

JOURNAL FOR "THEATER IN ENGLAND"

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THE NATIVITY:.

At the end of the theater in England program, I perceived the entire ,trip as part of a unified and continuous psychological drama; one which began, serendipitously, with "The Nativity," and concluded (more or less) with "Copenhagen". Despite the many disparate approaches these plays took to the trials and indiocyncracies of man, the resounding motif was humanism. Even in something as non-secular as the birth of the Christian God was a vehicle for exploring the tragedy, the drama, the inconsistencies, and the sheer intrigue of man.

"The Nativity" was quite brilliant in how it infused a classic biblical drama with a tapestry of images from modern society. For instance, when we first entered, the ceiling was decorated with a fantastically complex arrangement of colanders and cheese graters. As another example, the three wise men were paraded around on camels made of

in a way reinstating the importance of enduring crucifixion in life - not in a morbid or masochistic sense, but as a necessary strategy for growth, particularly in regard to modern youth. Speaking on behalf of 20th century youth, I can say that much of what in our minds is a tenuous popsicle-stick castle of morals, and an indeterminate haze where we repeatedly question and are frustrated by our lack of conviction and direction. The crucifixion is a more graphic version of the immensely valuable "wounding" referred to in the Iron John myth, and to a certain extent, the nativity was presented as a series of crucifixions. Three of the most prominent were:

- 1) Lucifer's initial descent into the crowd where he is carried around with his arms out in a kind of prostrated position
Lucifer gave off a sensation similar to a rock'n roll star in this scene. He was carried by
his "groupies" and put on display in front of the audience. In this way, we were implicated as part of a morally defective public. This of course, was also parodied, as the character of Lucifer was quite comic and almost endearing.~I think his function was almost to downplay the classical Christian notion of the invasion by the "evil other" and implicate man directly as the bearer of his own evils.

- 2) When Abel is butchered by Cain, he is tied to the sheep and dragged around as if being crucified. There is a considerable detail devoted to this. Cain enters an almost crazed state as he drags his brother around by his ankles. This was a frightening contrast to
Abel's
pastoral
simplicity,
and
implicated the
jealous as potential "crucifiers."

- 3) When Abraham is taking Isaac to be sacrificed, Isaac carries a large piece of wood in the manner of Christ bearing the cross. This provided almost a kind of justice as it accentuated the haunting depths of faith.

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In conclusion, I would like to focus on the use of the vertical plane in the production. This goes somewhat further on what I mentioned earlier about the set design. The fact that the audience was swarmed around the action put a particular emphasis on vertical mobility. More precisely, it gave a heightened sense of the "ascent/descent" drama that Northrup Frye argues. As a bit of a stretch, some have argued that the human consciousness arose from bipedalism - giving man a way of organizing thought and emotion into distinct vertical levels. Above and below spaces seemed to have very different functions in this play; for the most part, the above was the place of instruction and providence (Where God ruled justly and Herod ruled falsely), while the below was the place of feasting and retribution. Just a few examples: God is the most mobile Character, and beacons from atop his throne as well as coming down (in the instance of Noah) to meet his people. Herod, on the other hand begins atop as a false king, but is later destroyed by the angel of

death in mid feast.

BATTLE ROYAL:

I must admit that I found "Battle Royal" pretty rough going after "The Nativity." Whereas the set of the nativity was communal and cozy, the set of "Battle Royal" was massive and imposing. Perhaps the massive set with its elevated central podium and four red hanging tapestries were meant to maintain the distant sense of "sanctity in history" (In the same way, that the awesome size of Westminster Abbey makes even the most miniscule morsel of faith roar!). The size of the stage was often used exactly to this end - to show how vast and unforgiving the kingdom was and how cruel its intrusions on Caroline were. The one scene in particular with Caroline outlining her grievances to Mariette accentuated the tragedy of her marriage - her existence seemed at that point to be a kind of psychological dungeon. This contrasted very well with her experiences in Italy with Bartolemeo which featured a kind of "substag " This was a smaller, elevated stage where she could dance and interact. It was a smaller, more containing, and more "organic"

contrast to the British kingdom and was more forgiving and tailored to Caroline.

The contrast of the two settings - Italy and England helped accentuate what I found to be a central aim of the play: a study of manic excesses and manic depression caused by displacement. In this way, it is not unlike the displacement of the four Athenians in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or Othello's estrangement in Venice. The manic theme was seen most obviously through George and Caroline. Caroline is depicted as highly manic and defiant with her tendency for tantrums and hysterics. (In fact, in the opening scene I thought she was being committed!). George's manic energies are seen largely through his profligacy - his lavishing of women, his pathetic and exotic attempts to maintain correspondence with Miss Fitzherbert, and his excessive drinking. Ultimately, these activities for both proved to be self destructive. Caroline loses her life and fails to be coronated, while George is legally defeated and loses his love. This is very much a play about finding "one's place." George's place is as cavalier badboy of the Royal Court, while Caroline's is as the "outspoken 18th century flower child of Italy." Perhaps the title of the play can be interpreted not so much as a royal battle between Prince and Princess, but as George and Caroline's respective battles with the "royal system Throughout the play, the kingdom is presented as cruel and dehumanizing. It is a kind of eerie force and malleable power whose use has necessary repercussions. There are several themes which illustrated this in the performance. First, there were several instances where George and Caroline would give an offstage wave and hear a roar of response from a crowd. Secondly, there were the whole series of fights where a passerby was asked "Kingite or Queenite?" and then were beaten by the opposing faction.

There were two motifs though which stood out above all the rest with this "battle of the roya ". These were the encroachment of the court during the birth of Caroline's daughter, and the sheer complexity

AN INSPECTOR CALLS:

"An Inspector Calls" begs the question: "An inspector of what?"...And two weeks after seeing it, I have ideas but no definitive answer. I think I can derive a tentative answer to this question by considering what Priestly was aiming at -

After we see the house on the stage, we hear the laughter from within. I became increasingly interested in the role of laughter throughout the play. Each of the characters had a distinct and terrifying laugh: Sheila Birling had a shrill bubbly laugh that was perfectly matched to her whimsical dismissal of the dead girl. Arthur and Gerald had large haughty laughs that would often break down into a triumphant and sinister rejoice. I distinctly remember Gerald's laughter after

VOLPONE:

I had a very keen interest in "Volpone", Especially after some of my explorations of the grotesque. The opening scene was a perfect illustration of what Harpham referred to as "a comic gesture of revulsion and disbelief." The unctuous and knock-kneed Mosca buzzes in and pulls back the covers to reveal three grotesque figures: Nano, the dwarf, Castrone the eunuch, and Androgyno the hermaphrodite... three ~/ creatures that are either slighted by nature

1) There is Mosca's painting of Volpone's face. When painted with the green lather, Volpone is playing his avaricious

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM:

This production was the most vivid and vital rendering of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" I have ever seen. I think most would have to admit that there was some kind of strange Bacchanal energy released in the course of the performance. I noticed it especially at the end when the audience clapped in unison in a kind of massive Dionysian feast (I'm sure Nietzsche would have approved!). The theme was celebratory and joyous. There wasn't a single scene that failed to deliver passion, pleasure, or excitement. It reminded me that we are creatures of whim and there is immense pleasure in the sheer human-ness of being human.

I would like to start with the "Birth of Tragedy" exploration hinted at above and make a parallel between the Dionysian/Hellenistic impulses and the Wakefulness/Sleep motifs. This production brought to life the transitions in consciousness. There were stretches of repression (such as in the Athenian court) followed by explosions of latent Dionysian impulses which would surface as instances of self-indulgence. This was most noticeable in the scene when Philostrate and Peaseblossom "turn into" their fairy counterparts by tearing off each other's clothing. Peaseblossom's tower of red hair seems to literally explode from her cap! Underlying this disrobing is the vital idea that the director wanted to portray the fairy court as the hedonistic (in its positive contexts strictly) and magical counterpart to the Athenian court firmly entrenched in the repressive Edwardian tradition. These crucial opening scenes made the entire rest of the play have an extremely facile gaiety. The action became a harmless, but deeply meaningful psychological flight of fancy.

The program placed a tremendous stress on the nature of dreams, thus, it is impossible to ignore the director's attempt at constructing an elaborate "dreamscape" on stage. It was beautiful the way that classical notions (or, at least classical to me) of the stage were dissolved and made way for a convincing world of descending onto center stage, and flowers blooming to incite the shedding of layers of inhibition.

fairytale. The set, for example, was the

Scarl

I would like to make a bit of leap (though it is in keeping with the tradition that credits Shakespeare as the progenitor of all aspects of modern thought.). I would like to assert that Shakespeare is almost a kind of cognitive theorist in this play. There is a continual weighing of the forces of "mind" vs. "eye" just as there is a contrast between the "eyes" and the "nose" in "King Lear." Shakespeare seems to realize that the brain simply perceives *what it does* and is only vaguely causally related to the sensory faculties. That is to say, it is only a physiological convenience that we have a screen (retina) so intimately fused with our brains: dreams, according to the brain, are not idle thoughts, but whole realities that are awoken into. This relationship is first suggested when Hermia implores her father to let her marry Lysander:

Herm. I would my father looked but with

of simple living. A morality tale implies a yearning for home and follows the prodigal son parable where a deep

decision for change comes from within.

With Viv, homecoming is a kind of ex-post facto emotion - an ultranostalgic return to the past initiated not by a

desire for change, but the utter tragedy of loss.

ART

"Art", I believe, was the supreme example of a play which I have come to call an "interrogation play." Others which I would include in this group are "An Inspector Calls", "Closer", "The Lady in the Van", and "Copenhagen". All are plays where interrogation is used as the primary strategy for deconstruction whether it is deconstruction of a moral system, a cluster of friendships, or a belief system. Here of course it is friendships which are dissected in parallel with some vague notion of truth regarding the validity and worth of modern art. The white canvass of "the Atrioss!!" becomes the space where the friendships are decomposed and turned into a work of art: like a fugue of interpersonal complexity that gathers momentum until the dissonances between the lines becomes unbearable. The task becomes to maintain clarity and avoid dissonances, which brings up the question if the truth should be sacrificed as a concession to minimizing complexity.

Serge seems to understand this when he notes, appropriately, that "the Atrioss" has no frame. This seems to be a central theme of much of modern art: framelessness. I remember seeing an exhibit at the Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh where the art consisted of standing in a dark room while a series of lights flickered in no particular order. You were then asked to go to another room and stare at a white canvas for thirty minutes. Whatever thoughts and fleeting glimpses flashed through your mind was the work of art. In exactly this same way, the white canvass in "Art" is not so much art itself, but an occasion for art.

Though this is a bit of a stretch, this idea is not too unlike the probing humanistic theme tackled in "Copenhagen." Just as science rekindled humanism by placing man in the middle of a domain spanning from the subatomic to the cosmic, art has made a similar motion by placing subjective experience at the forefront. The aesthetic experience is not so much an appreciation of craft as it is a meditation on the work itself; even in it means using perplexity, confusion, or even revulsion as a starting point. Perhaps, in an even larger context, this reflects an increasing artistic interest in the element of time. To a large extent, all artists are slightly jealous of musicians in the liberty they have to sculpt with time. A lot of modern art tries to overcome the limitations of stasis.

*Interesting decision
which could have more
the 3 components in the
interrogation.*

Miss Shepard is therefore a kind of mascot of the young cognescenti -journalists, playwrights, and cavalier young entrepreneurs among other. She is a kind of social physician that makes house calls up and down the street and is able to sustain herself perfectly in the environment that Alan Bennett provides - a haven for intellectual frustration and a defunct sense of obligation.

HONK:

named. To everyone he meets along his journey, he essentially asserts: "Please... call me a duckling!" One of the vital parts leading to the transition though is when he meets the two aristocratic felines. His first reaction is hesitance ("Oh No! You're a Cat!"), but then we are given a rather heavy dosage of indoctrination when we see how breeding and nurturing has molded them into "perfect British ladies." This helps to dissolve the U.D.'s absoluteness in categorization and makes an easily digested comment on the "nature v. nurture" problem.

I was interested to see how the ending was handled. At first, I was a little uneasy at the Duckling's return to the "home pond", but I came to rather like it after thinking about it more. I had at first had issue because this was a very "non-Iron John" like ending. In a good inculcation myth, we are supposed to have a painful separation from the mother marked by a wound. Later, however, I realized that the intent of the musical was not meant to be so sweeping. This is a musical that celebrates childhood, not rejects childhood as time of unproductivity which must be overcome. The Ugly Duckling provides a model for coping within one's current situation - where continued striving is rewarded with acceptance and a self empowerment to realize the importance of one's individuality.

CLOSER

I was completely taken in by the performance of "Closer." I found myself in a kind of emotionally numbed state after the performance... to the point where I was absolutely baffled that this play has won the Evening Standard Award for Best Comedy. This play so violently and cruelly exposes what have become the kind of "tacit tenets" of modern dating. Modern relationships have dissolved from ritual and friendly banter to the point where they are exercises in cruelty and role playing; not role playing in a positive aspect, but in the most affected and damaging way. I saw this role playing evidenced most clearly in the kind of awkward pauses that occurred between each character's delivery of their lines.... I remember a few people objected to this, and even went so far as to call it bad acting, but I saw it as a highly intentional device to show the kind of posturing that much dialogue has turned into. The first comparison that comes to mind is with "Eyes Wide Shut," which employed a similar device in the beginning to accentuate melodrama of sexual role playing in social contexts. In "Closer," the pauses are actually written in as italicized "Beats."

The other instance which made me see this play as an exploration of failed attempts at role playing was the entire internet scene. That scene was quite wonderful in showing how blatant and eager the human mind is when given a communicative medium where it can disguise itself. Though we haven't quite gotten to this point as a society, we could argue that methods of communication are becoming increasingly "raw" and allow little for symbolism... words aren't so much "pegs to hang ideas on", but vocal artillery... plastic elements of speech which can be orchestrated to have truly cruel outcomes. The internet mentality is one aspect of post structuralist methods of communication - it allows greater expression of voyeuristic and sociopathic tendencies. That is exactly the kind of post structural world that allows such a voyeuristic play to occur between these four budding sociopaths : Alice, Anne, Larry, and Dan. V2aerism seems to be the driving impulse of this performance... the very title "Closer" suggests a close inspection of something. As the drama unfolds, I don't think it is too much to propose that it is Alice who is the kind-offocal point that everyone draws "closer" to.

Dan is drawn closer through his desperation and continual emasculation and rebuff... I think that at a straight psychoanalytical level, we can see that he is still suffering from the loss of his mother... and wants to draw closer to the metaphorical nipple and back into a state of weaning. Larry is drawn closer to Alice's and Anne's crotch; there is even that one scene where he stares at Alice's crotch less than arms length away. To top that off, we even have the overhead camera which accentuates the kind of magnetic power it holds for Larry. This is in fitting with his occupation as a dermatologist which requires

the most interesting character (and quite sensual). She employs "stripper -psychology" strategies into her orchestration of the socially and sexually dysfunctional situation. She aims the attention at herself and revels in the scrutiny taken to her body. Like an intoxicating charm, all are mysteriously brought to her - this is seen largely through the character of Larry, who inspects her "arsehole" for hours on end searching for the answers to life's questions.

I like to consider Alice an "architect of cruelty" ... not that she is the most cruel, but that her strategies are so deceptively sly and competitive. The scene which best illustrates this is at the museum following Larry's birthday, where she stages the meeting between her and Anna. She has so masterfully organized this meeting that it seems to be almost a victory dance done on top of Anna. Perhaps the greatest scam of all is her very name! Her entire existence was a myth; a future carved from a past....

On final note, I found very interesting the role that interrogation has in this play. Interrogation is a form of voyeurism here, where on occasion the darkest and most hideous facet of the truth spews from. Like others in the class, I was somewhat fascinated by the psychology of cruelty demonstrated in this play, and the sheer force of interrogation played a major role.. The tone of questioning seemed to almost completely disregard the fact that there was a living face associated with what was being spoken to (as in internet communication).... One of the most evil instances of this is Larry's probing of Anna for the details

OTHELLO:

I found it somewhat difficult to stay engaged during the performance of "Othello" - I felt at times that the subtlety that was crafted into the lines of the play was delivered with high volume melodrama as opposed to fine changes in gesture. Perhaps it is largely a matter of personal taste in Shakespeare though. One argument I always get into with others regarding Shakespeare, for example, is on the performance of the "Oh Vengeance" soliloquy. Some actors bellow forth sheets of sound into an almost monstrous "OOOHHHH VENGEANCE!!!!", while I have always prefer

Othello has undergone. In a sense, man craves irrationality and has a tendency for greatest psychological entropy - the error lies when we elaborate on this and seek rational models and evidence to explain irrational happenings. Othello is able to see the handkerchief in one instance as a magical token, and in another as a mere trifle. This is quite a nice counterpart to the philosophy of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" In that play, the aim is to give a construct where Dionysian energies can swell, grow, descend from other realms and spring from the ground; it is almost a parody of the rational in that it challenges any notion of emotional steadfastness. "Othello," on the other hand, challenges man's tendency for rationality and describes an existence where the brain is altered to calculate against itself.

A SERVANT TO TWO MASTERS:

"A Servant to Two Masters" was an occasion of sheer theatrical enjoyment and pleasure. Of course, I realize I'm not in small company in saying this! Also, like everyone else, I was transfixed by the sheer talent of Jason Watkins as Truffaldino. His character struck at everyone's comic chord from so many angles. He was an overworked, underpaid, and misunderstood character that could re-interpret his way out of any situation. He was the perfect link between the dramas of Florindo and Beatrice. I think much of the humor was derived from his ability to keep the two plots distinct even up to the very final exchange of the final scene. Just as the two plots are ready to smash together, Truffaldino would bounce onto stage with his gymnastics and his antics. I found myself almost clenching my teeth with the precariousness of the situation and then felt this tension come rushing out as explosive laughter when Truffaldino would work his magic. Overall, most of the comical moments were derived from the facile movement between the two conflicting agendas. Among these scenes were: 1) the opening of the letter v. the eating of the bread, 2) the serving of the dinner to both Florindo and Beatrice, and 3) the airing of both Florindo's and Beatrice's clothes.

The opening of the letter in the beginning is the kind of comedic Pandora's box. Then as Truffaldino tries to cover his tracks, we have the conflicting tension of duty v. "creature comforts," where he must decide if he is to use the bread to seal the letter (of course, a pathetic solution to the dilemma anyway), or satisfy his hunger. This situation turns into a fifteen minute melodrama where we watch his starved face contort with pleasure as he softens the bread in his mouth and then looks quizzically at the letter (almost painfully). This conflict becomes a kind of self-perpetuating problem as he is ultimately reduced to dancing around the letter and strangling himself to prevent the bread from going down. Of course, the pride he takes in having fulfilled his duty is hilarious as well when he hands his master the "repaired letter."

We see this same kind of "creature comforts" comedy again when Truffaldino serves the meals to his two masters (the now legendary "spotted dick" scene). Again, poor Truffaldino is famished and must make a compromise between duty and satiety, but this time, the humor is in how he considers himself a kind of food martyr and tries "just a taste" of each meal. Of course, his self-denial turns into untradramatic indulgence as he is at points reduced to lapping up his food like a starving beast with bits of meat and sauce slobbering from his chin. The sheer improvisation in this scene is

obliviously earnest in his desire to be helpful. It reminds

brand new Teflon pans for hours to remove "that black grime" (the Teflon coating of course!).

KING LEAR:

I shared the same reaction toward "King Lear" that many others did: I felt that for the most part, the performance did not add up to a coherent whole. Just as general criticism, I felt that the stage was almost too vast and became a problem for the actors trying to fill the space. It seemed to minimize the drama at times as opposed to achieving what was probably its intended aim - to make the audience quake as this massive kingdom buckles under betrayal, senility and tragedy. It seemed to attempt to achieve that sensational internationalism in Kenneth Branagh's film version of "Hamlet".

One thing I felt the play did excel in was in the performances of Lear's multiple accomplices, namely, the Fool and Edgar (when disguised as Poor Tom) and how they developed the vast concept of vision as it pertains to this play. "King Lear" is brimming with references to vision and smell - the more primal sense. There seems to be important differences between these two faculties: vision is often deceptive in its richness and has a distinct analytical component to

There is beautiful equivocation in these lines. On the one hand, it can be read as "All men who walk straight follow their eyes, and all the blind can do is smell what rots." Taken in this way, the line is derogatory - a beckoning to open one's eyes in the face of the obvious. However, the line is also brilliantly foreshadowing in that it introduces the dominant theme of the later acts: following one's nose (as trite as this expression has become, the drama is deeply moving). With loss of vision, we are sometimes more capable of finding the true path.

SONG AT TWILIGHT:

I found Noel

Coward's "Song at Twilight" to be a study on the importance of confession in autobiography and how issues of forgiveness work their way into confession. Like many of the other plays, it centered on the use of interrogation as a strategy for deconstruction, where the Hugo's rigid and unyielding facade is broken down by a kind of psychoanalytical "tag team" consisting of his wife Hilda and a former lover of his, Carlotta. Although not the most dominant character, Hugo is the center of the play. He is the thing to be analyzed and discovered. Thus, it is fitting that the play opens with images of Hugo flooding in from everywhere. It is immediately apparent that he is some kind of authority figure; he sits at center stage casually dipping his head to sample a book, while his wife has a subordinate position far to stage right. He is the generator of ideas, while she is the scribe (or so it appe*

s); in fact, her position seems so subordinate in the beginning that few realized Hilda was his wife! The scene seems to almost shout "Hugo!"; there are boxes and piles of his autobiography scattered across the floor, and an almost regal looking portrait off to the side.

It was quite interesting to see how this "Hugocentricity" was dismantled over the course of the play. We soon see that he is continually on the defensive - in a kind of psychological stalemate that he must consistently maneuver his way out of. I realized fairly quickly that the stalemate was the silent anguish of closet homosexuality. It was as

whimsical "God rest his soul." Perhaps this is a stretch, but there seemed to be a scene where she demonstrates her "gap-toothedness" by pulling on her cheek and showing Hugo her fillings.

At the close of the first act though, Hugo's defense tactics are rendered useless - though he still tries to use his defunct powers of repression and denial later on. The only weapon that can penetrate Hugo is the stark truth of his homosexuality. When Carlotta exposes this, he experiences a spell of utter confusion. I really liked the opening of act two, where Corin Redgrave gives an honest representation of the psychologically exposed and vulnerable state; I tend to do the same two things that he did on stage. The first thing he did is kind of walk around in the dark and gnaw on his hand like an animal that must decide if it is to chew off its arm to extricate itself from a trap. The second thing he did is splash out a phrase or two on the piano from a Schubert impromptu... I think we are all familiar with the internal drama that goes on in times like these. A splash of thought, a flash of regret, and the utter depth of indecision and uncertainty.

When Hugo invites Carlotta back, we begin a kind of reconstruction; we start a process in which confession is forced to replace verbal self defence. In essence, we change the goal and style of Hugo's writing. Carlotta helps Hugo fill what was absent from his memoir - namely, a sense of confession. The second act is satisfying in that it provides hope in confession. I began to feel almost sorry for Hugo as he is grilled by Carlotta to expose the truth and is blackmailed. There is a point in the second act where Carlotta's tactics become too much - she seems to be seeking largely retribution even though the cosmopolitan air about her muffles her vindictiveness.

This is the perfect moment for Hilda's entry, and when she comes back, she provides a sense of balance and measure to the situation. She offers a kind of solution to the dilemma. She is the most impressive character morally, and rises far above her original concerns. For Carlotta, the dilemma is solved when she sees Hugo broken and is able to give up the power she holds over him - she seems to realize that he is giving her a part of his life back and not simply enacting revenge for a wrong committed against her in the past. For Hugo, the epiphany comes as a massive fall. When the letters are handed to him, his entire world seems to vortex inward as there seems to be a possibility for forgiveness and confession. The play ends on a touching note when Hugo continues crying after Hilda's entry and admits it; it seems to be a silent pulse of hope for Hugo's ability to experience intimacy.

The greatest thing about the play though, and what made it truly humanistic as opposed to an exercise in

THREE DAYS OF RAIN:

"Three Days of Rain" was a wonderful performance by three very talented actors. I particularly related to the character of Walker, who was the prototype of the modern, intelligent, displaced youth; he was highly intelligent, but also highly accessible, unlike, say Alan Ber12tt or Werner Heisenberg in their respective roles. The driving emotion behind the play was sheer curiosity: what events could produce Walker? Where did the dysfunctional but loving sibling relationship arise from? What was the logic behind how the father's possessions were divided up? Most importantly, what is the missing history that clarifies what is meant by "Three Days of Rain?" The play presents a modern search for origin in a world that is complex; a world where human aspiration is often confusingly mixed with friendship, romance, and feelings of self worth.

The play begins somewhat confusingly by presenting the products of an event and gradually funnels inward and backward in time to a single gesture which the father calls "the beginning of error". Thus, at the end, we realize that what we saw in the beginning was the -result of error, and the father's allocation of his wealth was a kind of dying attempt to undo the error he had caused; the children, in turn, are the products of error. Greenberg was extremely fine in the way that he fused the artistry and romance themes, and in the way he creates a dynamic sense of past; it was wonderful to see Walker's decrepit lair revitalized in act II as a crisp setting with the architectural drafting table in the center. In this sense, the play was an exercise in preservation; it struck at the chord in everyone that is fascinated with the circumstances of their own genesis.

w.,~ I liked how the first act ended with Walker's burning of his father's diary as an attempt to avoid the

