask, the proverbial velvet glove concealing an iron fist. He functions as "... a timely reminder that the superficial liberalisation of society may only serve as a cosmetic to soften the hard old face of repression beneath."\(^5\) Basho, with his

civilized demeanor and cultural achievements, serves to humanize and legitimize the landowner's power, giving it a veneer of benevolence to conceal its true exploitative nature. The irony is that Basho is as exploited as he is exploiting, and is abandoned when the facade crumbles (along with his illusion of enlightenment) and the hard times begin. The bourgeoisie is represented by the merchant Kung-tu. He is from the lower classes, but he strives to place himself above them and separate himself and his family from their humble origins as he attempts to gain admission to the upper strata of society through the acquisition of wealth. In Scene 3, when he is abandoned in the grave hills with other village people, he speaks of his intention to remove his ancestors from this graveyard, which is for the poor, as soon as he can, "Confucius placed filial piety over all virtues. I shall remove my ancestors. They're not staying in this company." (p. 19) His conventional respect for conventional morality, so typical of the bourgeoisie, is matched by his willingness, when he becomes able, to indulge in small-scale charity, which costs him little, wins him praise, and ultimately does nothing to upset the system in which he prospers. In Scene 7, coming upon the woman prisoner and her husband with the water-sellers and the rice-cracker salesman, he buys a cracker and a cup of water for each of them (p. 56). However, when the soldiers rush off as the landowner leaves for the capital, Kung-tu rushes off to protect his interests, worrying that, "At times like these, supplies don't get through," (p. 57), and that his business will be damaged. His attachment to his goods, his unwillingness to join in the people's struggle, and his abandonment of the people from which he came, is seen in Scene 9, in which
he tries to get the retreating army to save his wealth and escort him, his goods, and his family (in that order) to safety. When he is refused army assistance in transporting his goods, his thoughts turn to saving his fortune through his family.

Kung-tu: I ought to fetch my family. The children could carry a few sacks. O god it's like an examination. What is it best to do? If we run and get caught—that would be worst! Should I risk it and stay? . . . I'm betrayed on all sides. The moment we're out of town the soldiers will cut my throat. I'll tell them about my—you see, there's a small account in the capital. Not much, but enough for this. If I promise—when we get there—? I wasn't born rich. I'm not rich! But I gave my life to my store. Now? Perhaps my wife will bring a few cases. She's a good woman. And my son's got a strong back. He could manage two. (pp. 72-3)

In the face of revolution, Kung-tu, the bourgeois merchant, wavers about whether to join the revolutionaries, and risk all he has, or run with the landowner's men. He chooses to run, and when the arrival of the revolutionaries seems imminent, he even abandons his family in his flight. "Tell my wife. She'll catch us up." (Scene 9, p. 73) Bond paints a highly negative picture of the bourgeoisie, who indulge in meaningless charity and embrace a morality which ultimately abets and encourages the exploitation of the workers. They are finally unsympathetic to the worker's cause, and culpable agents in their oppression. The irony is that, without the operation of their sentimental morality, Wang would not have survived, for the Ferzeman, as is true of many of the working class, is not free of the tentacles of bourgeois morality, and so abandoned his family's welfare and rescued the child; a gesture which Wang later refuses to make in a revolutionary setting.
Wang clearly represents the revolutionary worker, and the leader of the cause. The peasants and workers in the play are represented by the Ferryman and his Wife, the robber band that Wang joins (Tiger, Kaka, Sheoul, Tor-quo), the others caught in the flood (Lu, Pu-toi, and the elderly couple), and the Wife, Husband, and merchants from Scene 7. It is interesting to note that, in accord with Bond's view of revolutionary development and working-class solidarity in a revolutionary society, in each case, the workers in the play prey on one another while under the influence or control of the capitalist society, and bond together for one another's benefit under the impact of Wang's actions and ideas. The sole exception is the Ferryman, who demonstrates a degree of self-sacrifice greater than expected when he gives his life in Scene 8, and agrees to risk that of him and his wife in Scene 6 (p. 48). The robbers, as they themselves say, "rob only the poor" (Scene 5, p. 36) until they meet Wang, after which they form the core of his revolutionary band.

In Scene 3, Pu-toi acknowledges he is a slave of the system, and encourages the keepers to abandon Wang's ill mother in the graveyard. "I am, I slave day and night. We all do. What's it matter if they call us slave for once? That old woman's not worth taking. She'll be back in a few weeks. Let them stay—they won't have to pay for the trip to the graveyard," (pp. 18-9) He makes this speech to encourage the keepers to leave the burial hills as the flood rises, making it dangerous to stay. In Scene 8, however, Pu-toi risks his life as part of the group delivering rifles to the ferry, and in Scene 10 he works on the levies with the others. The small capitalists, the rice-cracker salesman and the water-sellers, who fight viciously in the beginning of the scene,
give their goods to the Wife and Husband in Scene 7 after Wang has freed her, resolving to tell the villagers what has happened (p. 60). The Husband from this scene works on the dock in Scene 10, joining the others despite his illness and lack of strength. Even Wang's mother changes and becomes more self-sacrificing for the sake of the people. In Scene 3, among the burial hills, she bargains years of slavery for her son in return for a ride from the hills. "Wang forgive me. You men in the boat: four. No more." (p. 19) In Scene 6, however, knowing she is dying, and that her husband's participation in the plot to get rifles to the villagers could cost her him and Wang, and hasten her own death, she tells the Ferryman, "Father, do what he wants." (p. 48)

Under the impact of the revolution, the workers and peasants band together, stop praying on one another, and adopt what amounts to a new moral code, one which does not assist the landowner in exploiting and keeping them poor, or encourage them to exploit one another, but which helps them co-operate and achieve freedom.

Given the arrangement of classes represented in the play, it becomes clear that, while the society presented is superficially a feudal one, in fact, on a metaphorical level, it is a portrait of a contemporary technological, capitalist society. The prescription Wang adopts for correcting the situation he finds, and the dynamics of the morality and action he adopts, thus are relevant not only to the society of the play, but for modern industrial society as well, according to Bond. As he pointed out in the preface to volume of of his collected plays:

One has to acknowledge violence. It's not that one would want to use violence, but that violence is used to maintain societies. It would not be a matter of introducing violence, for it is already
there. Ideally, I would like to see societies changed without violence, but if there were a revolutionary situation and people wanted to change their society, it is obvious that this would be resisted. It's not that one would choose to be insurrectionary, but that insurrection would be thrust on one. . . . I think that armed revolution is justifiable if it is politically effective. 6

Bond's vision of revolt in the feudal society of seventeenth century China corresponds to a vision of revolution in contemporary Great Britain, or any modern industrial capitalist state, and the process by which revolutionary consciousness is born in Wang, and revolutionary action created and carried out, similarly relevant to the twentieth century situation. It is the examination of the process by which a revolutionary consciousness arises in Wang, and by which he carries out his revolt, that forms the first, and more superficial, of the two elements that control the structure of The Bundle.

The revolutionary process examined by Bond in this play is only sketched in, with a few major turning points being all that is represented, and those only when they also contribute to his analysis of revolutionary morality. Nonetheless, it is these scenes, and this process, that carry the narrative action of the play, and their place as a determining factor in the selection and ordering of the scenes in The Bundle is secured by virtue of the fact that, effective though the scenes connected with this process might be in also dramatizing the analysis, other scenes could have done so equally effectively. Another story could have been told which would have explored the same relationships between morality and technology, society, and change as is done in

this drama. The resultant play would probably have been much weaker, however, for it would not have allowed Bond to couple his analysis with the presentation of the process which embodies his solution to the situation/problem represented in the play. The representation of the process, which proceeds in a linear fashion, is also a controlling factor in the arrangement of scenes, and the presentation of the analysis, because the process must proceed from one step to another, must grow, in a particular order for it to be presented sensibly. The analysis itself is not bound to a linear presentation. Its points need be made in no particular order, or in only a loose order, to be adequately discussed. In fact, its most effective presentation could conceivably be non-chronological. The order of the presentation of the analysis is determined in part by its being coupled with an examination of a process that proceeds in a particular linear fashion. The two obviously engage in an interplay structurally, and a scene which is present almost solely for its place in the analysis, such as Scene 7, can intrude into the narrative line of the process and separate two scenes which operate as a pair and, logically, ought to be presented back to back. The analysis is ultimately the most important structural factor, and clarity of the narrative line of the process was held to be of secondary importance by Bond in the presentation of the action of the play, as he makes clear in his preface to the play.

The epic must have a unity based on practical truth, just as once it was based on mythological coherence. This unity comes from the analysis, which demonstrates, embodies cause and effect in a coherent way. The scenes in The Bundle were chosen and ordered for this reason. Obvious examples are the parallels between scenes one and four; the placing of scene seven between scenes six and eight, where it interrupts the story, instead of before scene six; the decision
to dramatize the preparation for the fight and the consequences of it and not the fight itself—which the traditional story would have required (some critics were so confused by this that they thought the rifles were not used, although scene nine makes it clear they were).\textsuperscript{7}

Clearly, the analysis is the dominant element. Nonetheless, the representation of the revolutionary process is a significant part of the play and its meaning, and its clear presentation is one of the controlling factors of the play; an element which, as Bond suggests, keeps "the analysis from swamping the story,"\textsuperscript{8} and makes the play both thematically and dramatically interesting.

The story of Wang's revolutionary development begins in Scene 2, in which he questions the Ferryman at some length about the economic order of their society. This series of questions appears to be a simple outgrowth of Wang's youthful inquisitiveness, for when Basho arrives he tries to question him about enlightenment (p. 8). Nonetheless, Wang's questions, and his father's answers, provide him with the core of information which sets his thinking onto revolutionary lines under the impact of later events.

\begin{verbatim}
Wang: It's not our boat.
Ferryman: Not now.
Wang: Why not?
Ferryman: It went in taxes.
Wang: Why?
Ferryman: No money. So few passengers.
Wang: Why?
Ferryman: Robbers. People don't like to travel.
Wang: (after a slight silence) The wind ruffles my sleeve like the water. What are taxes?
Ferryman: Taxes make sure the country's well run.
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{7}Edward Bond, "A Note on Dramatic Method," p. xx.

\textsuperscript{8}Edward Bond, "A Note on Dramatic Method," p. xix.
Wang: Father—
Ferryman: SH
Wang: But . . .
Ferryman: (after a slight silence) I'll try to explain. It's true; the other day I got this cut on my head. I took two hefty young men in the boat. They said they were going to join the emperor's army. What a pleasure for an old man to row two strong young men to their glory. In the middle of the stream they laughed and said: "Give us the takings." I said: "Boys, you're my only passengers this week and so far you've given me nothing." Then because they were angry and because they wanted to amuse themselves, they said: "Let's sink the boat." I said: "Boys, this boat is the landowner's." Their whole manner changed. If the boat had been mine they'd have sunk it. With so many robbers about the police have many more important things to protect than us. But if they'd sunk the landowner's boat they'd have been hunted down to the ends of China. So, that's taxes: the soldiers left me the boat and only cracked my head . . . Sh.

Wang: No insects on the lamp. Cold.
Ferryman: (With a sigh) I wanted to catch a fish for your mother.
Wang: Who owns the river?
Ferryman: You're keeping the fish away.
Wang: Who owns the fish?
Ferryman: What fish?
Wang: Why do we fish at night?
Ferryman: The landowner owns the river and the fish. We can't afford a licence to fish.
Wang: So we steal the fish.
Ferryman: (slight pause) I will try to explain. The landowner owns the boat and the river and the fish. You could say he owns us—he owns the only way we can live. In return he keeps us safe. (Wang moves as if to interrupt) Wait! You sit on the bank in the sun and wave your arms to keep off the insects. Some still bite—but not many. Well, if the landowner didn't keep the robbers away they'd come down the chimney and take the food out of your mouth! We're his property. It's in his interest to look after us. There.

Wang: We steal the fish to stay alive to pay taxes so that there'll be no more stealing and the—(pp. 5-6)

In this exchange, Wang learns of both the exploitative nature of the relationship between the people and the landowner (as the Ferryman says, the landowner also owns them), and of the irrational nature of the relationship, which is ultimately based on the fear that, were it not for
The landowner, things would be worse. The landowner takes advantage of a cycle of causes and effects to maintain his power. In order to live, the people must work. To work, they must be protected. To be protected, they must pay taxes. To pay taxes, they must be protected and work. However, they will not be protected unless the landowner has a sufficiently high stake in their continued existence. Thus, they must work for him, and become his, so that he will provide enough protection for them to live and pay taxes, while he simultaneously keeps them poor enough that they will not prosper or grow independent, and no longer fear his lack of protection. The landowner is able to keep this system in operation because of fear and because he owns the means of livelihood in the community (the means of production, in a capitalist society). As the Ferryman says, "You could say he owns us—he owns the only way we can live." (p. 6) The economic system of the society is so corrupt and so irrational that it is approaching a critical point near which Bond feels revolutionary activity becomes inevitable: "... a class society inevitably produces an irrational consciousness in people until they come to that moment where the economic foundations of that particular society are so out of key with the structure of that society that it no longer holds together and so real oppositions can be created."9 The economic and social systems in the play clearly are not functioning in the interests of the people who, at base, create the wealth on which the landlord lives. However, at this point in the play, there is no one

9Edward Bond, from an unpublished interview with Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 86.
with the insight and courage to break the cycle of exploitation. Nonetheless, Wang learns the first lessons which lead to his becoming a revolutionary in this scene: that the system is unfair and irrational, and that the people are controlled via fear. Before he can become a revolutionary, there are additional lessons Wang must learn, and these early ones must be reinforced by his direct experience.

Wang's next lessons are learned in Scene 3, when the flood forces the people out of their homes and on to the burial hills. In this scene, Wang discovers two important things. First, he learns how the landowner uses the river to control the people. When the periodic floods come, massive destruction comes with them. By not taking any measures to prevent the flooding, the landowner is able to keep the people in a state of poverty, and thus dependent on him. When the flooding is especially severe, as is the case in this scene, he is even able to simultaneously charge (exploit) them for his assistance and build their gratitude toward him for assisting them at all. When the flooding is dangerous, the landowner is able to charge the people for ferrying them to safety, as occurs in this scene (p. 13), and then to charge them for allowing them to stay in his compound on a high hill, as Wang reveals in Scene 5 (p. 39). In Scene 3, the landowner's men take the last money and only coat from an old man and woman, money and a hat from Kung-tu, money from Pu-toi, and an agreement of nine year's slavery for Wang to ferry the people from the hills. This last charge, which Wang resists until there is no further hope, drives into Wang's consciousness the degree to which the landowner owns them; a point which is reinforced by Pu-toi's earlier, and true, assertion that there
is no point in Wang's refusing since they are all slaves in everything but name anyway. "I am (a slave). I slave day and night. We all do, What's it matter if they call us a slave for once?" (pp. 19-9) In the course of the scene, Wang learns how deep the control of the landowner over the people's lives runs. He literally controls their lives and deaths, and can enslave them if he wishes, although that is really only a formal description of their normal state of illusory freedom. It also completes his picture of the mechanisms by which they are controlled: fear (of robbers, and of the landlord's men), and the river. By the end of Scene 3, Wang has all the basic information he needs to form a true picture of the irrational, unfair, exploitative nature of the society in which he lives. Over the next nine years, during his servitude to Basho, Wang is able to synthesize the picture and begin to formulate a plan of action for changing it. This process of synthesis is unseen; however, his vision of the society and its relationships is summarized at the end of Scene 5 in a charade he plays with the bandit gang. In it, he demonstrates for them the social order he is recruiting them to fight against.

Wang: I was the servant of a great thief. He covered his floors, walls, ceilings with loot. It filled his attics and cellars. It grew in his garden. There was so much loot he built store-houses.

Others: Ah!

Wang: He carried it on his back. In his pockets. Other thieves guarded his loot—he paid them in loot. His hands were clean. He never raised his fist. Not even his voice. He prayed for those he sent to death. Gave money to orphans and widows. It became the meaning of ambition to follow him.

Sheoul: That is a great thief!

Wang: I haven't told you how great yet. He had a great servant, (He takes a bowl of water) This. (He empties the bowl of water)
Sheoul: Careful!
Kaka: Water!
Wang: Every year this servant raids the land. Digs up the dead to steal the coins from their mouths. Eats the fields. Strips trees. Takes men’s lives. Then it’s the day of judgment every day—even when it goes back to sleep in its lair its breath stands in the fields like a white mist. What does it take: hope. What does it give: mud, to bury all things. And the people stand in their ruined fields like ghosts. They might as well be buried in them.

Tor-quo: But the thief you worked for—
Wang: Lives on a hill. (To Sheoul) You are the poor woman. I am the thief my master. Tiger is the river. The river rises,
Tiger: Hal Hooocoool
Wang: I sit and smile on my hill. Where d’you run for protection? (Sheoul runs away from Tiger to Wang. She brings the bundle of loot) I smile at the poor and weep at the flood. (Sheoul sits by Wang. He steals the bundle) As I weep the waters go down.
Tiger: (sits) Ha.
Wang: (To Sheoul) Go home. Praise heaven.
Sheoul: (Sheoul goes. She misses the bundle and comes back) My hat!
Tiger: My chop stickd
Kaka: My knife!
Tor-quo: My mat
Kaka: . . . Why don’t . . . the people . . . build a wall round the river! . . . Then they don’t need your protection.
Wang: Tor-quo, you are my soldier! Arrest that man.
Tor-quo: (Goes to Kaka) Sir!
Wang: And hang him.
Kaka: Why?
Wang: You stole from the woman.
Kaka: What?
Wang: Her innocence.
Tiger: Ha . . .
Wang: You see how well the landowner works. Everyman must open his mouth and drink to live. He uses the means by which men live to fill them with ignorance. They live by being condemned to death. (pp. 38-9)

Wang’s story/charade about the great thief crystallizes the relationship between the landowner and the people, in which he utilizes his control over the river, which he controls by not controlling it, and the soldiers to maintain his wealth and ownership of the populace; just as a
capitalist factory owner maintains control over the lives of his workers and political power by controlling the means of production. In understanding society and the social system in which the people live, it becomes possible for Wang to conceive of means to disrupt or destroy that system and restore to the people control over their lives by helping them to control the river (industry/technology). To that end, Wang begins to gather a band of revolutionaries to indoctrinate and help him to carry out revolutionary action. Before examining the course of that revolutionary action, however, it is necessary to look briefly at two additional lessons Wang learns which solidify his revolutionary vision, and help him to understand the nature of the action he must take.

The first lesson Wang learns after he is released from servitude to Basho deals with the nature of revolutionary morality, and it is this lesson which finally allows him to break from the slave consciousness with which he has grown up and to become a true revolutionary. To understand the significance of this lesson, it is necessary to understand Bond's theory of the relationship between morality, society, technology, class structure, and social change. Bond summarized his theory in the preface to *The Bundle*.

Societies change and human consciousness changes with them. Change originates from technology, which constantly changes the way in which people work, in which they sustain their life. This provokes changes in human consciousness and subsequently in social institutions. Changes in human consciousness begin before changes in social institutions because, although working people have the first experience of using new technology (in this connection working people must be thought of as workers and consumers), they are not usually in control of social institutions. And furthermore, social institutions usually resist change. There are at least two reasons for this. Firstly, in order to function efficiently society must observe certain instrumental values. Cars must normally be driven on one side of the road, promises kept, rules of hygiene respected
and so forth. These rules or regulations are not in themselves moral values. You can keep a promise to kill an innocent person, or swerve across the road to miss a pedestrian. But it is morally valuable that they should normally be kept. Without them society is not possible. Secondly, social institutions represent the interest of the ruling class. They developed when technology was simpler than it is now and they represent a social order—a relationship between social institutions, technology, environment, and human consciousness—which technology has made obsolescent. Our social institutions do not represent the interests of those people who by experience as workers and consumers are creating developments in human consciousness, new ways of understanding and interpreting the world, and so making necessary new ways of organizing it. But when the ruling class defends its interests it can claim it acts for the good of everyone because it controls the administration, the mechanical efficiency, of society (keeping to the right side of the road and so forth)—and this claim has an obvious plausibility.

Social institutions control law, education, civic force (police and armed forces), scientific research and so on—all the machinery and knowledge we need to live together and create a common life. But the control is deeper. It permeates the ordinary use of language, mores, customs, common assumptions and unquestioned ideas. Together these things—institutions and their social reflections—make up a tacitly accepted view of life, a consciousness of the world which is also in large part a self-consciousness. It is not the whole of self-consciousness because, as I've said, that is partly created by experience as worker and consumer. This experience brings the tacitly accepted, ruling class, institutional values into confrontation with moral values. Moral values originate in the relationship between men, their technology, their environment and their mutual interdependence. They are not, therefore, necessarily embodied in the structure of any particular society. We can talk of a tacitly accepted view of the world because although this view is often rejected—in industrial strikes for example—it remains powerful unless experience as worker and consumer is transposed into concepts, and then into customs, mores and so forth to make up a radically changed view of the world. Social institutions control the tacitly accepted view by means of education, the selection of information, economic sanctions and if necessary naked force. Above all they control the tacitly accepted moral code—and social living requires a moral code (or a reactionary substitute for it) as well as a set of rules.10

In Bond's system, morality should function in a relationship with elements such as technology, class structure, and human consciousness in

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such a way that change in one brings change in all. However, in a class
society, such as that present in The Bundle, social, and to a consi-
derable extent personal, morality is manipulated, if not controlled, by
the ruling class, and is resistant to change since it is in the interest
of the rulers to maintain a status quo. This results in the system
being thrown out of balance, and an inequitable society is the inevita-
ble result. In the play, the society has reached this point of serious
imbalance, in which morality no longer matches the state of technology
(the river) and the condition of the people's lives. In fact, the
morality operates to help keep the people passive and enslaved. In
order to free them, and bring the people into balance with the techno-
logy and their ability to control it for their benefit, it is necessary
to break down the landowner's morality, to free the people from its
hold, and to substitute for it a new, revolutionary morality more in
line with the new situation. Wang's real break with the landowner's
morality comes in Scene 4. In that scene, Wang finds an abandoned baby
by the river; a baby which, in line with conventional morality, he
feels compelled to try to save. He attempts to get Basho to take the
child, but Basho will do so only if Wang consents to remain as his ser-
vant/friend, which Wang cannot do. When Basho leaves, Wang is forced
to choose between abandoning the child himself, dooming it to death, or
taking it with him, tying him down to raising and caring for it. Con-
ventional moral wisdom, that which the landowner would support, dictates
that Wang ought to save the child, despite the hardships on himself,
just as the Ferryman and his Wife had saved Wang years before. When
the child's mother returns, and explains to Wang that she cannot take
the child back, for her husband forbids it and they do not have enough
to feed the children they already have (pp. 27-8), Wang buys the child
from her (restoring her self-respect, as selling children is not con-
demned, as abandoning them is). At that point, it appears that Wang
has given in to the landowner's morality, and will effectively enslave
himself to the system in order to save and raise the child, taking part
in a cycle of activity that clearly is caused by the poverty of the
people and which works in the landowner's favor. However, after a long
monologue in which he explores all the ramifications of the situation,
he hurls the baby out into the river, realizing that the baby will
"crush me like a prison." (p. 29) Wang's dilemma is that, if he saves
this one child, it will make it impossible for him to act to save all
abandoned children by altering social conditions. As Bond explains:

The ferryman takes the child because as a humanist he can't abandon
it. He knows that taking the child will hasten his wife's death.
He tries to justify taking it (he is in the position where to have
loving or humane feelings is dangerous and a shocking self-indul-
gence) by saying the child will become a good worker. Later,
Wang's and the ferryman's situation is reversed. The ferryman and
his wife are abandoned to the water. This time Wang is blackmailed
by his humane feelings (as earlier the ferryman had been), at a
similar cost. (This refers to Scene 3, when Wang agrees to become
a slave for nine years to save his parents from the flood.—my note)
So finally when Wang finds the baby by the water he says: no. One
is not enough. I must save more, I will not be seduced into one
gesture of kindness when this will divert me from my total purpose.11

Consequently,

Shaking with the injustice of this awesome and seemingly insoluble
contradiction Wang holds the baby in the air, and in a denial of
his deepest instinct, hurls it into the river. He calls the baby

11 Edward Bond, quoted by Catharine Itzin from notes to her in
response to the unpublished manuscript of her Stages in the Revolution,
Stages in the Revolution, p. 84.
"a little killer," recognising that his "one little spurt of sweetness" which will save the child, will also neuter him politically, and thus condemn hundreds more babies to death.\(^{12}\)

By denying his human instincts, and breaking with what would be widely conceded to be a moral action, Wang shatters conventional, bourgeois, landowner morality, and adopts instead the revolutionary morality appropriate to the situation; one which posits that it is better to sacrifice one innocent life than to allow many more to meet a similar fate by losing one's capacity to act in their behalf. In other words, he comes to realize that one must act with regard to the greatest ultimate good for the greatest number, and not from immediate sentimental or humanistic motives. Wang learns one of the most important lessons a revolutionary must learn, and it frees him to take effective action for the good of all the people regardless of the cost later in the play.

The second of the lessons Wang learns prior to beginning his revolutionary activity by recruiting Tiger's band of thieves as soldiers is learned in the seven days which separate Scenes 4 and 5. Wang articulates this lesson on his entrance in Scene 5.

Wang: I ran through swamps, crying for seven days. I saw the rich prey on the poor. The poor prey on themselves. An old woman. She wore knitted mittens. Her hands were like squirrel's paws—holding an empty bowl. She knelt by the pilgrims' path and said: "Give—heaven will bless you." What heaven would bless such pilgrims when it hadn't blessed her? (p. 32)

In the week between his flight and this scene, Wang has learned how deeply the corruption and predatory nature of the social system run.

He had known well how the rich, the landowners, prey on the poor, but

\(^{12}\)Tony Coult, "The Bundle," p. 31.
he has now seen that the poor prey on one another in their attempt to
survive. He has also learned that looking to heaven or some outside
force for assistance is futile; that if any effective action is to be
taken to relieve the suffering, it is men such as he who must take it.
Having learned these lessons, he sets out to rectify the conditions by
recruiting a band of revolutionaries, specifically Tiger and his compa-
nions, at the end of Scene 5 in accordance with the plan he had formed
during his travels. "The emperor didn't send me. If the soldiers
caught me they'd cook me and eat me. I came to the swamp to find a
band of thieves. When I found them I'd join them." (p. 37) Having
found the band of thieves, he begins to convince them to join him and
to indoctrinate them with the story of the landowner and the river, which
he has them act out, in that way beginning his revolution.

Wang's revolutionary activity is sketched in very briefly by Bond;
only enough so that the outline of the course of the revolt is clear.
This is because Bond's primary concern in the play is not tracing the
course of a revolution, but in dramatizing his analysis of the rela-
tionship between morality and society, and between revolutionary and
conventional morality. Consequently, in Scene 6 he shows the development
of the main thrust of the revolutionary activity as Wang recruits his
father to ferry rifles across the river for the villagers to use in the
revolt. The Ferryman is reluctant to do so; in fact, he refuses until
his wife tells him to go on. Wang convinces him and his mother to do
as he asks in large part by pointing out to them the moral implications
of their refusing to join the revolution.

Wang: You picked me up and took me home. A good man! The good
ferryman! The saint who lives by the river! Do the birds
singing when you come through your door? It's not easy to do
good. You pick up one child. What about the tenth child?
Or the hundredth child? You leave them to rot! Drown them
with your holy hands... You saints who crucify the world
so that you can be good! You keep us in dirt and ignorance!
Force us into the mud with your dirty morality! You are the
scourge of the—. No, no, I must understand. I must be
patient. I'm sorry. (p. 47)

In this scene, Wang points out the negatives of the conventional mora-
ility for the current situation, and the way in which it contributes to
keeping the people "in the mud." The Ferryman comes to recognize the
truth of Wang's assertion, as well as the inevitability of the revolu-
tion, and he agrees to ferry the rifles for Wang, saying, "Yes. If
you'd drowned in the river someone else would have been asked the same
question. I'll take the rifles." (p. 48) However, far more important
in the scene is the contrast Bond establishes between the seeming sacri-
ifice of the conventional moral action of saving the child (Wang), and
the genuine benefits of a real moral action, ferrying rifles for the
revolution at considerable personal risk; an act which will contribute
to saving hundreds of children, not just one. The conventional moral
action is, in fact, ultimately selfish, for it is motivated in part by
the desire to win praise, and in part to gain a worker. Certainly the
conventional action also involves sacrifice, particularly in the risk
of deprivation and the hastened death of Wang's mother. But the conven-
tional good pales by contrast to the potential good of the Ferryman's
contribution to the revolution, establishing the latter act as the
greater moral action. The Ferryman comes to see that he must act in the
service of the greatest good for the most people, regardless of personal
risk. It is not that his action in saving Wang was wrong. Certainly,
it was more moral and "noble" than Basho's refusal to take the child
from entirely selfish motives in his quest for a false "enlightenment."
But in the context of a collective revolutionary struggle, that action
is not enough; and if it is held to be sufficient, it in fact becomes
immoral, as Wang's action in Scene 4 demonstrates. Though superficially
Scene 6 shows Wang furthering the revolution by setting up a network
for the distribution of rifles, in fact the scene is primarily concerned
with contrasting the conventional and revolutionary moral modes, and
establishing the supremacy of the latter, in which one sacrifices indi-
vidual good for the good of the whole, as the Ferryman puts himself and
his wife at risk to further the revolution.

In Scene 7, there is very little action that contributes directly
to the revolution. In this scene, Wang and Tiger are on their way to
meet with village elders to plot strategy (p. 53). Their actions in
the scene win several converts to their cause, but these elements oc-
cupy a minor portion of the scene. The primary concern in this section
of the play deals with another element in the exploration of revolu-
tionary and conventional morality. In this scene, Wang and Tiger are
confronted with the suffering of a woman accused of a crime, guarded
by soldiers, and condemned to wear a heavy stone cangue around her neck.
Their problem is how to free the woman, who has done nothing more than
steal food for her ill husband, and so is a victim of the unfair econo-
mic situation. Tiger wants to kill the soldiers immediately. Wang,
however, prevents him from doing so, and insists that they sit and wait
for an opportunity; and that if no opportunity comes, they must leave
her to her suffering. The effect of suppressing his impulse to give
the woman immediate relief is so great that Wang bites the inside of
his mouth until it bleeds as he explains to Tiger why they must wait.

Wang: I know the woman. I'd help her before all others. I sit
here calmly. I bite the inside of my lip to stop shouting
out. Look, there is blood inside my mouth—

Tiger: And my hand itches!

Wang: Too soon.

Tiger: Then buy her water!

Wang: Worse!

Tiger: Hard!

Wang: (There is a sudden fall of blood from Wang's mouth. As he
speaks it runs down his chin) No. The ox bears the yoke.
Break the yoke. Another yoke is put on its neck. The far­
mer has fifty yokes in his store. Stop being an ox. What
is the use of breaking a window when it has iron bars? The
landowner still controls. When he needs soldiers he send­
and they come. So people fear him. If we're kind to the
woman—he must be crueller to the people. So they say;
"She deserves to be punished." They act out of fear. That
is their morality. The only morality they can have. Learn
it: the government makes not only laws, but a morality, a
way of life, what people are in their very nature. We have
not yet earned the right to be kind. I say it with blood
in my mouth. When the landowner is no longer feared then
our kindness will move mountains. That is our morality.
Tiger. Today we should look on kindness with suspi­
cion.

Wang makes two points in his speech to Tiger. First, he again notes
that it is the greatest good for the greatest number which must control
their actions. They dare not kill the soldiers and relieve the suf­
fering of this one individual woman because, if they do, it will jeo­
pardize the welfare of the mass of people. "If we're kind to the woman--
he must be crueler to the people." Second, he points out the relative
nature of morality, depending on its revolutionary or non-revolutionary
context. That act which would seem kindness to the woman now would in
fact be a greater cruelty, for it would bring reprisals and leave her
and the people enslaved. Wang observes that there is a time for kind­
ness, and a time when kindness is a luxury the revolutionary cannot
The woman can be freed at no cost, Wang is willing to do it, as he does at the end of the scene. But when such action might jeopardize the larger action, the individual must continue to suffer for the good of the masses. This is revolutionary morality, and it differs markedly from the knee-jerk morality displayed by Tiger which conventionally wants to relieve individual suffering and injustice immediately, regardless of the larger consequences of that action. An additional observation made by Vang in this scene bears on the question of morality and clarifies in the text of The Bundle Bond’s theory of the relationship between social classes and moral views. Vang observes that the people’s morality is based on fear of the power of the landlord (ruling class), and that that morality will change when the fear is broken; presumably when the people take charge and rule for themselves. Wang, as does Bond in the preface, links morality into a functional system with elements such as technology, social institutions, and classes, and notes that, in order to change one element significantly, modifications must be made in other elements as well.

In Scene 8, Wang is called upon to make, and makes, his great sacrifice, as does the Ferryman and his Wife. Having learned of the Ferryman’s activities in carrying rifles from the captured Tiger, Basho plants soldiers in the boat in an effort to capture Wang. The Ferryman warns Wang of danger by dropping his pole in the water, something an experienced ferryman would never do. Wang realizes the danger, and flees, effectively abandoning his family to death at Basho’s hands, as he must do if the revolution is to continue. Basho recognizes the nature of the signal, as he indicates when he tells the Ferryman, "The
ferryman's son knows he could not drop the pole in mistake. Throw him in the river. To warn the rest." (p. 68) In warning Wang, the Ferryman knows that he condemns himself and his Wife to death (without him, she will surely die), but he does so anyway. He would have been killed in any case, as the first soldier tells him before the trip across, but his co-operation would have ensured his wife's life. "I can't promise you your life. That's out. No pardons. Not that it's up to me. Or the judge. The government's said it. But there's no need for your wife to be killed. She's senile enough not to know what you were up to."

(p. 63) In warning Wang, the Ferryman sacrifices himself and his Wife to the revolution, as Wang does in heeding the warning and taking flight. Revolutionary morality dictates that a sentimental gesture, such as attempting a rescue, which jeopardizes the revolt is as repugnant as the Ferryman's action would have been had he not tried to warn Wang. The scene is therefore another dramatization of revolutionary morality, as well as being an example of revolutionary sacrifice, and as such is an important part of the thematic and analytical core of The Bundle.

In Scene 9, the success of the revolt is demonstrated as the revolutionaries approach Basho's house as they take over the village, while the soldiers prepare to retreat. This scene functions thematically to demonstrate the contrast between the noble and sacrificial action of Wang and the Ferryman in Scene 8, and the ignoble actions of the merchant Kung-tu, who abandons his family to the oncoming revolutionaries and is far more concerned for his money and goods than them, and the treacherous landowner and rulers, who are fully prepared to abandon both
Kung-tu and Basho himself, now that their usefulness has ended. Revolutionary morality, despite its seeming harshness at times, is ultimately directed toward the good of the people; conventional morality, at base, despite its veneer of kindness and sympathy, is designed to protect the interests of the rulers, and is treacherously betrayed, and quickly crumbles, under pressure from the people's revolt. In many ways, this scene is an assertion both of the superiority of revolutionary morality and of the superior social system which is born in its triumph. The superiority of that social order is demonstrated in Scene 10, the final scene of the play, in which the former revolutionaries, led by Wang, are seen fulfilling their promise to build a wall to contain the river, and give the people freedom and control over their lives. The struggle to take control is seen to be not without cost; one of the workers is killed during the scene in the attempt to build the wall (p. 76). However, on the whole, the new order, and new morality, is seen to be triumphing. Wang has succeeded in breaking the bonds of fear for many of the people, freeing them from what once held them in slavery. The Husband of the woman Wang freed in Scene 7, who works by distributing food to the workers since he is too ill to participate in the building work himself, is exemplary of this achievement, as he demonstrates in a discussion with Lu.

Lu: Aren’t you afraid of the dark?
Husband: No.
Lu: Tigers?
Husband: No.
Lu: Landowners?
Husband: I’m not afraid of anything, my dear. I try not to be. (p. 75)

Wang is even succeeding in turning around the people's thinking about
the river. Although Tor-quo says his wife still fears it (p. 73), when Lu asks the Husband if he does not even fear the river when the banks are broken, San-ko says, "Why should the banks break? We'll build them well. It's for our own sake. There'll be locks. A cut-off channel for the spring tides. The banks will have stone walls. We're changing the river. What's the matter with you? You speak as if the old river was there." (p. 75) As the play ends, the workers are encouraged, despite the death of Tuan, when Wang reminds them that it is better to die free, building a free life for the future, than to "carry the dead on your back." (p. 78) As Basho wanders away seeking enlightenment and the way to the North, Wang summarizes the action and theme of the play in his final speech. "We live in a time of great change. It is easy to find monsters—and as easy to find heroes. To judge rightly what is good—to choose between good and evil—that is all that it is to be human." (p. 78)

In utilizing the process of Wang's growth to revolutionary consciousness and the progress of his revolution, Bond took advantage of the opportunities allowed by epic structure for cinematic movement in time and space, and episodic construction (allowing him to show only significant points in the developmental process), to render the action of the play effectively. He used those tools with equal effectiveness in the rendering of his other, and more important, element in the organization and selection of scenes: the examination and analysis of the nature of revolutionary morality (and its differences from conventional, bourgeois or ruling-class morality), and of the relationship between morality and society and its institutions. This analytical element
affected the structure of The Bundle in three ways. Each of these is dependent for their success to a considerable extent on the scenic isolation characteristic of epic structure; a trait which allowed Bond to create a series on individual, discrete scenes embodying sharply and clearly an important idea or point in the analysis. First, the analysis is manifest on a symbolic level by the presentation of an identical or similar physical objects, the identity or treatment by the characters of which shifts as the play progresses, building up meaning. An obvious example of this is the repeated presence of bundles in the play, each of which is different and has a different meaning: from Wang in Scene 1, to the baby he throws into the river in Scene 4, to the rifles in Scene 8. As the play progresses, the meaning of the bundle changes, inviting comparison and contemplation of the meaning of the objects themselves and the contexts in which they exist. Second, the analysis is built into the structure of each individual scene.

Every scene in the play is structured to illustrate the contradictions (within the landowner's social morality, and between the revolutionary and landowner's moralities—my note). Wang as a young man is stranded by the flood with his step-parents and villagers, on the high ground of a graveyard. (The river was Bond's symbol of industrialism.) All but they have something to barter with the landowner's men for their lives. Wang has a choice between drowning and selling himself into slavery. He abhors the idea of becoming a slave, but his instinct for survival (and parental pressure—my note) finally forces him to submit. His agonised shout of "Buy me" echoes as the epitome of capitalist exploitation. Wang robs from the rich to give to the poor: not food or money, but guns—the tools of violence necessary to replace capitalism with socialism.13

As Itzin notes, Bond works concrete examples, points of his analysis, directly into the scenes, illustrating the contradictions and dilemmas

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13 Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, pp. 84-5.
inherent in the society and situations in moments such as that in Scene 3, when Wang is forced to make the essentially immoral choice between slavery and death in a situation which, morally, calls for the landowner to make every possible effort to rescue the stranded villagers as a gesture of simple human duty and decency. Bond himself articulated a number of other points in which the analysis is dramatized within scenes.

These are some of the moments in The Bundle when the analysis is dramatized: in Scene seven, when Wang speaks calmly as the blood flows down his chin; at the end of scene five, in the play-within-the-play; in scene nine, the merchant's sudden animal shouts of "Yui" (these are shouts of terror, not abbreviations of "You"); at the end of scene three, Wang's choice of the word "buy" when he shouts; in scene eight (c), the mother's struggle to move and her scream; and in scene eight (a), the use of the water bowl—at first this is an object in the story and then it is abstracted from the story and put into the analysis, when the ferryman with a calm, simple gesture places it on the ground and offers the audience an elucidation, just as earlier he had offered Tiger the clear water. The changing of the bundle by the river from a baby in scenes one and four to rifles in scene eight (b) is also a dramatization of the analysis.

In the moments noted above, such as Wang's analysis of the origins of the prevailing morality in fear, and the need for it to change before non-revolutionary actions can be taken, San-ko's speech on the taming of the river in Scene 10, or Wang's concluding speech in the same scene, points of analysis are rendered directly into the action of individual scenes. However, Bond also dramatized the analysis in a second way, and one that is more significant for the actual construction of The Bundle in the selection and arrangement of its scenes: in the relationship between the scenes, and the way in which their juxtaposition creates meaning.

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Bond was clearly aware of his use of the analysis as a unifying and structuring device in the composition of The Bundle.

The epic must have a unity based on practical truth, just as once it was based on mythological coherence. This unity comes from the analysis, which demonstrates, embodies cause and effect in a coherent way. The scenes in The Bundle were chosen and ordered for this reason. Obvious examples are the parallels between scenes one and four; the placing of scene seven between scenes six and eight, where it interrupts the story, instead of before scene six; the decision to dramatize the preparation for the fight and the consequences of it and not the fight itself—which the traditional story would have required.15

As Bond says, the use of scenes with parallel actions, but different conclusions, is one way in which meaning can be built up and the analysis dramatized. For example, in Scene 1, the Ferryman gives in to his feelings and saves the baby Wang despite knowing it will cripple his Wife and himself, and worsen their lives. Faced with an identical situation in Scene Vang hurls the child into the river, because such a sacrifice for one child would mean the deaths of many more children.

Bond contrasts conventional and revolutionary morality in this way, making it clear that an action which might be laudable in a conventional situation can become positively immoral in a revolutionary context, where the good of the whole must be placed far above that of any individual. Such a system of parallels also operates in a more individual way so far as characters are concerned. In the same two scenes, both Basho and Wang individually refuse to take a child because it will be an intolerable burden on them. However, a comparison of the motives of the two points out the differences in the individuals and the moralities

they represent, as well as making it clear that there are circumstances in which such a refusal is justified, and others in which it is not.

Wang refuses the child in Scene 4 because it would make his revolutionary activity impossible, and lead to the continued oppression of the populace and more dead children, abandoned because the poverty of their families is such that they could not be fed, and might cause others to starve. In Scene 1, Basho abandons the child, even though he would be far more able to care for it than the Ferryman, because he selfishly wishes to pursue "enlightenment"; an enlightenment which, as it turns out, is illusory, and which does not prevent his becoming a judge for the landlord and a leader in the oppression of the people after it comes in Scene 2. Despite the Ferryman's all too true arguments that he is too poor to take the child, and that with Basho the child might grow "wise and good," Basho refuses, calling the child a hindrance, even while he regrets that the child is not old enough to carry his bundle.

Basho: Ah... No. Knowledge must be loved for itself. I would be like an organ grinder with a monkey on his back. If the child had been big it could have carried my bundle. Then heaven's purpose would have been clear. No, it was put here to tempt me at the start of my journey. Shall the sage turn back and never get further than his doorstep? Child, I am Basho the great seventeenth-century poet. I brought the haiku to perfection. (Scene 1, p. 2)

Basho is so full of self-importance, so arrogant, that he fails to take, perhaps cannot even see, the morally responsible action, personally and socially, in his refusal to adopt the child. By contrast, in refusing to take the baby in Scene 4, Wang, acting for the good of the whole, takes the only socially and morally responsible action he can take in
the revolutionary situation in which he finds himself, despite the
depth of his human feeling and agonizing over the child. The use of
parallel scenes is an important structural tool in the dramatization of
the analysis which controls the structure of The Bundle.

A second means of organizing scenes to dramatize the analysis is in
the juxtaposition of scenes which, although not parallel, contain a con-
tent which is intended to provide a contrast between the two moral sys-
tems, and the two societies they represent. For example, in Scene 8,
Wang and the Ferryman make enormous sacrifices for the sake of the re-
volution: Wang of his parents, the Ferryman of his and his wife's
lives. Standing in juxtaposition to those actions is Scene 9, in which
Kung-tu, the bourgeois merchant, abandons his family when the revolt is
about to succeed in his haste to save his own life. This is followed by
Scene 10, in which the selfishness and treachery implicit in the social
system of the landowners and exemplified by the actions of Kung-tu and
the soldiers in their abandonment of those who depend on them in Scene
9 is contrasted to the trust, confidence, and positive social action/
consciousness exemplified by the workers as they build walls and tame the
river. The juxtaposition of these scenes makes vivid the contrast be-
tween the two moral systems examined in the play. A final technique
employed by Bond in organizing his scenes for the dramatization of his
analysis is alluded to by him in the preface to the play. He takes ad-
vantage of the episodic structural techniques available in epic structure
to insert a scene, Scene 7, between two scenes which, in terms of the
logical development of dramatic action, ought to come together in a
direct presentation of cause and effect. In Scene 6, the plan to ferry
the rifles is set in motion, and in Scene 8, its consequences are demonstrated in the death of the Ferryman. In between, Bond places the scene involving the woman prisoner whom Wang and Tiger free. In that scene, Wang is given a long speech in which he makes clear the relationship between morality and social institutions, and the way in which the landowner uses fear to enforce a moral system/economic order which keeps the people enslaved. This scene, placed in this spot in the play, sheds light on both the scene which precedes and the scene which follows it. In Scene 6, Wang succeeds in breaking the chains of fear which bind the Ferryman to conventional morality and inaction. This process is illuminated, and its importance made clear, in Scene 7. The implications of this process are then made clear in Scene 8, in which the Ferryman and his Wife, who earlier had sold Wang into nine years of slavery to save their lives, and have lived in fear for decades, are now willing to sacrifice their lives to the revolutionary cause. By inserting a scene between two causally linked scenes, 6 and 8, Bond was able to make a point which is important both in itself, and for the light it sheds on the other two scenes. This technique, like that of juxtaposing scenes, is reminiscent of a technique of dramatic construction that David Edgar calls "thematic linking," and which he used to good effect in his epic play Destiny, an expose of the rise of neo-fascist organizations in contemporary Great Britain which, as Catharine Itzin points out, combines elements of both agitprop and social realism in its structure.16

16 Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 146.
That technique in *Destiny* I've rather uglily described as "thematic linking", which is to say that a scene is followed by one which took place seven years earlier, followed by another which took place two years before that, not because I was flashing back, in the conventional sense, but because the answer to the question Scene C posed took place seven years before and that was Scene D, and the answer to the question Scene D posed came two years before that, and the answer to the question Scene E posed requires us to return to the present tense. What I wanted the audience to do was actually view the play in terms of its theme, in terms of the social forces involved, not necessarily to be bothered with strict chronology.17

While Bond observes a regular chronological development in *The Bundle* (in part because of his use of a developmental process as a secondary controlling element in the structure), his use of juxtaposition and the insertion of scenes into causal pairs, his construction of the play in fact, does precisely what Edgar's thematic linking does: it asks the audience to view the play, not through its story or chronology, but through its themes and analysis. In many ways, this method of structuring is similar to that of agit-prop, as David Edgar pointed out in an interview with Catharine Itzin. "The way I wrote it (*Destiny*) was that I said I wanted to make this point in this act, these points in this scene, other points in the overall order. I then constructed the plot to fit that. And that is a technique of agitprop writing."18 Such a technique of presenting single isolated points, or groups of points, whether in a theme or analysis, as well as the ability to juxtapose those points to gain additional meaning, is one of the several advantages


of epic structure for a playwright concerned with clearly dramatizing a theme, argument, or analysis. The ability to isolate scenes and points, to shift freely in time and space, and to structure episodically all increase the ability of the playwright to present his analysis clearly in dramatic terms; an ability which Edward Bond used fully in The Bum-dle. By isolating his points in individual scenes and playing them off against other points in preceding, succeeding, or parallel scenes, Bond was able to clearly explore the relationship between morality and society, and between revolutionary and reactionary morality, as well as demonstrating the growth of revolutionary consciousness and action by combining the analytical element in the controlling structure of the play with one tracing a developmental process. In that way, Edward Bond was able to create both a fine play and an effective political document.

By utilizing epic structure, and "dramatizing the analysis instead of the story," Bond succeeded in, as he said in his preface, "reinstating meaning in literature."

The "dramatization of the analysis instead of the story", in both the choice and ordering of the scenes and in the incidents dramatically emphasized in the scenes, is a way of reinstating meaning in literature. It may seem cold and abstract but it is not. The analysis can give us the beauty and vitality that once belonged to myth, without its compromises and intellectual reallocation of meaning. It can be the most exciting part of the play, dramatized through powerful images and dramatic confrontations between appearance and reality. But these dramatizations must not exist in their own right as dramatic effects. They demonstrate those crises in a story when the audience are asked to be not passive victims or witnesses, but interpreters of experience, agents of the future, re-storing meaning to action by recreating self-consciousness. At these moments the audience are superior to the actors; they are on the real stage.19

In *The Bundle*, Edward Bond dramatized a story that was fully fictional in both its characters and its events and social background, despite its being, metaphorically, a picture of contemporary industrial society. In *Teendreams*, David Edgar, writing in combination with Susan Todd and the company Monstrous Regiment of Women, constructed a play which uses a fictional, albeit typical, group of characters set against the background of real events: the social movements in Great Britain from 1968 to 1978, particularly the growth of feminism. While Bond utilized at least two important elements in controlling the selection and arrangement of scenes in his play, in *Teendreams* David Edgar confines himself largely to a single controlling factor: the process of change in the consciousness and lives of his central characters as they react to personal events and political happenings during that decade. There is also the presentation of a story involving one of the central woman characters and two teenaged students which is an important structural factor, albeit a weakening one, for the stories are not adequately integrated, even on a metaphorical level. Nonetheless, despite their differences, both *The Bundle* and *Teendreams* are significant examples of the use of epic structure in the contemporary political drama of the British left, as well as being important political documents in the British leftist movement and theatre.

*Teendreams*, played out against the student unrest of 1968 and the growth and change in leftist political movements and attitudes from that year until 1978, is about the way youthful, romantic dreams and hopes (teendreams) were linked to and destroyed by the events of that period, and about how different people involved in the time emerged out of it
more or less intact. The central focus of the play is two women, friends from childhood, named Frances and Rosie, and what happens to them. However, the lives of a man, Colin, and two teenaged girls, Trisha and Denise, are also traced in some detail; and that of another man, Howard, is given a very superficial treatment in the course of the examination of the same basic process. In a sense, all of the characters in *Teendreams* are seen to be the victims of the shattering of dreams and illusions by the social events of the period, although only Frances and Rosie have their stories examined in much detail, and Trisha and Denise are seen less as victims of social processes acting on them, than as the victims of the failure of Frances's hopes, convictions, and ideals (in addition, of course, to providing a parallel for Frances and Rosie, demonstrating how, despite the differences in generation, their teenaged dreams are broken just the same). The chief structural principle of the play is the examination of the process by which the dreams of the characters are ground up and they are progressively disillusioned and damaged by the process. The process of regeneration in the characters, where that occurs, is not examined, but merely revealed in a series of three scenes which function as a coda to the action of the play. The process is clearly centered on the lives of the central characters of the play; however, always lurking in the background is the radical movement of the period 1968-75, and the shifting attitudes and tactics of that movement play an important background role in providing an environment for the action and accounting for certain of the changes in the characters' attitudes and actions. The action of *Teendreams* begins in 1975, with the action of Scenes 3-16 forming an
extended flashback from 1968 up to a few hours before the event enacted in Scene 1 of the play.

**Teendreams**

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<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Frances's apartment/Summer 1975</td>
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While babysitting for Rosie's children, Trisha attempts to commit suicide by taking pills. No reason is seen this early in the play.

Scene 2 | 7-8 | Frances's apartment/Two weeks later |

Frances discusses Trisha's attempt, and the disappointment in romance and friendship to which she attributes it. Tells Rosie how she had not been prey to Trisha's romanticism, but to a different sort (also tied up with a love affair, however): that of revolutionary marxist activity in the student protests of the late sixties. Also tells how that dream has ended as badly and painfully as Trisha's, and leaves for her patent's country house in retreat.

Scene 3 | 8-11 | University hall; demonstration headquarters/Summer 1968 |

Ruth and Cathy at work on leaflets and posters. Dave enters looking for Colin (Frances's lover), who is to address a rally. Colin is under an injunction not to do so from a court which has banned him from such activities after the university identified him as a ring-leader. He and Frances are late. When they arrive, Colin has decided to go ahead despite his probable arrest and consequent family embarrassment. Frances demonstrates in a short speech that her engagement with the demonstration is romantic at least as much as it is realistic and principled. Ruth ends the scene with the observation that, despite the fact that it is 1968 and a radical demonstration, men are still in charge, and women doing menial, not significant, tasks.

Scene 4 | 11-12 | Wedding reception/Summer 1968 |

Rosie and Howard's wedding.
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<td>12-15</td>
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Ruth, Anne, and Tony rehearse a feminist play demonstrating that marriage is a form of capitalist slavery for women. With them is Sandra, an abused wife, and her baby. Colin and Frances arrive to try to convince Ruth to speak at a rally opposing the Tory Rent Act to represent the women's point of view. She refuses, saying it is a male-dominated event irrelevant to the real problems of women. She argues with Colin and Frances over the merits of small-group consciousness-raising activities versus large-scale, Marxist oriented activities such as those of Colin. Frances tries to defend Colin's position. Ruth, Tony, and Anne leave.

| Scene 6 | 16 | Rosie’s house and Frances’s apartment on split stage/Spring 1972 |

Rosie, in kitchen, prepares three meals simultaneously in pantomime. Howard arrives home and presents her with perfume and jewelry in payment. Simultaneously, Frances is seen on the phone discussing National Teacher’s Union convention politics and tactics with Steve, planning a parliamentary maneuver in order to force through a leftist nurseries motion. Typical activity of each is seen in the scene.

| Scene 7 | 17-19 | Ruth or Maria's house/May 1975 |

Women's consciousness-raising session, attended by Ruth, who tries to run the meeting and dominate the group's ideology and action, Sandra, Maria (a college lecturer), and Rosie. Maria is trying to get the group to stage a rally to push for a nursery for the community to free up women. Ruth works against her proposal, arguing for the importance of a place for women to meet. They argue/discuss several issues to no real effect, although Rosie is very interested by Ruth's story of a housewife slowly going mad, cooking five meals a day just to stay sane. Scene ends with Maria prodding for action which the group will probably never take.
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<td>Scene 9</td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>Frances's apartment/Later the same night</td>
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Rosie and Howard in bed, he obviously very angry and uncommunicative over Rosie's being out late. Scene ends the verge of a major blow-up.

Rosie has left Howard and come to stay with Frances, a childhood friend whom she has not seen for years. Colin has dined with Frances, and planned to spend the night. Rosie discusses her life with Frances, and the reason for the break. She and Colin become acquainted. Colin discusses his shifting attitude toward small-group politics/activism, and launches into a discourse on socialism which Rosie breaks off by asking him to shut-up. Steve calls, asking Frances to pick up some leaflets on a train at 6:00 a.m. (it is now about 2:00 a.m.) She refuses. Frances asks Colin to leave, causing a small spat between them, but he goes. She and Rosie discuss her relationship with Colin (they have not lived together for a couple of years and have a casual relationship), and the fact that he really has never quite grown out of the 1960s. They comment on the sexist nature of male-female relationships, even in supposedly liberated men, during a joking exchange based on a reversal of the fairy-tale ending where the prince awakens the princess with a kiss. In this version, which originates in a misinterpretation of the stories by Rosie's daughter several nights before, the prince kisses the princess and turns into a frog. Frances and Rosie agree that Rosie and the children will stay with Frances.

Trisha and Denise, skipping metal-working class, hide in the cloakroom, smoking, and doing a "Your Ideal Lover" quiz in a pulp magazine (which establishes Trisha as hyper-romantic, and Denise as a thrill-seeker). Brewer, a schoolmaster, catches them. During his talk at them, it is revealed that Denise is not a good student at all, although she seems to enjoy geography, where she can learn about strange peoples and lands, but that Trisha is gifted in mathematics. Failing to reach them at all, he decides to send their tutor, Frances, to see them. Frances takes a different
Teendreams

(Scene 10) approach than Brewer, neither insulting nor berating them. In fact, they all have a laugh at Brewer's expense. Trisha's preoccupation with a boy named Gary is established. Frances shocks the girls with her ideal man/relationship, which is based on mutual independence. Brewer re-enters, and Frances lies to him and tells him the situation has been corrected. Trisha and Denise like Frances, but are puzzled by her, and the scene ends with a reaffirmation of Trisha's unhealthy romanticism.

Scene 11  28-29 Staff room/later that day

Brewer and Frances in the staff room as Brewer prepares to go referee a soccer match. Brewer mildly berates Frances for her relationship with the girls and her, to him, unrealistic approach to and view of them. He tells her she approaches them through her political program, and does not care about them or what is really best for them, as she is most interested, not in their welfare, but in turning them into leftists, rather than helping them climb a rung or two up the (capitalist) ladder.

Scene 12  29-32 Changing room/later that day

Denise is in the changing room, having been excused from physical education. Frances comes in and talks to her. Denise mentions she likes thriller stories, and Frances mentions that she, too, likes them, and that perhaps Denise could babysit for Rosie and look at them. They chat about how crude the young boys are. Frances leaves just before Trisha comes in. Trisha is coming from field hockey, and is upset because she is a mess and has just met Gary in the hall. She also worries because Brewer has said she is shallow and lacks character. Trisha says she hopes her relationship with Denise will always stay the same, and asks her to promise that it will. Denise does.

Scene 13  32-33 Youth Club Disco/A few days later

Scene is a narrative re-enactment of events at the dance, with Debbie and Sharon (two fifteen year old friends of Denise and Trisha), and Trisha, narrating in audience address. Trisha did not go that night, but Denise did. She invites Gary to dance, during which he kisses her. She recoils from him in disgust.
Scene 14  33-36  Trisha's bedroom/A day or two later
Trisha and Denise smoking and drinking Pernod. Trisha is making herself up. Denise tells Trisha about what happened at the disco, upsetting and angering her. Trisha attacks Denise verbally, calling her ugly (a sore point with Denise), telling her no boy wants her, and to leave. Denise begins to rip Trisha's posters of pop stars and articles on make-up and beauty tips off the walls and a bulletin board, attacking Trisha's romantic values as well. Denise tells her that Frances thinks she (Trisha) is a waste of time. Trisha retorts with more about how the boys (her boyfriends) won't touch Denise. Denise leaves, and Trisha laments.

Scene 15  36-37  Disco/A day or two later
Trisha at the disco. Debbie, Sharon, and Denise come in. They initially snub Trisha, then insult and humiliate her, finally causing her to spill her coffee on herself. The leave Trisha crying.

Scene 16  38  Frances's apartment/Next day, a few hours before Scene 1
Frances and Rosie, unseen, prepare to go out. Rosie worries about the children. Trisha arrives, explaining she will babysit alone, not with Denise. Frances and Rosie leave.

Scene 17  38-39  Trisha's hospital ward/Few days later
Rosie visits Trisha, bringing her a book (Bronte) from Frances, and also a toy. They briefly discuss Denise, who "went mad" and began smashing things on hearing about Trisha. Rosie tells Trisha Frances will not come until Trisha says it is all right, and Trisha says she can visit. Rosie tells Trisha not to forget what happened or to pretend it never took place; that what is happening to Trisha is part of changing, and it is normal to feel smashed and broken during such a time.

Scene 18  39-40  An assessment center/Indeterminate; a few days or weeks later
Denise is interviewed by a social worker. Denise reads her file, and discovers one interviewer had diagnosed
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<td>her as having inadequate gender identification, a term which Lynne, the social worker, explains to her. Lynne tells Denise that she feels Denise’s real problem is that she felt confused by things her teacher, Frances, had said. Denise more or less agrees, blaming it all on the fact that “the world came in on” her and Trisha, and they just could not keep their relationship together after that.</td>
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<td>Scene 19</td>
<td>40-43 Frances’s apartment/Two weeks later</td>
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Frances is packing to go away on holiday (in fact to escape the present situation and her feelings of responsibility for what happened, and her disillusionment with her life). Brewer is present. He tells Frances he once wanted to help students the way she does, but decided it was arrogant for him to think he knew more about what was good for them than they did. He tells her that she is responsible for what happened to Denise and Trisha, because in telling them they should not be what they were, but not giving them a clear alternative, the only choice they had was for Denise to become a man because she thought that is what Frances wanted her to be, and for Trisha to despair, because her femininity, her only real image of herself, became something to be despised. Rosie arrives. Frances assails him for what he has said, so Brewer explains how he really feels. He tells Frances she sees herself as a “Joan of Arc”, but that something has gone wrong, and she has transferred her insecurity and pain to Denise and Trisha, and destroyed them by her “arrogant conviction” that their lives and choices are worthy of contempt. He says he hopes the other girls will resist and want nothing more than to be wives and mothers if that is what they want, because he sees so many “liberated women” with so much less (bitterness, self-hatred, and despair). Rosie tells him the story of her marriage, and her feeling during it that she never really did or had anything. She tells him that is because she had no real choices, that her life, like that of Trisha and Denise, was all mapped out, and that Brewer does not know what he is talking about. Brewer leaves. Frances says she is not certain that there is not some truth in all Brewer had said. At this point, the scene picks up and replays Scene 2. Frances concludes that she has been on the run from herself for
Scene 19

(See pages 44-47)

A three part scene. In the first part, Colin visits Frances, who has been relaxing, playing with her nieces and nephews, escaping from politics and the world. Colin is now involved with another woman, Sarah, and is quitting his job to make a television series on the 1926 General Strike. He asks if she thinks he should, going into a long speech on the pros and cons. She replies by calling him "Dear Peter Pan", commenting on his perpetual innocence. Colin goes in to make drinks. The second part of the scene, a flashback to Frances and Rosie at thirteen, commences. Their class difference is revealed: Rosie is working-class, Frances upper-middle. Frances and Rosie discuss nightmares centering on the atomic bomb, and their parents' hawkish reactions to the ban-the-bomb movement. Their liberal impulses are clear, as is their desire not to be like their parents. In lines that are a direct parallel of those of Trisha and Denise in Scene 12, Rosie asks Frances to promise that the two of them will always stay the same, and not, as Rosie's mother had told her, give up their teenage dreams. Frances does. The scene shifts back to 1975 for the third part, Frances announces she's going back to the city, that she has passed the point of no return, is going back to all the mess, and will try to remember what all the pain is for.

Scene 21

(See pages 47-48)

Trisha is working demonstrating calculators. Howard, drunk, comes up. He makes passes at her while playing with a calculator, all of which she deftly turns aside while demonstrating the calculators to him.
Teendreams

Scene 22  48-49  Park bench/1978

Denise and Colin on opposite ends of the bench, each with a pram and baby. Denise has had a baby out of wedlock to get a council flat and welfare benefits, but is apparently a very good mother, although she still steals. Colin is now teaching at a printing college while his wife works. Denise remembers him from his television show. Colin wishes he were as good a mother as Denise. She assures him she is certain he is.

Scene 23  49-50  Frances's apartment/1978

Rosie has taken the children to their grandmother's, and her divorce from Howard has become final today. Frances is now teaching foreign students English. She talks about a debate that had occurred in her class between a young Indian woman who wanted to work in an office, and her supporters, and mostly older women who were scandalized that she wished to work outside a home, saying she would disgrace her husband. Frances comments how cheered she was by the conversation. She and Rosie then prepare to leave for a night on the town, both clearly feeling very good about themselves. They go as the play ends.20

The structural summary of Teendreams reveals that the structure of the play is epic. The construction is certainly cinematic, ranging through ten years (fifteen, if the flashback in Scene 20 is included) and sixteen locations. It is also episodic, with each scene treating a significant moment in the development of the processes which control the structure of the play without regard to the smooth, causal development of the action. In addition, the play has a large number of discrete scenes, and the absence of any divisions except those into scenes makes

20David Edgar and Susan Todd, Teendreams (London: Eyre Methuen, 1979). All citations are from this edition.
it clear that the scene is the basic structural unit of the play. These elements, combined with the organization and selection of scenes around a developmental sequence, the process of disillusionment out of teenage dreams in Frances and Rosie, and in Trisha and Denise (as well as in Colin, although to a lesser extent), establish *Teendreams* as an epically structured play. The developmental sequence that controls the structure itself is related to the events or stages in the development of leftist political consciousness and action from 1968 to 1975, and the central characters generally represent types whose development is played out against the backdrop of those events (although the characters are, as Paul Allen pointed out, real and highly individual characters as well).  

That Edgar wishes that those events or stages be considered an important factor in the development of the characters and action of the play is made clear by the fact that, although Denise and Trisha do not participate directly in the action from Scene 3 (1968) to Scene 9 (1975), in which those developments and their effect on Frances and Rosie are examined, both are seen as victims of those developments by virtue of their effect on Frances, and her impact on the girls. Unfortunately, though the parallel between the disillusionments of Frances and Rosie, and Trisha and Denise, are clear and operate effectively in the play, the attempt to pull the two together and attribute them to a single cause is largely a failure, and mars the play significantly. Edgar fails to build a strong enough case for Frances, and her problems, being

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the cause of Trisha's suicide and Denise's violence, and thus fails to link the two lines of action into a common source. He tries to establish the link through a series of lines in three succeeding scenes.

In Scene 17, Trisha expresses her confusion about what she is to do, and what she has done, to Rosie. "You know perhaps she's right. The nurse. It isn't natural. A girl like me. So what else can I do?"

(p. 39) This comment is significant in light of what follows, as well as a comment made by Denise in her fight with Trisha in Scene 14.

"Miss Lockett (Frances) says it. Says that girls like you are just a waste of time." (p. 36) In Scene 18, Denise and Lynne attribute what happened to Denise and Trisha to the results of Frances's actions as well.

Lynne: No. And in my view, not very helpful, either. In my view, the way that you're behaving is completely understandable. It's natural, you should respond the way you have. Because you felt, I s'pose, the things your teacher said . . . You felt confused.

Denise: Confused. Oh, yuh. Confused. I don't blame her. The Lockup. What she said. Just, couldn't keep it. Trish and me. We couldn't keep it, safe and sealed. The outside world, came in on us. And bound to. (p. 40)

Although Denise does not lay the blame squarely at Frances's feet, "the world coming in" is clearly reality shattering her illusions or dreams; a reality brought by Frances. The final link is supplied by Brewer in Scene 19, when he explains to Frances his theory of what happened.

Brewer: And, you know, that what you've done, is you have taken from those girls their props, supports, the things hold up their lives, and given nothing in return. You told them that they shouldn't be their kind of person, and the only choice they had was, on the one hand, for Denise, become a man, be what she thought you wanted her to be, take on the toughness and aggression, the machismo, be a thug, a bully-boy; and, on the other hand, Patricia, cut off from her femininity, despise it, left with nothing but despair.

(p. 41)
Edgar then tries to use a speech by Brewer to establish that the roots of Frances's actions lay in the failure of her dreams of changing people and society in the years following 1968, and her consequent dis disillusionment.

**Brewer:** And what I do mean, Frances, is that frankly I don't think, for you, this business has a thing to do with those two girls.

**Frances:** You what?

**Brewer:** They're just a sideshow, and the star is you. And, no, I'm not going to presume to even try and guess at why you see yourself as Joan of Arc, what kink that is, what went wrong when, but the result has been that you've transferred your agonies and insecurities and pain on to two schoolgirls, and what's happened is that you've destroyed them by your arrogant conviction that their choices, what they've chosen as their lives, their interests, their dreams, are worthy of contempt. And I hope all the other girls, the Debbies and the Jackie's and the Jos, I hope if they want nothing more than to be wives and mothers, if they've chosen that, they'll realise that what you and your twisted sisters offer is a great deal less, because its content, despite all the rhetoric, is bitterness, self-hatred and despair. (Scene 19, pp. 41-2)

Although Rosie's succeeding speech, and the subsequent action of the play, do much to undercut (although not obliterate) the extreme negativity of the end of Brewer's speech, and his views on marriage and motherhood, the early section of the speech establishes a link between Frances's past and her present action. That link is reinforced by Frances herself a bit later in Scene 19, when she admits the depth of her discontent, drawing parallels between her experience and that of Trisha.

**Frances:** You know, when I was 15, I remember reading all those stories, in the magazines. Like she did, Trisha. And they haven't changed. Boys' hair, a little longer. Nothing more. And I used to think, like Trisha did, that when I met him at the candy store, and when he whispered sweet nothings in my ear, and when we walked off hand in hand into the sunset, that in that very moment, suddenly
my whole life changed. But still, the thing was, I did
know, p'haps unlike Trisha, deep down, that the whole she-
bang was so much shit. It wouldn't last. The blissful
moment was, by definition, just momentary. But when I
was 19, and went to college, 1968, the dawn in which of
course 'twas bliss to be alive, and when I met him at the
demo and he whispered sweet and secret dialectics in my
ear, and when we walked off hand in hand into the sit-in,
and in that very moment, suddenly my whole life changed.
.. I thought it had. And, even more, I needed to believe
that tatty teenage fantasy was going to be a blueprint
for The Changing of The World. You know? And I have
spent the seven years since then pretending that that,
need, was actually a rational decision. Trying to con-
vince myself I'd woken up, one morning, had a glance into
the mirror, and decided, seen that all of history's the
struggle of the classes, fancy that, that capital creates
the means of its own overthrow, of course, that, well I
never, there appears to be this contradiction between the
social methods of production and the private ownership of
capital, well, glory be, and all those, rational cosme-
tics, smeared in layers across that sad and lonely, des-
perate little face that I had seen, that morning, in the
mirror. Blueprint. Change the world. In fact, a blue-
print to escape the world. And me, And I've been on the
run, from me, this seven years, and now at last I'm going
to turn me in. (pp. 42-3)

Unfortunately, despite this series of comments and speeches, ending in
Frances herself generally accepting Brewer's premise that her discon-
tent is the root cause of what happened to Trisha and Denise, and her
establishing the source of that discontent in the process of change in
herself and the leftist movement traced in Scenes 3-9, Edgar fails to
demonstrate adequately in the action of the play that Frances is really
the cause of what happened, despite her unhappiness and the shattering
of her dreams. There are only two moments in the action of the play
when Frances makes any comment which could lead to Trisha and Denise
questioning their values and lives. In Scene 10, Frances tells them,
"Well, I ... I like a man who treats me as a human being, lets me be
independent, and who knows how to wash his own socks. I mean, come on,
you can't seriously think that any real person's going to talk like
that? (the romantic language of pulp magazines)" (p. 27) Her other
comment is made to Denise alone, in Scene 12. "Because I think you
shouldn't take all that (the crude suggestions made by teenaged boys).
Because I think that that's a waste of you. I think you've got a better
life, a life of your own," (p. 31) These comments are the extent of
Frances's criticism or attempts to change the lives of Trisha and
Denise as seen in the play. During their fight, Denise tells Trisha
that Frances thinks she is a waste (Scene 14, p. 36), but there is no
evidence that this is anything other than a lie. Moreover, there is no
strong link or affection established between Trisha and Denise, and
Frances, which would suggest that anything Frances did or felt could
drive Trisha to suicide, or affect their behavior in any really mean­ing­
ful way. At the end of Scene 10, although they appreciate her treat­
ment of them, there is unresolved suspicion of Frances.

Trisha: She's nice.
Denise: She is?
Trisha: Think so. Don't you?
Denise: Dunno her game.
Trisha: Perhaps she hasn't got one.
Denise: They all got a game. (p. 27)

After Frances has left Denise in Scene 12, and Trisha has entered,
Trisha tells Denise, "I like the Lockup. Mean, she's really smart.
Them's Lotus shoes." (p. 31) Denise and Trisha then converse about
their worries of being shallow and lacking character (Trisha), and
being unattractive (Denise), but the only reference to anything Frances
has said or done comes when Denise reports to Trisha that Frances had
"Talked about wasting . . . . Said I got, life of me own." (p. 31) (It
is interesting to note that Trisha's worry is derived from something said by Brewer, not Frances, indicating that Trisha is not looking to Frances strongly for guidance or approval.) Beyond these few comments there is nothing in the play to suggest any deep attachment of either of the girls for Frances; any relationship that would allow Frances or her opinions such a sway that she could deeply affect the lives of the two young girls. Hence, laying their disillusionment or despair at Frances's feet directly, and indirectly at the changes in the leftist movement from 1968 to 1975 via their impact on her, and the disillusionment occasioned there, despite all the talk in the play, is an unconvincing source for Trisha and Denise's actions, and a vital link in Edgar's structural design of the play is thus broken. There is simply no concrete or convincing evidence that Frances, or the shifting radical movement through her and her discontent, have, or could have, had any real effect on Trisha and Denise. Though parallel processes of discontent function in the play between Frances and Rosie, and Trisha and Denise, successfully establishing the point that teenaged dreams are bound to be broken up by reality, the attempt to attribute them to a common source is a failure, and weakens the play. As Catharine Itzin comments:

But the treatment of the material had more in common with Love Story and West Side Story than with Edgar's Destiny or Monstrous Regiment's SCUM. The audience were asked to question the convictions of left politics over the past ten years without the substance to warrant that questioning. It was not obvious how—or why—the heroine/teacher's relationship with her teen-age students tipped them to suicide and vandalism; the reasons suggested in the play—a need for consumerist props and romantic fantasy, without which they had no identity—were presented too glibly to be truly credible. The tone, too, was of unbalanced bleeding-heart feminism—all "woe is woman and what a rotten world with all those
beastly men". But one of the pitfalls of experimentation is the occasional right to fail.22

Edgar's failure to integrate adequately the two basic movements in the play results in the second of those two movements, the story of Trisha and Denise, becoming unclear and poorly developed, with a consequent weakening of the drama. This weakness is the result of a problem Edgar anticipated in the writing of the play. As he explained in an interview with Clive Barker and Simon Trussler:

_Teendreams_ has been the first play in which I've written the story, and at present it is huge and sprawled. It'll come out neater, . . .

The central event concerns a teacher, an interfering busybody left-wing teacher, and her influence over two girls who are best friends, and whose way of living in the world, like a lot of working-class girls, is through an exaggerated and watertight culture of femininity, epitomized in something like _Jackie_ magazine. What the teacher does, recognizing that one of the girls is clearly rather brighter and raunchier than the other, is to split them up, and the alternative to the culture of femininity for the other girl is to become a man—to become aggressive, a bully, and so on. And it is pointed out by a right-wing teacher to the left-wing woman teacher that, in fact, what she has done by splitting up these two girls is to knock away the props that hold up their lives.

If certain people were writing the play, it would stop there, but then I do try and look at the way in which if you moved through that and beyond that point you can find hints of the possibility of alternative ways of developing. They are only hints, but it seems to me that as artists we do have to be open to admitting the possibility of that kind of complexity.23

In light of Edgar's comments, it becomes clear that, given the framework, particularly the length and scale available to him (the play was written for a touring company), Edgar attempted to do too much in the play. In order to suggest alternatives by tracing the stories of Frances and, especially, Rosie, it was necessary for him to sacrifice clarity and

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22Catharine Itzin, _Stages in the Revolution_, p. 278.

explicit exposition and development of the relationship between Frances and the schoolgirls (to say nothing of Brewer, the right-wing teacher, who unaccountably is present in Frances's apartment in Scene 19 as she is packing to go away, despite the fact that she does not have the sort of relationship with him that would suggest that he could ever visit her in her home). Had he written a somewhat longer play, Edgar could have included scenes developing and making clear the relationship between the girls and Frances, and how Frances's disillusion contributes to what happens to Trisha and Denise, as well as developing a fuller sense of alternatives to the options and behavior present in the play. Certainly, the epic structural mode which he adopted in the present play could have been expanded to accommodate such objectives. Instead, Edgar tried to cram too much into the frame of his play, and as a result he sacrificed clarity and comprehensibility, indeed believability, in what was to be the central action of his planned play (the relationship between Frances and her pupils), and lost the ability to clearly and fully develop that prong of the two lines of action which dominate the play as written. The result is a reasonably clear, but sketchy, development of the disillusionment of Rosie and Frances, but an unclear and unconvincing rendering of the disillusionment of Trisha and Denise (because it is not satisfactorily explained), and of the relationship between the discontent of Frances and the leftist movements of the early 1970s and the fates of the two girls. That being the case, it is clear that the problem in the play lies not in the use of epic structure to present the materials of the drama, but in Edgar's failure to expand the structure and the play to develop adequately all his concerns with
the clarity and precision necessary to develop the complex matrix of
of relationships and lines of action present in Teendreams. Rather
than using the cinematic and episodic construction techniques available
in epic structure to show dramatically critical points in the develop-
ment of the relationships and processes, Edgar has characters talk about
them without enough real, dramatic proof of their truth (this is true
even in the line of action centering on Rosie and Frances from 1968 to
1975). The result is a weaker play than it might have been because of
a failure on Edgar's part to take full advantage of the opportunities
afforded him by epic structure.

Because of Edgar's failure to account adequately for the causes of
Trisha and Denise's disillusionment and action, it is not useful to try
to trace the developmental process that controls the selection and
arrangement of scenes in that section of the play. The selection and
arrangement certainly is not random, and narrates a story and allows
the parallels between the fact of disillusionment from teenage dreams
in the two pairs of women to be clear. However, the underlying factors
in the control are absent or represented so weakly as to be insignifi-
cant, and it is possible only to speculate on what scenes/events might
have been necessary to fill it out adequately. On the other hand, it
is possible to trace the process of disillusionment in Rosie and Fran-
ces with more, albeit not complete, surety. Several significant stages
in the development are discussed by the characters in retrospect rather
than being clearly seen, but enough action is seen for those accounts to
be credible and effective in filling in the missing pieces. The major
portion of this developmental sequence is represented in Scenes 3-9, in
which Edgar traces the action up to the beginning of the material dealing with Trisha and Denise. In this section, the action involving Frances and Rosie is played out against the background of shifting developments in the leftist politics of the period. Specific events which actually occurred during the years from 1968 to 1975 are not represented; rather, it is the general tone which is present, and plays an important background role in explaining developments in the lives of Frances and Rosie. Frances and Rosie represent two types of people who moved through that time: Frances, the involved leftist who moved into feminist concerns slowly through her involvement with radical causes; Rosie, the housewife who came to feminism out of disaffection with her life. This movement toward specifically feminist stances and concerns, a movement which split the left-wing forces of the period and reduced their effectiveness in all but consciousness-raising activities, is one of the movements reflected in this line of action in the play. The other is the progressive disillusionment of Rosie and, especially, Frances, as their teenage dreams are broken down and dissolved in confrontation with reality. These two movements occupy portions of the work from Scene 3 to Scene 20, with the intruding structure of the action dealing with Trisha and Denise excepted except where Frances’s reactions to Trisha’s suicide lead to self-examination and motivate her retreat. The final scene of the play functions as a coda to these movements, showing the women three years after Frances resolves her problems enough to return to the city, but not tracing the process by which she and Rosie came to the healthy and happy (it would seem) end they arrive at in Scene 23. This line of action in the play is thus one which is
primarily concerned with forms of disillusionment and their connection to shifts in the radical movement and the growth of feminism over the seven years preceding 1975.

The first scene in which this line of action is pursued is Scene 3, which occurs during the student unrest of 1968, before the radical and feminist causes had diverged. This scene establishes two points. First, it establishes that Frances's involvement with radical politics is primarily romantic; i.e., based in a romantic notion of the meaning of revolutionary activity and an unrealistic assessment of the situation and chances for success in changing the world. Toward the end of the scene, after her lover Colin has gone out to speak to the crowd and risk arrest, Frances says to Ruth, "Magic. I mean, it's magic. Mean, you read the history, the Paris Commune, Russian Revolution, mighty moments, everything is changed. But for it to be happening now. To see it. Be it. And for me, to be with it, me, to be happening, too." (p. 11)

Frances romanticizes an apparently insignificant and not-very-well organized student sit-in protest into an earth-shaking, historical event of the magnitude of the Commune or Revolution. Her unrealistic attitude and assessment is shared by Colin and most of the other radicals. Ruth, however, introduces a second, sobering notion into the scene; one which will eventually contribute to the splintering of the feminist movement from the radical movement, an event symptomatic of the fragmentation of the left in general under the impact of the growth of special interests in the period. In reply to Frances's romantic statement, Ruth makes the following observation.
Ruth: It is indeed 1968. And everything's in question. Everything is new. We don't demand, we occupy, because the plastic culture's melting on the stove of history. So one does just wonder . . . Why the fuck we're still doing the typing and making the tea. (p. 11)

Ruth's observation that the left is still an essentially male-dominated movement, with women in subservient roles little different from capitalist culture, introduces one of the factors which will split the left in the years to come. In fact, in Scene 5, the first results of the split can be seen. Frances and Colin, still involved in the radical mass politics of the period, come, in 1972, to ask Ruth and her group of squatters to participate in a rally against the Tory Rent Act. Ruth refuses, and she and one of her fellows, Tony, provide several reasons which are symptomatic of the causes for the breakdown of the organized left into groups with more restricted, sometimes conflicting, interests. Ruth rejects their overtures for two reasons: that they are not addressing really important issues, and that the organized left is sexist.

Colin: About the meeting—
Colin: Why?
Ruth: Oh, I just don't think it's of much concern to us.
Colin: But of course it's of concern—
Ruth: Otherwise, you'd be discussing wife-battering, and instead of big guns from the N.U.M. and Parliament, you'd have a woman on the platform.
Frances: That is why we're here. We obviously think that women should be mobilised. That's why we're here.
Ruth: They should be mobilised.
Frances: That's right.
Ruth: Them forming, half the working class,
Colin: Of course.
Ruth: The bottom half.
Colin: Indeed.
Ruth: You having, as it were, the big guns, us the numbers. So. A token pussy on the platform. Add a little feminist appeal. Attract the cannon fodder. (p. 14)

To Ruth's rejection and objections are added those of Tony, one of her
companions, who makes the point that the leftist leadership and its marxist ideology is arrogant and out of touch with the working classes. This point is made after Frances tries to defend the meeting by asserting that individuals cannot be helped or liberated until society is changed, a common argument against small, independent, single-issue action groups.

Frances: This meeting's about housing. It's about taking on this Tory Government. It's about continuing, what started with the miners and the fight against the Industrial Relations Bill. And I personally don't think it's possible, to emancipate our sex, without emancipating the working class. I don't think you can just change your lifestyle and the rest follows. I don't think you can change the insides of people's heads without changing what's outside them first.

Anne: Hey, Ruth, does she mean we're going to have to wait until after the revolution?

Ruth: I think that's right, Anne. After which, of course, the family and all its works just melt away.

Anne: You mean, like Engels thought, when women went to work, and had a boss, that male supremacy would just, kind of, collapse?

Ruth: That's right, whereas in fact, of course, what's happened is that working women have two jobs, one paid, one unpaid, and two bosses, one at work and one at home.

Colin: Well, I think that's oversimplified—

Tony: You know, what really gets right up my nose about Fred Engels?

Colin: No?

Tony: It's that his view of my lifestyle was summed up in the phrase "degrading and perverted". And what really does extend my nostrils about blokes like you, is when you say my way of living's alienating to the working class, it doesn't strike you that the working class is fucking alienating to me. (pp. 14–5)

This exchange is symptomatic of the split which developed in the left during the early 1970s between relatively doctrinaire marxists, such as Frances and Colin in this scene, whose primary objective was to change society en masse, and those splinter groups who wanted to focus on single issues and attempt to bring about some immediate change in situation,
consciousness, or life-style. This tactical and philosophical split was bitter, and weakened the left, making it less effective; one of the factors which probably operates to disillusion Frances, although such a step is never made explicit in the play. In this scene, however, Frances is basically committed to the marxist, not feminist, cause, as her final speech of the scene, after Ruth has left, makes clear.

Frances: What, uh, to coin a phrase, gets up my nose is the assumption that if you don't happen to agree with every word, you're a secret rapist. Or an aspirant rapee. I mean, I'm not opposed to the demands, I mean of course there should be equal pay and free abortion. I just do find it difficult, to take that seriously a group of people arguing that the Queen's exploited by her footmen and her stable boys. (p. 15)

Frances articulates her basic committment as being directed toward working-class revolution, not feminism or small-group politics, in this scene. However, in the next scene in which she appears, Scene 6, a couple of months later, it is clear that the scope of her concern and activity is shrinking from national revolution to the specific concerns of labor union politics and a feminist proposal on establishing nurseries.

While Frances is engaged in radical politics, Rosie is married to and begins a family with Howard. Their marriage is represented in Scene 4. The entire scene is a monologue of jokes delivered at the reception by the best man, and is intended primarily to set a tone of middle-class marriage and life against which Rosie's later development can be measured. Into the scene, however, intrude two portents of things to come. One is a telegram from Frances, which reads, "Don't forget your promises love Frances." (p. 12) This suggests that there might be in Rosie
some commitment which will not be satisfied with existence as a house-
wife and mother. This notion that there might be trouble beneath the
surface is reinforced at the end of the scene. After smiling automatic-
cally throughout the scene, a spotlight is isolated on Rosie, who, al-
though continuing to smile, shuts her eyes, suggesting the possibility
that either her "teendreams" have been fulfilled, as those of Frances
seemed to be fulfilled in Scene 3, or that some tension lies beneath
her relationship to Howard and the event. Her subsequent appearance in
Scene 6 suggests that, in the short term, the former explanation might
hold. In this scene, she fixes, with incredible efficiency in a com-
pletely furnished kitchen, three meals simultaneously, and is fresh and
ready to greet Howard, and his gifts, with a kiss on his arrival home.
The scene is a pantomimic parody of the ideal housewife and her day,
and is played against a conversation on the phone between Frances and
Steve on labor union matter which, though it speaks of her continuing
commitment, demonstrates its shrinking scope. In Scene 7, a women's
consciousness-raising session set in 1975, significant shifts can be
seen in Rosie’s attitude and life. Although she is reticent during
most of the scene, when Ruth speaks of women at home quietly going out
of their minds, Rosie's interest rises. Ruth tells of a woman who
cooks five meals a day, all day, to satisfy the varying tastes in her
family. Ruth drops the subject temporarily as other issues are dis-
cussed, but Rosie asks her to return to it at the end of the scene.

Rosie: I'd like—I'd like to know. Bit more about the woman cooks
five meals a day.
Ruth: You mean, 'bout who she—
Rosie: Why she does it. How a person could. That endless, mind-
less toil,
Ruth: Well, S'pose. She hasn't got a life. Life of her own. She's stored it, packaged it out, between her husband and her children. And she does it well. Her life is comfortable. Painless. Tranquil. Numb. (pp. 18-9)

This story is very meaningful to Rosie, and touches on the pain in her life, as later speeches indicate. The vacuousness of the woman's life corresponds to something in her own, as her climactic speech in the play, that one which summarizes her experience, makes clear.

Rosie: When I was 19, I was asked to this wedding. And at the reception afterwards, met Howard. We stood near each other, giggled at the speeches, drank the fizzy wine. And then he asked me to go out with him, and I said yes, so out we went, and then he asked, well, in a month or so, if I would be engaged to him, and I said yes, and so engaged we were, and then before I knew it I was being asked if I would love and honour and obey, and I said yes, and love and honour and obey I did, and shortly after that I must have stopped the pill, cos I had Damion and three years later I had Sophie, complications and my tubes tied up, and I do not recall, throughout that happy fairy tale, one single, solitary choice at all. I never chose to get engaged. Be married. Have my children. I was chosen. . . . Now, you will know the concept of the Deja Vu. The feeling, I've done this, been here before. It's quite disturbing. Even more disturbing is the feeling that I had, from time to time, throughout my happy fairy life, a feeling in the night-time, in the darkness, of Non Deja Vu, a sense of loss of something that I should have been, but hadn't, sense of never really doing, never thinking, anything; a sense of being thought and being done. Which you will doubtless find it hard to understand. Because, although there's a limit to your choices, you can choose and map your life. Whereas, my life, and Trisha's, and Denise's, aren't like yours, because they are not mappable. They're mapped. So don't you (this is addressed to Brewer) talk to me, to Frances or to them, about free choice. Cos, on that score, dear Nick, you just don't know you're born. (Scene 19, p. 42)

The absence of options and meaningful action in Rosie's life are slowly driving her mad, making her as numb as the woman who cooks five meals a day, and so, when Howard mistreats her for being late home from her consciousness-raising session (Scene 8), she suddenly leaves him and her
way of life and moves in with Frances (Scene 9). Her dreams of being a happy wife and mother have crumbled under the drudgery and meaningless-ness of that existence. The full process is not represented in the play, but the combination of the pantomime in Scene 6, her interest in the story of the suburban wife in Scene 7, and her speech in Scene 19 combine to make clear the general shape and process of Rosie’s disillusionment. Scene 7 is also significant in tracing the developments in the leftist movements into the mid-1970s, particularly when combined with comments and actions in Scene 9, which takes place the same night. The disputes between Ruth, who insists on focussing on consciousness-raising activity, and Maria, who wants demonstrations in favor of nurseries and abortion, as well as a debate between Sandra and Maria over the abortion issue, are indicative of rifts in the women’s movement by 1975. Comments by Frances and Colin in Scene 9 indicate that small-group political activity had not only become respectable on the left, but even dominant, and that the women’s movement in particular had gained acceptance.

Colin: I used to be very suspicious of all that.
Rosie: All what?
Colin: Oh, small group politics. In fact, the Women’s Movement. Fran will tell you.
Frances: Fran will tell you.
Colin: Yes, I mean, I used to think it was, just therapy. Trying to find individual solutions to problems that were essentially collective. I think, in fact, it was a kind of reaction, to the sixties, you know, all that free your head stuff, and we all reacted very strongly, in the opposite direction, kind of bend the stick, particularly with the Tory government, with the revival of industrial militancy, and so on. But I think that was a great mistake, or anyway, mistake to keep that kind of prejudice. Because the kind of politics the Women’s Movement’s into, small group, consciousness, particularly, I think, the concern with raising consciousness, can make a major contribution to the wider struggle, as a whole. . . . (p. 21)
In the seven years since 1968, the left had fragmented into small
groups, and the marxist emphasis on collective action of the early days
had given way to small-group politics centered on narrow issues and con-
sciousness raising. However, the movement away from the radical com-
mittment of the early days has not been without cost, as Frances makes
clear in comparing and contrasting Colin and herself. From virtually
identical political lives in 1968, they have now diverged, and Frances,
at least, has lost some of her real commitment as disillusionment set
in.

Frances: It's just . . . That Col is Peter Pan. He doesn't alter.
Oh, the words, the ideas even, change. I mean you heard
him, and I may say his attitude to feminism in the early
days, the half he did not tell you, but he . . . Under-
neath it all, he's still the little boy who got arrested
at the sit-in and was marched off, all white-faced and
brave, to jail.

Rosie: He went inside?

Frances: One night. Then he got fined a hundred and we raised it
and they let him go. Not that it wasn't brave, in its
way, quite brave . . . But always, on his terms. And
never, if it threatens anything, inside. And what is even
worse, is that I look at him, his busyness, routine, un-
changing and unbending energy, the lack of any kind of
pain or challenge, and I see myself. See Me. (Scene 9,
p. 23)

While Colin retains his marxist romanticism, or at least does not see
through it enough to abandon it, Frances has seen through it and her-
self, and the dream has crumbled, as her long speech in Scene 19 makes
clear. Speaking about a month later than Scene 9, after Trisha's sui-
cide attempt, Frances talks about a lack of pain or challenge in her
political activity; however, she makes it clear that in her life she is
as pained as Rosie in the process and fact of her disillusionment. (See
pp. 392-3) Rosie describes the feeling.
Rosie: I feel as if I've been asleep. A soft-down slumber. All these years. Faint voices, in the distance, through the doze. Half-heard. The world outside. And then to wake up, find yourself, the middle of a nightmare, carnage all around, bits of your body ripped up on the bed... You want to shut your eyes again, turn over, pull the blankets tight. You can't. But it's not marvellous. (Scene 9, p. 21)

Consequently, it can be seen that in the cases of both Frances and Rosie, through a succession of three or four steps (scenes) in Scenes 3-9, Edgar sketches the process of disillusionment from their teenage dreams to significantly pained adults of about twenty-five. He does this by concentrating on a few moments which are both typical and crucial, and then explaining, amplifying, and commenting on the process in Scenes 9 and 19. In Rosie's case, her dreams of motherhood and happiness as a wife begin in the romance and happiness of her marriage and home-making. However, she progresses into a routine and vacuous existence of cooking and keeping house, then a realization of the meaningless of her life, and finally to a rejection of it, however painful that might be. In the case of Frances, her romantic dreams are centered in her political activity, and the belief that a marxist program can and will change the world. Her disillusionment is played out against the background of the political shifts which occurred from 1968 to 1975. From the full-blown, large-group, marxist activism, unity, and optimism of 1968, she sees that romantic vision of a new society faltering by 1972, when the left had begun to splinter into smaller groups with narrower concerns, a movement in which much of the energy and vitality began to be drained from the radical cause. She herself is caught in that movement, and involves herself heavily in union politics (Scene 6). By 1975, she has
realized the emptiness and futility of her vision and hopes, at least on anything much larger than a personal scale, and both begins to see the hollowness of her dreams and to disengage herself from a high level of political activity (in Scene 9, she refuses to rise early and collect leaflets for the union from a train; p. 22). After Scene 9, Edgar drops the line of action centering on the shattering of the teendreams of Rosie and Frances to concentrate on the story of Trisha and Denise. However, he returns to it in Scene 19, in which, as was discussed above, he tries to summarize this line of action in long speeches by both women describing how their dreams were found false and empty, and broken, and to tie together the two parallel processes represented in the experience of Rosie/Frances and Trisha/Denise. At that point, Rosie's story is essentially complete. However, that of Frances is continued in Scene 20, a scene which sees the return of hope, and the beginning of adjustment and regeneration. At the end of Scene 19, Frances quotes St. Paul while commenting on the loss of childhood dreams and the necessity of giving such dreams up when, as she feels, they have been proven wrong. "Now, how's it go. When I was a child . . . I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when . . . I can't remember how it ends. Something about, you grow up, and you can't be childish any more." (p. 43) In Scene 20, just before the flashback, she remembers the next portion of the quotation. "When I became a man, I put away childish things. (She laughs) Oh, dear. Again. An axiom that seems not to apply." (p. 45) In the flashback, she remembers that her commitment to fairness and social justice predated her romantic involvement with Marxist politics and Colin. As the flashback ends,
after the thirteen year old Rosie and Frances have discussed the bomb and never changing, Frances gestures around the terrace of her parents' home (she is wealthy, Rosie is not), and comments, "Oh, just look. Not bloody fair." (p. 46) Remembering that incident somehow helps to free her, and take on a more realistic perspective in which her commitments to social justice are not bound up in romantic dreams that can be broken. Her fundamental values are found to be sound; it is only the vehicle in which they have been bound that is unhealthy. She tells Colin, "So. Back. To all the mess and muck and guilt and failure and missed opportunity. Remembering, perhaps, occasionally, what all that pain is for: So what else can I do?" (p. 47) Frances is able to harmonize her dreams and her life, to incorporate them into her adult reality so that she is not disillusioned or pained by the juxtaposition of her hopes with reality. That she makes a successful adjustment, as does Rosie, is seen in the final scene of the play, Scene 23, in which the two women are leading well-adjusted and happy lives, and are going out together to "have a great time." (Scene 23, p. 50) Frances in particular is now teaching English to foreign students, and taking what steps she can to help others and improve society, and being happy in it.

Frances: My class? Oh, rather good. Was on to using the conditional. Sentences with "if", with wants and wishes. And Indira Joshi said, "I wish I could learn English very good, so I could get work in an office." That's her big thing, working in an office. And, of course, it started an almighty row. Some of them were scandalised, the older women, specially. How terrible, disgrace, her husband would be so ashamed. But some supported her, the money, and the pride. I've never heard them get like that before. I left them to it, at it, still. It cheers you up. That kind of thing. (p. 50)

By the end of the play, Rosie and Frances have overcome their
disillusionment (as have Trisha, in Scene 21, and Denise, in Scene 22), and have adjusted to their lives. As Edgar says, "They both look, for the first time in the play, completely how they feel. Which is good." (Scene 23, p. 50)

As is typical in plays in which epic structure is used to dramatize a process, in Teendreams David Edgar used the structure to isolate a few significant points for presentation, ignoring insignificant points along the way. Unfortunately, although the first of his two lines of action which control the organization of the structure is represented in sufficient detail for its general outline, if not specific development, to be clear, the second of his two chains of development is not developed sufficiently. As a result, it is not clearly comprehensible in terms of the relationships and connections between cause and effect that Edgar hoped to demonstrate: it is not convincingly or believably constructed, motivated, and rendered. This is a major flaw in the play. It makes a good deal of the action of the play less than fully believable or comprehensible: both by virtue of the fact that the plot line involving Trisha and Denise is weak and unclear, and because the intrusion of that plot line makes the treatment of Rosie and Frances's stories only marginally successful, complete, and clear. This flaw is the result of Edgar's failure to utilize fully and take advantage of the traits and opportunities of epic structure. The play serves, however, as an adequate example of how a background social situation or process can be traced and examined through a concentration on a few individual, but typical, characters in a fictional story. In Teendreams, characters such as Frances (middle-class radical and
romantic radical who becomes disillusioned), Rosie (suburban housewife who is radicalized by women's liberation because of the vacuous nature of her life), Ruth (radical women's liberationist split from the left), Colin (the radical who never quite loses his dream, despite his compromises), and Trisha and Denise (romantic, contemporary teenagers) typify the people of the period from 1968 to 1975, and what happened to many of them. Through the interplay of their lives and the social movements of the period (unsuccessfully rendered in the cases of Trisha and Denise, but adequately so in the cases of the others), Edgar was able both to chart the course of radical politics in the period and what happened to its adherents, and to show the perhaps inevitable process of disillusionment from romantic, teenage dreams, whatever they might be (by Scene 22, even Colin seems to have given up his revolutionary illusions for middle-class, albeit committed and liberal, life). In Female Transport, Steve Gooch attempted to do many of the same things as Edgar in Teen-dreams. However, Gooch is far more successful in blending his study of a process involving a group of typical individuals and in examining the background, in this case the structure and system of relationships present in a capitalist enterprise/class society, against which they operate and change.

Female Transport is about "the growing self- and class-consciousness of six working-class women convicts en route to exile in Australia in the early nineteenth century." The play is essentially a study of the growth of working-class consciousness and solidarity, and how the

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conditions and social relationships inherent in the exploitative, repressive, capitalist class society of the ship contribute to its development. The play is built around twelve scenes/incidents which occur in the approximately six months of the voyage from England to Australia, and represents points which are significant to the development of that solidarity. The chief controlling element in the structure of the play is the representation of a process and its development. However, a significant secondary controlling factor is the presentation of an analysis of the structure and mechanics of the society of the ship, an exploitative capitalist society which serves as a microcosm of capitalist society in general.

**Female Transport**

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Six women prisoners are brought aboard ship. They are: Nance, a political activist imprisoned for attacking a policeman during a demonstration; Charlotte and Sarah, pickpockets and former prostitutes; Winnie, a petty thief (shoplifting, pickpocket); Madge, an older woman (a lesbian as well who takes up with Pity) who ran an employment scam; and Pity, who became pregnant and was deserted by her lover, miscarried, and was arrested on her first day as a prostitute. Nance is nearly beaten when she talks back to the Serjeant, who, with Tommy, a young sailor on his first voyage, is in charge of this cell. Charlotte prevents it by starting a chant in which the other women join. The women are chained to their bunks, with three to a bed. Pity begs not to go; Madge begins to take care of her. Sarah jokingly makes up to Tommy. They discuss the trip to Australia, including the fact that on women’s ships the guards try to take advantage of the convicts sexually. They also discuss the risks of disease, including typhus, dysentery, small-pox, etc. The women insult one another, and are highly antagonistic. The scene serves to introduce the characters and alliances, and to provide factual/historical background for the action of the play.
Female Transport

Scene 2 11-12 Captain's cabin/Same as Scene 1

The Surgeon and Captain dicker over wages for the voyage. The Captain offers fifty pounds, the Surgeon holds out for 100 plus additional conditions. The poor state of convict transport is revealed: old boats, low pay, lack of officers and competent surgeons, etc. The scene ends without agreement on a salary for the voyage, but with the Surgeon charging five pounds for a pre-voyage examination of the prisoners, indicating that the Captain may be willing to sail, illegally, without a surgeon to save money.

Scene 3 13-26 Women's cell/Later that day

The women note Pitty (Kathleen's) resemblance to the prime minister, and razz her, upsetting her. The surgeon arrives and gives the women a medical check-up. There is a good deal of sexual by-play between the women at the Surgeon's expense. He explains to them his reasons for not coming on the trip, which are economic and philosophical (he views the convict trade as a capitalist war with the prisoners caught in the middle). There is still a fairly high degree of antagonism among the women, although it is reduced during a card game in which each woman introduces herself (or is introduced) and what crimes she is being transported for committing. Tommy arrives, bringing dinner and eating utensils, a tea-pot and tea. During the distribution of food, Nance steals potatoes from Sarah and Madge, making her immediately unpopular, particularly with Charlotte. Sarah makes up to Tommy, and he responds, Nance makes a plea for solidarity as their only hope for survival, but is undercut by her stealing of the potatoes. When the others point out that that is wrong (stealing others' food), she returns the stolen potatoes. A rivalry for leadership is nonetheless established between Nance and Charlotte. Tommy cons Winnie into becoming matron (she is responsible for the cleanliness of the cell) and distributes cleaning gear. Nance insults Tommy, but Sarah defends him. Winnie returns Tommy's knife to him, which Charlotte had stolen, chiefly because Tommy is young and innocent (his first voyage), and she and Sarah, at least, seem to have sympathy for him.
### Scene 4

**Page**: 26-28  
**Place/Time-Frame**: Deck/That night

Sarge and Tommy talk, Sarge filling Tommy in on the negative aspects of women’s ships, which he considers the worst. A streak of sadism is revealed as he talks. He also speaks of the ways the women can be exploited, and how to spot who can be manipulated, for sex, punishment, etc. He outlines the economic order on the ship, in which everyone is exploited and out for the most he can get. He ends the scene by explaining how he taps off the women’s rum ration to have extra for himself. The scene reveals the animalistic, corrupt, exploitative nature of the whole enterprise.

### Scene 5

**Page**: 28-39  
**Place/Time-Frame**: Women’s cell, at sea/A week or so later

Sarah is seasick throughout the scene, and the quality of food is much lower than in Scene 3. Nance and Charlotte fight throughout the scene, and Nance is generally antagonistic. Sarge seems to have picked out Charlotte sexually. When he arrives for inspection, Nance has spit on the floor in order to bully Winnie, and she has not cleaned it up (she is responsible for the cleanliness of the cell, and can get in trouble if it is not maintained). Tommy notices Sarah’s illness, and is sent to get the Surgeon, who has also been seasick. On seeing the spit, Sarge bullies Winnie into informing on Nance by threatening to place her on charge for not doing her duty. Nance attacks Winnie, and Sarge beats Nance. The women are unchained (on order of the Captain and Surgeon), and Charlotte immediately begins to attack Nance (they had previously been unable to reach one another), who is still down from Sarge’s beating. Madge prevents it from going too far, but Sarge overlooks it as a “favor” to Charlotte. Tommy and Sarge carry Nance out. The women make it clear to Winnie that she must choose which side she is on, encouraging her to give up the matron’s job. Surgeon brings a bottle of medicine for Sarah, but no more help because supplies and space for medical care are inadequate. Winnie tries to get Charlotte to play cards, offering a variety of inducements (including first crack at an affair with the Surgeon, which Charlotte asserts she already has). Tommy and Sarge return with Nance in a barrel; a restraining device which prevents her sitting or lying down. Nance and the women initially lark about it, putting on a
Female Transport

Scene 5  
"fashion show". Charlotte and Nance begin to come to terms with one another. The women try to help her with the barrel, but succeed only in giving her her pipe and taking some of the weight off it. The barrelling of Nance dissipates much of the tension between her and the group, and serves to bring them together. Tommy returns, apologizes to Nance for the barrel (he has protested to Sarge), and looks in on Sarah, who is better. The women chat about the men they want (Sarge), and encourage Tommy and Sarah, coaching Tommy to put his arm around and kiss her. He shyly puts his arm round Sarah as the scene ends.

Scene 6 39-41  Women's cell/Night, some days later

Tommy is in the cell, sleeping with Sarah (as well as Winnie and Charlotte, for it is three to a bed). Nance is still in the barrel. Sarge comes in to sleep with Charlotte. She tries to repel him, but forces his way into bed. She plays along until she can get him by the throat and pummel his stomach. He throws her off and runs from the cell, with Charlotte on his heels, shouting, "Rapist." Tommy sleeps through the whole incident.

Scene 7 41-42  Captain's cabin/A month or two later

Surgeon, Sarge, and Captain debate stopping at Capetown. The Captain refuses because it will cost him money. The Surgeon wants to take on fresh water and food, and let the women into the fresh air and sun. The Sergeant wishes to stop so he can, as the Captain explains, sell off supplies he has stolen from the prisoner's rations. The Captain absolutely refuses to stop, again citing economic reasons, and threatening to leave the two of them in Sydney after the voyage. The Surgeon traces the cycles of disease on the ship, demanding, if nothing else, that the excessive punishments end so no one is needlessly weakened. He and the Captain are on the verge of a major fight over the issue when the Sergeant interrupts, suggesting that the women be put to work in "a little light industry"; i.e., sewing shirts for sale in Sydney with the raw cloth that is aboard (which will bring a greater profit, particularly since they will be using what amounts to slave labor). He and the Captain strike a deal, fifty/fifty, over the objections of the Surgeon.
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Scene 8  Pages  Place/Time-Frame
43-56  Women's cell/A day or two later

Winnie, Sarah, Madge, and Pitty are returned to their cell after a shortened exercise period because a storm is coming in. Tommy quarrels with Sarah, and the rest of the women. Charlotte has gone to the library in place of exercise. Winnie taunts Sarah for Charlotte's reading and her approval of it, and Sarah taunts Winnie for her friendship with Nance. Nance is being flogged for insulting the Captain during exercise. There is a high degree of tension and short-temperedness among the women, and crew as well. Nance is brought in, badly beaten. The women rally behind her. Sarah attacks Tommy for assisting them, and Sarge yells at him for not being solidly behind him. Pitty is very upset by the flogging, and rebels against Madge, then begins to get hysterical. Winnie is left trying to cope with Nance and Pitty, as well as making tea. The women argue over caring for Pitty. Surgeon arrives to care for Nance. Women are angry with him for not preventing the flogging, a practice which frequently leads to death. Charlotte taunts him, in part over Sarge's having two teeth knocked out by Nance (a cause of her punishment) and his "sympathy" for them, which is totally ineffectual. The Surgeon points out how important the Serjeant is in the economic scheme of things in the fleet, and his even greater worth as the one who keeps everyone's heads on. They question his motives, and whose side he is on. Nance's comments, along with those of Winnie, indicate a growing revolutionary consciousness. Charlotte tries to get him to visit her at night, but the Surgeon merely leaves after giving instructions for Nance's care. The women argue after he has left. Sarge and Tommy appear, and explain that they will have the opportunity to make shirts in their spare time to give them something to do. Nance asks if they will be paid, but they will not be. Sarge is on the verge of leaving with no volunteers, when Madge agrees to do it, then Pitty, Sarah, and Charlotte. They try to justify their giving in to him, but Nance points out that they are being divided one by one. The storm hits. Water comes in, Pitty has hysterics, and they scream for help in fear. They suspect they have been deserted when no one answers initially, but Tommy explains that all hands are needed above for the storm. Tommy is hurt when a swell throws him off-balance. He and Sarah more or less reconcile. Sarah begins to vomit,
Female Transport

Scene 9

this time not from sea-sickness, but because she is pregnant.

56-57 Captain's cabin/A day or two later

Surgeon protests to the Captain about the flogging, threatening to report it, and demanding, as was earlier agreed, that he be consulted in all matters of punishment. The Captain orders the Serjeant to avoid extremes and consult the Surgeon formally, not because he has any real power, but to avoid further trouble.

57-65 Women's cell/Days or weeks later

Women awake to discover Pitty has hanged herself. Nance reveals she watched her do it, and let her. Tommy's behavior is quite matter-of-fact and crude, revealing how he has changed, coarsened, during the voyage. Charlotte finally hits him, and the women chase him out. Nance breaks out shouting that Pitty was killed by the Surgeon and crew. The women call out to report the body formally (to protect Tommy, who is not supposed to have been with them). Surgeon, Sarge, and Tommy come to cut down the body. Women point out that Pitty hanged herself with the shirts they were making for the Captain. Nance and Charlotte shout at the Surgeon and Serjeant, and accuse them of responsibility. Charlotte threatens to report them in Sydney. Winnie tries to break, escape, the mood by suggesting they play cards, but Nance insists that they dwell on what has happened, as it has pulled them together. Tommy arrives to fumigate the cell. He insults Nance, and Charlotte knocks him to the floor. All the women, even Sarah, rally behind her and against Tommy. At the end of the scene, tar begins to drip into the cell, melting in the heat. Nance uses the incident to assert the women's solidarity.

65-66 Captain's cabin/Days or weeks later

Because the Surgeon has threatened to submit a damaging report, the Captain has bribed him (the Surgeon has solicited the bribe) with twenty per cent of the proceeds from the sale of the shirts (all coming from the Sarge's and guard's share), as well as a job on the voyage home. The Serjeant protests, but relents when he is told to
Female Transport

Scene | Pages | Place/Time-frame
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(Scene 11) | to along or not be engaged for the return voyage, which would strand him in Australia. The Serjeant reports that they have sighted Sydney.

Scene 12 | 66-71 | Women's cell/Day or two later

Sarah, despite the concerns of the other women, asserts she will have her baby, even though she will probably never see Tommy again, and may not survive. The women briefly review the voyage. Tommy comes in, and tells Sarah he is going on the return voyage so that he can gather money and return to marry her. She gently discourages him, and he leaves hurt. The Captain comes in and delivers a speech to them glossing over the harshness and exploitation that have taken place on the voyage, informing them of their right to make complaints (and inviting them to complain to him so that he can "improve" conditions; i.e., mark them as troublemakers in his reports), and filling them in on some procedural matters. He also warns them about the sun, advising them to improvise some form of protection for their eyes against it. After he and Sarge leave, Winnie says she is going to report them. The women chat, their solidarity and sense of togetherness as a unit firm and clear despite the fact that shortly they will be broken up. The hatches are thrown open, and bright sun floods in. The women improvise hats from their pillows as the play ends.25

The structure of Female Transport is clearly epic. Although the play is restricted spatially to three locations, it takes in about six months over its twelve scenes. These scenes are the basic structural units in the play (there is no division into acts), and they are basically discrete, although several scenes function together to form small units of action in two cases: Scenes 1–4, on the preparations for the voyage, and Scenes 8 and 9, which involve Nance’s flogging and the

Surgeon's protest. Even here, however, only in the latter case is the relationship between scenes causal; i.e., what happens in Scene 8 (the flogging's aftermath) causes what happens in Scene 9 (the protest). In the former, what happens in a given scene does not cause what happens in the scene that succeeds it, maintaining the episodic construction that predominates in the play. The selection and ordering of scenes is controlled by two elements: a study of the operation of a capitalist, repressive society (an analysis of a condition or state), and the process of the growth of solidarity among the working-class members of that society; i.e., the women prisoners. Although there are a number of speeches or incidents which illustrate the operation of the oppressive, capitalist social system in scenes in which it is not the principle controlling factor structurally, this element makes its primary structural impact only in those scenes between the Surgeon, the Captain, and the Sergeant, where the mechanics of repression and exploitation are nakedly revealed. The growth of solidarity among the oppressed controls those scenes involving the women prisoners. The ordering of scenes is basically chronological; however, there is an intermingling of the two lines of development in the action. This increases the sense and nature of the play's episodic construction, as well as reflecting the development of the narrative, and is controlled by an interplay in which developments in the prison cell are counterpointed to those in the Captain's cabin to make points of the analysis clear. For example, in Scenes 5 and 8, concerns are expressed by the women about the quality and quantity of supplies.
Pitty: Why'n we get no fresh veg today?
Charlotte: Thass yer lot, sunshine. They're finished now.

(Scene 5, p. 28)

In Scene 7, the Surgeon confronts the Captain over the issue of stopping in Capetown for fresh supplies; a request which is refused entirely for economic reasons.

Surgeon: I think we should stop.
Captain: I'm sorry. I'm being paid seven pound ten a head for these girls. With a hundred and three heads, that's more than a thousand pounds. Over six months that's six pounds a day. Every day we're in Capetown I lose six pounds.
Surgeon: If you lose a life, you lose more.
Captain: I'm prepared to take the risk.
Surgeon: If we stop we can take on fresh water, meat and vegetables. They can get in the sun and the fresh air.
Captain: And a week later we'll be in the same condition we're in now. Except a week further from Sydney...
Sarge: There won't be much spare by the time we get t' Sydney.
Captain: Lack of spare depresses you does it sergeant.
Sarge: If we get 'eld up at all, sir.
Captain: We won't be.
Surgeon: I don't see how you can say that!
Captain: I know this ship!
Surgeon: Do you know the weather? The temperament of these women?
His guard?
Captain: I've got no money for extra supplies. All we've got to trade with are tools, tackle, and equipment. They need that in Sydney.
Sarge: They need everything in Sydney.
Captain: But not in Capetown. The price is lower, and if I claim for re-imbursement I won't see it till ten months from now, after the voyage home—which you two won't be on.

(pp. 41-2)

The juxtaposition of the women's expressed needs with the Captain's refusal to meet those needs for reasons of profit and loss serves to strengthen the condemnation of the uncaring and exploitative capitalist hierarchy. It can be seen that, while the structure of the play is controlled by two different concerns, those elements work in harmony in the structure of the play to produce maximum effect.
The controlling element dealing with the examination of an oppressive, capitalist society finds expression in five scenes (2, 4, 7, 9, and 11), and in five additional speeches or episodes in other scenes. The play demonstrates a relatively simple capitalist society, headed by the Captain, who owns the ship and runs it as a profit-making venture. Below him are a management level concerned with maintenance and supervision, represented by the Surgeon, and a lower management level, the foremen, so to speak, represented by Sarge and Tommy, whose function is the immediate supervision of the prisoners and the maintenance of order; a sort of company police. At the bottom of the rung are the workers, the prisoners, whose mere transport is a source of income, and who can be exploited for additional income if they will work (they can also, of course, be exploited by the guards sexually). The society is repressive, as the treatment of the women proves, and also exploitative, with each level exploiting those below it. This is even true of the Surgeon, who pretends to hold himself aloof from the cycle of repression and exploitation, but who eventually joins with the Captain, exploiting both the women and the guard when he solicits a bribe in return for his silence. This analysis is introduced at the end of the first scene, in a brief exchange between Charlotte, Nance, Madge, Winnie, and Sarah over the mandatory medical examinations.

Winnie: It's better now they got medicals.
Sarah: I ain' 'ad no medical.
Madge: None of us did.
Nance: We better 'ad then, 'adn't we.
Charlotte: Goin' a twist their arm, are yer? (p. 11)

This short exchange functions to introduce Scene 2, in which the Captain and Surgeon barter over wages. The Captain offers fifty pounds,
plus an additional ten for every month over six they are at sea, while
the Surgeon demands 100 pounds, plus twenty for every additional month.
It is mandated that the ship should have a Surgeon, as well as being
good sense, for the Captain receives a bonus for each prisoner who ar-
rives alive as an incentive for humane treatment and good conditions.
The Captain, however, is unwilling to engage the Surgeon at such a high
cost, and pleads lack of resources. One of his comments in his attempt
to persuade the Surgeon to accept a lower wage indicates the dismal con-
ditions found on the ship as costs are held down to maximize profit.
"Look, I've got a makeshift crew, a rabble of mercenaries for a guard,
no surgeon, and two days before we sail." (p. 11) The exploitative
nature of the whole enterprise is revealed in an exchange between the
two. When the Captain asks why another potential surgeon has not come
to be interviewed, the Surgeon replies:

Surgeon: He hasn't been paid for his last voyage. He's written to
the Navy board three times but there's been no answer.
Once he's at sea he won't be able to collect for another
year. If he dies at sea the Board saves a large debt.
He's staying in England till they cough up.
Can't they force him?

Captain: They're not really interested. In peacetime the Navy has
a surplus of surgeons. It's hard to find a use of them
and their market-value is low. So just as the Government
is dumping its surplus criminality in New South Wales now
America's no longer available, so the Navy's dumping its
surplus medical expertise on the ships that take it there.
The Transport Service has been getting us on the cheap.

Surgeon: They've also been getting me on the cheap. That's why they pre-
fer old boats. Till there's a disaster or a scandal.

(p. 12)
This interchange shows how exploitative the whole transportation operation is, with everyone trying to hold down costs and maximize savings or profit at the expense of the prisoners. The Transport Board and Navy take advantage of the buyer's market to exploit the Captain and Surgeon, they try to exploit one another, and each exploits everyone on the boat below them. It is almost a model capitalist enterprise, with everyone trying to make the most profit while expending the least capital, a situation which leads inevitably to the exploitation of everyone on the lower rungs of the social ladder. In any case, the Captain finally refuses to meet the Surgeon's fee for the voyage, and instead engages him to examine the prisoners for five pounds, apparently intending to sail without a medical expert. However, as is later revealed, he and the Surgeon, who need one another despite their mutual attempts at exploitation, come to an arrangement and the Surgeon joins in the voyage.

In Scene 3, two exchanges deepen the vision of repression and exploitation present in the society of the ship. In the first, the Surgeon explains the nature of the exploitation which underlies the transportation of prisoners.

Surgeon: The government declared war on rebellion in America and its bursting jails by investing in a new colony of thieves—not all of them in chains. So aggression became profit and the war spread. No one stands himself six months from civilization without a fight or a bribe. You're being pushed; your ship's captains, guards, and surgeons are being paid. And so the war goes on. Because the reasons that join also divide: the captains hurrying their cargoes to collect their fees; the guards bullying the cargoes into order; the surgeons botching them into health. You—the cargoes—rebel and are confined, flogged, and starved for your trouble. The surgeon patches, Caught in the cross-fire of a war without reason you can't expect humanity. It's an invidious and contradictory position. (p. 16)
The Surgeon's speech makes it clear that it is economic incentives that both lead men into the transportation business and to the conditions which prevail on the ships; conditions which he describes as war. Later in the scene, the way in which the ship's guard attempts to manipulate and divide the women to maintain order is introduced in a brief scene between Tommy and Winnie, although the payoff does not come until two scenes later. When Tommy distributes the tea and utensils, he asks who will make the tea.

Tommy: 'Oo's goin' a be Mum?
Winnie: Me.
Tommy: That makes you Matron then. From now on you collect an' supervise the distribution a provisions, Yer're also responsible for the tidiness and cleanliness a the cell.
Winnie: All that jus' fer makin' a cup a tea?
Nance: E's pulled 'is first fast one, en't yer, Tommy.
Tommy: They told me t' do it that way. Else no one'd volunteer, they said.
Winnie: They were right an' all. (p. 25)

By setting one of the women above the others and making her personally responsible for the cell, the guard gives her power and responsibility, setting her apart from her cellmates, and introducing the possibility of using her as a wedge, and even an enforcer, among the prisoners. The success of this maneuver is seen in Scene 5, in which Nance, unhappy about Winnie "selling out" and serving as matron, spits on the floor. Winnie refuses to clean it up. When the Serjeant arrives for inspection, he is able to bully Winnie into informing on the culprit with the threat of a black mark, even though Nance has already boasted to him that she did it.

Sarge: Whass this?
Nance: Whass it look like?
Sarge: 'Oo's is it?
Nance: Mine,
Sarge: You got spit on your floor, Matron.
Winnie: She did it deliber'ate.
Sarge: Did she now?
Winnie: T' goad me.
Sarge: (to Nance) Don't like takin' orders, eh?
Winnie: She's all right.
Sarge: Not if she spits on the floor she ain't. You goin' a report 'er?
Winnie: What for?
Sarge: Provocation, Deliberate.
Winnie: She spit, thass all. She knew I'd 'ave t' clear it up.
Sarge: You ain't though, it's my weekly inspection, there's spit on the floor an' you're responsible for it.
Winnie: No I ain't, she is.
Sarge: YOU'RE IN CHARGE.
Winnie: Oh.
Nance: You report me, Win, I'll do you good an' proper. I just about 'ad enough a this Matron crap.
Sarge: Intimidation now, is it?
Nance: Look, don' come that with me, shortarse. I know what you're up to, even if she don't. Either yer flog me or yer piss off out of it.
Sarge: D'you 'ear that, Matron?
Winnie: Yes, sergeant.
Sarge: Is that a way t' talk about yer senior jailor?
Winnie: I don't know.
Sarge: You ought a report 'er to me. Otherwise any benefits as might accrue from your office could be wiped out. (Pause) Yer don' wan' a black mark, do yer?
Winnie: No.
Sarge: Well then?
Winnie: She spat on my floor, Sarge.
Sarge: What yer say?
Winnie: She spat on my floor (Scene 5, pp. 32-3)

When Nance attacks Winnie for reporting her, Sarge takes the chance to beat Nance, with whom he has had previous run-ins, preparatory to bar-rolling her. By pressuring and threatening the matron, the guard is able to use the office to divide and control the women, exploiting their weakness and divisions, and desire for any break on the voyage or in Australia in their treatment or punishment, to keep them repressed.

The relationship between the lower controlling powers (Tommy and Sarge) and the women is explored in Scene 4, a conversation between the
two men. During this scene, Sarge explains to Tommy the advantages of having a matron, as well as what can be done with, or to, the women once their characters are known.

Tommy: 'Ad a flamin' great row while I was in there too.
Sarge: Thass why it's good t' 'ave a Matron, see. Keep 'em in line. Soon sorts that ol' nonsense out of 'em. Natural 'aters of authority they are. But when they're sorted properly, see, organised with a Matron, settled in, responsible for their own actions—character shows. Yer see 'oo's co-operative, 'oo's cantankerous, a randy little 'ore, a col' fish. Then yer pick 'em off.
Tommy: What for?
Sarge: Screwin', punishment, whatever yer fancy. They got a see 'oo's boss or our lives is misery. (p. 27)

Sarge explains the use of the matron as a tool to divide the women so that they can be "picked off", and also defines the basic nature of the guards' relationship to the women. The guards exploit the women, both sexually and, for sadists such as Sarge, for punishment as well (not to mention the possibility of using informers, etc., and controlling them and weeding out troublemakers through the matron system). They are even able to exploit the women economically by cheating them of rations, which the guards keep for themselves or sell in port at a profit. At the end of the scene, Sarge offers Tommy rum stolen from the women's rations: "It's their ration. We got our own, but keep their measures down a touch, we get some t' relax with." (p. 28) In Scene 7, the Captain accuses Sarge of holding down the women's rations so that excess supplies can be sold at a profit in Capetown: "So you can sell what you've creamed off the prisoners' supplies, I suppose." (p. 42)

It is clear that the relationship between prisoners and their guards is exploitative and repressive in all its aspects: sexually, economically (through stealing supplies and, as is later seen, their labor),
and as sources of prisoner control and information, via matrons, who can be pressured, and informers, to weed out troublemakers for punishment. However, as the Serjeant tells Tommy, their use of repression and exploitation is not the exception on the ship. It is the norm, and all those aboard are in it for what they can get out of it, regardless of who they must exploit or step on to get ahead. "It's what yer get out of it, en it. We're all on the make. Captain, Surgeon, Purser, First Mate. They make more'n me a course, but I ain' got their responsibility." (p. 27) Everyone on the ship functions in an exploitative relationship to the prisoners and those below them. The repression and exploitation is more immediate and apparent at the interface between jailors and prisoners, its nature clearer and more basic, but as this scene and others in the play demonstrate, all are caught up in the net of exploitative relationships inherent in capitalist societies.

The next scene controlled by this structural element is Scene 7, a portion of which was discussed above. In this scene, the strength of the impulse toward profit at all costs is demonstrated in two ways. First, the Captain refuses to stop at Capetown to take on fresh supplies because it will cost him money, even though he jeopardizes the health and lives of the prisoners in failing to do so.

Captain: Every day we're in Capetown I lose six pounds.
Surgeon: If you lose a life, you lose more.
Captain: I'm prepared to take the risk. (p. 41)

Later in the scene, the Captain enters into a deal with Sarge to exploit the prisoners' free labor to make a greater profit on cloth being carried to Australia by having them make shirts.
Sarge: Before you go into that, gentlemen, I was thinkin' a little light industry might be beneficial. If the women were kept busy workin', they might be less boist'rous. We got cotton aboard. Cloth. Needles.

Surgeon: What price are shirts fetching in Sydney, Sergeant?

Sarge: More'n raw cloth, sir, I know that.

Captain: I'll divide the difference with the Guard fifty-fifty.

Sarge: Very fair, sir.

Surgeon: You're bartering with their health!

Sarge: Oh no, sir. It's all in the mind, en it. (p. 42)

By having the prisoners convert cloth into shirts, without pay, their labor can be exploited to make the trip more profitable; just one more form of exploitation for those lowest on the social rung in the play. In Scene 8, the plan is implemented when Sarge offers the women the chance to make shirts in their spare time. Even though they will not be compensated, four (Madge, Pitty, Sarah, and Charlotte) agree. The women are aware of the exploitative nature of the activity, and are urged by Nance and Winnie to refuse. However, despite the fact that they will realize no profit or gain from their labor, they allow themselves to be exploited, virtually enslaved. The reasons for this are explained most incisively by Madge, although Sarah rationalizes that having needles and thread will make it possible for them to patch themselves up, as well as providing an opportunity for theft of the tools. Madge, when asked to explain by Winnie, tells them why she, and the others, have volunteered.

Winnie: What yer do that for?

Madge: Yer get bored.

Winnie: Thass nothin' new.

Madge: Always tear 'em up again after.

Charlotte: Yer won't though. They'll punish yer.

Madge: So what? I'm sittin' in a floatin' fuckin' birdcage. I'm underfed, me limbs are stiff, the conversation's pitiful an' I'm bored t' tears. They can't make it worse'n that. (Scene 8, pp. 52-3)
The deprivation and other inhuman conditions on the ship have, at least in part, broken the spirit of the women and their will to resist, and they knowingly allow the Captain and guard to exploit their labor for a change and some relief from the conditions; and perhaps for favorable treatment later on as well. The powers on the ship have exercised their repressive force (Nance has been flogged and beaten just prior to this sequence) to break down the women's resistance, and they can now be used to increase the ship's profit at no real benefit to themselves. They are nothing more than slave labor, and volunteer slaves at that.

Earlier in Scene 8, the Surgeon, when he arrives to treat Nance's flogged back, defines his place in the economic scheme of the ship, as well as those of the other's aboard.

Charlotte: She knocked the Sergeant's teeth out, didn't she?
Surgeon: It might've made my job easier if she knocked off the whole head. That would've saved me at least the work on the heads he's likely to knock off between here and Sydney. But then somebody would've asked me to fix his back on too. Heads are valuable, you see. The Captain's paid for not only every head that leaves England, as with the Second Convict Fleet, but a further four pound ten for every head that reaches Sydney. An incentive to be humane. The Sergeant's head, therefore, since he's paid to stop you knocking each other's—or even our—heads off, is worth perhaps the entire cargo.

Charlotte: An' whass your 'ead worth?
Surgeon: His and yours together, I suppose.
Winnie: 'Oo to?
Surgeon: The Captain. I'm paid to keep both on.
Winnie: What for? The fun of it? (Surgeon looks at her) What else is there?
Surgeon: You've heard of humanity, I presume.
Winnie: Sure. Only we're never included. (pp. 48-9)

The Surgeon's value to the ship in economic terms is defined as being very high, for it is he who can ensure the highest possible profit by making certain that the greatest number of prisoners survive the voyage.
This value places him in a position to exploit the others on the ship, including the Captain; a fact which is hinted at when Vinnie questions his motives late in the episode. The Surgeon's willingness to take advantage of his ability to exploit others for economic gain, throwing away his high-minded, but ultimately false, hollow, and hypocritical assertions of concern for prisoner welfare and humanity, is made manifest in Scenes 9 and 11. In Scene 9, he protests to the Captain about the flogging, demanding that it be stopped, and threatens to make a report to the Commissioner in Sydney; a report which could be very harmful to the Captain. In Scene 11, he actually succeeds in utilizing his power to exploit someone on the journey. However, instead of taking directly from the Captain, his attempt at blackmail nets him twenty percent of the profits from the sale of the shirts, all taken from the guards' share. He and the Captain are able to conspire to exploit, to betray, the guards in this way because the Surgeon can report Sarge's abuse, placing him in jeopardy, and the Captain has the power to refuse to take the Sergeant back to England on the return voyage, introducing the possibility that he will be stranded in Australia.

Captain: I told him that since he was present at the decision to have the women make shirts, it was only reasonable he should receive a percentage of the proceeds from their sale.

Sarge: 'Ow much percentage?

Surgeon: Twenty.

Sarge: Ten from each of us?

Captain: I'll get fifty. You'll get thirty.

Sarge: We agreed equal shares!

Captain: The situation's changed.

Sarge: Why should I suffer? It's you 'oo wants 'is mouth shut, not me.

Captain: You come off even worse in his estimation than I do. I'm protecting you as well.

Sarge: I'm not 'avin' it.
Captains: It's that or nothing. I need a crew to go back with.
Sarge: An' you're goin' with 'im are yer?
Surgeon: I don't want to stay in Australia.
Sarge: *Co does?
Captains: It was that which made his mind up, Sergeant. Even twenty per cent wouldn't have persuaded him on its own.
Sarge: Virtue gets its reward, eh.
Surgeon: The Captain made a favourable report from me the condition for my return home with him.
Sarge: An' for me it's a cut in percentage.
Captains: I'm assuming you want to come with us.
Sarge: Make it 'ard on a fella, don't yer. (Pause) What can I say?
Captains: Good. (Scene 11, pp. 65-6)

The Surgeon, having been exploited earlier by the Captain by fulfilling a very important position for a small wage, manages to exploit his condition by conspiring with the Captain via his power to make reports for additional income from Sarge's share of the proceeds from the shirts and a guaranteed passage home. The web of exploitation in the play is also closed in this scene, in which it becomes clear how vulnerable the Sergeant is to exploitation: both his pocketbook, his career, and his ability to return home can be jeopardized and exploited by the Captain. Despite the high-minded principles he displayed throughout the play, given the opportunity to participate in the network of exploitative relationships to his significant advantage, the Surgeon throws his principles to the wind and comes in on the side of those with power and capital. He is seduced (if much seduction is really necessary, considering his attempt to exploit the Captain's vulnerability in Scene 2) by the capitalist hierarchy of the play, and joins them in the present and future exploitation of the women, for without his report to corroborate their complaints, they will be branded liars and troublemakers, and the Captain will be permitted to transport prisoners under similar
conditions in future, continuing the cycles of exploitation seen in
Female Transport.

In Female Transport, Steven Gooch uses the episodic construction
techniques in epic structure to examine the nature of exploitation and
repression in a capitalist, class society by presenting a series of
scenes and vignettes illustrating basic aspects of the exploitation and
repression, and deepening, adding to, the view of those aspects in suc­
cceeding scenes. He also takes advantage of the episodic construction
to present effectively his second element in the organization of the
structure of the play: the process by which solidarity grows between
the working class members of the society as they come to class conscious­
ness; i.e., the women on the ship. By selecting moments during the six
months of the voyage in which the women are split, then draw closer to­
gether, Gooch is able to show how the capitalist repression functions as
a means of helping the women to attain working-class consciousness and
solidarity, and the process by which six diverse and antagonistic indivi­
duals are melded into a unit of five militant women by the close of the
play.

In looking at the development of working-class consciousness and
solidarity in Female Transport, it is necessary to remember that
throughout the play the women are under a high level of stress, and that
there is a tendency toward antagonism and the quick expression of temper
even among friends as a means of self-preservation up until near the end
of the play (the end of Scene 10). This is an element of the women's
social and personal styles which is present throughout the growth of a
sense of solidarity, and through which that solidarity is sometimes
expressed in a gruff manner (but not necessarily a highly hostile one). In tracing this movement in the play, it is clear that Nance brings a sense of working-class consciousness to the ship, although a very imperfect sense of solidarity, if any at all. As the action develops, Winnie is the first to come to a new consciousness on her own, and to develop a sense of solidarity with the others (oddly, she arrives at this in part because of the exercise of her duties as matron, and her intimidation by Sarge, ironically factors intended by the guard to be divisive). A very loose sense of solidarity can be detected as early as Scene 1, when the prisoners chant, "oi, oi" to prevent Sarge from beating Nance, but this is more a matter of establishing a protective net for themselves for self-preservation than of helping out a fellow prisoner and class member (p. 8). More typical of their relationship to one another is the following exchange between Madge and Charlotte, in which the two women would be at one another's throats were they not restrained by chains.

Madge: Anyone get seasick? (No one knows) Find out soon enough.
Charlotte: Don't wan' 'Eart's Delight pukin' in yer lap, do yer.
Madge: Why don't you stop pretendin' an shove your evil tongue up your pretty girlfriend's ole.
Charlotte: I'll 'ave your eyes out.
Madge: (Ironic, clawing like a cat) Rrrr (Scene 1, pp. 10-11)

Charlotte picks on Madge for her lesbian relationship to Pitty, and tries to attack her when Madge insinuates that such a relationship might exist between Charlotte and Sarah. This continues to be a sore point throughout the voyage, and is picked up again in Scene 3.

Sarah: Some things you got a accep'.
Nance: Not in 'ere darlin'. Don' accep' nothin'.
Charlotte: Like not seein' a man fer six months. Fer some of us thass an 'ardship.
Madge: Whass that supposed t' mean?
Charlotte: You're usin' that girl. (p. 14)
An early expression of Nance's revolutionary consciousness can be seen in the above exchange, in which she urges her fellow prisoners not to accept their conditions. Throughout the play, Nance refuses to accept, and her rebellion causes her to be barrelled in Scene 5 and flogged in Scene 8. Nonetheless, she serves as a catalyst for bringing the other women together in a revolutionary working-class unit. Nance comes by her attitude through her involvement in working-class politics; she is, in fact, a political prisoner.

Nance: I was 'onest, more or less. Used t' work, makin' shirts. Thought crime was fer mugs. Turns out politics is no better. I got fourteen years fer bashin' a peeler's 'ead with this lead pipin'. Went with me bloke up Kennington Common. T' this meetin'. We took the lead, case a trouble. There was this group a fellas, 'ecklin' an' pushin'. They start fightin' my bloke's mates, so Johnnie Law comes stridin' in, truncheon swingin'. Fetches my bloke one on the ear'ole. 'E weren't doin' nothin', 'cept listen t' the speaker. Soon as 'e's down, they start carryin' 'im off. 'E give me the lead t' protec' meself, so I give this peeler what for. Then this other peeler grabs me an' I'm bashin' 'is shins, so they carry me off an' all. (Scene 3, p. 19)

Nance's speech comes during a card game, during the course of which the women introduce themselves and how they came to be arrested. When Madge describes her crime, Nance's working-class consciousness is aroused, for Madge has run a phoney employment agency as a means of bilking the working class.

Charlotte: What were you anyway? A jealous madame?
Madge: They give me seven year for runnin' an employment agency.
Nance: Bitch.
Madge: They're the mugs. It's their look-out.
Sarah: Whass wrong with givin' people jobs?
Nance: Yer don't. Thass the point. Yer put an 'ad in the papers askin' folk five bob t' find 'em a job. They send it in, then you make off with it.
Sarah: Neat.
Madge: Would a been, 'cept me partner got caught collectin' the letters. Split on me, the cow.
Nance: Serves yer right. Cheatin' them as needs it most.
Madge: I been bilked enough by christian neighbors not t' love their charity, darlin'.
Nance: That ain' charity fer our kind, it's common sense.
Madge: If yer're soft.
Nance: Whass that then? (She indicates Pitty)
Madge: Mutual advantage.
Nance: Thass what I'm sayin'.
Madge: It's not the same. (Scene 3, pp. 20-1)

However, Nance's sense of solidarity with the working class and her notion that the women must stick together to survive are not, at this point, sufficiently strong to stand a challenge from her sense of self-preservation when she sees a chance to gain an advantage over the other women. When food is distributed, Nance begins stealing from Sarah and Pitty, and threatens to stab anyone who tries to prevent her with a fork. Charlotte in particular is instrumental in pointing out the contradictions between her actions and words.

Charlotte: 'Ave t' watch you, won't we.
Nance: And you. You're the cut-purse around 'ere. 'Ang on t' yer bags t'nigh' girls.
Charlotte: Got a fortune stashed away, 'ave yer?
Nance: 'Ave you?
Charlotte: I wou'nt tell you if I 'ad.
Nance: 'Ere we go.
Charlotte: Whass that s'posed t' mean?
Nance: I ain' been in this tub 'alf an 'our, I'm sick a the sound a your voice already. Shootin' yer mouth off, bitchin' all the time. Yer don't know when t' stop.
Charlotte: So?
Nance: Yer need a fuckin' gag on.
Charlotte: You goin' a put it there?
Nance: Thass not the point. This is the point. (She holds up a potato on her fork) Nothin' else matters.
Charlotte: Yer don't steal people's food.
Nance: Why not?
Charlotte: Think you're better, do you?
Nance: No. An' fer the same reason you don't go tellin' people what t' do,
Charlotte: Whass that if it ain't an order?
Nance: Know it all, don't yer.
Charlotte: You said it.
Nance: Stop stirrin' it is what I said.
Charlotte: What's stirrin' it if that ain't?
Nance: There's no 'ope in 'ere less we stick together.
Charlotte: Potato-stealin' Radical we got 'ere. Go tell that up Kennin'ton Common.
Nance: I'm jus' statin' the obvious.
Charlotte: Not arf.
Nance: Keep the air sweet.
Charlotte: It's you that's gettin' steamed up.
Nance: An' you that's playin' games. This ain't games. (The potato)
Charlotte: The air ain't sweet anyway. There ain't enough t' go roun'. We ain't t' fuckin' gether.
Nance: There are. (She holds the potato out on her fork. Charlotte takes it and gives it to Sarah) That one's 'ers. (She indicates Pitty)
Charlotte: Now 'oo's playin' games?
Nance: I ain' competin'.
Charlotte: Jus' chickenin' out.
Nance: You set yerself up, girl, I'll knock yer down.
Charlotte: I'd like t' see it.
Nance: You will.
Charlotte: Soon as these are off, I'll 'ave yer eyes out (her chains).
Nance: I'll be ready for yer.
Charlotte: An' me.
Charlotte: So? Jus' means there's two a yer. (Scene 3, pp. 23-5)

In this exchange, it becomes clear that there are contradictory forces operating in Nance which mitigate against her manifesting a working-class consciousness and sense of solidarity with the others in all her actions, despite her exhortations that they must stick together to survive. She also is motivated by a desire for dominance and self-preservation which, combined with her unbridled contempt for authority, lead her into conflict after conflict with both the women, with whom she is not popular, and with Sarge. These feelings bubble over and get her into serious trouble in Scene 5, in which relations between the women reach their lowest ebb. Angry with Winnie because she is serving as matron, and trying to exercise authority (as well as co-operating with the guard), Nance begins to bait Winnie.
Winnie: I didn't know bein' made Matron meant cow-towin' t' bitches like you.
Nance: 'Ow could yer? Yer didn't ask.
Winnie: Just as well, en it.
Nance: Comes natural t' some.
Winnie: Whass that s'posed t' mean?
Nance: Yer're a born lackey, darlin'.
Charlotte: We gotta listen to all that again?
Nance: I got better things t' do 'n listen to you.
Winnie: Thass right.
Nance: She's off 'er 'ead. (Winnie sweeps assiduously) It ain' doin' yer no good, yer know. They ought a pay someone fer that.
Charlotte: Shut up, will yer.
Winnie: I bloody wouldn't!
Nance: You're nominally responsible for this cell bein' cleanly an' efficiently run.
Winnie: I'm also in charge.
Charlotte: Whoa-hey!
Winnie: I can report you if you give me trouble.
Nance: Report me, darlin', I'll bust that broom on yer 'ead.
Winnie: That won't do yer no good.
Nance: Won' exactly be a tonic for you either. You ain' doin' herself no good by this.
Winnie: They might commute my sentence.
Nance: They tell yer that?
Winnie: 'Inted at it.
Nance: Bitch! (She spits on the floor) Sweep that up.
Charlotte: Silly cow.
Nance: Believe that crap, you'll believe anythin'! (pp. 29-30)

When Sarge arrives for his inspection, the spit is still on the floor (Winnie having refused to clean it up), and he is able to use it to intimidate Winnie into reporting Nance for punishment. He beats Nance when she attacks Winnie, and when she is released from her chains (on order of the Captain), Charlotte also attacks Nance, who is lying on the floor. For her behavior, Nance is taken out and placed in a barrel, a restraining device which makes it impossible for her to sit or lie down.
Initially, the incident, in particular Charlotte's attack on Nance, is a sharply divisive factor among the women.

Winnie: Cow.
Charlotte: Changed yer tune, 'ave yer?
Winnie: You got a yeila streak six miles wide.
Charlotte: She 'ed 'er warnin'. Nothin' worse'n stealin' food. I knew 'e won't touch me.
Madge: Got 'im nicely sorted, en't yer.
Charlotte: 'E thinks 'e's got me sorted, so it's fair. Anyway, it weren't me landed the poor cow in it. She ought a be shot.
Winnie: What could I do? 'E made me responsible
Madge: Once 'e's got you workin' for 'im, we're all under 'is thumb. Tell 'im where t' get off. We'll back yer up.
Winnie: What about gettin' me sentence commuted?
Madge: Got the power to, 'as 'e?
Winnie: I don't know.
Madge: D'yer trust 'im?
Winnie: No.
Madge: Well then. Yer got six months doin' everythin' 'e says, not knowin' if 'e'll keep 'is side a the bargain. One slip an' yer're done fer, livin' with us 'co won' love yer fer it. Against that yer trust us t' stick by yer.
Winnie: Nance won't, not now.
Madge: Thass what she lives by, en it, us versus them. She'll only 'ound yer if yer stay Matron. Stick with us, she's got no quarrel with yer.
Winnie: Yeh, well.
Madge: You'll see. (p. 34)

With Winnie as matron, Sarge has succeeded in splitting the women and picking one of them, Nance, off. So long as he can maintain such a state he can dominate the cell. However, Nance's punishment serves as a rallying point for the women, and begins to draw them together and give them a sense of being a unit. The process is begun in Madge's speech to Winnie, when she clearly delineates an "us versus them" situation. When Nance returns, she, and the women, manage to joke about the barrel, holding a mock fashion show with it, until they realize how diabolical a device it is (p. 36). The price for Nance's release is an apology to Sarge. The women advise her to do it to gain release, but Nance refuses,
In the face of Nance's punishment, the first truly vivid display of the repression in which they live on the ship, the women rally behind Nance and her position, and begin to come together as a group. This is especially true of Winnie, who gives up her position as matron and begins to develop a real solidarity with the others and consciousness of their position as a class under the influence of Madge's words and the example of Nance. The sense of solidarity among them is very uneven, with Sarah, Charlotte, and Pitty still standing more alone than with the group, but a beginning has been made under the impact of the experience of Nance in this scene. Madge is aware of the situation, but her commitment is mitigated by her commitment personally to Pitty, for which she continues to be a target of abuse, and which causes her to maintain a distance, a position which is clearly against the established authority, but not whole-heartedly in alliance with Nance. Winnie, on the other hand, swings solidly behind Nance in this scene, and continues to support her
and functions as a sort of glue for the group in the remainder of the play.

By the end of Scene 5, the women have a clear common enemy, represented most clearly by Sarge, and they are capable of banding together in opposition to it. The remainder of the play is devoted to the process by which they are knit together as a group which exists apart from the overt pressure of Sarge's repression. The process is a slow one, and is not completed until the very end of the play, just before the women are about to be split up. The first indication that such a process might be underway occurs in Scene 6, after Charlotte has repelled Sarge's attempted rape.

Charlotte: Floatin' brothel it may be, but it's the inmates 'oo set the tone.
Nance: Not always.
Charlotte: Jus' cos you're out a action.
Nance: Thanks.
Charlotte: Nothin' t' do with you. (p. 41)

Earlier in the play, in such a situation, a bitter argument would almost certainly have broken out between the two women. In this scene, however, they manage to both pull back and let it pass off. That the alliance is still rent with dissention is made clear in Scene 8, in which all the women are irritable because of the heat and because Nance has insulted the Captain (resulting in her flogging), causing their exercise period on deck to be cut short (in combination with a coming storm). The women's bitterness spills over in an exchange in which Winnie tries to defend Nance.

Winnie: Not doin' us no good though, is it. Water still stinks. Still got the cockroaches.
Sarah: Nance goin' a smash 'em for yer? Fee in the water t' make it pure?
Winnie: Nance is all right.
Sarah: If she is, we're all up shit creek.
Pitty: What'll they do to 'er this time?
Sarah: Cut 'er fanny out.
Winnie: She's got some pluck though. Yer got a give it to 'er. Callin' the Captain a cunt in the middle a exercise, then slammin' Sarge in the teeth fer tryin' t' quiet 'er. It's the only way.
Sarah: They'll probably 'ang 'er for it too.
Pitty: She asked fer it, she'll get it.
Winnie: I'm not sayin' she's clever, Pitty, I'm sayin' she gives 'em a run for their money. (p. 44)

Though Winnie is committed to Nance, and her position, the rest of the women hold themselves at a remove from Nance in all except her, and their, stand against Sarge as enemy. When Nance is brought down after the beating and flogging, they manage to rally, albeit lukewarmly, to her defense.

Sarge: I wan' better'n this, Matron.
Winnie: You got the wrong person.
Sarge: Charlotte?
Charlotte: Go an' play with yerself.
Sarge: Solid be'ind the martyr, are we?
Charlotte: Cheap 'eroics, thass all.
Sarah: No need to 'alf-kill 'er though. (p. 46)

Once Sarge has left, however, real solidarity between the women dissolves, even between Madge and Pitty, and Winnie is left largely alone to cope with Nance's injuries, a hysterical Pitty, and dissention between the remaining women. They still are unable to function as a unit except under the immediate threat of action by Sarge, despite Winnie's plea that they must work together to survive. "It's nothin' t' do with justice, Madge. If those of 'oo can con' 'old t'gether now, we'll all be climbin' up the wall." (p. 48) At the end of the scene, the women have dissolved under the pressure of the voyage, its discomforts, and the repression of the guard into a series of individuals again. They are
unable even to refuse the Serjeant's "offer" of unpaid labor making shirts, despite the fact that they are well aware that their labor means profit for the Captain and crew, but nothing for them. Their morale is at a very low point, and Nance points out that any sense of a group that might have been forming has been destroyed.

Nance: Pickin' us off one by one. Readin'. Sewin'. We'll be playin' the bloody piano next.
Sarah: Why not?
Nance: Rowin' all the time. Hysterics. We 'ad some fuckin' dignity when we came in 'ere.
Sarah: Still got that.
Nance: I can't see it.
Charlotte: I cou'nt see it then. (Scene 8, p. 53)

By the end of Scene 8, only Winnie and Nance have any real sense of solidarity or display a real consciousness of themselves as members of an oppressed group in all their words and deeds. The group is aware of the presence of a common enemy, but Sarge has once again managed to split them under the challenge of naked brutality and force. They do not think of themselves as a group with responsibilities toward one another, and cannot act as one. However, the seeds of working-class consciousness, revolutionary consciousness, have been sown, and a group has begun to coalesce around Nance's ideas, so that they are capable of standing together most of the time against their common enemy, the guard. In the next scene in which they appear, Scene 10, events occur which galvanize the women, and finally they are able to make real progress toward arriving at a sense of consciousness as a group, and an awareness that their welfare as individuals and an oppressed class depends on their recognizing their common interest in standing together and supporting one another at all times, not just under the immediate
threat of Sarge's action. In that way, when he moves against them, they will not be so rent by internal dissention that they cannot act together, and all their lives might be improved on a daily basis.

The event which pulls the women together is Pitty's suicide, an event which vividly demonstrates their individual vulnerability and need to stand together and support one another if they are to survive. Her inclusion on the voyage had always been a sore point among the women, who were aware that she should not be on the journey. When she kills herself, it pulls the women together to such an extent that Charlotte and Nance begin to act together and look out for one another, Sarah rejects her lover Tommy, and Charlotte attacks the Surgeon, whom she had earlier been interested in seducing. The moment when they really begin to come together occurs after Tommy has left the cabin to go to his quarters, so that he can come when they call and "discover" the body without it seeming he had spent the night in the cell, contrary to regulations. To call him down, the women start their rhythmic chant of "oi, oi" (p. 60). When he comes, however, they do not stop immediately. Madge and Winnie break from the group (Madge to mourn, Winnie to make tea), but the others continue after Tommy has gone. When they finish, they are, according to Gooch, "invigorated." When Tommy, Sarge, and the Surgeon arrive, Charlotte and Sarah assail them, pointing out that Pitty hanged herself with the shirts they were making, a fact which seems to impress on the women vividly the real source of their oppression and misery, and to bring them together both against it, and firmly with one another, for the first time in the play.
Sarah: Our shirts a yours, sergeant.
Sarge: I noticed.
Sarah: Nice idea the Captain 'ad, eh.
Charlotte: The only sure diagnosis, en it. (This to the Surgeon) We told yer she was sick. What did you do? Nothing! You ought a been up there, not 'er.
Sarah: Murderer. (p. 61)

While Sarge goes around collecting the shirts, Winnie trips him. As he rounds to attack, all the women rise and stand together against him, preventing him from taking any action against Winnie, despite the danger that he could attack them all (p. 61). In the face of the stand-off, Sarge is called away by the Surgeon, who has completed his examination. As he goes, however, Charlotte shouts after him in an expression of her new-found sense of oneness with the group, a sense which makes action on its behalf more important than self-protection to her.

Charlotte: I'll report the lot of yer when we get t' Syndy!
Nance: Tell 'em that now, they'll 'ire an assassin t' shut yer mouth.
Charlotte: Take more'n that now I got started.
Nance: Took yer time, though, didn't yer. (pp. 61-2)

Charlotte and Nance now stand together, not merely against a common enemy, but in the same state of consciousness about him and themselves. The next demonstration of this new sense of solidarity among the women occurs a short time later in the scene, when Tommy, Sarah's lover, who had been tolerated, even welcomed, by the women before, comes to fumigate the cell. Tommy's behavior, as the women remark earlier in the scene, has changed, and become cruder, more like that of Sarge, during the voyage (p. 59). In this episode, he insults and antagonizes the women, and all of them, including Sarah, turn on him and express solidarity with one another,
Nance: Get any a that on me, I'll tip the bucket on yer.
Tommy: You try it, I'll fumigate yer fuckin' fanny for yer.
(He mock threatens her with the broom. Charlotte brings her two fists down together on Tommy's back. He goes down in the wet.)
Charlotte: 'Co d'yer think you are, sonny?
Tommy: Ah fuck, All over me.
Charlotte: We're not 'ere for your amusement, yer know. Learn a bit a respect.
Tommy: For Christ's sake, I was only playin' aroun'! I get bored too, yer know.
Winnie: 'Ard luck. Yer got more space t' do it in.
Tommy: I bent me finger back.
Sarah: Ah-h.
Tommy: You're supposed t' be on my side.
Sarah: Only one side in 'ere, fella. (p. 63)

Sarah's identification of herself and her cause with that of the other women completes the process of their coming together into a single like-minded unit. Despite her relationship with Tommy, at base Sarah comes to realize that her only allies are the other women, and she asserts her identification with them. The group has now attained a similar consciousness, that espoused by Nance from the beginning of the voyage, and a sense of being a group, despite, or perhaps because of, the repression and oppressive conditions of the voyage. As the scene ends, Nance is able to assert the unity and strength of the group, and affirm its sense of oneness, against the ship and its crew. As tar begins to drip, melting in the heat, the women fear that the ship might be coming apart. Nance turns Winnie's phrasing of that opinion into an assertion of the solidarity of the group.

Madge: Tar. Off the ceiling. It's the 'eat. Look, between the beams. It's meltin'.
Winnie: We're fallin' apart.
Nance: We ain'. It is. (p. 65)

The events of Scene 10 bring the women together into a group with the same consciousness of their condition and the same goals for the first
time since the journey began. By the end of this scene, a revolutionary consciousness and sense of solidarity has arisen among the women which, as the final scene of the play makes clear, will stand the test even of their being divided when they reach Australia. Instead of one revolutionary present at the start of the voyage, there are now five conscious of the oppression of their class by the ruling, capitalist class, and willing to rebel against it despite personal risk.

The final scene of Female Transport, Scene 12, contains a re-assertion of solidarity by the women on the verge of their being taken ashore for dispersal. After the Captain makes a speech to the women inviting them to complain to him (a device to find troublemakers before unboarding the women), he leaves, and the women comment on him, and themselves.

Winnie: Amazin'.
Madge: 'E don' even know 'e's doin' it.
Charlotte: Complain to 'im now, 'e puts yer down quick as a trouble-maker.
Winnie: Some'll fall for it.
Nance: I'm down already. You could see that in 'is face.
Winnie: I ain't.
Nance: You reportin' 'im?
Winnie: Why not?
Charlotte: You ain't tellin' 'im though.
Winnie: What d'you think? (Pause) I'd cut 'is liver out fer tuppence.
Nance: You've got distinctly nasty, you know that?
Winnie: Followed your example, didn't I?
Sarah: Ain't none of us is nice now.
Nance: Never needed it in the first place.
Winnie: Know where we stand though. No misunderstandings.
Sarah: Shame they'll split us up.
Nance: We're still 'ere.
Sarah: Not t'gether though.
Nance: Just more space between us, thass all. (p. 70)

Winnie's assertion that the women now "know where we stand," and Nance's that they will now be together for good, despite the distance that might
be between them, signal the presence of a genuine group consciousness and solidarity between them, and it is a consciousness which is essentially revolutionary and working-class, and directed against the oppressing classes above them. In the closed, microcosmic capitalist society of the ship, this group of women representing the working class has achieved, through a long and difficult process, a sense of solidarity and an awareness of their position and social relationships which will allow them to function with one another, and others, against the state and the unfair socio-economic system which keeps them in bondage; be it the chains of imprisonment, or the chains of poverty.

In *Female Transport*, Steve Gooch utilized two organizing elements in the construction of his epic structure: an analysis of the nature and operation of an oppressive capitalist society, and the growth of working-class consciousness and solidarity among the oppressed members of that society, the women prisoners. The former is responsible for Scenes 2, 4, 7, 9, and 11, as well as a number of incidents or speeches in the other scenes, while the latter controls the action in Scenes 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, and 12. The structural relationship between the two, the interlacing of the scenes to form an effective structure for the action of the play, is controlled by two factors: the logical, chronological development of the action of the work, and the placing of scenes which operate to reinforce points made in succeeding scenes through the juxtaposition of events or concerns in the women's and Captain's quarters. In utilizing the opportunity for episodic construction and a cinematic rendering of events in a series of discrete scenes spaced through time afforded by epic structure, Gooch was able simultaneously
to examine a condition and a process, and to interweave the two in such a way that they reinforced and clarified one another. In Female Transport Steve Gooch made excellent use of the opportunities given him by epic structure to make a strong statement about capitalist oppression, and the suppression of women, to demonstrate how repression can function as a springboard out of which arises working-class consciousness and solidarity, and to create an engaging and exciting line of action as well. By manipulating the elements of epic structure to his advantage and that of his material, Steve Gooch succeeded in creating an important political document and a fine play in the same work of art.

It is clear that the contemporary British leftist playwrights have been able to utilize epic structure to create interesting plays and to present their points of view effectively, whether those points of view involve topics of primarily private or psychological concern, as in Ashes, Mary Barnes, and City Sugar, or public concerns. In The Bundle, Teendreams, and Female Transport, Edward Bond, David Edgar, and Steve Gooch were able, with varying degrees of success, to focus on an individual or small group of people as representative of larger social groups or movements, and through them and what happens to them to examine processes such as the growth of revolutionary consciousness and revolutionary action; conditions such as the nature of capitalism, class society, and capitalist/class oppression; to present analyses such as Bond's of the nature of revolutionary social morality; and to trace social history (in this case, or the radical movement from 1968 to 1975, in Teendreams). In utilizing small, representative groups to approach larger groups and movements, these playwrights have placed
themselves in the mainstream of socialist playwriting over the course of the twentieth century in the manner in which they handle socially conscious material in dramatic form. However, there is a second approach to the handling of material of interest to leftist playwrights, an approach espoused by Piscator, and adopted at times by contemporary British leftist playwrights in their epic plays. This is to focus directly on the process or condition under study, and to approach it, not through a group of representative individuals and their fates or experience, but by using the masses who participate in the movements and are affected by them as the focus of the play. In these works, the playwright, though he may create a number of individual characters, and even follow them through a good portion of the action, does not consistently focus on a few particular characters as typical examples of people experiencing the events in the play, nor is he especially interested in their personal fates, or linking those fates to the action. Rather, he focuses on the masses and the movements directly, with the fates of individual characters being of secondary concern, and frequently not even being fully developed in the action. Character becomes strictly subservient to action in these plays, and its development is shaped by the needs of the playwright for a clear exposition of the conditions he examines. Among the playwrights who have written plays such as this in contemporary Great Britain are Howard Brenton, Caryl Churchill, David Hare, and John McGrath, and it is works by these playwrights which will be examined in the next chapter.
CHAPTER SIX

THE USE OF EPIC STRUCTURE

IN PLAYS WHICH TREAT PUBLIC ACTION

THROUGH A FOCUS

ON A LARGE GROUP OR THE MASSES
In his book *The Political Theatre*, Erwin Piscator advocated that the drama of the individual be banished from socialist theatre, and that it be replaced by drama depicting "the times and fates of the masses." While contemporary British leftist playwrights have not banished the individual from their drama, either as the center of a study of primarily personal problems or as a representative of larger groups or classes of people, there has been a good deal of contemporary British playwrighting that has focussed directly on large groups of people, or even comparatively undifferentiated masses, as a means by which to examine social movements and forces. In these plays, though a single character or characters may reappear throughout the play, the dramatist is less interested in depicting his personal fate, even as a representative of a larger group, than in using the character as a vehicle to dramatize as directly as possible the social force, process, or condition he is examining in the work. The personal fate of a character or characters is no longer the focus or primary concern of the play. In fact, the use of character might become so functional in terms of the presentation of action that no character recurs consistently throughout the play. Rather, characters will appear, function for a given purpose in a specific scene or two, and then disappear, never to be seen or referred to again. The effect of such a practice is that individual characters often dissolve into a mass, and it is the mass and its fate,  

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the collective destiny, that becomes the focus of interest and action in the play. A number of contemporary British leftists have written plays utilizing this approach in the past decade, and frequently they have used epic structure in the construction of their dramas. Among these playwrights have been Howard Brenton (Epsom Downs), John McGrath (Little Red Hen), Caryl Churchill (Light Shining in Buckinghamshire), and David Hare (Fan-shen, the most perfect example of a play of this type among those under consideration), the authors of the plays treated in this chapter. Each of these playwrights has written plays for the socialist theatre utilizing other structural techniques, both non-epic, and epic, but centered on individuals or small groups. However, their contributions to this particular form of epic, leftist drama have been particularly distinguished both in their oeuvres and in the field. Utilizing epic structures and a focus on a mass rather than individuals, these dramatists have treated a variety of topics, utilizing them as the controlling element in the structure of the plays. In Epsom Downs, Brenton analyzed a condition, the social structure of contemporary Great Britain, and the interaction between classes. Historical processes were examined in Little Red Hen, Light Shining in Buckinghamshire, and Fan-shen, although in each play for a different purpose. In Little Red Hen, McGrath used parallel historical situations and conditions to warn the generation of the 1970s in the Scots socialist and nationalist movements against repeating the mistakes of the 1920s-1950s. Caryl Churchill, in Light Shining in Buckinghamshire, examined history in large part for its own sake in examining the origins of modern capitalism in the Puritan Commonwealth, and the failure of a people's revolution at that time. In
Fanshen, David Hare traced the growth of revolutionary consciousness and action in a Chinese village during the 1940s. In each of these plays, the dramatist utilized an epic structure controlled by a process, analysis, argument, or condition (or combination of elements) to create a work which is both good drama, and an informative and persuasive political document. In that way, they have enriched both the drama and political literature of the contemporary British left.

Howard Brenton's Epson Downs sits uncomfortably on the border line between both epic and non-epic, and between treating its subject through a focus on a mass, or a group of representative individuals. On the first point, the play is not particularly cinematic, and its division into acts is structurally as important as the alternating series of discrete episodes which, as in Ashes, makes up its structure (the units are too small to be considered full scenes in many instances, and they are episodes from longer chains of action which are seen only when the characters happen into the space represented onstage, much as if a camera recorded a day's events from a particular vantage point, and the film record showed a series of incidents involving a rotating body of people only when they were in the space covered by the camera). The play takes place inside one day (about sunrise to late afternoon), with the action being continuous in Act One, and nearly continuous in Act Two, the continuity being broken only at the end of the play. Similarly, the action in the first act takes place entirely in one location, and that in the second act varies only within a restricted area, and without a break in action or shift in scenery. These are traits much more likely to be found in a dramatic than an epic drama. However, the
play is pulled into the epic category by virtue of the structural impor-
tance of its discrete episodes, which are fragments of a series of
five or six main lines of action broken up and interwoven to form the
overall action of the work, and which function as basic units of struc-
ture. It is also epic by virtue of the fact that the central organizing
principle of the play is not the effective dramatic rendering of a line
of action, but the interlacing of a series of lines of actions, each
centered on a particular class, in such a way that they form a picture
of the British class system and an analysis of the relationships be-
tween the various classes. Brenton's depiction of the class structure
underlies and controls the structure of the play, and finds its expres-
sion in the fact that the lines of the story which center on each class
(the play takes place on Derby Day at Epsom Downs, a day when all the
classes are brought together for the day's racing) are kept separate,
and contact between those characters and lines of action minimized,
except on rare occasions when contact is initiated in such a way that
it examines and comments on the relationships between the classes, which
typically are economic and exploitative (although not without exception).
The structure of the play is a mirror of the class system and the way
it operates, and this organizational scheme is a very significant factor
in pulling Epsom Downs into the category of epic plays and away from
that of episodically structured, but dramatic, scripts.

The play is also on the boundary between scripts which are centered
on a mass, and scripts centered on representative individuals. There
are groups of representative individuals for each class in the play,
and the central lines of action follow these people through the day.
However, there are also a large number of characters who appear and function in the action briefly as examples of types or to further action, and who disappear, and this fact, combined with the large number of characters who recur in the play, make Epsom Downs sufficiently diffuse in its use of character to situate it most comfortably in that group of plays which examine their topics directly via the use of masses of people. It is a borderline play, but it fits most properly in this category.

The structure of Epsom Downs centers on a series of interlaced actions. Episodes from the progress of those actions alternate in the play, with the addition of intrusions by characters whose activities are not developed beyond their brief appearances. Each major line of action is designed to follow the progress of an individual or group through the Derby Day activities at Epsom Downs during the Silver Jubilee year, tracing their activities and hopes as representative of those of their class or social group, revealing some of the problems of those groups in the socio-economic climate of the time, and, in those instances where classes interact in the play, to demonstrate the normal relationships between the classes. Over the course of its two acts, the drama manages "to convey the whole sweep of English society, from the ruling to the workless classes." ² The play is composed of five main lines of action (six, if the race itself is included), each focussed on a class or type of person, with additional scenes showing other classes

briefly interspersed, and occasionally interacting with the major characters and lines of action. The first of the major character/action groupings involves Primrose, a gypsy girl, and Jocks, a left-wing stable boy who is fired by his rightist boss, a trainer, on the day of the race. Primrose and Jocks meet and spend the day together, he being interested in her sexually, she merely wanting to have a good time. These characters represent the lower levels of the working class; frequently unemployed, exploited, but willing to look out for one another. At the end of the play, after Jocks has spent his money and faces a long walk back to London after the day's events, Primrose gives him a kiss and ten pounds, and tells him to disappear. Next up the social rung is Sandy and Margaret, a young married couple, their two children, and the grandfather. They represent the people of Britain of upper working-class or lower middle-class origins who aspire to a bourgeois and comfortable existence. Unfortunately, they are squeezed by the economic problems and inequities of the capitalist system, and find themselves employed only occasionally, without sufficient money for a home, and living in a camper in a friend's garage. So desperate are they in their condition and their hopes for a home and the means for a better future (a ladder, so that Sandy can do roofing work on his own, not for others), that they wager their life's savings, 400 pounds, on a horse in the Derby, hoping, if they win, to secure enough capital to buy tools and make a down payment on a home. As luck has it, they back Lester Piggott, something of a working-class hero, and win. A significant subplot involving Margaret also runs through the play, in which Margaret is accosted by the ghost of Emily Davison, a feminist who
threw herself in front of the king's horse and was killed in a women's rights protest in 1913. In this subplot, the destructive effect of her way of life for Margaret's happiness is pointed out via her reactions to her confrontations with Emily, although she also speaks of the good side of her life, and ultimately makes it clear that, despite the lures of freedom and independence, it is the life she has chosen to and will live.

Next up the social rung are two individuals of working-class origins who have climbed up the social ladder to become solidly conservative members of the middle class: the trainer Charles Pearce, and Police Superintendent Blue. Their part in the play is primarily that of participants in a series of vignettes which illustrate a variety of points, without a strong, consistent line of action being developed around them. A weak line is developed when Pearce makes a slighting remark about a couple of jockeys and horses that is somehow picked up by the press. When one of the horses wins, Pearce laments that it will make him seem a great fool and jeopardize his position in the racing world. Nonetheless, though no major line of action develops around them, Pearce and Blue are very important characters, for they, particularly Pearce, in their attitudes and actions toward those above and below them socially, illustrate both the exploitative nature of class relationships, and the petty tyranny of those who have risen up the class scale and are selfishly determined to maintain their position, even if it means licking the boots of those above, and trampling on those below. Pearce represents a kind of class traitor: the working-class man who has risen above his origins and become an arch-conservative
and an exploiter/oppesser of his former fellows, rather than one who will assist them to achieve economic equality and lead better lives.

The fourth main line of action is centered on Miss Motram and Mr. Tillotson, born and bred as members of the middle class. Interestingly, they are represented as crippled victims of capitalism and the bourgeois urge for upward mobility and the accumulation of wealth. Both are now Christian revivalists, having turned to religion after losing everything because of gambling (Tilottson directly, Miss Motram by becoming an alcoholic after her father, a gambler, lost everything). During the play, Tilottson succumbs to the urge to gamble again, and at the end of the day he and Miss Motram, she mightily tempted to take up drinking again in disillusionment, begin their way back to London, hoping desperately to avoid their respective afflictions on the way back (each knows exactly how many gambling places or bars there are from Epsom Downs to their home).

The final major line of action centers on Lord Rack, a Labour M.P. and socialist who has sold out and become an exploiter of the working classes even as he professes to love and work for them; a member of the very ruling class he supposedly wishes to overthrow. He is a life peer, an honor he was given to remove him from the House of Commons and a responsible position to a station in which he could cause no harm after he was caught in a sex scandal. He spends the day gambling, gorging himself wastefully on food and drink, and trying to exploit working-class girls sexually; specifically Primrose, whom he offers ten pounds for a sprig of lucky heather and other favors. She, however, manages to snatch the money and leave him with only the heather. Rack
represents the peerage, the upper classes, particularly those who profess to love and have the best interests of the workers in mind, but who in fact exploit them and work against their interests in what they actually say and do. Aside from Rack, other members of the ruling classes and aristocracy are represented intermittently in the play by a series of horse owners and drunks. Similarly, there are occasional appearances by other members of the working class (primarily jockeys and a few vendors) and middle class. Many of the additional middle-class characters are bookmakers, who live off the bets of the poor, who cannot afford it, and the rich, who can, and who thus are social parasites (as many of the middle class are, Brenton would argue). By interweaving the lines of action, and including vignettes outside of the major lines, Brenton builds up a picture of class structure and relationships in contemporary Great Britain; a picture which controls the play structurally by maintaining the separateness of the individual lines in discrete scenes (as the classes are largely separate) except for those occasions when groups are brought together to illustrate the nature of class relationships.

Because the features of chief interest in the examination of *Epsom Downs* are the way in which epic structure accommodates the intertwining of diverse lines of action, the way class structure determines the play's structure, and because the few cinematic features present in the work are of little interest, the structural chart for this play will be altered somewhat to reflect the way in which lines of action interweave, with a summary of the action being omitted (except for the outline of the main lines presented above, and specific significant points in the
interaction of the classes, to be noted below). Accordingly, preceding the structural chart, a chart correlating characters/groups and lines of action with a series of letters will be presented. The presence of a letter beside a given episode indicates that one or more characters from that group are active in that episode.

**Epsom Downs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Character or group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Primrose; also Minty, her mother, in Episode 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Sandy and Margaret, their children (Bobby and Sandra), and Grandfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Pearce, the trainer, and Superintendent Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Lord Rack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Tilottson and Miss Motram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Diverse traders and venders, mostly lower class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Working-class drunks and down-and-outers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Jocks, a stable boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Hugh, a rival stable boy; other stable boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Jockeys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Jubilee drunks (upper middle-class drunks in jubilee dress)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Horse owners (Dorothy, Pearce's employer; her companion Roger; Aga Khan; diverse others)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Les Backshaker (a bookie), his wife, and Morry, his assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Other bookies, including Louis, Les's rival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Diverse policemen and body guards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Ghost of Emily Davison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Racehorses (some of whom speak)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>The Derby and The Course (who speak, narrating the race)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Crowds 1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Lunatics from the asylum who clean up the Downs after the race day for a cup of tea each</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Act One, the action takes place entirely on a grassy area on the Downs near the racetrack. In Act Two, the action begins at the parade ring of the track, moves to the beer tent environs at Lord Rack's first

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3Howard Brenton, *Epsom Downs* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1977). All citations are from this edition.
appearance, shifts to varying locations around the perimeter of the 
race course during the crowd scenes, and back to the grassy area repre-
sented in Act One when Jocks and Primrose meet for the last time (p. 80).

**Edson Downs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Lines of action/characters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Act I</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>A (Primrose sunbathing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>A, and B (no contact)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 4</td>
<td>11-14</td>
<td>A (no contact with) C, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 5</td>
<td>15-16</td>
<td>A (no contact with) B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>A (no contact with) G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 7</td>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>A, D (Rack propositions Primrose)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 8</td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>C, H, I (Pearce fires Jocks for leftist politics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 9</td>
<td>21-23</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 10</td>
<td>23-25</td>
<td>A, H (Primrose and Jocks meet; go off to spend the day together)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 11</td>
<td>25-28</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 12</td>
<td>29-30</td>
<td>C, D (Pearce and Rack, old enemies, pass with minimal civility)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 13</td>
<td>30-38</td>
<td>B, F (Revelation of economic state of Sandy and Margaret)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 14</td>
<td>38-39</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 15</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 16</td>
<td>39-44</td>
<td>C, F, L (Arrival of Pearce's employers and the Aga Khan; i.e., horseowners)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 17</td>
<td>44-55</td>
<td>M (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M (no contact with) E (45-46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M (no contact with) F (46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M, N (46-48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M, D (48-50; Rack places bets with Les)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M (50-51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M, B, O, K (A jubilee drunk propositions and harasses Margaret. She questions Les on odds; Grandpa heckles Policeman, who responds politely, and criticises Queen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 18</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>B, P (Margaret defends her life to Emily's ghost)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Act II</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 19</td>
<td>56-57</td>
<td>I, Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 20</td>
<td>57-59</td>
<td>I, Q, J, L (Attitudes of rich explored; also interaction of them and jockey/employee)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Epson Downs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Lines of action/characters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Episode 21</td>
<td>59-61</td>
<td>A, H (Primrose and Jocks quarrel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 22</td>
<td>62-65</td>
<td>D, G, H, K (shift scene to beer tent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 23</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>J, Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 24</td>
<td>65-66</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 25</td>
<td>66-71</td>
<td>N (no contact with) B; E (contact with N only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 26</td>
<td>71-72</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 27</td>
<td>72-73</td>
<td>E, R, S (Crowd 1—all crowds played by same actors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 28</td>
<td>73-75</td>
<td>E, R, S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 29</td>
<td>75-76</td>
<td>B, E, R, S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 30</td>
<td>76-77</td>
<td>E, R, S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 31</td>
<td>77-78</td>
<td>B, E, S (Sandy and Margaret win their bet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 32</td>
<td>78-80</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 33</td>
<td>80-81</td>
<td>A, H (Primrose gives Jocks money to get to town, and a kiss)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 34</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 35</td>
<td>82-83</td>
<td>C (Pearce's inner discomfort revealed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 36</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>E, P (Margaret acknowledges toughness of her life to Emily's ghost, but defends it)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 37</td>
<td>83-84</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 38</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 39</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In looking at the structural chart of *Epson Downs*, it is readily apparent how Howard Brenton utilized the episodic construction and freedom of organization available in epic structure to interweave a series of by and large separate lines of action into a satisfying whole. Though there are a number of scenes in which more than one major line of action is present, in most of those contact is minimal and insignificant, reinforcing the basic separation of classes endemic to the British class system, even on a day such as Derby Day, when all the classes are mixed in a relatively small area. Those few instances where significant contact occurs are primarily economic in nature (placing bets, propositioning women) and designed to show the exploitation inherent in both the class system and capitalism, and to reveal class attitudes toward other
groups. In fact, the only meeting of individuals who do not come to
the Downs together which is not ultimately exploitative is that between
Primrose, the gypsy girl, and Jocks, the stable boy who is fired for
his leftist views by Pearce. Even in this relationship between two
people who are basically members of the working class begins with the
prospect of sexual exploitation. When Jocks meets Primrose and con-
vinces her to go to the fair with him, he comments to himself, after
she has gone off (they must go to the fair separately to avoid detection
by her mother), "What d'you know? Lose my job. Pull a gypsy girl. The
ups and downs, the swings of life—." (p. 25) Later, when they return
from the fair, Jocks seems to expect some return on the money he has
invested in Primrose by buying her a kermit frog and other goods.
Without prospects in the horse business, the only one that he knows,
because Pearce will see to it that Jocks is blacklisted, he proposes
that he marry Primrose and travel with her as a gypsy. When she rejects
his idea as absurd, he tells her, "If you won't marry me, at least come
cut over the Downs. Show the bastards we don't care. Give us a lovely
long fuck in the grass, eh?" (p. 61) At this, Primrose flings the ker-
mits frog at him and leaves. However, when Jocks has spent the last of
his money betting, Primrose comes to him and gives him ten pounds to
do a "job" for her; i.e., to kiss her, and then to disappear (p. 61).
Beyond this however, relationships in the play, particularly between
classes, are, from start to finish, economically exploitative. The
peerage; represented by Lord Rack, exploits the lower classes, repre-
sented by Primrose, in Episode 7, in which he propositions her. Of-
fering her ten pounds for a sprig of her lucky heather, Rack says, "Now
don’t be shy and run off; Sell us a bit of lucky heather. (She reaches for the money, but he holds it back) Give us a bit of a cuddle. French kiss? Odds on you’re not a girl who brushes her teeth, eh?” (p. 17) A similarly sexually exploitative offer is indicated later when a jubilee drunk, an upper middle-class person regaled in union jacks, makes the beginning of a proposition to Margaret, but is repelled by her, assisted by Les Backshaker:

Drunk: Alone with all your brood, darling?
Margaret: Go away.
Drunk: Don’t give me a hard time.
Les: You heard the lady. Waddle away. (p. 52)

While Les helps Margaret avoid this situation, his entire position in the economic structure is parasitic and exploitative, for he is a bookmaker, taking from rich and poor alike, enriching himself in the process. Les defines the basic nature of his business in a comment to Morry, his assistant. “There is no code. There is only the punters—twenty-five p. or a hundred and eighty quid. And there is the strength of locks upon my bag. And there is the threat of powerful friends with knuckles.” (p. 50) Les, and other bookmakers, will take money from anyone, regardless of their circumstances. This is not strongly condemned in the play; however, Brenton provides two examples of what obsessive gambling can lead to in Miss Mottram and Tilottson (as well as the lengths to which economic desperation can drive people when Sandy and Margaret risk all their savings on a wager which, fortunately, they win). Tilottson describes his life as an obsessive gambler to his companion.

Tilottson: I was a gambler. I mean I really was a gambler. Some take it or leave it. But I had compulsion. Compulsive gambler, me. Have you any idea what that means? To get gambling money in my hands, I would have sold my
children, I did sell my children. Where are they now? Twenty-four hour gambling. Ten-thirty, betting shop. The manager'd keep my stool free. Bring me a cup of tea halfway through the afternoon, for I did not eat! Money was not for food! Never break a note, gambling money! Five-thirty, out the betting shop. Casino. 'Till four in the morning. Then—illegal casino. I have left a betting shop with twelve thousand pound in my hand! On to Soho, Windmill Street! Come the dawn, not a bus-fare. Oh, I was action man. The end came at Epsom. Roberto's Derby. I motored down with this investment broker in his Rolls-Royce. Heavy gambling is a great leveller, a real brotherhood of ghosts. The second race gone, I'd done my money in. He nipped off for a pee. Know what I did? I sold his Rolls-Royce. To a bookie for ten thousand pounds. Come the last race I'd done that in too. Everyone was looking for me, wanting my blood. Investors brokers, bookies' runners. And I was marooned on the Downs all night. And caught pneumonia. And had my nervous breakdown. (p. 27)

Clearly, occupation in a profession which abets such suffering cannot be a positive thing, as Brenton demonstrates both by Tilottson's speech, and by his action, his desperation, when he "falls off the wagon", begins betting, and loses all his money, causing Miss Mottram, a reformed alcoholic, to be tempted to take up alcohol again (her father's gambling drove her to drink in the first place). Even those comparatively well-off, such as Pearce, are exploited by those above them, and are victimized by their patronizing attitudes. After Pearce and Blue have welcomed Pearce's employer and the Aga Khan to the races, Blue comments to Pearce, "Well! That's our bowing and scraping done." (p. 44) However, despite his treatment at the hands of the rich, Pearce shares their contempt for the poor, despite the fact he is from the working class himself. "Always makes me shudder. When you look at half a million punters laid out on a hill—you think 'Democracy could go mad.'" (p. 12) Pearce's employer cares nothing about racing except for the prestige of
having a Derby entrant, while it is Pearce's consuming passion, and her attitude and patronization of him is hurtful, as his final speech in the play reveals: "I am a man at the top of my profession. Before I crawl to the Pearly Gates, dragging my ulcer behind me, I will win the Blue Ribbon of Racing. Even an MBE. Why, then, am I not calm? Why do I feel—abused?" (p. 82) Somewhere in his sub- or semi-conscious mind, Pearce is aware of his exploitation by his superiors, and unhappy about it. Yet he shares their contempt for the workers, and assists in their oppression (it is he who fires Jocks for his leftist convictions). Throughout the play, in comments, and in occasional interactions between social classes, Brenton demonstrates that the class system and capitalism are inherently exploitative and detrimental to all but the few individuals at the top of the pyramid (and perhaps even them, if Lord Rack is any example).

The way in which Brenton weaves the five main lines of action into a panorama of the day's events while still emphasizing the essential separateness of the classes can be seen by charting the episodes in which each group appears.

Group A (Primrose, mostly with Jocks) 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 21, 33
Group B (Sandy and Margaret) 1, 3, 5, 13, 17, 18, 25, 29, 31, 36, 37
Group C (Pearce and Blue) 4, 8, 12, 16, 35
Group D (Lord Rack) 7, 12, 17, 22, 35
Group E (Tilottson and Miss Mottram) 11, 17, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32

Groups A and B overlap on only two occasions, and in neither is there any contact between them. A and C overlap only once, without contact, and A and E never appear in the same episode. The significant contact
of A (Primrose) occurs with line D (Lord Rack) in Episode 7, when she
sells him heather and he propositions her, one of the moments demonstra-
ting class relationships and exploitation. Group B, Sandy and Margaret,
ever interact with any other line of action, although they appear in
one scene in common with Rack, and three with Tilottson. Group C,
which consists of Pearce and, to a lesser extent, Blue, have no rela-
tionship whatever with Group E, and only one shared scene with Group D,
when Pearce passes Rack on the Downs and they exchange a greeting in
which they treat one another with minimal civility, their standing as
personal enemies being made clear in their mutterings to themselves.
This conflict has roots in class and political considerations. Rack
advocates a tax on winnings, and is a socialist, both of which are ini-
mical to Pearce. Pearce also resents Rack's (to him) political hypoc-
crasy: "A man who stands for everything I can't stand. Socialism and
racing? Like an elephant trying to get up a nanny goat." (p. 29) Rack,
on the other hand, generally resents the attacks on him from the racing
hierarchy, and particularly resents Pearce for what Rack feels he has
done to racing and for allowing himself to be exploited by the horse-
owners. "Managerial whiz kid. Selling his skills, not realizing how
he is used. With his mod cons—horses stuffed with vitamin pills, poor
animals badgered by swarms of accountants. Perverting 'sport of the com-
mon man.'" (p. 27) However, the meeting itself is without incident, and
the significant portion of this episode is not what these two say to one
another, but what they say to themselves, further emphasizing the essen-
tial isolation of the groups in the play. Rack appears in one episode
in which Tilottson also appears, but they have no contact with one
another. Out of forty episode appearances in which one or more of the characters from the main lines of action appear, in only ten episode appearances is there any overlap at all, and in only two, when Rack meets Primrose, and when he meets Pearce, is there any interaction on a significant level; i.e., one which reveals class exploitation or class attitudes/tensions. Even in those instances where Brenton examines class relationships, particularly exploitative ones, and class attitudes, the most important points/incidents in the analysis tend to take place either outside these major lines, or via the interaction of one of these lines with an incidental character or characters, such as Les or the jubilee drunks. Brenton’s structure in Epson Downs mirrors that of British society in its representation of the various classes, their essential separateness, and the nature of their contacts when they occur, and it is the structure of that society which controls the structure of the play. His use of epic structure is crucial to the success of this organizational scheme, for without the freedom epic structure offered him to interweave several lines of action episodically, to isolate classes and examine them both in isolation and interaction with other groups in the structure of his episodes, and to utilize repetition and alternation of points and ideas in a series of scenes, he could not have succeeded in both capturing the atmosphere of Derby Day at Epson Downs (surely a significant part of the play’s theatrical appeal) and presenting an important, leftist view of the class society of modern Great Britain. Through his skillful manipulation of epic structure, Howard Brenton was able to present both a rich theatrical experience and to make important political points in Epson Downs.
In *Epsom Downs*, Breton used the exploration of a condition, British class society, as the controlling element in the structure of his play. In *Little Red Hen*, John McGrath uses an argument as his controlling structural principle. Through the action of the play, McGrath tries to draw parallels between historical and contemporary situations in Scotland to make the point that Scots Nationalists, and their movement, can never create a free Scotland unless it is also a socialist Scotland, free of the control of English capital. He does this by setting the drama in a narrative framework in which the socialist grandmother (Old Hen; i.e., Henrietta) of Young Hen, a Scots Nationalist/Separatist, traces the history of the betrayals and failures of Scots socialism over the course of over fifty years to demonstrate how England and its capitalists and politicians have consistently managed to sabotage Scots hopes for a better life for its working classes through a free Scotland. He thereby hopes to convince the separatists that their first loyalty should be to socialism, for only by successfully coupling socialism and nationalism, freeing Scotland from the tentacles of English capitalism and industrial and political hegemony, can Scotland be really free.

The shadow of Scottish nationalism threatens playwright John McGrath’s dream of a socialist society in Britain. With *Little Red Hen*, McGrath and his Scottish 7810 Company set out to combat the political illusions and false promises of the Scots Nats—promises that threaten to win young militants from more traditional allegiances.  

To do this, McGrath provides a series of scenes reconstructing historical events on both the national level and in the home of old Henrietta.

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from 1921 to the present (then 1976), utilizing those scenes to argue that English capitalists and politicians, often with Scots complicity (e.g., Ramsey MacDonald), have consistently worked against the best interests of the Scots working class, that English capitalism and Scots freedom and welfare cannot co-exist, and that efforts should be bent toward making a free Scotland a socialist Scotland. The play does not proceed along the line of a series of scenes, each illustrating a single, discrete point which, taken as a whole, add up to a conclusion. Rather, the scenes each demonstrate several points which are repeated a number of times for emphasis throughout the play. The selection and arrangement of these scenes, however, is still controlled by the argument which McGrath ultimately wishes to make: that for Scotland to be a free and independent nation, as the Nationalists wish, it is necessary for them to join and work for the socialist cause, so that an independent Scots political entity would also be an independent economic entity, free of the grasp of English capital, and able to liberate and ensure the welfare of its workers.

The structure of Little Red Hen consists of a series of scenes, each titled in a Brechtian fashion, illustrating approximately fifty years of the struggle toward a socialist Scotland, and the fate of that struggle. Within each of the titled scenes, several episodes may occur, frequently covering the space of several months or years, and two nations. The individual episodes, and the scenes as a whole, are separated by, and sometimes include, narration by Old Hen, or conversation between her and Young Hen, which is designed to explain, comment on, or reinforce the points made in the scenes. The scenes are the basic units of
structure in the play, each embodying a point or points critical to McGrath's argument. The play is divided formally into two acts, but there is no structural significance to the division; it is present to provide an interval for the audience to go out and chat, drink, etc.

Most of the scenes, as opposed to the narrative links, take place in the past, and are concerned with one of two closely related story lines: the national political and social events of the period, and the family story of Old Hen as a young woman, including her romance with and marriage to Charlie, another activist, and her/their life in the home of her parents, and what happens to that family.

**Little Red Hen**

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As the audience comes in, a band plays quietly. After a while, a voice announces the appearance of Harry Lauder, a popular Scots music hall performer of the past. A mock Harry Lauder, then the whole company as mock Harry Lauders, perform that performer's "sentimental and jovial" turns, all of which play up a Scots angle, and which Young Hen intends to use as a springboard for a discussion of Scots Nationalism.

**Scene 1** 1-6 The stage, then a public speaking place/Present, shifting to 1921

Title: Two Hens. Young Hen comes out to speak for Scots Nationalism. Old Hen, her grandmother, interrupts, and they argue about whether a free Scotland is possible without socialism, and where the primary commitment should be. To prove her point that socialism is a necessary pre-condition of a free Scotland, Old Hen puts on an illustrated history show, beginning in 1921. Four of the leading socialist Scots of the period, major figures in the socialist movement and the Labour Party in and around Glasgow and the Highlands (i.e., members of the so-called Red Clyde), are
Little Red Hen

Scene

(1) introduced and make brief speeches introducing themselves and their specific orientation on the left (socialist, marxist/communist), and making a few remarks on the necessity of the success of the proletarian revolution and the Labour Party to make life in the land decent. One, John Maclean, speaks for an independent, socialist Scotland. Another, James Maxton, leans in that direction. The final two, Willie Callacher and John Wheatley, take no stand on the nationalist issue. All, however, speak out strongly for socialism. The scene ends when, after the four men have made their speeches and very briefly discussed a couple of differences, Old Hen has the stage set for her home in Bridgeton, a Glasgow working-class suburb/slum, in 1921, and instructs Young Hen on how to play her (Old Hen) in the re-enactment of the events of the 1920s and 1930s to come.

Scene 2

6-10 Old Hen's home as a teenager in Bridgeton/1921

Title: The Lower Depths of Bridgeton. The family is established: Hen (latter teens), her brother George (who, since the war, has spoken very little, and worked in woodworking and carpentry), her mother, and her father. There is also a baby sister, Agnes, who is dying (and dies) from illness caused by the poor conditions in which they live. Charlie, a friend and co-worker of Father, comes in with him, initially declining to enter the house because he must deliver pamphlets for the Labour Party and its candidate in the district in the coming elections, Jimmy Maxton. He urges Father to come to a meeting and then vote, but Father indicates he will do neither, even though he supports the labor cause (because, as he admits to Charlie, he is ashamed because he cannot read). Charlie comes in to explain the Labour and union positions, pointing out that only they can help to relieve the conditions under which the family lives. Father mistrusts unions, and cannot see how he has a right to protest to the landlord, but Charlie sets him straight on both accounts. Nora (Mother) and George are uninvolved in the conversation, but Hen listens, and reads the pamphlets. Mother and George reject the notion of political involvement, but Freddie (Father) agrees to vote for Maxton. Charlie leaves, forgetting the pamphlets. Hen is so swayed by what the pamphlet, and especially Charlie, have to say that she delivers the pamphlets for him (and more, when
Little Red Hen

Scene | Pages | Place/Time-frame
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(Scene 2) | he asks, at the end of the scene, despite her exhaustion). This begins her involvement in socialist politics.

Scene 3 | 10-14 | Glasgow train station, then London-bound train, then London/1922

Title: Victory, and Off to Westminster. In Glasgow, in the 1922 parliamentary elections, Labour won ten of twelve seats, including Jimmy Maxton in the family's district. The Conservative Party, however, won the election and controlled Parliament. Maxton and Wheatley depart for London together, each making rallying speeches on the Socialist cause at the train station. On the trainride, they express their hopes for a Socialist state and their homesickness for Scotland. J. Ramsay MacDonald introduces himself (he speaks mostly in rhyme), and discusses his scheme to woo the Socialists from Scotland to vote for him for party leader. From the beginning, his practices of hypocrisy and political double-dealing are revealed, and the falseness of his socialist and Labour positions exposed. He meets Maxton and Wheatley, using a false Glasgow accent, and, claiming to be "Red", tries to convince them to vote for him. They initially indicate they mean to abstain, but agree eventually to consider his position.

Scene 4 | 14-17 | London cocktail party/1922

Title: Cocktails. London socialites and political figures have invited some of the Labour members from Scotland, Wales, and the North to a party, primarily because they regard them as quaint and are amused by their manners, and to make jokes at the expense of the new members from the provinces. MacDonald expresses his fear that the behavior of these new members, untutored and uninterested in polite London and polite politics, will rob his party of the respectability he has tried to build for it so that it will have a chance to rule (i.e., he will have the chance). He decides it will be his job to make them all "eminently respectable". Wheatley is seen successfully resisting the temptations and blandishments of polite London society and polite politicians, but a Lancaster member's wife, and Kirkwood (another Scots socialist) are seen succumbing, losing their socialist fervor and principles under the impact of the attention they receive.
Title: Hard Words at Westminster. Young Hen points to what happens in Scene 4 as proof that London is bad, and the Scots need their own parliament. Old Hen points out that a Scots Parliament may be a good thing, but that it was not London, but the bourgeoisie and their parliament that corrupted men like David Kirkwood. Young Hen asks if it happened to them all, but Old Hen says no, not to Haxton and Wheatley, and there commences a scene illustrating that point. As part of their spending cuts, the Tories, during a discussion of health in Scotland, decided to abolish a program of milk for babies; a campaign led by a Tory doctor and M.P. from London, Maxton rose and addressed the nearly deserted House on the terrible poverty and suffering, and the climbing rate of infant mortality, in Scotland, the latter partially attributable to moves such as the milk cuts and a proposal to deny immunization for several childhood diseases that came at a time when epidemics of those diseases were killing hundreds. He concludes by calling anyone who proposed or supported such measures a murderer, a technical violation of House rules. When he refuses to retract his statement, he is expelled from the House and "suspended". Wheatley, Old Hen then explains, rose, called them the same thing, and went to join Maxton, also under suspension. She explains that they then went to Wales, Scotland, and parts of England to gain support for their cause. Meanwhile, however, in London Ramsey MacDonald was preparing a political deal to "save" the party and undercut Maxton and Wheatley.

Title: A Cunning Ruse. MacDonald explains in a sonnet his dilemma. Maxton and Wheatley are stirring up the people to revolt. If they lose, they will damage the Labour Party terribly. If they win, they will "chop off his head". He arranges a deal with the Prime Minister, "conspiring and colluding", to readmit them to Parliament, a move which will seem to serve Democracy and its institutions, but really serve the powers-that-be by cutting away Maxton and Wheatley's case. They plan to do it when Maxton and Wheatley do not expect it and are unprepared, a move which will seriously undercut them both by taking them by surprise and by
### Scene 6

Making them seem like radical rabble-rousers, Word of the plan leaks out; however, and Willie Gallacher comes to London and advises Wheatley that, half-an-hour before the “surprise” vote to readmit them, they should go to the doors of Parliament demanding to be readmitted in the name of their constituents so that, when the vote comes, it will appear that they had won. They do this, and are successful. Young Hen calls Gallacher clever, but Old Hen points out it was the worst thing that could have happened. Had Haxton and Wheatley “told that lot of bourgeois bum-lickers to stuff their parliament up their backsides,” they might have saved the Labour movement by using their popular support with ordinary workers to organize a rebellion against MacDonald, and his future machinations against the workers could have been aborted, and a true worker’s party created.

### Scene 7

| Title: | Ramsay in Power. In the Parliamentary elections of 1924, the Conservatives dropped seats, and MacDonald was able to make a deal with the Liberals to bring in the first Labour government. Haxton speaks to Charlie in Glasgow, telling him of trouble ahead when the Labour government tries to implement its programs from bankers and stock-brokers. The beginning of Hen’s romance with Charlie is hinted at, MacDonald plays golf with a General Thompson, who is advising him on his Cabinet. MacDonald gives all the important or sensitive jobs to conservatives, and “fobs off the yobs” by giving them less important positions. Wheatley is offered the coal mines, but refuses, MacDonald needs him in the Cabinet as a token Bolshevist to pacify that wing of his party, so he offers Wheatley Housing and Health, which, though “trouble”, Wheatley accepts. The remainder of the scene is devoted to MacDonald’s interview with King George V. The king has a brief soliloquy in which he reveals that, despite the Socialist government, nothing can really change since he has all the power (money and army/police) on his Conservative side. MacDonald, however, soothes him considerably in their interview by proving to be, as George calls him, the quintessential “bum-licker”. George tells MacDonald to control his party and government properly or he will dissolve Parliament. The meeting ends with George considerably soothed, going off to play with his jewels. |

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Title: Meanwhile, Back in Glasgow. Wheatley opens the scene with a plea for continued activity and mobilization of Labour forces, as Parliament cannot be trusted to do what is necessary. Charlie comes to visit Hen, waiting in the empty house until she arrives. She is happy, returning from work in a sweatshop, jubilant in the Labour victory. Charlie is glum, and explains to her it is because of the make-up of the government, which is indicative of the sell-out. He also reveals that he has been laid off, as has every socialist in his shop. Charlie tells Hen he loves her, but has no money. She overcomes his reluctance by telling him it is wonderful, and proposing to him. During a narrated section, Hen reveals that Weirs, Charlie's employer, had distributed a blacklist with his name on it all over Scotland, so he could find no work. Wheatley made some progress in improving conditions for the poor, but not much, and it was more than an uphill fight every step. Maxton continued to fight as well, but realizing the situation, came out behind a Scots Home Rule bill proposed by Buchanan. Before any action could be taken on it, however, even to "castrate" it, MacDonald, hoping to improve his position, called new elections, and lost. The scene ends with Old Hen revealing that in late 1924 and early 1925 conditions continued to get worse in Glasgow, but that in May, 1925, she and Charlie were married.

There is a long discussion about sleeping arrangements in the house, now that Charlie and Hen are married and will be living there. In the end, it appears that George will have to give up his own room and sleep in the kitchen, as he did before Agnes died. George leaves the room and returns packed to go. He reveals he has taken a room, and is leaving. Despite the family's hardships, he has saved 200 pounds, and is going off to start a carpentry business, having already engaged two assistants. He reveals the nature of his bourgeois, capitalist dreams, and rails against Charlie and Hen for the futility of their socialist vision and all the trouble it causes. He leaves, wearing a bowler and overcoat to walk down the street to establish his break with the family. The scene ends with a song.
Pre-show for Act II. Old Hen calls Young Hen back to the stage to resume the play. Charlie and Father are in a state of tension, not because of unemployment, the Tory government's attempts to smash the workers, or the economic crisis, but because Hen is about to give birth. It was their first child, and Young Hen's mother. Young Hen comments on the irony that from squalid beginnings and socialist parents her mother has become a Conservative (a fan of Margaret Thatcher) and a social climber with pretensions to bourgeois existence, despite the fact she lives in council housing.

Scene 11  
34-40  All over England and Scotland/1926

Title: The Implacable Foe. This scene traces out the progress of the General Strike, particularly in Glasgow, and the way in which MacDonald and the Trades Union Council buckled and sold out the workers to the Tory government on the verge of victory. The origins of the strike are traced in a fictional conversation between Stanley Baldwin, the Tory Prime Minister, and a coal miner. Baldwin insists the miners must take a cut in pay, and the miner rudely refuses. Old Hen explains the tactics of the strike, which included a government delay of six months in wage reductions when the trades unions rallied behind the miners. This allowed the government time to train troops, students, etc., to take over vital jobs in time of strikes. MacDonald came out against the strike. The seeds of defeat were sown when the miners put the matter into the hands of the TUC, which ultimately buckled on the verge of victory under the leadership of Walter Citrine, whose speeches in the play make it clear he was more concerned with personal honors and advancement than the lives of workers. The TUC "grovelled", begging Baldwin to take them off the hook where the General Strike was concerned, which, as Old Hen explains, let the Tories know they would win and made them not back down. Events in Glasgow are traced through conversations in Hen's home, including Charlie's being beaten by police on a picket line, Hen's activities, and some accidents, even deaths, caused by untrained people doing jobs like running the trains. There is a long series of readings from
Scene 11 newspapers and histories of the strike, read by five readers (including Charlie, Father, and Young Hen). At the end of the readings, the scene reverts to the home, where, despite the strength and resolve of the striking workers, Charlie announces that the leadership has sold out and surrendered unconditionally to government demands. He also indicates, by reading an ad in the Glasgow Herald, that union members were not rehired after the strike, and predicts that the working class would pay for the strike for years to come, as Old Hen says they did.

Scene 12 40-42 Stage/Present

Title: Bone Soup. Narrative section in which Old Hen traces what happened to the family and movement in the late 1920s and 1930s. Charlie, out of work and on the dole, eventually went to fight in Spain and was killed. Hen worked, even when she had twins (she describes an incident in which the government tried to deny her benefits to which she was entitled after the birth of the children). MacDonald’s sell-out of the workers is traced further: he was elected again on a promise to increase worker’s and unemployment benefits, and instead he cut them as unemployment rose from ten to twenty per cent; Hen’s father and mother lost their jobs, and the family was reduced to Hen’s salary. For food they purchased broken cookies and stale, broken loaves of bread, and families made bone soup. She also traces briefly what happened to the Red Clyde members in the 1930s, most of whom, but not Jimmy Haxton, mellowed out of socialism (at least radical socialism), and slid comfortably into the Labour Party hierarchy. Wheatley also resisted selling out to the Party, and died fighting for the workers. The TUC remained “spineless” throughout the decade.

Scene 13 42-44 Family home/1951

George returns home. He has a long speech to audience before there is any interaction with the family. He has prospered and become very wealthy through his involvement in the business trade. To improve his business, he has joined the Labour Party and become a member of the Glasgow Corporation (city council), using his post to steer business in building public housing to his diverse companies. He explains the corrupt
(Scene 13) system in which he works, whereby he buys old tenements, makes a profit fixing them up for the Corporation, another selling them to the Corporation for public housing, more when he is paid to knock them down, and the biggest profit of all when they contract with him to build more public housing to replace that which he has destroyed. The scene concludes with a scene between George and his aged parents in which he explains to them that he is going, on behalf of the council, to repair and modernise their apartment, for which they must pay, then evict them to tear it down. The home is transformed before our eyes, the parents respond with pleasure, and George ironically traces his political roots and that of his "renovation" to Maxton, Wheatley, and Maclean.

Scene 14 44-51 Stage/Present

Title: Enter Scotland's Oil. In the concluding scene of the play, McGrath attempts to solidify his case that Scotland must be socialist to be truly free. Young Hen points out that conditions have improved since the 1920s in a conversation with Old Hen opening the scene, but Old Hen says that better housing and food, more wages and relief, is not enough. It is not the real socialist vision of a world in which everyone can lead their life to its fullest capacity, not just a few. Old Hen complains that everyone wants that, but none of the young are willing to really fight for it, and she is thus still handing out pamphlets and organizing rallies. Old Hen demands Young Hen tell her what she and the SNP (Scotts Nationalist Party) intend to do that is better and more productive. This serves as a bridge into speeches by three SNP politicians: Charlotte Square, Harish Banff, and William McCashin, in which they are revealed to be greedy capitalists whose vision of a free Scotland is one in which they can exploit the workers and Scotland's resources for their own profit, rather than English capitalists doing it for theirs. They are essentially Tory politicians (one, Banff, stood for election as a Conservative, but was so badly beaten he concluded that Tories were finished in Scotland, and so leapt onto the SNP bandwagon to improve his political, and financial, future), who are trying to capitalise on the nationalist sentiment in the nation. Young Hen protests that not all SNP members are like that, and that some of her members want social justice, but
**Scene 14**

Old Hen responds that you cannot have social justice without economic justice. Young Hen speaks for gaining independence first, then socialism, but Old Hen says that by then it will be too late, that multinational corporations will be in-control of industry and oil, and that she wants a Scotland free of England and of capitalist greed, misery, and exploitation. Young Hen speaks of her group's belief in democracy and participation (workers on management boards), but Old Hen points out that participation is a capitalist trick to keep workers under control. Young Hen's last appeal is to action, to nationalist pride. Old Hen responds, tying the play together, that her generation had failed because it split nationalism and socialism, putting economics first, and that the new generation will fail as well if it puts nationalism first, for to succeed the two must go hand in hand together, Young Hen ends by agreeing that her grandmother has given her something to think about. The play ends with a series of speeches by characters in the play (Mother, Father, George, Charlie, George V, Maxton, Gallacher, Wheatley, and Maclean) in which they re-emphasize something they said earlier in the play to crystallize and fix the arguments, and then with a song which asserts that a free Scotland must be socialist.5

The structure of *Little Red Hen* is clearly epic. Its action covers about fifty-five years, and swings between the stage, Glasgow locations, and London locations. It is composed of fourteen discrete scenes which, though they are organized chronologically outside of the segments which represent the present in the theatre, are episodic in their internal construction and relationship to one another. The play traces a historical process in its action; however, this representation of a historical development is not the element that controls the

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structure of the play. Rather, the play's structure is controlled by an argument, which is responsible for which scenes from the historical sequence are included, and which omitted. This argument is that the freedom of Scotland cannot be attained without socialism, for even if Scotland were to attain political autonomy, it would still be dominated by English capital and investment, and that would still work to the detriment of the Scots working class. McGrath argues that only when nationalism and socialism work hand in hand can Scotland become free, a point which he makes clear near the end of the play in a speech by Old Hen.

Old Hen: And so were we—but do you no’ see the mistake we made; we put politics—that’s Westminster and government, up here, and it failed us. Then we put economics—that’s unions and General Strikes and the abolition of capitalism, up here—and it failed us, why? Because the two must go together. When the working class of Scotland gets itself on the move, and organised, for both together—then you’ll see something. That’s what you should be fighting for. (Scene 14, p. 49)

In order to argue his case, McGrath, through his narrator, Old Hen, and her recreations of historical events in the lives of her family and the leftist movement in Great Britain, points to the lessons of history: the betrayals of the workers by the Labour Party; capitalist oppression, particularly under Tory governments, which have failed to relieve, and often caused, poor housing, ill health, and a lack of good food; the suppression of the workers' movement by government, seen most vividly in the handling of the General Strike, and the duplicity, weakness, and betrayals of its leaders (MacDonald, TUC); the historical corruption of both Labour and Conservative politicians (MacDonald, her brother George). Old Hen draws parallels between the present conditions in Scotland and
those of the past, between the present nationalist activism and "the heady days of 'Red Clyde' when a socialist Scotland seemed possible," in order to warn Young Hen of the dangers, of the fact that the same sort of machinations will cause the failure of all Scots workers movements until socialism and nationalism are successfully linked and the working class mobilized to fight for the cause. In so doing, McGrath hoped to provide a valuable lesson for the present generation of Scots.

In *Little Red Hen*, we try to take a look at that earlier time of high hopes, and at the present moment of aspiration, through the eyes of one of that older generation. What went wrong with the first period—which ended in the misery of the '30s—may be of interest to people today who are working, as she did, for a better future for the people of Scotland.

In arguing his case, McGrath selected points in the historical record to illustrate points central to his contention that capitalism would function as an oppressive, enslaving force on Scotland and its people, free or as a part of Great Britain, and that Scotland would have to be socialist to be truly free. The manner in which he makes his case is to provide illustrations of a number of points which establish the social ills caused by capitalism and capitalists, and by its politicians, both Tory and Labour, whose corruption and double-dealing have consistently betrayed working-class interests. Once the evil of the English capitalist system has been established, it then becomes possible to argue that the only viable alternative is socialism and an

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autonomous Scotland, free of English controls, and ruled by the working class. Though McGrath explores a number of points in his argument, three representative and highly significant ones will serve to illustrate the way in which McGrath constructed his argument, and how that argument controlled the structure of the play: the hardships imposed on the working class by capitalists and their governments; the ineffectiveness and corruption of Labour Party politicians and governments, including the TUC; and the illusion that separatism will bring about a state better fit to serve the Scots working class, regardless of its economic orientation and policies.

The social ills which resulted from capitalist control of Scotland, its economic life and politics, are represented primarily in Scenes 2, 5, 8, 11, and 12. The development begins with the first view of the home life of Han as a teenager, in 1921. In this scene, the youngest child, Agnes, is dying because of the condition of the housing and the disease which breeds in such conditions. When Freddie asks how the child is, Nora replies, "Well, I wouldn't say she's worse, but she's no' exactly better—it's this bloody room, the walls is wringing wet and she cannae get air to breathe at all." (p. 8) Charlie agrees that the house is responsible for Agnes's condition, and points out later in the scene that unless the political situation changes, and Maxton, the socialist, is elected, conditions will not improve.

Charlie: Look, missus, you've said it yourself. These old houses are no' fit to be lived in the way they are—no wonder yer bairn's sick, no wonder she's no' gettin' better—now I'm not sayin' "Get out and vote for Maxton and you're gonnae get three months' holiday on the French Riviera", no, but what I am saying is if us and the likes of us don't vote for him and the likes of him, this tenement's
still going to be standing here in fifty years' time, still wrin'g wet, still stuffed full of sick bairns and underpaid, overworked people. For why? Because the place is owned by a landlord—right? (p. 8)

As Charlie points out, the conditions in the house are the responsibility of the landlord, a capitalist, who provides inadequate housing, generally for unfair rents, and evicts anyone who protests. He is, moreover, "legal—sanctified in the law of the land" in what he does (p. 9). The oppressiveness and destructiveness of the law for the working class, and particularly of the policies of the capitalists' party, the Tories, is developed in Scene 5, during a debate in the House of Commons. The Tory government, despite epidemics in Scotland, has cut milk subsidies for children and intimated that inoculations for whooping-cough and measles will now be cut off at the height of epidemics of those diseases and influenza. In a speech to the House, Maxton argues that the policies of the Tory government are responsible for a high rate of tuberculosis and infant mortality in Scotland because they condemn people to live in conditions which cause disease to breed rapidly, all as part of a capitalist program to save money regardless of the human cost.

Maxton: There is some division of opinion as to the causes of this disease; there is much division of opinion as to treatment and possibilities of cure; but it is admitted by all that sunlight is an important element; and that good, nutritious, wholesome food is also an element, both in preventing the disease and in effecting a cure. . . . For this reason (because of incredibly low wage rates paid by factory and business owners), not only are they denied food, clothing, and house accommodation, but even the free gifts of God: sunshine and fresh air, for fresh air and sunlight cannot be got in a big proportion of our tenement dwellings. . . . That seems to me to be a very definite and clear indication as to where the breeding-ground for some of your tuberculosis is to be found, at least. . . .
We have the definite statement in the report: "We have continued to carry out a policy of rigorous economy because we must save money." (p. 18)

In order to save money, the Tory government, far from even maintaining the horrible conditions which breed disease and death in the tenements, are willing to make them even worse, reversing the supply of food and milk and cutting off inoculation. As Maxton says, "In the interests of economy they condemned hundreds of children to death, and I call it murder. . . . It is a fearful thing for any man to have on his soul—a cold, callous, deliberate crime in order to save money." (p. 19) The monetary policies of the Tory government, the government of capital and big business, permits the capitalist establishment to keep wages unreasonably low, condemning people to unhealthy living conditions, which it permits landlords to maintain, and then makes matters worse by providing inadequate relief from those conditions, even minimal food and medical subsidies, from public funds. The policies of government and capital are seen to go hand in glove in maintaining a state in which the working class is ill-fed, ill-housed, ill-clothed, and riddled with disease.

In Scene 8, the means the capitalists use to keep workers in line and suppress labor unions and socialists are revealed. Weirs, the firm where Charlie was employed, announced 200 lay-offs. As Charlie tells Hen, "I'm out of work. I've been combed out. Weirs was laying off two hundred—I was number seven. Every red in the shop got thrown out." (p. 26) Not only did the firm eliminate the "trouble-making" elements from its work-force by lay-offs, but it instituted a blacklist circulated to other firms, thus denying those men any opportunity for further employment in their trade. Hen explains to Young Hen, "Not only was he
out of work, he was on the blacklist—Weirs had given his name to every engineering employer in the West of Scotland: troublemaker—no thank you, get out." (Scene 8, p. 27) To make matters worse, all of this occurred during a time when a Labour government was in power; a government which should have acted to prevent such practices, and to provide jobs for workers at a time (1924-5) of rising unemployment. The practice of capitalists legally denying employment to union members is raised again in Scene 11, when, after the conclusion of the General Strike of 1926, the Glasgow Herald was able to announce, "No union member formerly employed on the Glasgow Herald need apply for re-instatement." (p. 40) Throughout Scene 11, which traces the course of the General Strike, the contempt of the Tory government and big business for labour and the working class is seen. In fact, the Conservative government of Stanley Baldwin provoked the General Strike in an attempt to break the backs of the unions; a move which in fact succeeded in crippling the unions and labour movement for many years after the TUC, on the verge of victory, caved in and surrendered. As Charlie says when the end is announced: "Nora, we're all gonnae suffer—we've fought and we've lost—now we're gonnae pay the price. As if we're not paying enough already—the whole working class is gonnae suffer for this for years to come." (p. 40) The strike began when the government insisted that workers, in particular the miners, take a pay cut during a time of economic hardship. Old Man explains: "Aye, capitalism was buggered; just like it is now. And the only way they could make it work was to take money out of the pockets of the workers. Just like it is now." (Scene 11, p. 35) (An interesting comment in light of the
recent rounds of wage concessions in both Britain and the United States)
In a time of rising unemployment and hardship, the government and its allies wished to take money from the poor and working people who could least afford it to place in the pockets of the big capitalists. The government withdrew their demands for six months, during which time they trained "scabs" from among the army and students to take the jobs of workers when the strike came, as it did in May, 1926. Had the union struck immediately, they would almost certainly have brought down the government; as it was, they gave it time to prepare. The road to the government victory was actually paved by the Trades Union Council, which tried to deal with the government before calling a strike.

Old Hen: That Executive grovelled, it cringed, it begged Baldwin to think of a way to stop them calling a General Strike. That was when Baldwin and Churchill and Lord Birkenhead and the other generalissimos of the ruling class knew they were on a winner. Their side was organised, ours was unprepared, fevered, and weak at the top. Go ahead—says Baldwin—call your strike—and we’ll smash you.

(p. 37)
The strike commenced, with the government utilizing police to protect strike-breakers and beat pickets (Scene 11, p. 37, describes how Charlie came in beaten), and using unqualified people, troops and students, in jobs on the docks and trains, causing a number of injuries. After nearly two weeks, however, with nearly all strikes holding solid at close to 100%, the General Council of the TUC gave in. What followed is described by Old Hen in the beginning of Scene 12, the last one primarily concerned with the detrimental impact of capitalism and capitalist governments on the working class. After the General Strike, unemployment rose, and then came the Great Depression of the 1930s.
Old Hen: Soon Charlie wasnae the only one on the parish—there was thousands and thousands queuing for their dole-money—if they were lucky enough to get any. We got another Labour government alright—aye, Ramsay MacDonald rode again—we put him in to increase the benefit—do you know what he did? He cut it. When he came in, one man in ten was unemployed—in two years, one man in five. Do you know what we had to dae? Ah’ve seen my ain mother tramp on her two feet frae Bridgeton to Skinners in Sauchiestall Street, wi a pillow-slip tae fill wi’ broken loaves that naebody wanted—and, if she was lucky, squashed meringues. The next day she’ud be up to the Barmaline for two pennorth of broken biscuits. First Charlie lost his job, then my father, then my mother—I was still going on fine, nineteen shillings a week frae the sweatshop, stitching up ballgowns and pin-stripe suits. Made me sick to think of people dressin’ up like that wi’ other people starvin’ near to death in the same city—. (Scene 12, p. 41)

Conditions were so bad people scrambled for bones to soak to make bone soup. While all this suffering was going on, as Old Hen points out, the rich, the ruling class, ignored it and danced. Throughout the course of the period traced in the play, government and business worked to weaken labor, oppress the working class, and, far from alleviating the terrible conditions in which many of the Glasgow poor lived, actually took actions which made them far worse in the name of saving money. McGrath utilizes actions in five scenes to establish clearly that, throughout the years represented in the play, capitalism has worked against the lives and best interests of the working class, and would be likely to do so in the future, as in the present.

The action illustrating the treachery and corruption of the mainstream Labour Party (as opposed to its genuine socialists), and its ineffectiveness in meeting the needs of working-class people, is presented primarily in Scenes 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, and 13. Most of this action is centered on the machinations of Ramsay MacDonald, through his
verse commentary, although the situation is considerably updated in
George's monologue, Scene 13, which takes place in 1951. The develop­
ment begins when MacDonald introduces himself and describes his place
in the party and his ambitions, which have little to do with improving
the lot of workers.

MacDonald: J. Ramsay MacDonald speaking
A great parliamentary career's what I'm seeking;
I may look like a bit of a smarty
But in fact I'm in the Labour Party.

When they say that my politics are soft
I remind them—I was born in a croft
And though I now hob-nob with grand lords
I once fearlessly criticised the landlords.

In a preface to a book, as a matter of fact; of course
that was in nineteen hundred and five, and some long
time ago, but a little reputation for being red goes
quite a long way in the Labour Party; damned useful, too.

Now this man Clynes is a boring wee bleeder
It's time I'd a shot at being Labour leader—
But alas and alack, woe betide!
I'm in need of the votes of these wild men from the
Clyde—
I'll stand in a good left-wing stance (poses)
Then maybe I'll stand a bit of a chance—

So watch this: I think you'll be impressed. (Scene 3,
p. 13)

At this point, MacDonald adopts a false Glasgow accent to convince
Wheatley and Maxton to vote for him. Having become party leader, he
sets his mind to becoming Prime Minister. However, in order to attain
the office, he feels he must make his party respectable, and tame its
"wild" socialist elements; a step which will neuter the real spokesmen
for the working class.

MacDonald: All those wild men roaring down from the Clyde
And Wales and the North and God knows where beside
Are turning my party into a fearsome scrimmage
They're common, uncouth and spoiling our image.
For Government's high office we must seem to be fit—
But how can that be when they belch and scratch and spit
The people who matter will soon make a mockery
Of their Welshty, Northerness and unspeakable Jockery

Now I'm the leader I shall make it my job
To teach them good manners, to curtsey and bob
A party of workers is obviously rejectable
I shall make it my business to make them eminently respectable. (Scene 4, p. 14)

To achieve his end of making the new members respectable, MacDonald introduces them to London social life, of which the cocktail party represented in Scene 4 is an example. Though Wheatley and Maxton resist his attempts at taming them, many more, such as David Kirkwood, succumb and mellow from socialists to liberals.

Kirkwood: That's just an example of what I was going to say (Mrs. Beatrice Webb telling him not to use her title, Lady Panfield, but to call her Beatrice); before I entered the House of Commons, I'm afraid I knew little of the Great Ones, the Powerful Ones, the Lordly Ones; by the way, you can read all this in my autobiography— My Life of Revolt— but when I entered the House I found it was full of wonder. I had to shake myself occasionally as I found myself walking about and talking with men whose names were household words. More strange was it to find them all so simple, unaffected and friendly. (p. 16)

There follows a song, in which Kirkwood has the lines, "Choose the right friends, in a year or two—you can join the peerage." (p. 16) This defection of socialists under the influence of London life, MacDonald's policies, and power (when they come to power) eroded the socialist base of the party throughout the 1920s and 1930s, as Old Hen explains at the end of the play.

Old Hen: And our great parliamentary heroes? What did they do? Most of the Great Reds of the Clyde slid into the Labour Party, in the hope of turnin' into Prime Ministers. Not Jimmy Maxton, no—he became a sad, solitary voice, cryin' in the wilderness. Nor Wheatley. He died. Still a Pepe,
b u t s t i l l f i g h t i n 3. And the TUC? Spineless. (Scene 12, p. 40)

In these scenes, McGrath shows how MacDonald was able to undercut the working class and work against their interests by wooing their representatives away from strong socialist positions and working as a moderating influence.

The next episode in which MacDonald works against the workers and their representatives occurs in Scene 6. After Maxton and Wheatley have been suspended from the House of Commons for calling some Conservative members murderers for cutting milk and food subsidies to children in violation of parliamentary rules, they begin successfully to organize a grass-roots national social protest. As MacDonald explains, however, to further his interests, this campaign on behalf of the workers must be stopped.

MacDonald: I might have known we'd have trouble sooner or later. And one of those wild men would be the instigator. We must have good manners, dignity, sweet reason. These damn'd Glasgow keelies are guilty of treason—

And now they're proposing to storm through the land Attacking our democracy, red flag in hand; Mocking our parliament, rousing the rabble Frightening the voters and stirring up trouble.

If they lose then we all lose, our party is dead If they win then I'm done for—they'll chop off my head.

Now nothing in my view could possibly be more sinister So I've conspired and colluded with the Tory Prime Minister

Democracy will be served, parliament will win They're too dangerous to be out, so we'll let them back in.

When they're least expecting it—shh! (Scene 6, p. 20)

Learning of the plan, Maxton and Wheatley, with Gallacher's advice,
manage to make it look as if their demands have been met in returning. However, as Old Hen points out, their re-entry was the worst thing that could have happened for the people.

Old Hen: The day they boys were sucked back into Westminster whirlpool was a black day for every worker in Scotland—aye, and in England, too. If they'd told that lot of bourgeois bum-lickers to stuff their parliament up their backsides, they might have saved the Labour movement. If they'd gone off to the workers and the ordinary party members and organised a rebellion against MacDonald and his tomfoolery, they would have had all the support they needed. And something might just have emerged to shake the mighty ruling-class off the backs of the working people. (p. 21)

That did not happen, however, and soon Ramsey MacDonald was elected Prime Minister, bringing, in 1924, the first Labour government to power. In an interview with King George V, represented in Scene 7, MacDonald's true colors as a servant of the ruling class and enemy of the workers becomes absolutely clear. Prior to going to the meeting, he speaks of his cabinet choices.

MacDonald: Now, I'm the PM and Foreign Office, too
And I'd be everything else, but there'd be too much to do
I'd have no time for golf or anything
Good, loyal, right-wingers, in all the key jobs
The problem remains—how to fob off the yobs.

I've had one idea that fits in rather neatly
I'll offer the coal mines to that Bolshevik Wheatley.

(p. 23)

When Wheatley refuses, MacDonald, realizing he needs him, offers Wheatley another position, which he accepts. "What one can't win by cunning, one must win by stealth—I'll offer him trouble—Housing and Health." (p. 23) In this way, by token representation, MacDonald tries to keep control over and neutralize the socialist elements in his party. He affirms his intentions to continue doing so in his meeting with George,
When the king complains that at a labor rally the "Red Flag" and the "Marseillaise" had been sung, MacDonald replies that he told them it was a disgrace, and further:

MacDonald: Only by hard persuasion and clucking like a spinster Can I stop the "Red Flag" being sung in the Palace of Westminster But I shall stop their yodelling, from their mouths I'll wean it— Or make quite sure that if they do sing, they certainly won't mean it. (p. 24)

George V is pleased with MacDonald and his attitude, and with the fact that the cabinet will be made up of "honest, God-fearing, respectable bum-lickers like yourself." (p. 24) George dismisses MacDonald, and leaves happily, saying, "We think the neck's safe in the hands of those fools—We're off to the Tower to play with our jewels . . ." (p. 24)

The extent of MacDonald's betrayal in the selection of his cabinet is made clear in the following scene, Scene 8, when Charlie reacts to the selections angrily, reading Hen a section of a socialist paper.

Charlie: "It is a cabinet of old and ageing men; the average age is nearly sixty. It is a cabinet of dullish men with a large contingent of recruits who have spent most of their lives in the Tory or Liberal parties. It is a cabinet largely of rich men and of men who have inherited comfortable fortunes: of capitalists or landlords or brewers, So far as Labour is concerned, many of them have never even worked for their living at all, let alone had experience of poverty. And, as for Socialism, not more than five or six of the whole twenty would call themselves Socialists, and each one of them would give a different definition of that much-abused term . . ." (stops reading) Do you want to hear any more? About Lord Haldane or Lord Parmaur: " . . . the most dreary and most reactionary of all Tory opponents of social reforms. . ."? . . . Or would you like to hear this quote from Carlyle: "No party has been so sold since Judas concluded his trade."? (pp. 25-6)

In selecting his cabinet, MacDonald turned his back on the workers who
placed him in power, and selected for sensitive positions some of those most opposed to the interests of the working class. Clearly, MacDonald and his cabinet represent one of the great betrayals of working-class interests by a member of the Labour Party in the twentieth century.

During the General Strike, MacDonald, though out of the government, stood against the striking workers. In Scene 11, MacDonald says, "As far as we can see we shall go on. I don't like General Strikes. I haven't changed my opinion. I have said so in the House of Commons. I don't like it; honestly, I don't like it; but, honestly, what can be done? . . . By the way, I'm the leader of the Labour Party. Honestly." (p. 35) In the workers' great challenge to capitalist and Tory government oppression, MacDonald deserted and opposed them, apparently agreeing with Mrs. Beatrice Webb, whose husband was chairman of the Labour Party, and whom, she asserts in the play, agreed with her as well when she said, "We are personally against the use of the General Strike in order to force the government to submit to the men's demands. If it were to succeed it would mean a militant minority were starving the majority into submission—and that would be the end of democracy." (p. 35) In a critical moment for the workers' movement, the Labour Party hierarchy deserted them; and they and their cause suffered a devastating set-back in the aftermath of the 1926 General Strike.

The final act of treachery by MacDonald against the workers is revealed briefly by Old Hen in Scene 12. "We got another Labour government alright—aye, Ramsay MacDonald rode again—we put him in to increase the benefit—do you know what he did? He cut it. When he came in, one man in ten was unemployed—in two years, one man in five." (p. 41)
However, McGrath's treatment of the career and treachery of Ramsey MacDonald does not conclude his treatment of the Labour Party. In Scene 13, the final one in which he treats this subject extensively, the absorption of capitalists into the Labour Party, their corruption of it, and their use of it to further oppress the poor, is revealed. This is done in a monologue by George, Hen's brother, who had prospered as a builder during the 1930s and 1940s, then joined the Labour Party and got himself elected a councillor when the post-war Labour government announced its public housing policy. Since that time, he has been using his office to divert funds to his companies under contract. He explains that, his interests having gone "hand-in-hand together" in his two jobs, politician and builder, he is about to embark on a really major project (again, at the workers' expense).

George: The future lies glowing ahead like a Christmas puddin'. First, a few bob on the side renovatin' the old tenements—that's Phase One. Phase Two, you sell them to Glasgow Corporation. Phase Three, Glasgow Corporation pays you to knock them all down, and Phase Four, and this is where the real profits, or should I say social benefits, come in—you pay me to rebuild the whole shooting-match. (Scene 13, p. 43)

The corruption of Labour principles, the perversion of the principles and vision of socialists like John Wheatley, is revealed in this scene, along with the perversion of the whole Labour movement under the impact of an influx of capitalist members willing to use their political power to the detriment of the working class and to exploit their positions and power to gain wealth. This enormous perversion of the principles of the Labour socialists of thirty years before accounts in no small part for the desertion of Labour by many of the young, represented in
the play by Young Hen, and illustrates one more way in which capitalism is detrimental, inimical, to the interests of the working class. It's leaders infiltrated and destroyed the workers' movement and, with Mac-Donald's help, the party which was created to bring social and economic justice to Great Britain through a socialist workers' state.

The final significant point in McGrath's argument that socialism and nationalism must move forward hand in hand if a free Scotland is to be created deals with the essential falseness of the proposition that the two causes can be separated. In a sense, the demonstration of the treachery of the Labour Party and its exploitation by capitalists dis-above are proofs in themselves of this point of McGrath's case. However, he also includes a few direct assertions of this point, as well as one graphic illustration of the dangers of this illusion in the scenes in which it is most prominent: 1 and 14, the scenes which frame the play. The first assertion of this point comes early in the first scene, when Old Hen explains to Young Hen the economic and social facts of life in contemporary Scotland.

Old Hen: You've no more chance of Bonnie Prince Charlie comin' back from the grave to claim his rightful throne—when Scotland's free (than of saying how a free Scotland will be run/governed, Young Hen's assertion of what will come to pass). There's two Scotlands, Hen, and don't you forget it—there's the Scotland that's you and me, that's been robbed and cheated and worked to the bone when it suits or thrown on the queue at the burroo when it doesnae suit—that's one Scotland; and there's a Scotland that owns factories like yours and sweatshops like I worked in, and grouse moors and mountains and islands and stocks and shares, and says what goes—and there's only one of them can be free at a time—and don't you go kiddin' yourself it's going to be the workers-- (pp. 2-3)

Old Hen's assertion that the capitalists run Scotland and will not bring
workers economic and social freedom and equality, even in an independent Scotland, is echoed moments later by James Maxton in his introductory speech.

Maxton: My name is James Maxton, also from Pollokshaws. I’m a member of the ILP, I believe in Home Rule for Scotland, and I believe in socialism. Of course, for believing that, Calton Jail was for a spell my ancestral home. Labour must fight and fight to win. To win socialism in our time. The pathway of reformism or gradualism does not do for me when I see the children of Bridgeton going to school with a careworn look, when only joy and play should be in their minds. It is all very well to say that we must build "brick by brick" a structure of socialism—but you’ve got to get the bricks, and they are in the hands of capitalists. And even if you get the materials to build your edifice, you get it on capitalist conditions. In the end you find you have built not the Palace of Socialist Freedom, but a slum dwelling for the working classes. We place our faith in the common working people of our land, inspired with courage, hope and determination, to build the new Society.

The danger to the working people of an autonomous, capitalist Scotland is demonstrated vividly in Scene 14, in which Old Hen’s and Maxton’s worst fears are realized when three Nationalist politicians, one a failed Tory candidate, give speeches outlining their vision of a future independent Scotland. Without exception, those visions are capitalist, and would lead to the continued oppression of Scots workers. One of them, Hamish Banff, who owns 800 acres of farmland and boasts of making a killing the previous year when he withheld barley from a tight market (p. 46), predicts something akin to the sweatshop conditions of the nineteenth century for Scots workers, as well as government by bankers and merchants.

Banff: Oh aye, propaganda—"do not be misled by the propaganda of the London parties, we in Scotland are one the road to untold riches"—well, some of us have got untold riches right now, and as long as they remain untold, there’ll be no more
questions asked. You see—we need the business fraternity as our friends, make no mistake about that—and that is why we've gone to the trouble to set up our Economics Advisory Committee—with your boys from the merchant banks and the investment trusts and the Stock Exchange—to tell us exactly how to run Scotland—and make a profit; no skimping; these are the best men—when it comes to making a bob or two—and after independence that's what we'll all be in it for—er, in for. "We are going to give Scottish businessmen a fair crack of the whip." Now I realise that's a dangerous image that, but we're no' sayin' who's back we're cracking it on. I'll say this, though, you won't see the blood for the colour of the shirt. Aye, and we'll have the labourers back in the bothies singing bothy ballads and snapping up their bowl of broot, that's what made Scotland great, not wasting their time chasing better wages like they do in England. All these realities will become a dream when our own dear Scotia becomes a nation once again. (pp. 46-7)

Banff's vision of a capitalist paradise in which workers are docile and paid a minimum to maximize profits, and in which socialists will be, if not purged, at least silenced, is echoed, albeit less violently, by another speaker, William McCashin, whose vision includes dominance of Scotland by American capitalists who employ Scottish bosses, and multi-national corporations (p. 47). He also denies that Scotland will be socialist, despite the assertions of some SNP members, raising the specter of "secret police, massacre of women and children, rape, arson, looting, thuggery, monumental architecture, anarchy, chaos, civil war, American intervention possibly with H-bombs, the death of all we hold near and dear—and workers getting more wages. Now that last one's the real problem." (p. 48) McCashin ends with the pronouncement that "After independence, Scotland will definitely not be a socialist country." (p. 48) While Banff and McCashin are rendered as idiots, and their speeches are obviously overstated by McGrath for satirical and propagandistic effect, their appearance serves to remind the audience that a
capitalist Scotland, regardless of whether it is run by English or Scots, can mean nothing but continued oppression and injustice for Scots workers, and a lack of real social and economic equality and freedom.

Following the appearance of the SNP speakers, Young Hen challenges Old Hen with objections to Old Hen's vision of the party, stating that there are many in the SNP who want freedom and social justice in Scotland, but that independence must come first, and that then perhaps the socialists in her party can take control. However, Old Hen replies that the emergence of the socialists after independence would be too late.

Old Hen: Do you no' think that might be a wee bit late? Let's be hearing from you now, before your bankers and your think-tanks and your failed Tories take you over completely.

Young Hen: Aye, but first we must get independence, so we've got to stay united. After independence...

Old Hen: Oh God. Here we go again—do you no' see what I'm sayin' to you? Now come on—for it matters, girl; what are you gonnae dae any different from us? You're gonnae move your parliament from London to Edinburgh, but it'n gonnae still be there tae keep the people quiet and under the thumb—what difference is any of that gonnae make? None at all. And your precious oil—look—there's not one man—or woman—in your party gonnae make that much impact on the multinational corporations—all you'd be gettin' after independence is a few people grabbin' a bigger slice of the same bloody capitalist cake—Come on, girl—I'm waiting for you tae speak.

Young Hen: Aye, well, I canna get a word in edgeways—

Old Hen: Well try to avoid stupid expressions like social justice—you lot don't read enough, you use words that don't mean anythin'. You've learnt nothin' from two hundred years of working class history. All you can do is—Scotland! Well, don't forget, I'm for a free Scotland; free of England, aye, but free of capitalist greed, misery and exploitation—. (pp. 48-9)

Having made her case that capitalism is the real exploiter of Scotland
and her working people, Old Hen concludes with her, and McGrath's, advice on how Scotland can become truly free, economically and politically. "Because the two (politics/socialism and nationalism) must go together. When the working class of Scotland gets itself on the move, and organised, for both together—then you'll see something." (p. 49)

By shedding the illusion that either cause can really succeed separately, Old Hen, and McGrath, argue, it will be possible to unite the working class and many of the separatist elements in Scotland, and to fight successfully to create a free, socialist, Scottish nation.

In Little Red Hen, John McGrath utilized a line of argument as the device that controlled the selection and arrangement of scenes, choosing scenes which illustrated points he considered crucial to his case, and repeating them sufficiently often to drive his points home. To do this, he used the historical record, selecting incidents from the history of twentieth century Scots life and the socialist struggle, and linking them by commentary and narration to both provide a history of that struggle and its parallels to the contemporary situation, and to argue his case for a union of separatist and socialist movements as the only hope for a free Scotland. Utilizing the freedom of cinematic and episodic construction available to him in epic structure, McGrath was able to create a satisfying drama and an effective political and, particularly, propaganda document. In the process, he succeeded in effectively dramatizing the lesson and warning given to the Irish in 1897 by the Scots and Irish socialist and nationalist James Connolly; a warning which is, McGrath would argue, equally applicable to Scotland today.
If you remove the English tomorrow, and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the Socialist Republic, your efforts would be in vain. England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and industrialist institutions she has planted in this country.®

As in John McGrath's *Little Red Hen*, Caryl Churchill's *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* presents a surface portrayal of a historical sequence which is actually controlled on a deeper level by another element. In *Little Red Hen*, this element was McGrath's line of argument. In *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, which is set in Commonwealth England from 1642 to 1649, the controlling factor is Churchill's analysis of the birth of modern capitalism and the death of a potential revolutionary society in the conflict between two formerly-allied groups that developed after the overthrow of Charles I. The first group supported a retention of the old system of government and economic/social organization, but without the king at its head, as a means of retaining and protecting their property. This group consisted primarily of the landed gentry and great lords, and was supported by Cromwell. The other group was composed of those who wished to create a new, democratic, egalitarian society based on the common holding of property rights, and consisted largely of the poor, many of whom had fought in Cromwell's army on the promise that such a levelling of society would, at least to some extent, occur (they were called levellers). The play demonstrates how Cromwell's army was created out of the social and religious ferment of

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the time; a puritanical, evangelineic, millennial ferment that anticipated the imminent arrival of Christ on earth to establish his kingdom. There was a strong millennial movement during the period, an anticipation that a time was coming soon when all men would be equal and free, and the play explores how Cromwell and his party were able to exploit that belief to raise a saints' army and overthrow the king/anti-christ. It also explores how the people's and army's revolutionary hopes were crushed by Cromwell and the landowners during the Putney Debates in 1647, and how, after the crushing of the levellers movement (which had arisen in response to the outcome of those debates), some elements, in their despair, turned to a radical religious, millenial group called the ranteers, who advocated communal property, free love, and held a vision which included Christ's return to earth in 1650, the overthrow of the rich (the new anti-christ), and the entrance of the poor into paradise. The ranteers, however, were basically a retreatist movement, not unlike the so-called flower children of the late 1960s, and even before they were officially suppressed, had spent most of their energy internally rather than on social change. The play is, in a sense, the story of a failed revolution and its aftermath; a revolution which, had it taken place, would have resulted in a socialist society in seventeenth century England.

The result is not a realised political or even social revolution—as it was not in 1647—but the harvest of a revolutionary experience, the collapse of fixed hierarchy, the recognition of betrayal, the beginnings of social doubt (as well as the awareness of class distinction/identity, if not class warfare, as Mairowitz points out elsewhere in his discussion—my note). Those who have gathered at the final prayer meeting learn not to expect their freedom to be granted them—this is also Winstanley's lesson—but that it must be
taken, by them, and not in false solidarity with any other class.9

On the surface, it might appear that Light Shining in Buckinghamshire belongs to the second category of plays, for there are six characters who recur through the play, five of whom come together at the end in the prayer meeting and, in the final scene, to reveal what happened to them after 1650. However, it was not Churchill's intention that these characters be viewed as individuals with personal fates with which the audience should become involved. To prevent this, she devised a practice whereby each male or female role was played by more than one actor in the six-member company, even when a character appeared in succeeding scenes, in that way dissolving any real sense of character continuity and achieving a greater sense of isolation of scenes, as was her intent.

The characters are not played by the same actors each time they appear. The audience should not have to worry exactly which character they are seeing. Each scene can be taken as a separate event rather than part of a story. This seems to reflect better the reality of large events like war and revolution where many people share the same kind of experience. I recommend other productions to distribute parts in the same way, since the play was constructed with this in mind; and there would be difficulties if each character was played by one actor. . . . When different actors play the parts what comes over is a large event involving many people, whose characters resonate in a way they wouldn't if they were more clearly defined.10

The success of Churchill's (and Max Stafford-Clark, the original director's) idea for dissolving strong individual character identification in

the audience to shift attention to the collective and to the large-scale social movements of the period is reflected in David Zane Malrowitz's response to the play.

One of the dramatic virtues of this magnificent play is that it can assume a certain given historical foundation and proceed to de-emphasize specific characters and events. In fact the play's history is rooted wholly in a collective consciousness which is its protagonist and hero. This is neither a group of specified individuals moving together or even a defined community experiencing the raising of armies or the aftermath of civil war, but an interweaving of historical and fictional persons appearing and disappearing, together and independently, through the middle of the 17th century, seeking parallel roads to freedom, paths occasionally crossing, reaching similar (if not cohesive) conclusions. Churchill works against their identification: "there is no need for the audience to know each time which character they are seeing". Consequently, roles are interchanged so that no one player carries the same character throughout, thereby stressing the collective vision of history even in the staging of the play.\(^\text{11}\)

Given the comments of Churchill and Malrowitz, it is apparent that, although an impression of character continuity is created in the published script, it is both the author's intent and the effect of production to dissolve that continuity, and to throw the focus of the play on to the human collective and the social processes in which they are caught, and off the personal fates of the characters, making it most appropriate to consider \textit{Light Shining in Buckinghamshire} a play of the third category.

The structure of \textit{Light Shining in Buckinghamshire} is composed of twenty-three separate scenes, all but one of which is named in the same manner of those in \textit{Little Red Hen}. It is divided into two acts, and the division serves a secondary function in the structure of the play.

for the first act traces the action of the period from the beginning of the Civil War through the betrayal of the poor, who had joined Cromwell in the belief that he would alleviate their lot in a newly created nation, during the Putney debates of 1647; while the second act traces developments from the rise of the levellers, who hoped to do what Cromwell had failed to do, through their suppression, to the rise of the ranters. The play is composed of both enacted and narrated scenes, and covers events from 1642 to 1649 throughout England.

_**Light Shining in Buckinghamshire**_

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<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
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<td>Preshow: cast sings millenial verses from Isaiah 24.</td>
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<td>Scene 2</td>
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<td>Cobbe's room/1642</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Title: Cobbe Prays. Cobbe prays in early morning, fervently, with great awareness and fear of his sins. He reveals a social consciousness, wondering if it is sin for men to swear as they are being whipped through the street, and revealing his contempt for his father, whom he calls &quot;cruel, greedy, hypocritical,&quot; a wealthy man, and his guilt that his family eats well while outside people are whipped and starving.</td>
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<td>Scene 3</td>
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<td>Vicar's home/1642</td>
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<td>Title: The Vicar Talks to His Servant (Claxton). Vicar and Claxton discuss the day's sermon, which was written by the Bishop and delivered mandatorily as a statement against the revolutionary forces, as well as commenting on the lack of people coming to the Church. Vicar instructs Claxton to have the Parish police make certain everyone is in church the following Sunday to hear him give the same message in his own words. Scene reveals the Church's support for the rich and powerful, the landowners, against the poor.</td>
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<td>Scene 4</td>
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Title: Margaret Brotherton is Tried. Brotherton, a vagrant, is tried by two justices, one harsh, one lenient. She is convicted, without trial, of begging outside her home parish, and sentenced to be stripped to the waist and whipped to the parish boundry.

| Scene 5 | 4-5 | A prayer meeting/1642 |

Title: Star Recruits. Star, an officer in Cromwell's army, and apparently a member of the petty gentry, gives a recruiting speech. He emphasizes that his army is Christ's army, fighting against the anti-Christ Charles I, and that all who support or fight in it will be taken into paradise when Christ comes to create New Jerusalem in England in 1650. Briggs says he will join, and several others offer to support the army with donations.

| Scene 6 | 5-6 | The open road/1642 |

Title: Brotherton Meets the Man. Brotherton, driven from the Parish, doubles back toward town. She meets a vagrant man, who is drunk. They discuss hunger, drink, and how cold she is. He has ten pence. She offers to sell him some cloth and rope for a ha'penny. He offers her a ha'penny to sleep with him there. She holds out to go indoors at an inn, but he is unsure he wants to spend the money, since it must hold out until Christ comes in the near future.

| Scene 7 | 6-8 | An inn room/1642 |

Title: Briggs Joins Up. Star interviews Briggs, eventually assigning him to his own infantry company because Briggs has no horse. Briggs will not remove his hat (except before God), but assures Star he will follow any order that is not "against God". Star phrases the conflict as one between Saxons, who have been oppressed for six hundred years, and their Norman (French) rulers, with Christ as a Saxon. The nature of the army is revealed. They are Christ's Saints and they read the Bible and talk a great deal. It is also more or less democratic, for Star indicates many of the officers are not gentlemen.
Title: Hoskins Interrupts the Preacher. Jone Hoskins, a free-thinking female religious radical, interrupts the sermon of a progressive preacher, who permits his congregation to answer and question him on his sermons, but not women. Hoskins asserts that there is not a restricted number of the elect, but that all can be saved. The preacher clearly supports Cromwell, and it is made evident in the next scene that his church is not part of the Anglican establishment. Hoskin's interruptions lead to her being removed bodily from the church and beaten.

Title: Claxton Brings Hoskins Home. Claxton has gone to the Preacher's church, deserting the Vicar (as he reveals, a difficult moral decision for him). He brings Hoskins home after her beating, and he and his wife tend to her. Hoskins reveals she has been making her living by preaching and, mostly, stealing from the rich, which she considers no stealing since they stole it by exploiting the poor in the first place. She asserts that Christ will return soon, and that only the rich will be damned, not the poor. Claxton's wife is shocked, revealing a conservative bent of mind, saying that women cannot preach because they are inferior to men and committed a greater original sin. This, she feels, has something to do with the death of her baby in the recent past. Hoskins asserts that children die, not because of sin, but because of the conditions in which they live. Claxton reveals himself to be something of a free-thinker as well, interpreting a passage in Revelation to indicate that the rich are damned, and the poor will be saved. His wife begs him not to speak so.

Title: Cobbe's Vision. Cobbe describes a vision in which he was told by God to go to London to tell the people He is coming back.
Scene 11

Title: Two Women Look in a Mirror. Two women look in a mirror taken from a great country estate which the people have opened, and from which they are taking things, in the belief that, the revolution having succeeded, everything now belongs to them, and they can take whatever they need/want, as it will shortly be legalized by Parliament. For this reason, nothing has been broken in the house, since it is now the property of all the people, they believe.

Scene 12

Title: Briggs Recalls a Battle. Briggs describes a battle in which he was wounded. As he lay on the ground, he realized that the soldiers on the other side were not the agents of the anti-Christ, but that all the soldiers on each side were fighting the anti-Christ, and that when the war was over, "all the darkness and confusion we'd lived in (would) bring us all into the quiet and sunlight."

Scene 13

Title: The Putney Debates. The debate involves the issue of parliamentary representation, the first of a series of points demanded in an Agreement of the People submitted by members of one of the regiments of the army (common soldiers) through their elected representative, Sexby. The proposal calls for each man in the nation to have a vote, and for their to be proportional representation of the people on the basis of one man/one vote. Arguing for that cause are the levellers, which include Colonel Rainborough, Sexby, Colonel Nathaniel Rich, and John Wildman, a civilian. Arguing against is Commissary General Henry Ireton, with support from Cromwell. Ireton argues against the proposal as an infringement on the rights of and to property (he, being a large landowner himself, stands to lose a great deal from this proposal, which would strip him of his unequally large share of representation and threaten his wealth). After three days, Cromwell consigns the bill to oblivion in a committee, with no action taken. The scene makes clear the betrayal of the people and their revolution by its leaders, who can now become the rich and powerful rulers of the country, replacing those
Light Shining in Buckinghamshire

Scene 13

whom they had overthrown. The interests of capital and the large landowners of the upper (ruling) class are, in that way, preserved, for they will continue to have an unequally and unfairly large proportion of parliamentary representation, and be able to govern and enforce policies that protect their interests and wealth at the expense of the poor, whose hopes they have betrayed by repudiating the promises made at the beginning of the war.

Act II

Scene 14

22-23 Stage, then St. George's Hill, Surrey/1649

Title: Diggers. Narrative section tells the story of one of the first groups of levellers to take action. Led by Gerrard Winstanley, a group took over the common land at St. George's Hill and soon gathered several dozen members more. They plowed the land and planted it, stating that England would not be free until the poor who had no land were given free allowance to dig and plant on the commons. They were overrun by over 100 people, who beat them, broke their spades, and pulled down their houses. Soldiers and the Sheriff participated, as did the local Vicar, who paid the soldiers to pull down homes and turn an old couple out into the cold. Some of the diggers were imprisoned for five weeks. The crops were destroyed.

Scene 15

23 Indeterminate/1649

Title: Claxton Explains. Claxton has left his wife, and apparently gone off with Hodkins. He now gives himself to other women, and thinks it no sin since it is done purely, and because there is no sin but what man thinks is sin. He also lies and steals sometimes to prove that there is no lying or theft but in the mind. He has acquired a nickname as well, Captain of the Rant, as a member of the ranters.

Scene 16

23-25 Army camp/1649

Title: Briggs Writes a Letter. Briggs and Star are at a camp. Briggs has refused to go to Ireland to fight (he says the Irish are fighting the same battle against Cromwell as he did against Charles I), and will not buy the argument that the Irish Catholics are the anti-Christ, which Cromwell is trying to use to rally the
Light Shining in Buckinghamshire

Scene 16

array, Briggs has been, and is, one of the more radical members of the army, supporting the levellers and initiating campaigns for change. He is now working to get the governmental system reversed so that, rather than rule by a council of officers, a wider system incorporating two agitators representing each regiment can be reinstated. Star warns him he will be in trouble if he keeps up his campaigns, but Briggs will not heed him. Star, who fancies himself, as he always has, "a man of the people," is clearly now split from the people's cause. Briggs explicitly accuses Star and Cromwell of betrayal and "mutiny against the people."

Scene 17

25-26 Stage/Stage present

Title: The War in Ireland. An actor reads a proclamation addressed to the army by radicals in 1649, informing it that the cause of the Irish is the same as theirs is against the new masters (Cromwell, etc.), and urging them not to go to enslave the Irish for Cromwell and the landowners.

Scene 18

26-27 Country/1649

Title: The Vicar Welcomes the New Landlord. Star has purchased a country estate. The Vicar welcomes him, and asks him to correct a few local situations (such as squatters using common land, collecting back rents, etc.), as well as to ensure his job. Star affects the attitude of a progressive man of the people, but he intends to implement the same oppressive policies as all the other landowners (i.e., enclosure). He does it in the name of the people, claiming it will help them, but clearly it, and he, will only exploit them, even though his iron hand might be wrapped in the proverbial velvet glove.

Scene 19

27-28 Road through a town/1649

Title: A Woman Leaves her Baby. Because of her ill health, and her lack of food, a woman leaves her dying baby on the steps of a home in hopes that it will be saved.
Scene 20 28-29 Butcher's shop/1649

At his shop, a butcher refuses to sell any more meat to the fat and wealthy because they have had their share and more, stealing the food from the mouths of the poor and starving. He asks them if they are going to buy meat for those poor, and tells them they have stuffed themselves with the dead children of the poor.

Scene 21 29 Stage/Stage present

Title: Lockyer's Funeral. An actor reads the description of the funeral of Robert Lockyer, a leveller leader who was executed by Cromwell, from a newspaper of the time. Though a private in the army, he was given a funeral equal to that of a commander, and the body was accompanied by thousands of citizens through the streets of London, and met by thousands more at the churchyard. Nonetheless, despite the public display of support, the reader reveals that, a few weeks later, at Burford, the levellers movement was finally crushed.

Scene 22 29-38 A drinking place in London/1649

Title: The Meeting. A meeting of a group of ranters (a drunk, Hoskins, Cobbe, Claxton, and Briggs), plus Brotherton, whom they want to join them in their communal life, sharing food, drink, and their bodies in the name of Christ, waiting for him to return the next year. She resists, feeling she is too sinful, for she had abandoned her baby to die, but they win her over. A number of the rancer's beliefs, which tend to be odd and highly individual and idiosyncratic, are expressed (although Hoskins demonstrates considerable continuity of belief with her earlier statements). Their whole movement is a sort of inversion of traditional Christian belief, with anything one can say or do being alright if it is done in the right spirit, including crime/sin. Briggs alone does not share their belief that Christ will return in 1650. He is highly disillusioned by the failure of the revolution, and believes Christ will not come and change things, Brotherton, too, is bitter at the rulers and landowners, and is determined to drag them to hell with her. In the end, Brotherton is won over by them, while Briggs decides the only thing that can help is to kill Cromwell. As the scene ends, the group has a loose sense of unity.
Light Shining in Buckinghamshire

(Scene 22) and solidarity, but it is clear that each is too eccentric in his beliefs for them to ever take effective action together.

Scene 23 38-39 Indeterminate/Stage present (?)

Title: After, Each character from Scene 22 reveals an incident or the course of his life after 1650, or makes a comment on what happened. Hoakins comments that she thinks Christ came, but no one noticed him. Cobbe was tried for blasphemy, and after the Restoration changed his name: Brotherton continued her life as a vagrant criminal. The Drunk welcomed Restoration with a spree, Briggs worked for a while, but gave away his employer’s goods. Then, to reduce the price of corn, he decided that, since it was high because some people ate too much, he would eat too little. He gradually shifted his diet until he ended by living in a field eating grass. Claxton moved to Barbados, where he secluded himself, trying to hear nothing of the world.12

It is clear that Light Shining in Buckinghamshire possesses an epic structure, with its cinematic construction and episodic organization of a series of discrete scenes, which function as basic units of structure. The organizing principle for the structure of the play is a double-pronged one, in which the two aspects of structure are so inextricably linked as to function as one. These prongs are the analysis of the roots of modern capitalism in the policies of the Commonwealth government after the overthrow of Charles I, and the failure of the revolutionary movement which overthrew him to result in a revolutionary society. As Catharine Itzin points out, one of the chief reasons for the failure of the revolution was the religious impulse which, in no

small part, gave it birth (the other major reason being, of course, the power of the new government). "The revolutionaries (the leaders who betrayed the cause) became, with the Restoration, the new squires, the new ruling class. Churchill suggested the religious non-dialectic was ultimately influential in defeating the possibilities of real revolution."13 Churchill explains her vision of what happened to the revolutionary impulse, and gives some indication of her view of the place of religion in the success of the overthrow of the old regime and the failure of the revolution to create a new society in her preface to the play.

A revolutionary belief in the millenium went through the middle ages and broke out strongly in England at the time of the civil war. Soldiers fought the king in the belief that Christ would come and establish heaven on earth. What was established instead was an authoritarian parliament, the massacre of the Irish, the development of capitalism.

For a short time when the king had been defeated anything seemed possible, and the play shows the amazed excitement of people taking hold of their own lives, and their gradual betrayal as those who led them realised that freedom could not be had without property being destroyed. At the Putney debates Cromwell and Ireton argued for property; Gerrard Winstanley led Diggers to take over the common land: "There can be no universal liberty till this universal community be established." The Levellers and Diggers were crushed by the Army, and many turned in desperation to the remaining belief in the millenium, that Christ would come to do what they had failed in. The last long scene of the play is a meeting of Ranters, whose ecstatic and anarchic belief in economic and sexual freedom was the last desperate burst of revolutionary feeling before the restoration.14

Having been born out of the desire in the people for freedom and equality, before man and God, and in the religious belief in the millenium

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13Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 284.
(and that in fighting the king they were doing God's work), the potential Commonwealth revolution was betrayed by those who led it in the interests of maintaining capital and property. In order to maintain those interests, the new ruling class crushed those movements that insisted on trying to establish a social system based on early revolutionary ideals. As a result, a number of people, rather than continuing their agitation for the establishment of those principles in society, retreated into a millenial belief that Christ would come and do their work for them. Their were two results of this phenomenon. First, a new ruling class came to power and wealth, while the lives of the people and the real organization of society and its institutions changed almost not at all as a result of seven years of civil warfare. Second, because a new body of people were able to become landowners and accumulate wealth through the redistribution of the property of the king's supporters and policies such as enclosure of common land, new wealth came to be concentrated in the hands of people who were willing to invest in and propagate those activities and ventures that eventually formed the basis for the rise of capitalism during the eighteenth century.

Given Churchill's vision of the events of 1642-9, the structure of *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* can be seen to fall into three basic units. In the first section, which includes Scenes 1-12 (i.e., most of the first act), Churchill examines the roots of the Civil War and the place of religion and social misery in bringing it about and giving it public support (she does not examine the motives of the gentry and wealthy lords who supported Cromwell, and whose motives were somewhat different). In the second section, including Scenes 13-21, Churchill
examines the betrayal of the people in the Putney debates and the suppression of the levellers and diggers. In the final section, Scenes 22-3, plus Scene 15, she looks at the phenomenon of the ranters, and how that movement, with its passive belief in the millenium as a solution to their troubles, represented the end of the hopes of the people for any real change in their situation. In the course of the three sections, Churchill presents the reasons for the popular support of and the failure of the revolution of the 1640s, the revolution that never was. In the course of Section Two, she also establishes the way in which those events contributed to the birth of modern capitalism in Commonwealth England.

The first section of the action of the play begins with a group singing of a verse from Isaiah, Isaiah 24, 17-20, which describes a millenial event; the destruction of the world.

Fear, and the pit, and the snare are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare; for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall and not rise again. (p. 1)

This verse sets the tone for the millenial religious fervour which follows, and finds its first expression in the prayer of Cobbe in Scene 2. During this scene, Cobbe prays for the forgiveness of his sins and protection from them. He also links a developing awareness of the evil of the social inequities of his time with a dilemma in his own perception of sin; i.e., how to resolve the question of the sin of not honoring
his father with the fact that he cannot honor a man whom he knows to be evil, and whose evil is connected to social injustice in Cobbe's mine.

During his prayer, Cobbe says:

Cobbe: What is worst, I am not praying to you about the worst sin. I sin in my fear of praying about that sin, I sin in denying my fear. But you cut through that mesh, knowing. Why is it not enough to use your name in prayer, oh God, oh Lord Jesus Christ, amen, this is prayer, oh God, no swearing. Rich men of Antichrist on horses swear, king's officers say "damns" laughing. The beggar swore when they whipped him through the street and my heart leapt at each curse, a curse for each lash. Is he damned? Would I be? At table last night when father said grace I wanted to seize the table and turn it over so the white cloth slid, silver, glass, capon, claret, comfort overturned. I wanted to shout your name and damn my family and myself eating so quietly when what is going on outside our gate? Words come out of my mouth like toads, I swear toads, toads will sit on me in hell. And what light on my father, still no light? Not to honor my father is sin, and sin to honor a greedy, cruel, hypocritical—Is it sin to kneel here till he leave the house? I cannot go down to him, It is sin to go down, I will wait here till I hear the door. To avoid his blessing. (Scene 2, p. 1)

This prayer reveals several significant things. First, there is already a linking of the king and his men to the antichrist, and an identification of that position as being of the rich. Second, in the lines about the beggar, there is a developing awareness of the notion that, if an individual is driven to sin, it may not be a sin (a ranter argument). At this point, Cobbe only poses the question, but this will become one of the common beliefs of the runters seven years later. Finally, there is an indication of a developing social consciousness, an awareness of the injustice of the society which is connected to the religious perception of what is sinful, and degrees of sin. Cobbe indicates his conviction that his father's exploitation of the poor, or at least his unwillingness to do anything to alleviate their lot, is a greater sin
than his not honoring his father. There is a rudimentary coupling of a concern for social injustice with God's action on earth. This coupling of social and religious attitudes develops and deepens throughout the play, beginning in Scene 3, in which the discussion of the Vicar and his servant, Claxton, indicates that those who stand with the revolution and against the continuance of the king's unjust government are avoiding the official church, which stands with the king.

Vicar: The sermon would have done them good. It wasn't my own, you could probably tell. The Bishop's naturally more gifted, but it's no good having it read in every parish if nobody compels the tenants to hear it. It's the ones who weren't there that I was talking to. "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" From their lusts, from greed and envy and pride, which are from the devil, that's where the wars come from. . . . Why we have this war is because men want heaven now. If God meant us to have heaven on earth, why did he throw us out of paradise? They're fighting God himself, do they know that? They must be brought before the magistrates and forced to come next Sunday, and I'll tell them in my own words. . . . This is a godly estate, and they will be evicted if they don't submit. (p. 2)

It is interesting to note that, not only is the official church supporting the king, and offering mandatory sermons in his favor, but both sides have linked their cause to that of God in some way. The people's flight from the state church is developed in more detail in Scenes 8-10. In the intervening scenes, Churchill presents examples of the social injustice and millenial feelings running rampant in the land, and of the way in which Cromwell's army exploits those feelings in its efforts to gain support.

Scene 4 includes a graphic example of the injustice afflicting the society. Margaret Brotherton is on trial for begging; a trial in which she is given virtually no opportunity to speak, and in which she is
sentenced to be stripped to the waist and whipped to the boundary of the parish, and thence to the parish where she was born, some fifty miles away. Because this particular parish is an unusually generous one with its own poor, the magistrates assume Brotherton has come to take advantage of its generosity. However, as they explain:

2nd JP: It's only our own poor who get help from this parish.
1st JP: And we don't give money. So you can't drink it. It's your system of poor relief that brings them—they hear there's free bread and cheese, free fuel, there's no parish for miles that does that. (p. 3)

As the scene makes clear, Brotherton has been begging in, and been turned out of, a number of parishes. She is one of the poor and oppressed whom the society refuses to help, and whom it condemns to starvation and death by exposure, or crime and punishment, as is indicated later in the play (especially in Scenes 19 and 20). The failure of the society to care for those such as Brotherton is one of the primary reasons for the support of the revolt among the poor, who hope and trust it will alleviate their lot. Indeed, this is one of the inducements offered by Star, a recruiting officer for Cromwell's army, in the next scene.

Star: Life is hard, brothers, and how will it get better? I tell you, life in Babylon is hard and Babylon must be destroyed. In Babylon you are slaves. Babylon is the kingdom of Antichrist. The kingdom of popery. The kingdom of the king. And it must be destroyed. Because then will come the kingdom of Jerusalem. And in Jerusalem you will be free. That is why you will join as soldiers. To destroy Antichrist, To fight with parliament for Jerusalem. To fight with Christ's saints for Christ's kingdom. Because when parliament has defeated Antichrist then Christ will come. Christ will come in person, God and man, and will rule over England for one thousand years. And the saints will reign with him. And who are the saints? You are. The poor people of this country. When Christ came, did he come to the rich? No. He came to the poor. He is coming to you again. If you prepare for him by defeating Antichrist which is the royalists. If you join the army now you will be one of the saints. You
will rule with Jesus a thousand years. . . . Who are you? What are you? I know you all and you know me. You are nobody here. You have nothing. But the moment you join the army you will have everything. You will be as important as anybody in England. You will be Christ's Saints. (Scene 5, p. 4)

Star promises that the victory of the army will bring a new life for the poor of the nation, particularly when Christ returns for them. Star's division of the saved and damned into the poor and the rich, respectively, is indicative of a growing sense of class consciousness, a factor echoed later, and more explicitly, by Hoskins in Scenes 6 and 9. It is also echoed in Scene 7, a conversation between Briggs and Star in which Briggs joins Cromwell's forces. That scene is a follow-up to the recruiting pitch of Scene 5. Separating them, however, is scene 6, in which Brotherton, chased out of town, meets a man. This scene reinforces two ideas developed in earlier scenes: the degradation of the poor, and the belief in the imminent coming of Christ. On the first point, Brotherton is offered a ha'penny by the man to sleep with him (an offer she seems disposed to accept, if only he will take her to an inn). In addition, they are seen freezing, without shelter, on the open road, and no longer hope for more than a bit of food or drink, not both, to tide them over. On the latter point, the man hopes that his ten pence will hold out until Christ comes (p. 6). Returning to Scene 7, Star emphasizes three points to Briggs in trying to convince him to join the army. The first is the rich/poor, damned/saved polarity, which in this scene he traces historically as a conflict between the rich "Normans" (doubtless playing on the fact of Charles' French wife, as well) and the poor "Saxons".
Star: Beef and mutton is Norman words. The Saxon raised the animal. Sheep, Cow. The Norman ate the meat. Boeuf, mouton. Even the laws of this country aren't written in English. . . . What we're fighting for . . . We've known each other all our lives. Our paths never cross. But you know me as an honest dealer. I've been leant on many times to keep up the price of corn when it could be down. And I'd be a richer man. The hunger now is no fault of mine. You're a Saxon. I'm a Saxon. Our fathers were conquered six hundred years ago by William the Norman. His colonels are our lords. His cavalry are our knights. His common foot soldiers are our squires. When you join this army you are fighting a foreign enemy. You are fighting an invasion of your own soil. Parliament is Saxon. The Army is Saxon. Jesus Christ is Saxon. The Royalists are Normans and the Normans are Antichrist. We are fighting to be free men and own our own land. (p. 7)

By linking the poor to Christ and an oppressed people, and the rich to the antichrist and the oppressing conquerers, Star, and Cromwell, are able to tap both the religious sentiments and the feelings of social injustice caused by their miserable plight among the poor, and so build an army. A second, related point, which Star makes to Briggs concerns the morality of the army.

Star: In the meantime there's no looting. No raping. No driving off of cattle or firing ricks. We're not antichristian royalists. We're Christ's saints. It's an army that values godliness. There's no swearing. The men don't like swearing. They like reading their Bibles. They like singing hymns. They like talk. We don't discourage talk." (p. 7)

The religious nature of the army and its quest are emphasized by Star to Briggs. He also emphasizes a third point, the comparative equality in the ranks of the army; a point which aids in the development of democracy in the ranks and of the levellers movement among many of the troops: Star tells Briggs, "Your officers are not all gentlemen, they're men like you." (p. 7) Star also approves of Briggs's keeping his hat on before him.
Star: You keep your hat on. New style catching on.
Briggs: Yes sir. I mean, yes, I do.
Star: As a sign you're as good as me?
Briggs: Yes, Nothing personal Mr. Star. Before God only.
Star: Parson seen you like that?
Briggs: He said I was a scorpion, sir. Mr. Star. I mean, he said I was a scorpion.
Star: A hat's all right for a soldier. It shows courage. (pp. 6-7)

Star's only concern is that Briggs agree to follow orders, which Briggs agrees to do "if they're not against God." Star replies, "They can't be against God in God's army." (p. 8) In this scene, as in Scene 5, Churchill establishes the way in which the religious and social hopes of the people were linked into the emerging revolutionary cause and used by Cromwell, as well as hinting at the way in which the organization of the army, and its relative lack of social distinctions, created an atmosphere that would engender notions of absolute social and economic equality as the inevitable outcome of victory in the war; hopes which, when not realized, led to the activities of the levellers and diggers, and, ultimately, to the ranters.

In Scenes 8 and 9, two important trends are examined. First, Scene 8, which represents a congregation and preacher which are constituted outside the official church (in Scene 9, Claxton's wife notes, "It's not a proper church."); p. 10), shows the continuing rebellion of the people against the king's church and the rise of a grass-roots religious movement finding its expression in the kind of Calvinist Puritanism and millennialism preached by the Preacher in his sermon (which, in fact, includes passages from Revelations and the passage from Isaiah quoted in Scene 1); The second trend indicates a split developing within the religious community representing the revolutionary movement. The
Preacher, and most of his congregation, fit into a conservative mold. They are against the Church of England, and are strict pre-destination- nalists in orientation, and so represent a break from the establishment. However, they also maintain a formal structure in their worship, including a sermon by a preacher who leads the service. This particular preacher is rather liberal, for he permits male members of the congregation to answer his sermons when they are concluded. Nonetheless, women are not permitted to speak; in fact, Hoskins is expelled and beaten for repeatedly speaking out, and often disagreeing, during the sermon. This church is therefore representative of a conservative, mainstream approach to religious experience, featuring formal structures in worship and in the relationship of pastor to congregation. Hoskins, on the other hand, represents a far more radical rejection of traditional religious belief and experience; a split which will, in time, rend the new movement, and which will roughly approximate that between Cromwell and his supporters, and the levellers and the poor of the country betrayed by the revolution who sink into the ranters movement. There are two points on which Hoskins and the Preacher are in specific disagreement. Both accept that the king is antichrist, and must be overthrown, and that the millennium is coming; a time when the poor will be saved. As the Preacher says:

Preacher: When Christ first came to earth he came to the poor. And it is to the poor, to you, to tailors, cobblers, chapmen, ploughmen, that he is coming again. He will not set up a kingdom like we have now, a kingdom of Antichrist, a kingdom of a king, nobles and gentry. In Christ's kingdom no worldly honour counts. A noble can be damned and a beggar saved. (Scene 8, p. 8)
However, for the clergyman, the question of salvation is one of predestination, with a certain number of the elect selected for salvation before time began, and the remainder damned. Hoskins, however, asserts that no one need be damned. "He's chosen me. He's chosen everyone.

... There is no pit, there is no snare. God would not send us into the pit. Christ saves us from that... Yes he will cast them down (the rich) but he will not damn them eternally." (p. 9) Hoskins refuses to accept that God could wish to or take pleasure in sending people to hell, and she asserts that everyone can be and is saved.

Hoskins: No, it's not just a few. Not just a few elect go to heaven. He thinks most people are bad. The king thinks most people are bad. He's against the king but he's saying the same... In his kingdom of heaven there's going to be a few in bliss and the rest of us in hell. What's the difference from what we've got now? You are all saved. Yes, you are all saved. Not one of you is damned. (p. 10)

Hoskins's assertions are similar to those which grow later in the ranters movement, in which all are saved who are poor, and in which sin is not sin so long as it is either done purely or one is forced into it. Hoskins, in fact, feels immune from sin now, for her favorite way of making a living, as she tells Clarion's wife in Scene 9, is to steal, since, "It's only the rich go to hell. Did you know that?" (p. 11)

The split between Hoskins and the Preacher is emblematic of the split between the conservative Puritans, who believed only a few elect could attain salvation, and the ranters, who opened salvation to all (or at least all the poor, with poverty about the only qualification). The second split, which is also symptomatic of the developing split which would fraction off the ranters from the remainder of the religious revolutionaries, is the Preacher's dispute with Hoskins over her right to
speak in church.

Preacher: Why are you speaking? I let it pass but you are too loud. Women can't speak in church.

Hoskins: God speaks in me.

Preacher: For St. Paul says, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."

Hoskins: A text? a text is it? do you want a text?

Preacher: "For Adam was first formed then Eve. And Adam was not deceived but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

Hoskins: Joel. Chapter two. Verse twenty-eight. "And it shall come to pass that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the hand-maids in those days will I pour out my spirit."

(p. 9)

The equality of women, at least in the eyes of God, asserted by Hoskins is another point which is picked up and developed later by the ranters. Even very early in the development of the revolution, as Churchill demonstrates, the seeds of the beliefs that were to be embraced by the ranters in their retreat were present and active in the thoughts of a few.

Additional assertions of the primacy of the poor in Christ's kingdom occur in Scene 9, in a long speech by Claxton, whose orientation, even this early, makes it clear that his sympathies tend to lie with the more radical of the religious revolutionaries. In Scene 8, Hoskins compares the current social conditions to hell. "In his kingdom of heaven there's going to be a few in bliss and the rest of us in hell. What's the difference from what we've got now?" (p. 10) Claxton, too, has become aware of the inequities of the current situation, and he no longer wishes to be employed by the Parson of the church. "Don't want to work for parson." (Scene 9, p. 10) He has come to interpret a
passage from *Revelations* in terms of the socio-economic inequality of the times, and sees in it an assertion of the primacy of the poor after the millennium comes.

Claxton: Sometimes I read in *Revelation*. Because people say now is the last days. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. And there was no more sea." Why no more sea? I never seen the sea. But England's got a fine navy and we trade by sea and go to new countries, so why no more sea? Now I think this is why. I can explain this. I see into it. I have something from God. The sea is water. And salt water, not like a stream or well, you can't drink it. And you can't breathe it. Because it's water. But fish can breathe it. But men can't live in it, ... Fish can live in it. Men can't. Now, men can't live here either. How we live is like the sea. We can't breathe. Our squire, he's like a fish. Looks like a fish, too, if you saw him. And parson. Parson can breathe. He swims about, waggles his tail. Bitter water and he lives in it. Bailiff. Justices. Hangman, Lawyer, Mayor. All the gentry. Swimming about. We can't live in it. We drown. I'm a drowned man. ... Octopus is a kind of fish with lots of arms, grasping and full of black stink. Sharks eat you. Whales, you're lost inside them, they're so big, they swallow you up and never notice. They live in it, ... We can't live. We are dead. Bitter water. There shall be a new heaven. And a new earth. And no more sea.

(p. 12)

In Claxton's vision, the absence of water will kill the fish (the rich), leaving only air, in which the poor (man) can breathe and live. In this way, he asserts the salvation of the poor and damnation of the rich in the new kingdom of Christ, echoing a common theme of the revolution.

The final three scenes of the first section reinforce or bring to fruition ideas introduced earlier in the section. In Scene 10, Cobbe, the young man who prays in Scene 2, re-emphasizes the belief in the imminent coming of Christ when he describes a vision given to him, at the end of which he heard a voice telling him, "Go to London, to London, that great city, and tell them I am coming." (p. 13) In Scene 11, two
women discuss the looting of a house of the wealthy, an activity undertaken by the people in the belief that, the revolution having succeeded, it is now legal as all property is to be held in common.

1st Woman: ... You can take things—
2nd Woman: That's his things. That's stealing. You'll be killed for that.
1st Woman: No, not any more, it's all ours now, so we won't burn the corn because that's our corn now and we're not going to let the cattle out because they're ours too. (p. 13)

The women exemplify the people's belief that, as had been promised, after the king was dethroned, real social and economic equality would come; a belief that was soon to be crushed at the Putney debates. The final scene of Section One, in which Briggs describes a battle during which he was wounded, and his thoughts while lying on the ground, demonstrates again the sense of fighting against the antichris t for the salvation of the common people. However, in this scene, the notion of the common people meant for salvation is expanded to include those who fought on the other side, not just Cromwell's men, indicating a real consciousness of the poor as a whole as a class, separate from all rich.

Briggs: But after I was wounded, lying with my head downhill, watching men take bodies off the field, I didn't know which was our side and which was them, but then I saw it didn't matter because what we were fighting was not each other but Antichrist and even the soldiers on the other side would be made free and be glad when they saw the paradise we'd won, so that the dead on both sides died for that, to free us of that darkness and confusion we'd lived in and bring us all into the quiet and sunlight. (Scene 12, p. 14)

Briggs's comments close Section One. In that section, the beliefs and conditions that gave rise to Cromwell's popular support in the revolution against the king are presented, and the hopes of the people for a salvation which is closely equated with social and economic freedom
and equality outlined. The combination of dissatisfaction with the terrible conditions in which they lived, and the promise of paradise when the "army of Christ" was victorious and Christ descended to earth to start the millennium, were sufficient lures to the common folk to create a popular groundswell under Cromwell. The section also examines the seeds of radical religious through which later gave rise to the ranters, as well as demonstrating, particularly in the scenes with Briggs and with Hoskins, the development of a vague sense of class solidarity. Had this sense developed into a real vision of class structure, it might conceivably have led to class warfare, and real revolution. However, such a vision never developed on a wide scale, and, as a result, Cromwell and his faction were able to rule the country in an authoritarian manner as the king had done, and at least as much to the detriment of the common people, whose hopes of a better future were suppressed and crushed by the policies of Cromwell's government, which protected property, and merely allowed a new group of gentry and landowners to take over from the old. The crushing of the people's hopes, and the factors which contributed to the origins of modern capitalism in the Commonwealth period, are the subject matter of Section Two.

Section Two begins with Scene 13, which includes an extended presentation of an issue raised during the Putney debates. In this scene, Rainborough, Sexby, Rich, and Wildman speak on behalf of the common soldiers in the army and the levellers movement. They seek an egalitarian society, founded on the principle of one man, one vote, open to all citizens of the land. Cromwell and Ireton, a general in the army and a wealthy landowner, speak against the proposal on the grounds that it
will endanger society and, especially, property, if those who have no
stake in property are permitted to vote. The argument ultimately de-
volves on to two points. The central case of Rainborough and the others
concerns the issue of consent to law without representation.

Rainborough: All inhabitants that have not lost their birthright
should have an equal vote in elections. For really I
think that the poorest he in England hath a life to
live as the greatest he; therefore truly sir, I think
it’s clear, that every man that is to live under a
government ought first by his own consent to put him-
self under it. (p. 17)

Ireton, who is the chief spokesman for the opposition, argues that those
with no stake in property (chiefly meaning large landholdings) ought not
have an equal voice in the government, although some minor alterations
of past voting practices might be in order.

Ireton: I think no person hath a right to an interest in the dis-
posing of the affairs of this kingdom that hath not a per-
manent fixed interest in this kingdom. We talk of birth-
right. Men may justly have by their birthright, by their
being born in England, that we should not seclude them out
of England, that we should not refuse to give them air and
place and ground and the freedom of the highways. That I
think is due to a man by birth. But that by a man’s being
born here he shall have a share in that power that shall
dispose of the lands here, I do not think it sufficient
ground. . . . All the main thing that I speak for is be-
cause I would have an eye to property. Let every man con-
sider that he do not go that way to take away all property.
Now I wish we may consider of what right you will claim
that all the people should have a right to elections. Is
it by right of nature? Then I think you must deny all
property too. If you say one man hath an equal right with
another to the choosing of him that will govern him, by
the same right of nature he hath the same right in any
goods he sees—he hath a freedom to the land, to take the
ground, to till it. I would fain have any man show me
their bounds, where you will end. (pp. 17-8)

Later in the debates, Ireton exclaims, “I have a property, and this I
shall enjoy.” (p. 20) Central to the cause of the common people who
fought with Cromwell was the principle that the large landholdings would be broken up and given to the poor, or commonly held. Such a hope is argued against by Ireton in the debates, and his point of view is implicitly upheld when Cromwell consigns the proposals to a committee. The parliament turns its back on those who fought for it, leading Wildman and Rainborough to comment.

Wildman: The gentleman here said five parts of the nation are now excluded and would then have a voice in elections. At present one part makes hewers of wood and drawers of water of the other five, so the greater part of the nation is enslaved. I do not hear any justification given but that it is the present law of the kingdom.

Rainborough: What shall become of those men that have laid themselves out for the parliament in this present war, that have ruined themselves by fighting? They are Englishmen. They have now no voice in elections.

In order to protect the property of a few of the wealthy, equal rights and freedoms, social and economic, are denied to the vast majority of the people, crushing the hopes and aspirations of many who fought in or supported Cromwell's army during the war, and betraying a hope, a trust, given by the people in the early days of the conflict. Far from initiating meaningful social reform, the civil war has simply meant that a new set of masters will replace the old ones, and business will proceed as usual. The lot of the common people, which they had hoped so much to improve, will not improve at all; in fact, it gets worse, for their attempts to take what they feel they won leads to suppression and oppression by Cromwell's forces.

Two additional points of some importance are raised in Scene 13. First, one of the speakers, Sexby, is a private soldier elected as an agitator, or representative, by his regiment, indicating that a fairly
high level of democracy exists in the army; at least to the extent that the soldiers still have a means of expressing their sentiments openly to their commanders and the government. In Scene 16, however, which takes place about two years later (April, 1649), it is revealed that the system of agitators has been dissolved, and a council of officers now advise the government in their place, indicating that the government is growing further from the common people and their rights and interests.

Second, in moving to protect property at the expense of the hopes and rights of the people, the government continues the practice of concentrating land/wealth in the hands of a few large landholders. This is a factor which works against the establishment of a socialist society such as would almost certainly have been the result of the people's dream, had it come true. It also permits the formation of concentrations of capital in the hands of a few citizens, forming the base that ultimately makes it possible for capitalism to develop. The decision to protect and maintain roughly the same distribution of land and wealth as before the war, albeit in the hands of a number of new owners, is one of the principle factors in the development of capitalism in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Scene 14, the first of Act Two, is a narrative scene which tells of the suppression of a representative group of diggers, led by Gerrard Winstanley, at St. George's Hill in Surrey. The diggers were a movement which, when Parliament failed to answer the people's hopes and keep the commitments many felt had been made in the early days of the war, took the redistribution of land into their own hands by taking over and trying to farm common land. Winstanley declared:
Winstanley: Take notice that England is not a free people till the poor that have no land have a free allowance to dig and labour the commons. It is the sword that brought in property and holds it up, and everyone upon recovery of the conquest ought to return into freedom again, or what benefit have the common people got by the victory over the king? ... True freedom lies where a man receives his nourishment and that is in the use of the earth. A man had better have no body than have no food for it. True freedom lies in the true enjoyment of the earth. True religion and unde-filed is to let every one quietly have earth to manure. There can be no universal liberty till this universal community be established. (p. 22)

The diggers movement was strongly suppressed by Cromwell, as an account of the events at St. George's Hill, narrated by six actors, makes clear.

1st Actor: A Bill of Account of the most remarkable sufferings that the Diggers have met with since they began to dig the commons for the poor on George Hill in Surrey.

2nd Actor: We were fetched by above a hundred people who took away our spades, and some of them we never had again, and taken to prison at Walton.

3rd Actor: The dragonly enemy pulled down a house we had built and cut our spades to pieces.

4th Actor: One of us had his head wounded, and a boy beaten. Some of us were beaten by the gentlemen, the sheriff looking on, and afterwards five were taken to White Lion prison and kept there about five weeks.

5th Actor: We had all our corn spoilt, for the enemy was so mad that they tumbled the earth up and down and would suffer no corn to grow.

6th Actor: Next day two soldiers and two or three men sent by the parson pulled down another house and turned an old man and his wife out of doors to lie in the field on a cold night.

1st Actor: It is understood the General (Cromwell) gave his consent that the soldiers should come to help beat off the Diggers, and it is true the soldiers came with the gentlemen and caused others to pull down our houses; but I think the soldiers were sorry to see what was done. (pp. 22-3)

At the same time as the diggers were being suppressed, their close relative, the levellers, were being suppressed by the army as well. The levellers movement was strong in the army, and so represented a
particular threat to Cromwell. As a result, it was crushed even more viciously than were the diggers. In Scene 16, Briggs, who is a leveller, and Star speak of the execution of a leveller, Arnold, at Ware, the ca-
shiering of a group of five troops for petitioning officers, and the recent execution of Robert Lockyer for mutiny in London "by martial law . . . in a time of peace," (pp. 24-5) During Scene 16, Star, who is a supporter of Cromwell, tries to get Briggs to go to Ireland with the army, or at least to cease his leveller activities for his own safety's sake. He makes the old argument, which by now is not widely believed, that Cromwell's forces are those of Christ's saints moving out against the new antichrist, the Catholic Irish, but that argument is rejected by Briggs (pp. 23-4) Later Star complains that the army is dissolving under the leveller's controversy, a fact which he greatly fears.

Stars: . . . But now we begin to be thousands of separate men.
(Instead of one, united army)
Briggs: God is not with this army.
Star: It is the army of saints.
Briggs: And God's saints shot Robert Lockyer for mutiny. By mar-
tial law. In time of peace. For demanding what God de-
manded we fight for.
Star: If the army splits up—
Briggs: It has done.
Star: If you levellers split off into conspiracies away from the
main army—
Briggs: It's you who've split off.
Star: You risk the King's party getting back again.
Briggs: Would that be worse?
Star: Briggs. We can still be a united army. Remember how we
marched on London, singing the fall of Babylon?
Briggs: It's you who mutiny. Against God. Against the people.
Star: Briggs.
Briggs: It's Cromwell mutinies.
Star: Briggs.
Briggs: If I was Irish I'd be your enemy. And I am. (p. 25)

Briggs has realized the same thing that the anonymous author of an exhor-
tation to the troops realized; an exhortation which constitutes Scene 17.
It pleads with the troops not to go to Ireland to help Cromwell extend his tyranny and slavery there.

Whatever they may tell you or however they may flatter you, there's danger lies at the bottom of this business for Ireland. Consider to what end you should hazard your lives against the Irish: have you not been fighting in England these seven years for rights and liberties you are not yet deluded of? and will you go on to kill, slay and murder men, to make your officers as absolute lords and masters over Ireland as you have made them over England? If you intend not this, it concerns you in the first place to see that evil reformed here. Sending forces into Ireland is for nothing else but to make way by the blood of the army to extending their territories of power and tyranny. For the cause of the Irish natives in seeking their just freedoms, immunities and liberties is exactly the same with our cause here. (Scene 17, pp. 25-6)

Before leaving for Ireland with his army, however, Cromwell finally crushed the levellers, the party embodying the aspirations of the common people in the civil war. "A few weeks later at Burford, the Levellers were finally crushed." (May 1649; Scene 21, p. 29) With his campaigns against the diggers and levellers, Cromwell stripped away the hopes of the people for social and economic reform, one of the causes for which they had fought and died, and secured the interests of the wealthy landowners. In so doing, he furthered the development of capitalism by establishing and securing a climate in which it could grow. However, in the process, he sent the people despairing into the ranters movement, and established himself as as great a tyrant as the king he had defeated. As Briggs tells Star, "Shall I tell you why the Levellers have been shot? Because now the officers have all the power, the army is as great a tyrant as the king was." (Scene 16, p. 25)

The course of the establishment of capitalism, and the continued suppression of the working people of England, is seen in Scene 18, in which the Vicar welcomes Star to his new estate, which he has purchased
during Parliament's sale of confiscated land, Star plans to take over the common land and enclose the fens, removing more land from the people's holdings. He says he does this to improve their lot. "When I say enclose the commons, I don't mean in the old sense, as the old squire did. I mean to grow corn. To make efficient use of the land. To bring down the price of corn. I'm sure the tenants will understand when I explain it to them." (p. 26) However, he also intends to evict squatters from the common ground, force the tenants to pay back rents (which they have withheld as a means of recouping their losses incurred while billeting soldiers in their homes), and the enclosure of the fens will deprive the people of some of the little fishing and hunting land they have. These moves will no more improve their lives than Star's planting a little more corn bring down the national price. His real motive is to turn a greater profit. "It will be hard work. For the tenants and for me. I don't shrink from that. It is to God's glory that this land will make a profit." (p. 27) Star's so-called improvements are merely new means for exploiting and oppressing the poor and the workers. Their only real effect will be to place more capital in Star's hands, increasing the concentration of capital in the hands of the few and contributing to the possibilities for the development of mercantile and industrialist capitalist economies in the succeeding centuries, while making the lives of the poor a bit more miserable.

The final three scenes of Section Two are short, and illustrate aspects of life under the Commonwealth, and how it has not improved or changed (in fact, if anything, how it has gotten worse). In Scene 19,
a woman who is starving leaves her baby, who is dying, on the steps of a mayor’s house in hopes it will be saved. The horrible tension in the woman (who might be Brotherton) between leaving her child to an unknown fate (even though her companion assures her it is a special home, where such children are cared for; p. 28), or keeping it, knowing that both she and it will likely die, is revealed in the action. The scene demonstrates that people suffer no less under the Commonwealth than they did under the king. They still starve, and are unable to care for their children, making for a high rate of infant mortality. The high death rate among children because of the poverty and oppression of the people is also touched on in Scene 20. In this scene, a butcher’s monologue to his customers, it is revealed that the unequal distribution of food continues. When a fat, wealthy man comes in, the butcher, who sees him daily, is angered by his gluttony and greed in the face of so much starvation, and ultimately refuses to sell him any meat, because he takes it from the mouths of the poor.

Butcher: You don’t look hungry. You don’t look as if you need a dinner. You look less like a man needing a dinner than anyone I’ve ever seen. What do you need it for? No, tell me. To stuff yourself, that’s what for. To make fat. And shit. When it could put a little good flesh on children’s bones, it could be the food of life. If it goes into you, it’s stink and death. So you can’t have it. No, I said you can’t have it, take your money back. You’re not having meat again this week. You had your meat yesterday. Bacon on Monday. Beef on Sunday. Mutton chops on Saturday. There’s no more meat for you. Porridge, Bread, Turnips. No meat for you this week. Not this year. You’ve had your lifetime’s meat. All of you. All of you that can buy meat. You’ve had your meat. You’ve had their meat. You’ve had their meat that can’t buy any meat. You’ve stolen their meat. Are you going to give it back? Are you going to put your hand in your pocket and give them back the price of their meat? I said give them back their meat. You cram yourselves with their
children's meat. You cram yourselves with their dead children. (pp. 28-9)

The final scene in Section Two is Scene 21, which is a narrative section describing the funeral of Robert Lockyer, a leveller, and stating that the levellers movement was crushed a few weeks later; a sign of the repression of Cromwell's regime and its sell-out of the people who put it into power. It is a scene which is an appropriate ending to a section which describes the betrayal of the hopes and aspirations of the people in the assertion of the rights of property at the Putney debates and the suppression of the diggers and levellers when they tried to seize and realize the people's hopes for social and economic equality.

The section also briefly traces the origin of capitalism in the upholding of the interests of large landowners, the expansion of their holdings via enclosure, and the securing of their operations by Cromwell and the army of the Commonwealth.

Section Three of Light Shining in Buckinghamshire, which looks at the ranter's movement, into which many people retreated after the levellers were crushed in hopes that Christ would come and do their revolutionary work for them, consists of Scenes 22 and 23. However, a part of this examination also takes place in Scene 15 of Section Two, a monologue by Claxton, in which he talks about how he became involved in radical religious activities, and outlines a few of his beliefs; beliefs which are typical of those held by the ranter's.

Claxton: . . . And I am alone, because my wife can't follow me. I send her money when I can. But my body is given to other women now for I have come to see that there is no sin but what man thinks is sin. So we can't be free from sin till we can commit it purely, as if it were no sin. Sometimes I lie or steal to show myself there is no lie or theft but
in the mind, and I find it all so easy that I am called the Captain of the Rant, and still my heart pounds and my mouth is dry and I rush on towards the infinite nothing that is God. (p. 23)

Scene 22 shows a meeting of ranters. However, their diversity makes it clear that they could never be capable of taking common or concerted action to improve their lives or social conditions. Nor is that an objective. They are simply willing to sit and wait for Christ to come and solve their problems by reordering society; an event they expect will occur the next year, in 1650.

Hoskins: I try to be sad with you but I can't. King Jesus is coming in clouds to glory in a garment dyed red with blood, and the saints in white linen riding on white horses. It's for next year. Now is just a strange time between Antichrist going and Christ coming, so what do you expect in a time like this? There's been nothing like it before and there will never be again, so what's it matter if we've no work and no food or can't get parliament like we want? It's only till next year; (p. 33)

Cobbe, Claxton, Briggs, and Brotherton are also part of the group, although Briggs and Brotherton are now yet real members. Briggs has come to London to kill Cromwell to avenge the many levellers killed or imprisoned, while Brotherton is too afflicted by guilt to readily join or allow herself to be touched by such a "Christian" group because she abandoned her baby by the road to die (at the end of the scene, however, she is won over by them). Briggs adds Brotherton's child to the list of those he will revenge.

The group apparently spends most of its time eating, drinking, making love, and talking (messages from God; new insights into the situation). They agree on few points; e.g., they dispute the nature of God and of Christ, the means by which and form in which Christ will appear, etc. (Claxton, for example, believes all men are God, and that Christ will come in each individual.) However, one of the points on which they all agree is their primitive communist life-style, which includes the communal ownership of all property, including their (one another’s) bodies.

Cobbe: My coat’s yours. And I hope yours is mine. We’ll all live together, one family, one marriage, one flesh in God. That’s what we do.

Hoskins: Yes, everything in common.

Cobbe: All things common. Or the plague of God will consume whatever you have.

Claxton: All goods in common, yes, and our bodies in common—

Briggs: No.

Hoskins: Yes, we’ll have no property in the flesh. My wife, that’s property. My husband, that’s property. All men are one flesh and I can lie with any man as my husband and that’s no sin because all men are one man, all my husband’s one flesh. (p. 34)

However, despite this agreement, Churchill portrays the ranters as so idiosyncratic and passive, so committed to the notion that, after the failure of the Commonwealth revolt and the diggers and levellers movements, all they can, or need, do is wait for Christ to come, that it is clear any possibility of revolt or revolution including this group of people is gone. In their faith in the millennium, they have lost touch, or interest in altering society themselves. Only Briggs does not believe the millennium is upon them, and realises the situation and what must be done to correct it.

Briggs: Christ will not come. I don’t believe it. Everything I’ve learnt these seven years. He will not come in some bloody red robe and you all put on white frocks, that will not
happen. All I've learnt, how to get things done, that wasn't for nothing. I don't believe this is the last days. England will still be here in hundreds of years. And people working so hard they can't grasp how it happens and can't take hold of their own lives, like us till we had this chance, and we're losing it now, as we sit here, every minute. Jesus Christ isn't going to change it. (p. 33)

But Briggs is a tiny minority, and however accurate his assessment of the situation, and of the opportunity for change's slipping away if they don't act, it is clear that the others can never take action with him, and that any hope of a revolution is gone. There are simply too few who understand the situation and believe as Briggs does; and those who do have no power. The belief in the millennium, the religious fervor which made the revolt led by Cromwell possible, is now the very thing that prohibits a true revolution of the people from taking place. The energy is gone from the revolutionary movement, the moment is lost, and the people have retreated into a passive, desperate hope which, as is pointed out in Scene 23, was never realized.

In Scene 23, the ranters of Scene 22, plus Briggs, describe their lives or an event involving them after 1650, excepting Hoskins, who merely comments on the failure of the Second Coming to occur. Briggs and Claxton have left society, albeit for different reasons. Claxton has withdrawn to Barbados in disappointment, running away from the world. Briggs, however, has taken a socially responsible, if absurd, action. So that others will have more to eat, he has taken to living in a field and trained his body to subsist on grass. Brotherton returns to crime, and Cobbe is tried for blasphemy. Hoskins sums up their plight, and what happened, in her final comment in the play. "I think what happened was, Jesus Christ did come and nobody noticed. It was
the time but we somehow missed it. I don’t see how.” (p. 38) Hoskins’s comment unwittingly sums up the action and message of the play. It was the time; the time for a revolution to free the people from their oppressors, but it was missed. The revolution—that—never—was left the people of England, the poor and working class, as bad off or worse than before. After less than twenty years, England again had a king, and the only real change was that there were new landowners, and the seeds of capitalism had been firmly sown.

In Light Shining in Buckinghamshire, Caryl Churchill analyzed the reasons for the failure of the Commonwealth revolt to turn into a real revolution, the origins of that revolt, and the factors in its aftermath which contributed to the rise of capitalism later in the seventeenth and in the eighteenth centuries. She did this by taking advantage of the opportunities found in epic structure for cinematic construction and the isolation of scenes, making it possible for her to roam freely in time and space, presenting all significant points in the period and process, and to isolate those points, highlighting them to present her analysis clearly and concisely. She was also able to select her scenes for maximum effect, and organize them effectively around her analysis, for its clearest possible presentation by taking advantage of epic structure’s freedom to organize the structure of the work around some element other than a dramatic story, as well as its episodic construction techniques. These factors, combined with her use of an innovative device to create the impression of an examination of the masses, even though she used six significant recurring characters, and an involvement in the mass movements of the time, help to make Light Shining in
Buckinghamshire both exciting theatre and an effective and important political document; clearly, as David Zane Mairowitz observed, "... one of the finest pieces of English playwrighting for years."

David Hare's *Fanshen*, like *Little Red Hen* and *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, deals with real historical events; in this case, the process of revolutionary change which took place in the Chinese village of Long Bow from 1945 to 1949, as it was described by William Hinton in his book *Fanshen*. However, unlike the other two plays, which used the historical processes present in the action as a means through which to dramatize, more or less directly, an argument or analysis, in *Fanshen* Hare is directly concerned with presenting the historical sequence itself in dramatic terms, and consequently it is the process which is the controlling element in the structure of the drama. The play is a very faithful, albeit condensed, dramatization of Hinton's chronicle of life and change in Long Bow, a village about 400 miles southwest of Peking (which situated it on the border of territories controlled by the communists and the Kounintang at the end of World War II). The characters in the play, as in the book, are real people, and often retain their real names in the play. *Fanshen*, and its structure, are thus controlled directly by life, by the rendering of a historical process, a sequence of events which took place just over thirty years ago.

15 David Zane Mairowitz, "God and the Devil," p. 25.

Hare defines the meaning of "fanshen" in his introductory remarks to Scene 1.

Every revolution creates new words. The Chinese revolution created a whole new vocabulary. A most important word in this vocabulary was "fanshen". Literally it means "to turn the body" or "to turn over". To China's hundreds of millions of landless and land-poor peasants it meant to stand up, to throw off the landlord yoke, to gain land, stock, implements and houses. But it meant much more than this. It meant to enter a new world. That is why the book is called Fanshen. It is the story of how the peasants of Long Bow built a new world.17

Catharine Itzin provides a slightly different, more illuminating, description of the meaning of "fanshen". "Fanshen literally means 'to turn over', and in revolutionary China it meant the process of change from feudalism to communism: a peasant person who was effectively 'politicised' was said to have fanshened."18 Fanshen details the process of change both from feudal society, controlled by landlords, to a revolutionary society, controlled by the party and people, and the accompanying change in political attitudes and belief. In fact, much of the play is focussed more on the process of education, and the growing pains politically and ideologically as the village and its leaders struggle to apply communist doctrine and directives to the local situation, than on the redistribution of wealth and subsequent economic situation. The play is also greatly concerned with the effective use of public criticism and self-criticism, and the way in which it can be used to maintain a revolutionary society, as well as the question of

17David Hare, Fanshen (London: Faber & Faber, 1976), p. 13. All citations are from this edition.

18Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 220.
re-education, rather than punishment, for those who falter on the way toward a complete fangshen. The educational process begins when the peasants are taught, for the first time in their lives, to question.

The "drama" of the play was in the dialectics. For generations the peasants lined the pockets of the landlords, whose power went unquestioned. They are finally forced to ask why. And to answer: because the landlords own the land, and the peasants need the landlords' land in order to live. Did they ever think that the landlords equally depended on them and their work? Suddenly they are made to question who needs whom, who depends on whom, for what and why. The peasants are taught to accept nothing at face value, to question everything until it makes sense or until they can change it so that it does make sense. The play charted the process of change.19

The process is then worked through questions of the equitable distribution of wealth, the creation of new class classification systems, the correction of errors in the redistribution process, the zealous misapplication of party principles and directives by a party working team sent to lead the village, and the re-education of those, particularly in the Communist party, who abuse their power through the process of public criticism by the people and of self-criticism before them. In the end, having worked through a series of difficulties, the village of Long Bow is seen as well on the way toward a successful revolutionary society.

The controlling factor in the structure of Fashen is the process of change, with all its successes and setbacks, rewards and growing pains. In charting the process of change, Hare takes the entire village as his cast, shuttling characters in and out of the action as needed, and, as a general rule, in accordance with the historical record.

19Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 220.
as chronicled in Hinton's book. There are a certain number of conti-
nuing characters who appear in many scenes throughout the action, but
the focus of the play is not on the personal fates of these individuals.
In fact, several very interesting developing stories/characters are
dropped without completion in the course of the play because they become
irrelevant to or side issues in the central process of change in the
village as a whole. This sense of community as the center of the play
and its action is reinforced by the fact that, as in Light Shining in
Buckinghamshire, a small group of actors (in this play, nine) take all
of the over thirty parts in the play (although there is no indication by
Hare that the individual parts are to be played by more than one actor
each in the course of the play). The shifting character identities of
a given actor breaks up a strong sense of actor/character identification,
and makes it easier for the audience to focus on the story of the village,
rather than its individual members. In rendering the action of the play,
Hare divides the work into twelve sections (called "sections" in the
text), each of which is composed of one to three smaller episodes il-
lustrating part of the topic which is the concern of the section. The
play is formally divided into two acts of well, but the division is of
no structural significance, and is present merely for the convenience
of an audience interval. The action is confined to the village of Long
Bow and its environs, and to the district capital of Luoheng, and covers
the years 1945 to 1949. No specific time frame is indicated in the
text beyond the years, and it is impossible to reconstruct one with any
accuracy from internal evidence. Consequently, that category will be
omitted from the structural chart, with the notation that several weeks
or months pass between each section, and considerably shorter periods of time pass between the episodes of each section (from several hours to a few days), unless it is otherwise noted in the structural chart.

**Fanshen**

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<td>Section 1</td>
<td>13-21</td>
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<td><strong>Prescene</strong></td>
<td>Series of villagers give information about Long Bow and the conditions of their lives.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Scene 1</strong></td>
<td>T'ien-ming and Man-hsi, two members of the underground, bring Kuo Te-yu, a collaborator with the Japanese, into town for the people to try. They are reluctant to participate, for they are afraid of the Kowmintang, which often collaborated with the Japanese themselves, but when Yu-lai begins, many accuse Kuo Te-yu of his crimes, for T'ien-ming and Man'hai will not act without village participation. Kuo Te-yu accuses two other men of giving him the orders he carried out in oppressing the people: the commander of the local collaborationist garrison, and the Police Chief.</td>
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<td><strong>Scene 2</strong></td>
<td>T'ien-ming and Man'hai execute the commander and Police Chief, then distribute their clothes to the citizens as a reward for their participation. The people, fearing the Kowmintang, refuse to take them.</td>
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<td>21-25</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Scene 1</strong></td>
<td>T'ien-ming and Secretary Liu, who are communists, begin teaching Man'hai, Yu-lai, and the other people, who are not, indoctrinating them into rudimentary communist doctrine. They demonstrate that the landlord needs them more than they need him, and that the people must ask questions until things make sense, or change things so that they are sensible. The people discuss their bad treatment at the hands of the landlords, and decide to stop paying rents.</td>
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<td>Section 3</td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>Landlord's homes, then village square</td>
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| **Scene 1** | Tui Chin informs landlord Ch'ung-wang that, owing to past grievances, the people will no longer pay rents. Ch'ung-wang moves to beat him, but Cheng-k'uan and Yu-lai, as officers of the newly formed Peasants' Association, step in. They intend to figure a bill for
Fanshen

Scene 1

(Scene 1) overcharges and extract it from the landlord, but find he has allowed grain to rot and salt to hydrolyze, indicating he has wasted while the people starved, and converted his goods to cash. They figure his debt at least 100 bags of grain, but only six good ones remain. They beat him until he reveals where his gold is hidden. Scene shifts, and another landlord, Ching-ho, tries to bribe Yu-lai and Cheng-k’uan with a bag of flower and his daughter.

Scene 2

Ching-ho is seized and accused by over 180 villagers, with his debt coming to 400 bags of grain. All his property is confiscated, and he is beaten until he reveals where he hid his money. The fate of the seven village landlords is also narrated. Three died after beating by the Peasants’ Association. Two died of starvation. The others, including Ching-ho, survived, with Ching-ho moving away to teach in a primary school.

Scene 3

Yu-lai, Man-hsi, T’ien-ming, and Cheng-k’uan preside over the redistribution of the landlords’ wealth and possessions to the community. The amount received by any individual is a product of his need, number of grievances, and participation in the overthrow process. Each individual receives a certain number of bags of grain. He or she is then permitted to trade any number of those bags for other possessions, each of which is rated at a given value.

Section 4

34-37  On the road to Changchih; then pantomime tableau on stage platform

Scene 1

T’ien-ming, a member of the Communist Party, tests Man-hsi and his feelings about the Eighth Route Army and the party. Man-hsi passes, and T’ien-ming reveals himself as a party member (the party being illegal, all members keep it secret), and recruits Man-hsi into the party. He explains the role of the party in the village, and the necessity of all party members to win over the people and lead them by setting a good example.

Scene 2

Series of tableaux, narrated by Ch’ung-lai’s wife, tell how Hu Hsueh-ch’en, one of the poorest and shyest of the peasants, was brought out of her shell by a doctor in the local army infirmary who, unknown to her, was a party member, and whom she married. Under his encouragement, she blossomed out, and became Secretary of the Women’s Association. He had to leave, following the army, about ten months after their marriage, but maintained contact through letters. After he leaves,
Fanshen

(Scene 2) Man-hsi tests, then recruits Hu Hsueh-ch'en into the Party to which her husband, unknown to her, also belongs.

Section 5

37-40 Yu-lai's house, then Haueh-ch'en's house

Scene 1

Yu-lai and T'ien-ming, with Cheng-k'uan, discuss the war. Man-hsi has gone to fight, and the village will farm his land for him while he is away. T'ien-ming reveals a new party directive to the others, saying the peasants still have not fanshened in many areas, and calling for further redistribution of land. There are few landlords or rich peasants from whom to take in Long Bow, and it is dangerous, as Cheng-k'uan points out, to risk alienating the middle peasants, whom the party also realizes are necessary allies of the poor. Yu-lai feels the middle peasants should be forced to go along, and wants to push the fanshen harder, since many in the village are convinced the K'oumintang will return and, afraid of them, are secretly turning in what they received in the first redistribution. T'ien-ming decides they will look at the lives of the fathers and grandfathers of the present villagers. Any who held land as landlords or oppressed the people will have possessions confiscated for redistribution.

The three men narrate the campaign, during which many were tortured to reveal the whereabouts of their money, particularly among the gentry. The K'oumintang is beaten back, but the campaign to find new wealth for redistribution is disappointing, and many peasants feel they have still not fanshened. There is also, and continues to be, trouble with the village's Catholic community, many of whom are among the wealthier members, and many of whom were involved with the K'oumintang and collaborated with the Japanese during the occupation.

Scene 3

T'ien-ming secretly informs Hsueh-ch'en that he has been called to a new post by the party, and that the local members must elect a new secretary.

Section 6

40-46 Fields and roads near Long Bow

Scene 1

Yu-lai beats Tu-ch'ih for complaining about the meeting Yu-lai and Cheng-k'uan have called, demonstrating how Yu-lai is misusing his power.

Scene 2

A Communist Party work team, led by Hou, and including Little Li, Ch'i-yun, and Chauig Chu'er, arrives in Long Bow to supervise the fanshening of the village. They
Chang Chu'er is attacked and badly injured by a disguised assailant; so badly he must be taken to a nearby town for treatment to save his life. Lai-tzu, a fairly wealthy local Catholic, tells the work party he heard Yu-lai plotting the attack, and points to the towel used to strangle Chang Chu'er as proof. Hsueh-chen and Cheng-k'uan warn the work party that Lai-tzu is unreliable, but the work party chooses to believe him, and has Yu-lai and his son, the police chief Wente, arrested and sent to the district capital for trial. Hou decides the whole village must be rotten, the work team having heard grumbling in the village, so they dissolve local government and suspend the local militia, Women's Association, and all local leaders, and take over the task of organizing and governing themselves. The local party branch is to go into secret session to critically examine its performance while the work team takes control. Hou tells Cheng-k'uan and Hsueh-chen to think of the people, and no their own disappointment.

Scene 1

The work team has decided that the poorest people of the village should become the board for classifying the citizenry for a new redistribution, and explains their task to them. The guiding rule of the Draft Agrarian Law is explained: Depend on the poor peasant, unite with the middle peasant, destroy the feudal system. Under the new system, all will receive a fair share, regardless of merit or past actions, on the principle that each will have what he and his family need.

Scene 2

The poor peasants interview and attempt to reclassify several villagers.

Scene 3

The results of the classification are discussed by Hou and Little Li. There are 174 poor peasant families, only seventy-two of which have fanshened, and there is not enough land and goods that can be confiscated by them from landlords or rich peasants to make any difference. Some people have accused local cadres (party members) of taking too much in the fanshen, but the working team can discover no evidence of serious enough abuses to make any real difference.
The working team has published the names of local party members, and all are now to stand before the poor of the village for self-criticism and public criticism/questioning of their past action. The Party members must pass this "gate" with the people's approval to maintain their offices and, in extreme cases, party membership. To fail to pass the gate is an extreme humiliation, and strong punishment in itself. Cheng-k'uan is the first before the people. He confesses openly to petty thievery, and abuse of power. He offends the people by being too contrite, and confessing to more than he has really done to win their favor. One member of the people's panel is highly vindictive, and wishes to expel him from the party and send him to Lucheng for trial, but most are satisfied he has confessed and is repentant, and under guidance from Hou, sentence him to a six months suspension from office, during which he will be watched, with a second chance to pass the gate, and be reinstated at the end of that time. He accepts the decision of the masses. Hsuanchen appears, with a list of twenty-three occasions on which she "impeded the revolution," all very minor incidents. The delegates have no objection to her performance, but are offended by her seeming smugness, her sense of being a better person than they. She promises to try to reform her attitude, and passes the gate.

Hou reads the results of the gate. Twenty-two passed, four failed (to be reviewed again later. This does not occur in the play, but in Hinton's book it is revealed that all passed on the second or third gate). An additional four, including Yu-lai, have not yet stood because they are in jail. He also discusses the nature of the crimes. Theft or taking an unfair share is the most common, followed by beatings (many of which, Hinton points out, were the result of overzealousness in party business), illicit sex, and collaborating with landlords. He announces that the work party will be leaving temporarily the next day for a conference in Lucheng.
Scene 1  
Secretary Ch'en severely criticizes the work team for their overzealous performance, which he calls an example of Left extremism. Morale has fallen in their area, and the actions of the work party can, in many instances, be seen as a contributing factor. Rumors of shootings of cadre members have been circulated. The evidence against Yu-lai has been dismissed, in part because of the suspicious status of its source, a Catholic collaborator. Cheng-k'uan was suspended over the alleged absence of money from the sale of silver candlesticks which turned out to be pewter and worth very little. Ch'en tells them that they made up their mind about the village before arriving, and were ready to believe the worst, accepting the worst version of anything they heard as truth. They also neglected and alienated many middle peasants, whose support the party seeks, and sought support only from the poor, elevating their prejudices, vindictiveness, and opinions to the status of party line, in direct contradiction of party policy. Ch'en uses them as an example of what not to do in front of the whole conference, and tells them to correct their errors.

Scene 2  
The work party members express their discouragement, then begin self-criticism as a means of correcting themselves. The other members of the group are especially hard on Hou, who has a tendency to sink into self-pity, encouraging him to undertake an honest and objective self-criticism, which, with their help, he begins to do as the scene ends. In addition, Ch'en announces that, to correct past errors, the village land must be redistributed again.

Section 10  
68-79  
Three households, the village grounds, work party quarters, and the church

Scene 1  
Yu-lai and Wen-te return home and begin to intimidate the people, and especially to abuse Ha-i'en-e, Wen-te's much-abused wife. Chang Chu'er tries to get Tui-chin to come to a redistribution meeting (Tui-chin is a member of the committee), but he will not come, as he is afraid of Yu-lai, and his morale is low. They also need him to form a new Peasants' Association so a new gate can be held for Yu-lai and the others. Still Tui-chin will not go. Ch'ien-yun visits Cheng-k'uan, whose child has died shortly after birth because of the
absence of adequate medical care. He grieves, but she tells him that the improvements for which he has worked to prevent such occurrences will come. Yu-lai goes out in the street firing his luger, daring anyone to bring charges against him in the gate.

Many months later, Hsien-e goes at night to the work party and volunteers to testify against Yu-lai and Wen-te if they will protect her and help her obtain a divorce, conditions to which they agree. With this first volunteer, it will be possible to get others to speak against Yu-lai and Wen-te.

The gate of Wen-te, in a condensed form, is held. He recites a few minor charges against himself, then the people begin bringing charges against him which amount to a roll of paper five feet long. Huan-ch'ao even tries to strangle him. Yu-lai had coached Wen-te in his attitude and speech, but Wen-te's arrogance melts into tears of despair under the onslaught of the people. The people sentence him to be taken to trial at the county court, to which he agrees. He refuses, however, to give his wife a divorce, and swears to her he will reform.

After the gate of Yu-lai, he is brought to a room to await transport to jail. He too despair. Secretary Liu appears and inquires why Yu-lai is crying. He frees Yu-lai, and tells him to walk down the street, and the people will not harm him, for his mistakes have been aired, and he is repentent; that the people do not hate him, but what he has done. Liu reprimands the work team for making Yu-lai despair, suggesting that with re-education a man of his cleverness and skills would be a very valuable party member. He suggests that they send him to a special school which re-educates people such as him, since punishing him will do nothing to aid the party, only satisfy impulses for vengeance. They agree to send Yu-lai to the school over the protests of Little Li, who insists he wants "justice" to be done. (Note: in actual fact, it was Wen-te who was offered the chance, and agreed, to go to the school.)
Fanshen

Scene | Pages | Place
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(Scene 1) | | 
middle peasants slightly less, and rich peasants only 1/6 acre. He outlines two sources for the problem. First, in their zeal for fanshening, the Lucheng district had ignored the section of the Draft Agrarian Law which stated that in areas which, prior to the Law, had fanshened and redistributed, further redistribution need not be conducted. Second, the party in the area had applied the wrong standard to fanshening. They had sought an illusory and impossible equality, when in fact the process was designed only to end feudalism as a step toward collectivization. As a result, he instructs the work parties to return to their areas, and to return land to the middle peasants, and make certain that landlords had enough land to make a living.

Scene 2 | | 
Little Li complains bitterly about the meeting and directive. He does not trust the people to accept it, and is angry and afraid. He speaks critically of Ch'en. Hou goes to get Ch'en so that Li can express his criticism. Despite Li's skepticism about his coming, Ch'en appears and answers Li's complaints that policies have been changed. Li points out that several times Ch'en had misinterpreted the policies, not the field workers, who must implement the revisions and face the people. Ch'en accepts personal responsibility, explains the transitional nature of land reform, and tells them to trust the people and return to the village, for if they are open and honest with the people, they will be trusted and the people will tell them the truth.

Section 12 | 83-85 | Long Bow streets and fields

Scene 1 | | 
The work party returns and begins to tell the people about the new redistribution, and to ask them their opinions. For perhaps the first time, the work party really seeks and listens to the opinions of the people.

Scene 2 | | 
A worker works his fields. He recites a poem which, metaphorically, speaks of his freedom and equality with all men, as well as driving home the point that feudalism has been defeated. He leaves his fields to go to a meeting when the flag is posted.

As the structural chart clearly shows, Fanshen possesses an epic structure. It is cinematic, ranging through four years and two Chinese towns, including a number of locations within one of the towns that is
represented. It has an early point of attack, coming at the very beginning of the fanshening process in Long Bow. The construction is episodic, and Hare utilizes it to good effect to represent significant points in the fanshening process of the village, and the political growth of its citizens and the work party assigned to it. Hare also used the isolation of scenes, which function as basic units of structure, very effectively to enhance the clarity with which the process is presented, and to allow him to isolate and emphasize the political point of each scene. The isolation and clear presentation of the political implications of the script is very important to Hare, and his use of epic structure was well-suited to that desire. In his preface to the play, Hare specifically asks actors and directors to isolate and keep those political points in mind when preparing and playing Fanshen.

At the end of each scene ask the question: what political point is this scene making? And then ask, does our presentation of it do everything to make that point, or is it in places contradicting that point? You will find that once you ask these questions, a lot of fussy over-characterization will drop away and arguments about motivation will be set in perspective. Instead ask the question: is our presentation positive enough?20

Given Hare's desires for clarity and precision in presenting the process itself and the political implications of his scenes, his use of epic structure ideally fits his need to be able to isolate scenes/points in the process/argument for clarity and emphasis, and to detail all, but only, those points in the process significant to his discussion of the process of fanshening in Long Bow. In fact, the structure of Fanshen

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represents one of the most skillful matchings of the formal demands of
a play's subject with its epic structure in contemporary British drama.

Insofar as extensive revelations of the way in which epic structure can be used to develop a process have already been presented in
discussions of Mary Barnes, Female Transport, and The Bundle, it is not
necessary to undertake an extensive discussion of the structure of Fanshen and its organization around a process. However, a brief overview
of the structure, and the way the scenic isolation in epic plays allowed Hare to present clearly each significant step in the action of
the fanshening of Long Bow, is in order. The first section in the play
shows how the Japanese collaborators and Kuomintang were expelled, and
the people began to take some responsibility for their actions. When
Kuo Te-yu stands before them, and T'ien-ming is encouraged to shoot him,
T'ien-ming replies, "Nobody will be shot, nobody, until they have been
tried by you. You have taken their lives into your hands, you, the pea-
sants of Long Bow. It lies with you. Do you understand?" (p. 20)
T'ien-ming's forcing them to act and accept responsibility is the first
step in their consciousness-raising process. The second step is repre-
sented in Section 2. During a talking session which lasts three days,
T'ien-ming and Secretary Liu teach the people two vital and liberating
lessons. The first is that they must question and analyze until things
make sense. The second is that the landlords depend upon them for a
living, and not they on the landlords, a lesson which makes it possible
for the people to overthrow their oppressors. Liu explains this to them
in introductory remarks which outline this conversation as the first
step in a consolidation program in areas controlled by the communist
Eighth Route Army.

Liu: An island in the center of China. A province controlled by the Eighth Route Army. Now—a short ceasefire in the war between the Koubintang and ourselves. During this time the possibility of a coalition is to be explored. But for a time our ground is safe. Our army protects us. In Lucheng County there is a People's Government. Our duty, the duty of all village leaders, is to consolidate the successes of the Anti-Traitor movement. The history of China is a history of bloody and violent rebellion. But always the blood runs down the gutter and nothing is changed. How are we to make sure this time, in this tight circle, the overturning holds? The difference is, this time, we think. We ask questions. We analyse. This is why I have come to talk to you. Today we must consider a single question. Who depends on whom for a living? (p. 21)

During several days of talks, Liu and T'ien-ming lead the people to the conclusion that the landlords are responsible for their suffering, but that it is the people who keep the landlords alive, and not vice-versa.

Ch'ung-lai's Wife: We have all suffered for them.
T'ien-ming: So who depends on whom?
Yu-lai: We make them rich, they depend on our labor, they depend on us.
Ch'ung-lai's Wife: They depend on us.
T'ien-ming: Yes.
Liu: Yes.
Fa-liang: They depend on us.
Yu-lai: Take us away, they'd die. Take them away, we live.
T'ien-ming: You do not depend on them. They depend on you. Understand this and everything you have ever known is changed.
Liu: We have liberated a peach tree heavy with fruit. Who is to be allowed to pick the fruit? Those who have tended and watered the tree? Or those who have sat at the side of the orchard with folded arms?
Yu-lai: We shouldn't even pay rent.
Liu: The policy in the Liberated Areas is to simply ask for a reduction in rents and interest charges. But here in Lucheng County, you—the leaders—will go ahead of the policy.
T'ien-ming: Now surely we can right the wrongs of the past. Already in many places the landlords have been beaten down. We have only to follow the example of others. Then we can all fanshen. (pp. 24-5)
Having learned the economic reality of their community, in Section 3 the people refuse to pay rent, and then overthrow the landlords, confiscating goods and land in payment for past crimes. Shen Ching-ho, one of the landlords, narrates the outcome. "Of the seven landlords in Long Bow, three died after being beaten to death by the Peasants' Association. Two more died of starvation when they had been driven from their land. Shen Ching-ho was luckier; he ran away and became a teacher in a primary school. (p. 31)

Having overturned the landlord system, the peasants redistribute the spoils in the first redistribution fanshen of the play (Section 3, Scene 3), a scene which also sees the rise of Yu-lai and Cheng-k'uan as village leaders. The recruitment of leaders in the village into the Communist Party is the step represented in Section 4, in which Man-hsi and Hu Hsueh-chen are recruited into the party, which is as yet a secret organization. Yu-lai and Cheng-k'uan also join the party, although this is not seen, effectively placing town government in party control, as T'ien-ming has been a member of the party for some time. The role of the party is outlined for Man-hsi by T'ien-ming.

T'ien-ming: The Party must be the backbone of the village. It must educate, study, persuade, build up the People's organizations—the Peasants' Association, the Village Government, the Women's Association, the People's Militia, it must co-ordinate all these, give them a clear line to follow, a policy that will unite everyone who can be united. Without the party the village is a bowl of loose sand. So its members must get up earlier, work harder, attend more meetings, stay up later than anyone else, worry before anyone else is worried. We must become the best organized, the most serious group in the village. All in secret. We must lead, not by force but by example. By being good people. By being good Communists. (pp. 35-6)
However, Section 5 demonstrates the first setbacks encountered by the party and village leaders. When a directive comes that further redistribution must occur, T'ien-ming, Yu-lai, and Cheng-k'uan realize that there are no more rich to be overthrown. Policy has it that middle peasants are allies, and should not be touched, so they must go back into family histories, so that they can take from those whose families were oppressors in the past; in effect, punishing the children for the sins of the fathers. As T'ien-ming says, 'This time we must examine family history. Anyone whose father or grandfather exploited labour at any time in the past will have their wealth confiscated.' (p. 39) This sort of redistribution is bound to stir up more bad feelings than already exist, and, it is later revealed, actually contravenes party policy. Present troubles from another source are spoken of by Yu-lai, and his response to those problems, the exercise of force, hints of trouble to come in the future.

Yu-lai: The whole village is convinced the Koumintang will return. The Catholics openly plot our assassination, peasants have begun to creep back in the night to return the goods that were seized from landlords, grenades go off in the hillsides, you ask about fanshen, people have never heard the word. We're at war. What do you think we should do? Leadership. Strong leadership, Cheng-k'uan. We must keep things moving. (p. 39)

Yu-lai's willingness to use force is demonstrated in Section 6, when he beats Tui-chin for questioning a meeting Yu-lai and Cheng-k'uan have called. This use of force will later be turned against Yu-lai at his gate. As it is, it builds ill will, further dampening morale, and leads to discontent with the process of fanshen and, indirectly, the party (since Yu-lai's membership is, of course, still a secret).
The next major step forward also occurs in Section 6, when the work team from the Communist party arrives to consult with and guide the village and its leaders. When one of its members, Chang Ch'uer, is seriously attacked, and suspicion is cast on Yu-lai by a Catholic, the leader of the work team, Hou, decides to dissolve all town organizations, have the work team take over, and reorganize the town with a new redistribution so that more can fanshen. In so doing, he and the work team place all their trust and confidence in the poorest of the poor, and take their word against any middle peasants, or even party members.

Hou: I've only been here a few hours but already the work team has heard a good deal of complaint. Some people who feel that fanshen is not complete, some who feel they got too little, others who feel that the cadres took most. Whether this is true, an attack is made on the life of a member of the work team by a leader of the village on the first day we arrive to investigate. The Vice-Chairman of the Peasants' Association (Yu-lai) must be taken to jail. His son, Wen-te, the Head of Police, will be taken to jail. His closest friends must be arrested and taken to jail. The work team will be issued with guns. All village leaders are temporarily suspended. The village accounts will be examined by the work team. The Party Branch will go into secret session to examine its own performance up till now. The work team will take over the affairs of the village. It will root out com-

mandism, hedonism, opportunism. It will re-examine the vil-

lage's whole fanshen. (To Hsueh-chen and Cheng-k'uan) Com-
rades, I am not saying you, you are thinking of the hours you have all worked, of the days, of the months, of the years, you have given. Don't. Don't think of yourself. Think of the people and how they are led. Wipe the slate clean and start again. The place is rotten. We must start again. (pp. 45-6)

As is explained in Section 9, in this action, and others, Hou makes a number of mistakes. He jumps to several conclusions without sufficient evidence, and later blindly places his trust in the poor at the expense of the most trustworthy body of citizens in the community; party mem-

bers. He is also insufficiently informed of the true state of affairs
in the village to proceed sensibly. For example, he takes the word of
a Catholic who is a suspected collaborator with the Japanese and Koumintang, and saboteur of the village's fanshen, despite warnings from, and
over the word of, party members. He also, in Section 7, organizes the
poorest members of the community (those with little or nothing in the
way of interests or property to protect), into a committee which, in
accordance with the new Draft Agrarian Law, is to reclassify all peas-
sants in Long Bow for a new redistribution of property. In so doing,
however, he ignores both a provision stating that the purpose of the
law is the end of feudalism, not equality, and one that states that in
areas which have fanshened, no further action is necessary (this latter,
however, is a common mistake, as is revealed in Section 11). He ex-
plains to the committee members the principle underlying the Act:
"Depend on the poor peasant, unite with the middle peasant, destroy the
feudal system," (Section 7, p. 47) Under this system, as a general
rule, property will be transferred from rich peasants and landlords to poor
peasants, with middle peasants basically holding their property at pre-
redistribution levels. However, when the reclassification is complete,
the first hints of trouble with Hou's vision of the village and with
the logistics of managing his plan become apparent.

Li: I have the results of the classification. Trying to make sense.
Hou: What is it?
Li: One hundred and seventy-four families have been classed poor
peasants.
Hou: Isn't that what we expected?
Li: But only seventy-two have so far fanshened. It means there
are one hundred families in the village who barely scrape a
living. And I've nothing to give them. We found one rich
peasant. One. It's not going to go very far. It's not land,
there's enough land, one acre for every man, woman, and child
in Long Bow. It's resources. Animals, carts, implements,
houses. That's what we need.
Hou: I've been over the village accounts to try and see if anything was missed or stolen in the last distribution. Everyone says the cadres took too much, but I can't find anything.

Li: So what do we do next?

Hou: Expand the Poor Peasants' League.

Li: It won't create things, Comrade. (pp. 52-3)

Hou can find no evidence of corruption of any significance among party members, and his assessment of the previous fangshen as inadequate is obviously not correct in its entirety. Nonetheless, in Section 8 he institutes a gate in which party members, whose identities have now been revealed, must stand before the poor peasants for self-confession and criticism, and questioning by the people. In order to continue in service, they must pass the gate. While Hsueh-ch'en and twenty-one others pass, Cheng-k'uan, and three others, fail, clearly more from personal vindictiveness on the part of the poor peasants than for major corruption on their parts. This is particularly true of Cheng-k'uan, who is placed on suspension for six months, at the end of which he must face a new gate. He has a few beatings to his credit, a not uncommon thing (most the result of overzealousness with peasants reluctant to follow village/party policy), and some petty selfishness, taking more than his share, but the chief charge against him concerns the disappearance of expected proceeds from the sale of a pair of silver cangue-sticks from the Catholic church, which were confiscated by the town. He is accused to stealing most of the proceeds, but this charge is later found to be untrue. A Catholic widow testifies the canguesticks were silver, but in fact they were pewter, and worth very little. Nonetheless, in this instance, as in all others throughout the gate, Hou takes the word of the poor against that of party members, even when
are known to be vindictive or potential class enemies. He is so locked in to his notion that the town and party members are corrupt that he is blind to any other possibility. In any case, at the end of the gate, he announces that the work team will go to Lucheng for a conference for a few days. At Lucheng (Section 8), Hou and the work team are called on the carpet for their mistakes and performance in handling the situation in Long Bow. They are called in to a special meeting with a party official, Secretary Ch'en, who dresses them down severely.

Ch'en: For the moment, the matter of Yu-lai and his friends... The arrest was a mistake... I have heard rumors the four cadres have been tried at a mass meeting and shot... Thirty miles from Long Bow the rumors are credited. And they lend currency to the belief that the cadres were guilty. And that undermines the work of every cadre in the County. There was not enough evidence for an arrest... You arrested them on the basis of rumor and suspicion. You had no firm evidence. The county police have already decided to release them. It seems you made up your minds about the village before you even got there. And you then accepted the worst version of everything you heard. Isn't it true you suspended all the cadres the very first day you were there? Isn't it true you put the whole Party Branch under supervision and took control of the village yourselves? Isn't it true that by the second day you were publically examining the village accounts before you commanded any support among the people? And from what I've heard of the Long Bow gate you countenanced every slur the people could bring against their leaders, Cheng-k'uan failed the gate because he was suspected of misusing money from the sale of candlesticks... We've looked into that. The candlesticks weren't even silver. They were pewter. They were worth very little. And yet you went to Wang's widow for evidence, you went to a class enemy for testimony against a cadre. We have a name for what you did. We call it Left extremism. Here is a report prepared by the third administrative district of the Taihang subregion. Your mistakes are already listed in that. You have sought support only from the poor peasants, thereby neglecting the middle peasants. You've treated Party members as if they were class enemies. Everything the poor peasants wanted you have believed and tried to give them. You have elevated their point of view to the status of a line. That line is in clear opposition
to the official policy of the Party. . . . I shall be using
the work of your team as an example to the whole conference
of Left deviation. I hope after criticism we shall be able
to correct your faults. (pp. 62-4)

After Secretary Ch'en's charges, Hou, and the other members of the work
team, hold a self-criticism session as a means of beginning to correct
their errors. However, on returning to Long Bow in Section 10, they
find morale very low. Many are afraid because Yu-lai has returned and
begun a campaign of intimidation. Party members are upset because of
their treatment, and Cheng-k'uan's woes are compounded because of the
death of his child for lack of the very things fanshen was supposed to
bring. Later in the section, Yu-lai and Wen-te are brought before the
gate, and both are crushed emotionally and spiritually by the accusa-
tions of the people and their desire for vengeance. They are to be
sent to Lucheng for trial for their crimes. However, when Secretary
Liu arrives and finds Yu-lai crying, he teaches both Yu-lai and the
work team two valuable lessons: that Yu-lai is hated for his deeds,
not himself, so that he can re-win the people's blessing through his
contrition, and that re-education is preferable to punishment and ven-
geance, particularly when the individual can be of use to the party.

When questioned by Liu, Yu-lai tells him that he wants to die, and
fears he will be shot by the district court, or lynched by the people
for his errors (or thrown out of the party, which, he says, is "as bad
as being shot."); p. 77) However, Liu corrects and encourages Yu-lai.

Yu-lai: People hate me. They want me dead.
Liu: You can still decide your fate. It's up to you. I know
people who have done much worse than you. They have
faced the people honestly and the people have accepted
them again as leaders.
Yu-lai: I can't face living in this . . .
Liü: You can. Everyone can face everything.
Yu-lai: The people hate me.
Liü: No, They hate what you've done. (Pause) The people have voted to send you to the Court. You are not yet in prison. Walk down the street. Try it. (p. 77)

When Yu-lai leaves, Liü turns and severely criticizes the work team, teaching them a valuable lesson about how the revolution salvages and uses its human resources.

Liü: How did this happen? You let him lose hope. How could you? Never, never let a man lose hope. It's a waste, to the Party. To the people. It's easy, it's so easy to stamp something out. It's what they do in every country in the world. They cure diseases by killing the patient. But we... are going to save the patient.

Chang Ch'ueri: You're not going to let him loose?
Liü: Why not?
Little Li: He and his son terrorized the village... Ah I see, so you thought get them out of the way and everything will be all right...
Little Li: The people...
Liü: But it won't comrade. You can't smooth trouble over, it will come back at you, always it will appear somewhere else unless you dig out the root.

Ch'ü-yun: The people wanted rid of him.
Liü: Of course...
Little Li: And we proved, we proved today we could remove their fears...
Liü: Of course you did, that's the easy part...

Little Li: We proved today the Party is ready to purify its own ranks...
Liü: No. You proved the party could be brutal and wasteful. There is a school in Changchín for cadres who cannot pass the gate, a place where they can be re-educated, taken out of their own lives, given a chance to think, to learn, to be objective. He should go there. He should not go to prison. On no account should he be thrown out of the Party. (Pause) It's a practical question, you must say what you think.

Chang Ch'ueri: Send him to the school. We can use him.
Hou: Yes. Our thinking was wrong.
Ch'ü-yun: Yes.
Little Li: No. We said purify the Party, we promised that. Now we mustn't go back. The people need to see him punished.

Liü: Or is it you who needs that?
Little Li: We worked so hard to organize that meeting.
Liu: And you want a reward?
Little Li: I want justice.
Liu: Well?
Hou: The overall feeling of the team is strongly for reforming the man.
Liu: Good.
Little Li: If men like Yu-lai can remain as Communists then what is the point of the campaign?
Liu: There are no breakthroughs in our work. There is no "just do this one thing and we will be there". There is only the patient, daily work of re-making people. Over each hill, another hill. Over that hill, a mountain. The Party needs Yu-lai because he is clever and strong, and reformed will be of more value to the people than if he had never been corrupted. We must save him. We can use him. He can be reformed. (pp. 77-9)

The majority of the work team learns an important lesson about the need to sublimate their personal wills to the good of the party, and to look more objectively and positively at situations, as well as about the potential for and need to reform and use anyone who can help the party, and be changed. For the revolution to succeed, all who can help must be allowed. At the end of the scene, only Little Li seems to remain unconvinced and disgruntled about the party's position and Yu-lai's fate.

In Section II, the work team returns to Lucheng, and receives part of the general criticism Secretary Ch'en levels at the entire district. In their zeal for an equal society, the fanshening process has proceeded in such a way that poor peasants now have, on average, about 4/5 of an acre, middle peasants a bit less, and rich peasants 1/6 of an acre (p. 79). In other words, the whole scale of ownership has been turned upside down, something the Draft Agrarian Law was never meant to do. Land reform had been carried out in Lucheng before the Law was enacted, and so the area was exempt from its redistribution procedures and provisions. Nonetheless, in their zeal, work teams had gone about
further redistributing land and possessions, with the permission of the provincial government. Ch'en explains that this is the result of false ideas about equality and how it can be created, and orders them to return to their stations and reverse some of the redistribution.

Ch'en: Equality cannot be established by decree. Even if we could give everyone an equal share, how long would it last? The strong, the ruthless would soon climb to the top; the weak and the sick would sink to the bottom. Only in the future when all land and productive wealth is finally held in common and we produce in great abundance will equality be possible. So we have been judging fanshen by the wrong principles. We have taken absolute equality as our banner. We have tried to be charitable. We have tried to give everyone everything they need. We have tried to be god. Land reform can have only one standard and it is not equality. It is the abolition of the feudal system. And that we have achieved. Now we know from history that whenever victory draws near it's easy for cadres to become adventurist, to alienate their allies, to persecute creators of wealth, to make impossible leftist demands. This is counter-revolutionary, because it pits working people against working people and endangers the success of the whole movement. We must rein ourselves in. Above all in Lucheng County we must begin the work of returning goods and land to those middle peasants from whom we have taken too much. And we must ensure that landlords are given enough land to make a living.

Ch'en's speech upsets Little Li very much. However, when Ch'en comes to accept Li's criticism, he accepts blame for the confusion over policy which was misinterpreted, and so misled work teams. Ch'en explains that many of the problems result from their being in a transitional stage from the old society to socialism (which is itself a transitional phase), and that there are many questions to be answered about the path ahead. The team is apprehensive about returning to Long Bow with news of the return of the land (oddly, Hinton indicates that many were happy to return land, for they had been given more than they could work, and assessments were too high). However, Ch'en teaches them the final great
lesson of the play, and the one which completes the political fanshen of the work team: trust the people.

Ch'en: You must explain our mistakes, the people will be perfectly happy to listen. Tell the people the truth and they will trust you. One day, some time, this is the hardest thing, they will tell you the truth in return. Tell them why China must be bold in concept but gentle in execution. Tell them . . . they are makers of the revolution every one. They have lived already through many mistakes, but these are just ripples on the surface of the broad yellow river. Go back. Tell them. (p. 83)

The work team returns to Long Bow, to talk to the people, and, for the first time, to really listen to them in return. The play ends with an assertion of confidence by a peasant working in his field, in a poem he recites just before going to a party meeting.

Peasant: There is no Jade Emperor in heaven
There is no Dragon King on earth
I am the Jade Emperor
I am the Dragon King
Make way for me you hills and mountains
I'm coming. (Section 12, p. 85)

By effectively utilizing the episodic and cinematic construction, and the high level of scenic isolation, found in epic structure, David Hare was able to examine the process of social and political growth in Long Bow and its work team clearly and effectively, charting the process called fanshen from 1945 to 1949. Step by step, the significant stages in the process could be, and were, revealed. In a similar way, Howard Brenton was able to examine the condition and operation of British class structure and relationships in Epsom Downs, John McGrath to argue for a union of socialist and nationalist causes in Scotland to free it of English political and economic rule, and Caryl Churchill to analyze the origins and failure of the potential working-class
revolution during Commonwealth England, as well as the roots of modern
capitalism in the period. These four plays, each of which examines its
concerns by focussing directly on events and the masses, rather than
representative individuals and their personal fates, indicate the vari-
ety of topics, and types of topics, that can be treated by combining
epic structure with this focussing approach. They also demonstrate the
high quality of dramatic, political writing being produced by contem-
porary British leftist playwrights using epic structural forms, with
two of them, Fanshen and Light Shining in Buckinghamshire, clearly
standing among the finest examples of English playwrighting in the
post-war era.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION
Throughout dramatic history, playwrights have sought diverse means of most appropriately matching the content of their plays to the forms and structures available to them in world drama. One of the most common structures utilized has been epic structure. With its cinematic and episodic construction, use of a series of discrete scenes as basic structural units, and ability to adapt itself effectively to elements other than the compact, dramatic rendering of a story line as the controlling factor in the selection and arrangement of scenes (construction of the structure), epic structure has proved to be a most satisfactory means of handling material so that it is both dramatically interesting and thematically clear. It has shown itself to be particularly useful in dramas which take as their primary purpose the conveying of thematic material, such as social, political, or religious/philosophical analyses or arguments, and for rendering long-term processes, be they historical sequences or processes of some other kind.

Epic structure has been especially useful in meeting the needs of dramatists in four periods of theatrical history: the middle ages, with its long cycle plays (particularly in England) tracing the history of God's intervention in the world; the English Renaissance (and the Spanish Golden Age of about the same time); Piscator and Brecht's Epic Theatre of the mid-twentieth century; and in contemporary British drama, particularly among leftist playwrights, who have attempted to infuse their plays with both dramatic interest and significance, and persuasive, important political contents. These contemporary British leftists, whose specific political positions vary from Labour/Social Democratic to
marxist or revolutionary socialist, have utilized epic structure in a variety of types of plays, most prominently in plays which treat public actions either through a focus on a representative individual or group, or a large group or the masses, although they have also used it in plays examining the private, frequently psychological, problems and concerns of individuals. In developing dramas dealing with these concerns, British dramatists have used a variety of elements as a means of controlling the selection and arrangement of incidents in their works, as the plays examined in the preceding chapters makes clear. Contemporary British leftist dramatists have organized their plays around the presentation of arguments (McGrath's *Little Red Hen*), processes (Edgar's *Mary Barnes*; Edgar and Todd's *Teendreams*; Hare's *Fanshen*), thematic analysis (Poliakov's *City Sugar*; Bond's *The Bundle*, which also utilizes a process as a significant controlling factor in the structure), and the analysis of conditions or events (Rudkin's *Ashes*, which combines several other elements of control to ultimately examine barrenness; Gooch's *Female Transport*, in which a process is also a major controlling element; Brenton's *Epsom Downs*; and Churchill's *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*). By skillfully utilizing the opportunities afforded by the traits of epic structure for the clear isolation of scenes/points of significance in an analysis, process, or argument, British leftists have been able to meet both their dramatic and their extra-dramatic, political ends successfully. It should be noted that the effective use of epic structure as a means of constructing a dramatically viable and thematically powerful or persuasive play is not limited to political concerns, nor to those of leftists. Even a completely apolitical author could use it
effectively in, for example, dramatizing history, and the use of epic structure to present and reinforce religious teachings in the Medieval period makes it clear that its use is far from being merely political or socialist. However, epic structure is in many ways peculiarly well-adapted to the needs of leftist dramatists, whose concern with social conditions/processes and history, and whose conviction that clearly presented themes and analyses/arguments in drama can be used to persuade and propagandize as a weapon for socio-political change, make epic structure an ideal vehicle for the presentation of their ideas in dramatic form. It is therefore not surprising that contemporary British leftist playwrights have become the most prolific and proficient users of epic structure on the contemporary theatre scene.

Aside from its presence as an important, even dominant, structural type in several significant periods of theatrical history, there are four additional reasons why epic structure is deserving of far more study and examination than it has thusfar received from dramatic and theatrical critics and scholars. First, an understanding of the workings and capabilities of epic structure is necessary for the fair and accurate evaluation of epic scripts, many of which are of considerable artistic worth. If epically structured plays are evaluated on the basis of those standards applied to the criticism of dramatic, or Aristotelian, plays, it is quite possible that the epic play and its powers will be misunderstood, receive unfairly negative evaluations, and be downgraded or cast aside on the basis of critical principles and judgments which cannot accurately describe, account for, understand the workings of, or evaluate a play with epic structure. For the sake of an
accurate scholarly and critical appreciation of a large body of drama, and hence of world drama in general, a full understanding and appreciation of the potential and drawbacks of epic structure is necessary (This could be especially vital in increasing western appreciation of Asian drama, much of the best and most important of which is epic, including Sanskrit, Wayang, Chinese operatic forms, and Kabuki/Bunraku scripts of both joruri and more conventionally dramatic origins.). Second, epic structure is important for the avenues it opens into the more effective handling of a variety of types of content, and for new ways of handling it, including the dramatization of history and various types of political, philosophical, religious, etc. materials. A real mastery of the use of epic structure could be a considerable aid to the use of drama for educational purposes. Third, epic structure has contributed to, and continues to contribute to, the impulse toward the development of new techniques in staging and the use of new production values. The demands of epically structured plays for speed and flexibility in design and scenic arrangement can serve as a spur to the development of new technology and staging methods in the theatre, particularly if epic plays become more prevalent than they are today in world, and especially American, theatre. Finally, along with spurring new technologies and design approaches, epic structure, as a prevailing form, could lead to the development of new and innovative uses of theatrical space; new theatre architectures and actor/audience relationships. There has always been a fairly close relationship between the form, structure, and conventions of drama, and those of the theatre spaces for which the plays were written. Plays have always been written to take advantage
of the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of the spaces and conven-
tions of the theatres for which they have been written. For example,
the lack of scenery and openness of the Elizabethan public stage led
to the writing of plays which took advantage of the opportunity to use
the audiences' imaginations to accommodate rapid shifts in time and
place, and so contributed to the writing of the sprawling dramas of the
English Renaissance; just as the difficulty in shifting box sets con-
tributed to the rise of realistic, domestic dramas in the mid- and late
nineteenth century. A prevalent use of epic structure in drama could
ultimately have some effect on theatre architecture; be it in a quest
for new forms, or a return to a modified version of the older stages on
which epic dramas were common. Given these factors, it is clear that
epic structure is worthy of a good deal of critical, scholarly attention
in the near future.

There are several areas of epic theory and practice which are ripe
for additional scholarly work. Though a brief outline of epic struc-
tural theory was presented in Chapter One, a great deal of additional
work remains to be done in developing and understanding epic structure
before it will be fully understood in all its potentiality, strengths,
and weaknesses. Aristotelian dramatic structure, with its critical
heritage of approximately 2,400 years, is very well-understood. With a
real critical heritage dating back only to Brecht and Piscator in the
1920s and 1930s, there is a good deal of work still to be done in ana-
lyzing and coming to terms with epic structure in drama. There is also
considerable room for expanding an understanding of epic structure's
relationship to other structural forms, such as the Aristotelian, cyclic,
or lyric. It would certainly be worthwhile to examine the presence and use of epic structure and the prevailing controlling factors used in other periods, particularly the Medieval and English Renaissance, and other portions of the twentieth century. Finally, the use of epic structure in, and its potentialities for, non-realistic drama is a virtually untouched area. Even in the twentieth century, be it in the drama of Brecht, or in the plays of the contemporary British leftists, epic drama, as a general rule, has been grounded firmly in a realistic tradition in terms of its language, rendering of and approach to characters, motivation, and characterization, creation and rendering of conflict, situations, and action, and basic world view. In part, this is because so much epic writing in the twentieth century has been socialist in nature, making it likely that a strong prejudice in favor of the realistic should exist, since they wish to examine reality/society in order to change it. However, there is no reason to suppose that epic drama could not be satisfactorily produced in non-realistic modes, and an examination of work accomplished in that area, and of the potential use of epic structure in non-realistic drama, might be quite valuable.

Epic structure has been an important dramatic structure throughout theatre history. However, in terms of both quantity and quality of use, the contemporary British leftists stand second only to the playwrights of the English Renaissance in their use of epic structure. Recent British dramatists have used epic structure to tackle a wide variety of contemporary and historical subjects and problems, and have written a large number of dramatically powerful and thematically persuasive plays. Clearly, their skillful use of epic structure and its potentials has
been a major factor in allowing contemporary British leftist dramatists to produce many of the finest works in contemporary world drama, and to produce many important social and political documents as well.
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