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Exposition in playwriting - past and present methods

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A Study of Past and Present Methods
by
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EXPOSITION IN PLAYWRITING

Study of Past and Present Methods

Introduction

Since Aristotle, whom Ben Jonson called "the first accurate critic and truest judge", promulgated his famous statement that a Beginning, a Middle, and an End are the necessary parts of the Whole that makes the perfect tragedy, dramatists have accepted his definition as one of the basic principles of playwriting.

Opinions have differed as to which of these three is most important: the Beginning, in which the dramatist must secure the attention of the audience; the Middle, with crisis following crisis and cleverly sustaining interest; or the artistic End, with the logical conclusion toward which the author has been working from the outset.

It is the purpose of this paper to deal only with the Beginning of drama, what is now technically known as Exposition, or the setting forth by the dramatist, to the audience, of the facts necessary to a complete understanding of the play.

In connection with the study of Exposition, the following topics are to be treated:

I. A Brief Summary of the History of Exposition
II. What the Dramatist Should Accomplish in Exposition
III. A Study of Methods of Exposition as Found in Representative Longer Dramas of Past and Present
IV. A Similar Study of Methods of Exposition as Used in the One-Act Play
V. Conclusions Based upon this Study of Exposition.

I. A Brief Summary of the History of Exposition

In a study of the history of exposition, emphasis must be placed on the fact that a dramatist wrote for an audience of his own time, and that these audiences naturally presented great differences in education, appreciation, and racial characteristics.

The problem of presenting expository facts was not particularly difficult for the great Greek dramatists, who competed in the religious festivals of Dionysus, since they were dealing with stories well known to their audiences: powerful tales of the downfall of heroic, tragic kings and princes. The legends of Electra and Orestes, the stories of the Trojan War, and the myths of Jason were familiar material that needed little explanation.

The Greek dramatists used the Chorus to handle Exposition. Frequently, a long Prologue gave a review of the antecedent events.

In subject matter and style, the great classical tragedies were prepared for an audience of intelligent, cultured Greeks, who were ready to sympathize with the downfall of famous men like Agamemnon, but who were not particularly in accord with the demands of a notorious woman like Medea, unless, perhaps, they felt sorry for the husband who had to suffer because of her outrageous demands.

The Latin author Plautus, on the other hand, was writing for a composite audience of natives and strangers.
He could not count on their having a previous knowledge of his story; therefore he made use of every device at his disposal for imparting information: asides, soliloquies, and long addresses to the audience. Later critics have condemned these artificial means, which detracted from the interest in the action, but he had his particular problems to solve in amusing his own audience.

The rise of Christianity, the disappearance of the drama, and its gradual resumption as a form of religious instruction bring us many hundreds of years later to the period of Elizabethan drama, and to the greatest figure in dramatic history, Shakespeare.

Shakespeare, the actor-director-playwright, wrote to please an energetic, restless English audience, many of whom could not read or write, and who would accept his geographical or historical statements without comment. They wanted action; they reveled in witches and ghosts; they liked all the noise and excitement possible; but they liked sweet sentiment in lavish doses, too. Their interest had to be captured at the start by hints of ghosts walking on the battlements, or of trouble brewing between the rival houses of Capulets and Montagues.

By Shakespeare's time, the soliloquy had superseded the Chorus of ancient days as a device for setting forth information. Shakespeare even begins one of his plays with a long expository soliloquy, but in the case of that play, Richard III, the English audience recognized at once the lame
Plantagenet who spoke of "this sun of York."

Shakespeare made use, too, of the device of an important character's talking intimately with a confidant. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Bassanio discusses with Antonio his affairs of the heart, while Portia and Nerissa set forth the respective merits of the suitors.

During the revival of the drama in Spain, Lope de Vega and Calderón wrote many stirring romances and melodramas for audiences that came for entertainment, and were not concerned about classical unities. They both made frequent use of the confidant device for handling exposition. In Lope de Vega's *The Star of Seville*, nearly every important character has a servant to whom he can divulge his troubles and doubts. The King's attendant in that play is frankly called "confidant of the King."

In France, the classical tragedies of Corneille and Racine did not enjoy the popularity of Molière's comedies, in which he ridiculed the foibles and pretenses of his own day, but in a fashion that still appeals. With Molière, Exposition became more of "the art which conceals art", and the beginning of *Tartuffe* has been justly praised as a clever example of exposition incorporated almost immediately in the action of the play. In *Tartuffe*, too, the dramatist uses the innovation of not producing his leading character until rather late in the play.

With the restoration of Charles II in England, drama took the form of the heroic play, in imitation of the French
classicists, and of comedies of intrigue, presented for the sophisticates of gay London society.

From the artificial drama of the Seventeenth Century, we come to the brilliant and popular Eighteenth Century comedies of manners, with Goldsmith and Sheridan as the leading exponents. Both wrote for London audiences that deeply appreciated the merry adventures of sentimental heroines, careless heroes, and scandalous gossips. Exposition was still handled in rather obvious fashion, usually by the confidant method: Lady Sneerwell with her Snake, or Lydia Languish with her maid.

In Italy, the Eighteenth Century dramatist of note was Carlo Goldoni, author of sprightly comedies, with the Exposition presented, without action, in the form of a long conversation between two characters.

The German Golden Age of Drama came in the Eighteenth Century, also, with Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller trying to combine the Greek unities with the ideas and tendencies of their own time. These dramatists still used the longer four and five-act form, in which exposition could be handled in a more leisurely way, or in which more time could be given to establishing the setting, as in the case of Schiller's William Tell.

The brief revival of Romanticism in Drama, beginning with Hugo's Hernani in 1830, gave the theatre colorful plays, with heroes who struggled ardently for fame and love, often unsuccessfully.
Soliloquies and asides were still used liberally to set forth exposition; Don Carlos in *Hernani* has what must be one of the lengthiest soliloquies in literature, while he awaits the arrival of the conspirators.

So-called "Modern Drama", beginning with Henrik Ibsen, brings us every variety: the realism of Hauptmann's *The Weavers*; the expressionism of Kaiser's *From Morn to Midnight*; the pessimism of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*; the symbolism of Maeterlinck's *Pelléas and Mélisande*; the romance of Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*; the dramatic works of Pinero and Wilde; and the bewildering array of plays dealing with all phases of present-day life from the pens of contemporary dramatists.

With the gradual change from the five-act to the three-act play, to suit the convenience of the ordinary theatre-goer, have come consequent changes in methods of exposition. The soliloquy and the aside of earlier days have gone their unnatural way, except in some of O'Neill's experiments. Occasionally we find a short and quite natural soliloquy, or, somewhat akin, the use of an important letter, to be read to the audience by the writer or the recipient of it.

The stilted revelations made by two servants about their master's affairs have disappeared, too, with the soliloquy. The heart-to-heart talk with a confidant is still used, however. Sometimes a stranger, or a native returned after many years, has been brought on at the start, to whom the story of preceding happenings must be related to give the audience a large initial dose of exposition.
With the advent of mechanical devices, the telephone has taken a leading part in dispensing exposition. As used in Rice's *Counsellor-at-Law*, for instance, the telephone operator furnishes an element of humor, as well as the necessary atmosphere of a busy law office, and, in addition, arouses curiosity as to succeeding events.

A device that has been used effectively is the short Prologue to show necessary antecedent action. Thus, in Rachel Crothers' comedy, *As Husbands Go*, the first scene is really in the nature of a prologue, showing the amusing situation in which the two American women became involved in Paris, just before their return to their respective husband and grown-up daughter at home.

Gradually dramatists are coming to realize that the best exposition is that which is not obvious; that necessary bits of information can be trickled in skilfully; and that exposition can be made an integral part of the dramatic action. Of course, there is still the difficulty of latecomers to the theatre to be considered, with the consequent problem of not having anything of vital importance happen in the first few moments. This has been taken care of, in some cases, by the clever use of pantomime preceding dialogue.
II. What the Dramatist Should Accomplish in Exposition

A. Definitions of Exposition

The following references on exposition are taken from standard authorities on the technique of playwriting.

"...When the attention of the audience is required for an exposition of any length, some attempt ought to be made to awaken in advance their general interest in the theme and characters. It is dangerous to plunge straight into narrative, or unemotional discussion, without having first made the audience actively desire the information to be conveyed to them. Especially is it essential that the audience should know clearly who are the subjects of the discussion or narrative - that they should not be mere names to them."

"...Create interest as promptly as possible. To that end neither striking dialogue nor stirring situation is of prime consequence. Clarity is. When an audience does not understand who the people are with whom the play opens and their relations to one another, no amount of striking dialogue will create lasting interest. ...But when dramatist deals with characters wholly fictitious, he must carefully inform his audience at the outset who his people are, what are their relations to one another, where the play is laid, and when...Identify your characters as promptly as possible."

"Organically, the Beginning is that portion of the plot-facts which make plain to the audience enough of the character-traits and circumstances involved to enable them to understand the whole plot-action."


"The first desire of the audience present at the performance of a play is to understand what it is all about, and their second demand is that the action shall develop before their eyes so that it can be followed without effort... A full appreciation of the relations of the several characters to each other is a condition precedent to the playgoer's interest in the action, as it is unfolded before him... In the vocabulary of stage-craft, this conveying to the audience of the knowledge necessary to enable them to follow the plot is known as exposition." (1)

B. Problems of Exposition

Whether a dramatist is an Aeschylus presenting his Agamemnon to a Greek audience, or a Kaufmann hopefully launching his Let 'Em Eat Cake on Broadway, his problems are in many ways the same.

First of all, he must be very clear in identifying his characters at once. Even though he has written detailed stage directions as to his hero's height, ruddy complexion, uniform, and melancholy manner, he must take care to have some one say, "Here comes Captain Paul Jones. - How are you today, Captain Jones?" And Captain Jones, in reply, must answer, "As well as can be expected, Arthur Jameson." If these spoken labels are not carefully affixed to the persons of the drama, the audience will resent the vagueness, and will lose some of the action in its efforts to puzzle out who's who.

The dramatist must also make evident where his play is taking place, and also at what time, if those two facts are essential to an understanding of the plot. In some cases,

the setting takes care of the place: the mountain scenery in Schiller's *William Tell*; the attractive modern living-room in Ervine's *The First Mrs. Fraser*; the interior of a bank in Kaiser's *From Morn to Midnight*. But, if the setting has an important bearing on the plot, as the old Mannon homestead has in O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra*, then the opening dialogue must give the information needed. In the same way, if time is a vital element in the opening scene, that must be brought out, as in Hugo's *Hernani*, when the audience must be told that Hernani has an evening rendez-vous with young Doña Sol de Silva.

Having been satisfied as to name, place, and time, the audience wishes to know the relations of the characters. This information can often be conveyed simultaneously with the names, by such a simple means as Sidney Howard uses in *The Silver Cord*, "It's Mother, Dave"; or, as Lope de Vega, in *The Star of Seville*, "My welcome in Seville has greatly pleased me, and I perceive I am indeed the sovereign monarch in Castile."

At the same time that the people are being introduced, the clever dramatist tries also to characterize them, being careful, too, to have them speak in character. Thus, in Galsworthy's *Justice*, Cokeson, in the first speech of the play, makes it clear that he is a methodical, painstaking clerk, intent on business-like accuracy. In Maugham's *The Circle*, the opening scene shows that Arnold is a fussy sort of man, given to meticulous detail.
In addition to setting forth the characters, the dramatist must make manifest the atmosphere of the whole play. To be sure, some authors like to deceive the audience in this respect, as Ibsen does, but a more artistic effect is obtained when the atmosphere is consistent throughout the play. In Abraham's Bosom, by Green, the tragedy begins with three negro laborers, furtively discussing such gloomy subjects as lynching, in a forest clearing. Maxwell Anderson's Mary of Scotland begins gloomily, with the forbidding Knox, in his long black robes, waiting to denounce the Papist Queen at the dingy wharf where she landed secretly at night. Another Language begins with a domestic atmosphere made unpleasant by a domineering mother-in-law, who is to try to wreck one son's marriage.

An original and very sensible device occasionally employed is an opening pantomime, which helps to mitigate the trouble of late comers, who may watch the action on the stage, even while they climb over their neighbors' knees, bang down their seats, and rustle their programs. Barrie uses this idea very successfully in The Twelve-Pound Look.

Finally, the highest art of exposition calls for involving the characters at once in a situation that happens in a plausible way, and that arouses immediate attention, pointing to more intense dramatic action. Thus in Ervine's The First Mrs. Fraser, the arrival of James Fraser at the home of his first wife to get her advice on the question of letting his second wife have a divorce is one that provokes instant curiosity.
In the following detailed study of the methods of exposition used in representative dramas of past and present, consideration will be given to the points that have just been mentioned:

1. The identification of characters by name.
2. The mention of place and time, where this information is necessary.
3. The making clear of the relations of the characters.
4. The use of dialogue that is in character and that helps to personalize the speaker.
5. Establishing the appropriate atmosphere.
7. Creating quickly, and in a natural manner, an interesting and dramatic situation that points ahead to further action.
III. A Study of Methods of Exposition as Found in Representative Longer Dramas of Past and Present.

A. Greek Classical Drama

From the great period of Greek Classical Drama, in the fifth century B.C., three tragedies have been selected for study. Under the three great dramatists, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, tragedy reached a high stage of development.

No comedy of Aristophanes is included in this study, because his particular style of satire was directed to local audiences, and is rather confusing to the modern reader.

1. Agamemnon, by Aeschylus

This play is the first of a trilogy, based on the same material that O'Neill was to use later.

Since the play follows the unities of time and place, the whole action occurring in one day, and before the Palace of Atreus, a great deal of exposition is necessary, even though the story was known to the audience. This exposition is furnished by the Watchman, in his long opening speech, as he waits for the beacon-light that will announce the fall of Troy; and by the long speeches of the Chorus, setting forth the story of the King who was commanded to kill his own daughter as a sacrifice, before he set out with the Greeks to conquer Troy. Clytemnestra, appearing to talk with the Chorus, is apparently the devoted wife waiting with a gracious welcome for her lord. The entrance of Agamemnon is further prepared by the arrival of his Herald with news of his coming.
By the time of Agamemnon's impressive entrance with his captive Cassandra, we have been told who he is, where he has been, and why a curse hangs over his house. We have not learned, however, beyond a few dark hints from the Chorus, of the treachery of his wife in his absence, nor of her plans to kill him. But, since these facts were known to the audience, it was apparent to the spectators that tragedy lurked in the atmosphere, and that a double murder would soon follow the apparently cordial welcome of the King by his Queen.

2. Oedipus the King, by Sophocles

This well-constructed play has been called one of the greatest tragedies, showing with sustained dramatic intensity the downfall of a great man, who brought about his own doom by his relentless search for his father's murderer.

Oedipus, the chief character, enters at once to address the Priest of Zeus. Both of them are carefully identified. In his first speech, Oedipus says, "I have come myself, whom all name Oedipus the Great." The Priest repeats the King's name and adds his station,"Yea, Oedipus, thou ruler of my land." He also reveals his own identity, as "Priest, I, of Zeus."

The Priest also gives in a long speech the past story of Oedipus who, by his famous answer to the riddle, saved Thebes from the ravages of the Sphinx. He asks Oedipus to save the city again from the present pestilence that has visited it. Oedipus announces that he has sent Creon to Delphi. Creon is also carefully identified. Before he arrives, Oedipus speaks
of him as "Creon, my kinsman." The Priest adds, "Creon comes advancing on his way."

By the use of coincidence, Creon comes on the scene just as he is needed (as Teiresias does later), to announce that the oracle bids them seek out and punish the murderer of the former King Laios. This point brings us to the initial impulse of the play: the search and tragic discovery follow, that Oedipus is the son who murdered his own father and married his mother Jocasta. Jocasta, the unhappy Queen, does not appear in the play until the story is well under way.

The atmosphere of the play is tragic from the start, when the priests gather as suppliants at the altar of Zeus to pray for relief from the pestilence.

3. Medea, by Euripides

When the play opens, the Nurse is alone before Medea's house in Corinth. Her long opening speech gives the entire preliminary story of Jason's search for the Golden Fleece; his return to Thessaly with Medea, who killed her brother to expedite her elopement; Medea's part in the death of King Pelias; the intent of Jason to cast aside Medea and her two sons in order to marry Glauke, daughter of King Creon of Corinth; and the fact that Medea is plotting vengeance.

An attendant enters to add news that Medea is to be banished. The two servants hold a long conversation, and we learn from that, "Few I ween shall stir her hate unscathed, or lightly humble her." We learn, too, before Medea appears, that she has a keen blade ready, perhaps "to slay the bridegroom and
the King," and that, so greatly is her spirit moved, she might
even harm her two sons.

While this exposition is being presented, we hear
Medea's voice wailing off-stage. Then we hear her praying to
Themis, goddess of Justice, that she may see Jason, his bride,
and the latter's family, "broken in misery." When Medea
finally comes on the stage, the exposition has been completed,
and we are prepared to hear her plead with the women of Corinth
to help her in her plans for vengeance.

The atmosphere here, too, is essentially tragic
throughout.

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B. Elizabethan Drama (not including Shakespeare)

For hundred of years the drama was practically non-
existent in literature. Gradually, as the Church recognized
its value, religious mysteries and miracle plays were used.
These led to the popular fifteenth century morality play.
The next stage in drama development produced the early English
comedies, like Udall's Gammer Gurton's Needle, and the
tragedies, like Norton and Sackville's Gorboduc.

The rapid growth of drama during the latter part
of the fifteenth century resulted in many contributions to
dramatic history. The names of Thomas Kyd and Robert Greene
were prominent as predecessors of Shakespeare. Christopher
Marlowe was perhaps the most distinguished contemporary of
Shakespeare. Ben Jonson, following Shakespeare, wrote
classical tragedies, as well as satiric comedies. Beaumont and
Fletcher, Thomas Dekker, Thomas Heywood, John Webster, and Thomas Middleton are other well-known names of this period.

As representative of Elizabethan Drama, other than that of Shakespeare, only two plays are here considered.

1. The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus, by Christopher Marlow

The play begins with an explanatory statement by a Chorus, in imitation of the classical style. The Chorus tells of the birth of Faustus in Germany, of his education leading to a Doctor's degree, and of his "falling to a devilish exercise" in the study of magic.

The first scene then shows Faustus in his study. He introduces himself in the opening lines: "Settle thy studies, Faustus, and begin to sound the depth of that thou wilt profess." There follows a most learned dissertation on the classics and theology, both of which fail to satisfy the great scholar, who turns to magic as the only satisfactory study. A Good Angel and an Evil Angel appear to exhort him; the one, to read the Scriptures, and the other, to continue to go forward in his art.

By the third scene, we find Faustus so advanced in his nefarious practices that he can conjure Mephistophilis to appear before him in the guise of a friar, and we learn that Faustus is willing to give his soul to attain the power he seeks.

With that initial impulse, the play proceeds to its dramatic close, with Faustus forced to pay his soul as he had agreed.
2. *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, by Thomas Heywood

In a short prologue, the author announces that he is writing of "a barren subject, a bare scene." That was his brief apology for choosing to write a play of everyday life, of an erring wife whose husband treated her so considerately that she died of remorse.

The first act opens with a large group on the stage, including the three members of the eternal triangle of 1603, Master John Frankford, Mistress Frankford, and Master Wendoll. The exposition is handled smoothly. The first line, spoken by the bride's brother, informs us that the party is celebrating a wedding. We identify the new husband, who speaks as a level-headed, rather outspoken man; the bride, who seems to be very modest and virtuous. From one of the guests, we learn at the start that the bride is of excellent birth and education, and an accomplished musician.

Soliloquy is used later in the play, although not so much for the purpose of giving expository facts, as for summing up present situations, as in Master Frankford's contented statement that he is happy in his birth, his revenues, his studies, and in "the chief of all the sweet felicities on earth...a fair, a chaste, and loving wife."

There is no indication in the exposition that Wendoll is other than the affable gentleman of "good deserts" that Master Frankford considers him.

No hint of an atmosphere of tragedy is given
until the third scene of the first act, and then the tragic events are chiefly connected with the complicated subplot. For the main theme, the author uses contrast effectively: a merry wedding scene at the beginning; the wife's unhappy death at the end of the play.

C. Shakespeare

Shakespeare, using the five-act form of his day, and with few problems in the matter of scenery or setting to be considered, could, in most cases, present his action as occurring entirely within the play, and thus avoid the necessity of presenting expository facts. The fact that he did not observe the classical unities enabled him to handle his material in a more flexible manner, also.

Since his method of beginning comedies and tragedies was essentially different, four of each of these plays are considered, together with one historical play. (1)

1. The Taming of the Shrew

The play begins with an Induction, which has no direct connection with the main action, except that Christopher Sly, a drunken tinker, is persuaded that he is a Lord, whose

(1) Although a study of The Tempest is not included here, mention should be made of the fact that, although a comedy, it begins in the manner usually reserved by Shakespeare for tragedies; namely, an exciting opening scene to arrest the attention of the audience. In the second scene, exposition is presented in the talk between Prospero and Miranda.
players are to present a comedy for his amusement.

The play proper begins with a conversation that seems far-fetched to the modern reader, with Lucentio and his servant telling each other who they are and what they are doing there. None of this information is necessary, however, as exposition.

With the entrance of Katharina, her father, her sister, and several friends of the father, the action is ready to begin. Baptista, in his first speech, tells that Katharina can be married at any time now, but her sister Bianca can not wed until the elder girl is married. Katharina's first speech stamps her as a shrew, while Hortensio's fervent "From all such devils, good Lord deliver us!" indicates the trouble Baptista expects to have in acquiring a son-in-law.

Thus the play starts off, on a comedy note, and showing, in a very natural manner, the situation from which the main action will develop quickly, following the arrival of Petruchio in the second scene.

2. 12th Night

Some slight exposition is required in this play, but only to present, in the second scene, a few necessary facts: that Viola has been shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria; that she fears her twin brother has been drowned; that he intends to disguise herself as a page to seek employment with the Duke, who, she has found, is still a bachelor, although he is very much in love with Olivia. This conversation between Viola and the captain is handled very naturally, and it is not merely expository, since the fact of the captain's service is used
In the first short scene, the Duke is shown in his present lovesick state, sighing for the fair Olivia, who has announced her cruel intention of staying in mourning for seven years. The use of soft strains of music throughout this scene establishes an atmosphere of romance, and is perhaps indicative of the several cases of unrequited love that are to be solved happily during the course of the comedy.

3. The Merchant of Venice

Antonio's opening speech, "In sooth, I know not why I am so sad," is perhaps a note of warning that he is to have occasion to feel sad during the play, even though it is called a comedy. We find him conversing with two friends, whose remarks make it clear that Antonio is the wealthy Merchant of Venice. He is clearly identified, but we are not at first told the names of the other two, who are not important characters. Their conversation is not expository, but rather presents, as is Shakespeare's practice, characters in a natural opening situation.

The next three characters to enter are clearly identified; "Here comes Bassanio, your most noble kinsman, Gratiano and Lorenzo." Bassanio's conversation with Antonio is not in the nature of exposition, either, since he is talking over present affairs, his plans for wooing the beautiful heiress at Belmont.

The other important characters are shown in the same way: Portia, talking with her confidant Nerissa about her many suitors, and Shylock, discussing the question of a loan with Bassanio.
The only two expository bits of information that deal with antecedent action are the references to the will of Portia's father, and the scornful treatment Antonio has given Shylock in connection with the latter's business practices.

4. As You Like It

Orlando, one of the chief characters, begins the play with his recital of grievances to his old servant, Adam. With the entrance of his brother Oliver, a quarrel between the two reveals the opening situation. Neither brother is identified by name, but their relationship is indicated.

With the entrance of Charles, the wrestler, some exposition is brought out in a natural conversation between Oliver and Charles: "the old duke is banished by his younger brother the new duke", and "the duke's daughter...is at court, and no less beloved of her uncle than his own daughter."

With these few facts made clear, and with the characterization of Oliver as a cruel, selfish elder brother, the action is ready to proceed quickly to a crisis.

5. Hamlet

Hamlet begins, as most of the Shakespearean tragedies, in an exciting manner, with an atmospheric appeal of mystery and impending trouble. The time, place, and characters are quickly identified. We learn that "'Tis now struck twelve"; "'Tis bitter cold"; the sentry on duty, Francisco, is being relieved by Bernardo, with Horatio and Marcellus following; and all are "liegemen to the Dane." The entrance of the ghost of the King is the occasion for Horatio
to give some information about young Fortinbras and the enmity between Norway and Denmark, and to bring in some mention of "our valiant Hamlet."

This is one of the few of Shakespeare's plays in which exposition has to take care of antecedent action. This is done by means of the ghost's instructions to Hamlet in Scene 5, in which Hamlet learns that his father was murdered by his uncle, who then married the Queen and became ruler of Denmark. With the ghost's request that Hamlet "Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder", the main action of the play is ready to begin.

From the start, Hamlet is carefully characterized as a young man given to much introspection.

6. Macbeth

This play, like Hamlet, begins with an opening scene that sets a tragic and, in this case, weird atmosphere, with witches on a heath. In the second scene, we have some exposition to tell us that Macbeth is very brave, and that he and Banquo are captains of the King of Scotland. In the third scene, Macbeth meets his temptation in the form of the witches' prophecy, and from the many aside remarks that he makes, we know that the prophecy that he will be King has already begun to affect him.

7. Romeo and Juliet

This tragedy begins with a Prologue which tells the whole story briefly: "Two households...in fair Verona...from
ancient grudge break to new mutiny... A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life... Do with their death bury their parents' strife." The first scene then begins directly with the "new mutiny", as the street resounds with the cries, "Down with the Capulets! Down with the Montagues!" No other preliminary information needs to be given.

Following the street-brawl opening, Romeo is introduced as a youth, suffering the pangs of unrequited love for one Rosaline. His friend Benvolio offers to cure his passion by showing him other beauties, beside whom he will think his "swan a crow." The beautiful maiden who is to win Romeo from his Rosaline is made known to us as the daughter of the Capulets, whom Paris wishes to woo, although she is not yet fourteen.

8. King Lear

This play begins perhaps more directly than any other of the tragedies. No exposition is necessary. In the first scene, King Lear announces that "We have divided in three our kingdom: and 'tis our fast intent to shake all cares and business from our age." The three daughters are at once addressed as "Goneril, our eldest-born"; "our second daughter, our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall"; and "our joy, although the last, not least; to whose young love the vines of France and milk of Burgundy strive to be interest'd."

Cordelia, in her first speech, an aside, indicates how the tragedy is to be precipitated when she murmurs, "What shall Cordelia do? Love, and be silent."
9. King Richard III

In presenting his historical plays based on English royalty, Shakespeare could assume that his audience would know and recognize such colorful characters as bluff Prince Hal and the lame Duke of Gloster, without much exposition.

This play begins with a long soliloquy by the Duke of Gloster in which he takes the audience into his confidence, with his statement, "I am determined to prove a villain." He makes his wicked plans even more obvious when he stops the widowed Lady Anne, while she is a mourner in a funeral procession, to tell her that he intends to marry her. Lady Anne shows that she is a spirited creature, who detests Gloster, because she calls him "Foul devil...unfit for any place but hell."

With his villainous intentions thus made manifest, Gloster starts on his murderous way to the throne, and to become the husband of Lady Anne.

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D. Revival of Drama in Spain

As the classical drama was not particularly popular in the revival in England, so in Spain, romantic plays were preferred to those that followed the rigid rules of the unities.

The two leading Spanish dramatists of the fifteenth century were Lope de Vega and Pedro Calderón de la Barca, both of whom wrote innumerable plays. The best-known work of each
has been selected for this study.

1. The Star of Seville, by Lope de Vega

The play is typical of the author's stories of romance and adventure, although he calls it a tragedy.

At the beginning we find the King announcing that he will reign in Seville as well as in Castile. The lords who welcome him are dismissed in order that the King may talk over matters with his confidant, whose name is not given until the end of the conversation, but whose position is obvious. We soon learn that His Majesty has a nice taste in Spanish ladies, and has already noticed the fairest of all, Doña Stella, the Star of Seville, who is carefully guarded by her honorable brother, until the latter has selected a husband for her in Seville. At the suggestion of his confidant, whose name turns out to be Arias, the King plans to heap honors on the brother, so that he might make secret love to the sister.

The brother, Bustos Tabera, brought to the King, proves to be a sturdy, honest man, who can not evidently be bribed. During the interview, Bustos indulges in a very obvious aside, indicating that this sudden and uncalled-for favor has aroused his suspicions. We are left to fear that the amorous monarch will find that his plans do not work out so smoothly as he had hoped, and that he will have reason to be amazed at the pride and constancy of the people of Seville.

2. Life is a Dream, by Calderón

This play is a philosophical drama, based on the idea that life is an unreal experience, as well as upon the
theme that a brute may awaken to a sense of proper behavior.

At the opening of the play, the scene reveals a tower in an isolated section, with a mountain crag as background. Rosaura, disguised as a man, accompanied by her servant Clarin, in a long speech, reveals that she is a stranger who has lost her way in this wild section of Poland. Her language is exalted, and shows no particular characteristics of the speaker. Clarin's simpler, plain-spoken words, addressed to "my lady", show that he is the servant, with a happy-go-lucky, rather philosophical disposition.

After the two discover a door and hear chains within, Sigismund groans from his prison. Clarin, whose name has been spoken by this time, is for running away, but the lady, being of sterner stuff, stays to find out that a man is lying chained within the dungeon, and that he is dressed in the skins of wild beasts.

Emerging into the light, Sigismund, in a very long speech, berates the dire fate which made his birth a curse to him, but he does not tell anything definite about himself. We do not learn who he is until the second scene, when King Basilius, also speaking interminably, tells that Sigismund is his son, condemned to exile, because his horoscope and his mother's dreams foretold that he would be "the most cruel of all princes" and "of all monarchs the most wicked." In the same speech, the monarch discloses his intentions of giving Sigismund one chance to prove what his character is like. From that point, the play centers about Sigismund's reform, with the story of Rosaura as part of the subplot.
Corneille and Racine are the great names in the revival of classicism in France. Following the classical rules closely, Corneille used material from ancient history for his tragedies, as did Racine.

Molière, the third distinguished figure in seventeenth century French drama, wrote comedies that were very popular, in which the author ridiculed the foibles of his countrymen.

One play of each author is included in this study.

1. The Cid, by Pierre Corneille

The scene opens with a conventional conversation between Chimène, the beautiful daughter of a Spanish nobleman, and her confidant, in the form of a governess. Chimène is one of the principal characters and throughout the play she indulges in long speeches on every occasion. At the beginning, the lady is excited at the prospect of marrying her Roderick; at the end she is still excited at the prospect of marrying him, after almost losing him.

Another noble lady in the play, the Infanta, also has a convenient governess, with whom she can discuss her heart secrets.

During the first conversation, we are not told Chimène's name, nor in the second talk is the Infanta identified beyond her companion's statement, "Yours is the blood of kings." But when a page enters to call her "Your Highness," we are satisfied that we have placed her correctly.
With Roderick's entrance, the action begins, when he is involved in a feud with Chimène's father. Act I closes with a very long and poetic soliloquy in which Roderick laments the apparently cruel fate that threatens to rob him of Chimène whom he dearly loves.

The explanation of the title is not given until the very end of the play, when the King tells that the Moors have given that name to Roderick, whose warlike prowess they fear.

2. Phaedra, by Jean Racine

Since this play is modeled on the French Pseudo-Classicist school, the author has observed the unities of time, place, and action. Like the great Greek tragedies, too, the leading characters are dead at the end of the action.

The exposition is handled carefully, as the plot is involved by a number of cross currents. Hippolytus, one of the chief characters, is unburdening his mind at the beginning to his companion and tutor, whom he mentions definitely in the first two lines: "My mind is settled, dear Theramenes. And I can stay no more in lovely Treozen." He goes on to say that he is in mortal anguish because his father, who has been gone six months, has not been heard from. His tutor, in reply, makes clear that Hippolytus is a prince, son of King Theseus. As the conversation continues, we learn that Phaedra is the second wife of King Theseus, that she seems to have a dread disease, and that she dislikes Hippolytus. Hippolytus confides to his tutor that he is in love with Aricia, sole survivor of
the race of Pallas, whom the king has ordered not to marry, as he does not wish her race perpetuated.

After this preliminary exposition, Phaedra, the chief character, enters to admit her love for Hippolytus, who feels only aversion for his stepmother. From that point, the action proceeds swiftly to the tragic close.

3. Tartuffe, or the Impostor, by Molière

This play, which has been called the first social comedy, and the pattern on which modern social drama is based, is one of Molière's greatest comedies of character. Goethe has said that the exposition is one of the best of its kind. The characters are types of the bourgeoisie of that period, and the one who is pointed out for ridicule is the impostor Tartuffe, who conceals his mercenary and lustful plans under the guise of great piety and sincerity. The entrance of this leading character is delayed until the third act, but in the first scene we are told all that we need to know about him.

The exposition, which has been so highly praised, is in the form of a humorous conversation, in which Mme. Pernelle, about to leave her son's house, characterizes in pungent style each member of that household, at the same time revealing her own prejudices. For instance, the old lady tells Dorine, "You are a great deal too saucy for a waiting maid." To Damis, she says, "Four letters spell your name, my chile, a 'fool'; I, your grandmother, tell you so." After she has disposed of her grandchild, her daughter-in-law, and the latter's brother, she mentions Tartuffe. Then we learn that, while Mme. Pernelle
thinks him "a very worthy man...who wishes to lead you on the road to Heaven", the others call him a stranger, a beggar, and a hypocrite, and deplore the influence he exerts over Orgon, the head of the house.

When Orgon enters, we are puzzled by the fact that he is not addressed by name, although his relationship to the speaker is always indicated, as brother, brother-in-law, father, etc.

F. Restoration Drama

In England, so-called Restoration Drama was largely influenced by French Pseudo-Classicism. One of the best examples of the heroic play, or tragedy written in accordance with the unities, was Dryden's All for Love. This play, in blank verse, is the story of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra rewritten in the classical manner.

One of the outstanding comedies of this period was Congreve's Way of the World, typical of the society play of intrigue that appealed to the sophisticated court of Charles II.

1. All for Love, or the World Well Lost, by John Dryden

The Prologue, in which Dryden uses his familiar rhymed couplet, has no particular connection with the play, serving only as a general introduction, as well as a sarcastic greeting to the critics who evidently flourished in 1678.

Since the play is cast in the classical mold, the one scene is Alexandria, with the Temple of Isis as the
background.

The action takes place in one day, and begins in the morning of Antony's birthday, which is also the last day of his life.

Reminiscent of the Greek tragedies, the opening scene shows priests gathered to pray that the evil omens of the preceding night may be averted. The tragic note is struck in the priest's account of the voice he heard in his dream, crying, "Egypt is no more!"

With the entrance of the Queen's officer, the exposition makes clear that Antony has admitted defeat past recovery and, in his despair, has retired to the temple to brood over his losses. The Queen, in an attempt to improve conditions, has sent word throughout her kingdom that Antony's birthday must be celebrated happily.

When the general Ventidius, a brave Roman warrior, invade Antony's privacy to spur his flagging spirits, the main action of the play begins.


This play, which is considered Congreve's masterpiece and one of the best examples of the English comedy of manners, has been praised for its brilliant dialogue, and severely criticised for its lack of clear exposition.

In the opening scene, laid in a chocolate house, Mirabell and Fainall, leaving their cards, plunge directly into what is meant to be exposition, but is instead of hodgepodge of gossip, with too many persons named to distinguish
among them. Mr. Fainall's name we learn at once, but we are kept in doubt as to Mirabell's name for some time. We are told that Mirabell loves Millament, and that Fainall is married, but is apparently not jealous of his wife, although she is of a party of what Mirabell calls coxcombs, who may bring scandal to her.

Lady Wishfort, we hear, is an older woman, Fainall's mother-in-law, who can indulge in invective, and who has been deceived by Mirabell's "sham addresses to her, to conceal his love to her niece." All this intrigue is exceedingly complicated, but gradually curiosity is aroused as to Lady Wishfort and her vocabulary. The lady does not appear, however, until Act 3, when she endeavors to make up for lost time by her remarks to her maid.

G. Eighteenth Century Drama

In England, the artificiality of seventeenth-century drama was gradually superseded by a more natural form, which reached its highest point in the brilliant comedies of Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Sheridan. A play by each of these authors is included in this study.

In Italy, a distinguished writer of comedy was Carlo Goldoni, whose *La Locandiera* has been given to American audiences recently by Eva Le Gallienne.

In Germany, the Storm and Stress Movement of the last half of this century brought important contributions to dramatic literature from the pens of Lessing, Goethe, and
Schiller. Since Goethe is more famous as a poet than as a dramatist, his Faust has not been considered here; but a study has been made of one of Lessing's plays and one of the great historical dramas which Schiller wrote about great leaders like Wallenstein.

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1. She Stoops to Conquer, by Oliver Goldsmith

Although Horace Walpole called this play "the lowest of all farces," most critics have deemed it an excellent type of the natural comedy of manners.

The opening conversation is very natural, between Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle. Mrs. Hardcastle addresses her husband by name at once, and in her first speech stamps herself as one who, living in the country, hankers for the "polishing" of a trip to town. In the second speech, we are told that the Hardcastles live in an "old rambling mansion, that looks for all the world like an inn, but that we never see company." After Mr. Hardcastle's delightful remarks, "I love everything that's old," including "an old wife," we soon learn that the old wife is fifty-seven, that this is her second husband, that she has a son, Tony Lumpkin, with a very good fortune, but that in Mr. Hardcastle's estimation Tony is a mischievous, stupid boy.

Immediately following that exposition of Tony, the lad demonstrates in person what he is like. On his way to the ale house, he disregards his mother's request to stay at home, and hauls the lady out after him, when she tries to detain him by force. This is certainly an awkward and obvious removal of Mrs. Hardcastle.
Mr. Hardcastle, left alone momentarily, indulges in a short soliloquy, whose sole purpose seems to be to give us a few facts about his pretty Kate, who, after living a year or two in town, has become very fond of fashionable clothes. Thus introduced, Kate enters, to be informed by her papa that Mr. Marlow, the man he has chosen to be her husband, is on the way to see her. Although this statement sounds dictatorial, Mr. Hardcastle's talk with Kate shows us that the two are on very good terms. In their good-natured raillery, the necessary facts are brought out about the prospective suitor, who is intelligent, generous, young, handsome, but very bashful.

Mr. Hardcastle's exit at this point is motivated by his desire to prepare the servants for Marlow's reception, but this again seems an awkward exit, as Mrs. Hardcastle should be attending to that duty, instead of being pulled about by her son.

Kate, then, is left "sola" to give a good eighteenth century, "Lud, this news of papa's puts me all in a flutter." Her confidant, Miss Neville, arrives to interrupt the "sola" and add the news that she has an admirer who is an intimate friend of this bashful Marlow, who, it seems, is not so bashful "among creatures of another stamp."

Still in Scene 1, we hear that Mrs. Hardcastle is trying to arrange a marriage between her dear Tony and her niece, Miss Neville, who has a considerable fortune in jewels, but that Tony is not eager for matrimony.

Thus, in one short scene, the exposition is very
neatly given to us in a most efficient manner, and the complications are ready to begin, with the audience's curiosity aroused as to how Miss Hardcastle will overcome the timidity of her suitor who is so different with creatures of lower rank, and how Miss Neville will thwart her aunt's plans and sail safely into matrimony with her jewels and her true admirer, instead of with Tony.

2. The School for Scandal, by Richard Brinsley Sheridan

Scene 1 opens in Lady Sneerwell's dressing-room at Bath. Snake is drinking chocolate, while her ladyship is at her toilet. The first page and a half of dialogue is slow in getting to the point, but the two characters are identified and their favorite sport of scandal is emphasized. Then Sir Peter Teazle is brought into the conversation, and Snake, in a long and frankly expository speech, rehearses information that Lady Sneerwell must know perfectly well. Snake is an eighteenth-century Greek Chorus. The lengthy harangue sets forth the whole history of the Surface brothers.

The remainder of the scene introduces Joseph Surface in person, Maria, Mrs. Candour, Sir Benjamin Backbite, and Crabtree, with liberal sprinklings of bits of gossip. The wheat is concealed in the excess of chaff; the wheat in this case being the facts that Lady Teazle and Sir Peter are not in agreement, that Sir Oliver Surface, Joseph's wealthy uncle from the East Indies, is coming home, and that Charles is in a bad way financially. Much of the conversation is not to the point,
introducing a medley of names, although the dialogue is amusing in showing how malicious gossip can be and how easily it spreads.

At the beginning of Scene 2, Sir Peter Teazle has a long soliloquy in which he reviews his six months of tempestuous wedded life with his young wife. Lady Teazle does not appear until Act 2, but we have been prepared to find her beautiful, temperamental, and extravagant.

3. *La Locandiera*, or *The Mistress of the Inn*, by Carlo Goldoni

The exposition is adroitly handled in a very natural opening conversation. The place is carefully indicated as an Inn in Florence. In the course of their argument over the respect due to their rank, the two men first on the stage give their names and titles: the Marquis of Forlipopoli, and the Count of Albfiorita. The two are in love with Mirandolina, a charming young woman, who has been mistress of the Inn since her father's death. Fabrizio, her servant, is also in love with her.

The complication starts with the arrival of the Cavalier, who "regards woman as man's most insupportable infirmity," and who proceeds to order the pretty mistress about in very brusque fashion. Naturally she resents such treatment, and vows she'll make this rude person fall in love with her, to teach him a lesson.

The quick opening and amusing dialogue provide the proper atmosphere for a sprightly comedy.

At the opening of the play, Just, the servant of Major Von Tellheim, is disclosed talking to himself while asleep. By this ingenious means we learn that his poor master is not satisfied with his lodgings. When the Landlord enters, the two carry on an extensive conversation to inform us that the Landlord has given the Major's rooms to a young, beautiful, and amiable young lady; and to let us know, too, that the Major has not been able to pay his bills for some time. The amiable young lady, Minna, does not appear until the second act. The first act is devoted chiefly to setting forth the character and circumstances of the Major as a gallant soul who, in spite of financial reverses, can still be charitable, and who inspires the devotion of his servant and the affection of his friends.

5. *William Tell*, by Friedrich Schiller

The first act requires typical Alpine scenery of lake and meadows and mountains. For atmospheric effect, the play begins with singing by the fisher boy, the herdsman, and the hunter. To interrupt the pleasant scene, a storm is seen coming up, and Conrad Baumgarten enters breathlessly, to plead with the ferryman to help him escape from his pursuers. When the ferryman refuses to help him, because of the rising storm, Tell suddenly appears, without any expository introduction, and leads Conrad to safety across the lake. Thus, Tell's bravery is indicated by direct action, instead of by any previous description of his courageous acts.
The identification of characters and of places is done with almost painstaking thoroughness. Tell is brought before us as a very brave man, and we are told of the tyrant whom all fear.

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H. Romantic Revival

With the production of Victor Hugo's *Hernani* in 1830, there began a short-lived revival of romanticism in drama. The plots chosen were melodramatic, the central figures were of types that could be used in scenes of great emotional intensity, and the whole effect was theatrical in the extreme.

As typical of this kind of play, a French, German, and English drama of this period have been studied.

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1. *Hernani*, by Victor Hugo

The play has every ingredient of melodrama, put together in the proper order. Dark and stormy night; a duenna answering a knock at the door; the entrance of a stranger, none other than a king incognito; he hides in a cupboard; enter the expected lover, a dashing mountaineer; enter the lovely lady; the gentleman in the cupboard emerges to fight with the mountaineer; the quarrel suddenly stops because of the sudden return of the lovely lady's aged relative and affianced husband. All that happens in rather startling succession at the beginning of Act 1. Exposition is interspersed with action; every one is properly named; *Hernani* stands out as the heroic character, who has good cause to hate the king; the atmosphere is fraught with danger and treachery; the lovely Doña Sol de
Silva has given her heart blindly to the man with whom she is to die at the end. The speeches are short and to the point at the start; later they grow longer.

2. The Prince of Homburg, by Heinrich Von Kleist

Although this play was written before the production of Hernani (1821), it is considered an excellent example of the romantic play as produced in Germany in the early nineteenth century.

The central character, a combination of coward and brave man, goes through many fantastic and fearful experiences.

At the beginning of the play, he is shown in a sleep-walking scene in a garden. The first speech tells us that he is the Prince of Homburg, and that, after three days' intensive fighting against the Swedes, he is resting for a few hours before continuing the campaign. In his sleep, the weary young prince reveals that he loves the Princess Natalie, and when she comes to watch him with her father, he snatches one of her gloves. The Prince is thus revealed at the start as a composite of warrior and lover. There is no hint in the garden scene of the troublous times ahead for him and of his narrow escape from death.

3. Richelieu, by Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton

This thoroughly theatrical play, which critics have berated as being insincere and showy, can still, in spite of its defects, hold the attention of audiences, when an actor like Walter Hampden makes the most of its emotional leading part.
Richelieu does not appear until the second scene, and the first is largely expository, with frequent mention of the Cardinal as one to be feared by the conspirators. In lengthy and poetic speeches, two main facts are brought out: that De Mauprat, loving Julie, thinks he is going to meet death at the hands of the Cardinal; and that Baradas, confident that he can overthrow the King, hopes to marry the same Julie, who is the Cardinal's ward.

The atmosphere is one of intrigue. The characterization is not clear-cut, except that De Mauprat is made the heroic type of handsome hero, who looks on his love as a star in heaven, and who is ready to meet death without a flicker of fear.
I. Modern Drama

Henrik Ibsen is considered the founder of modern drama. Daring to use the real problems of real people, he developed dramatic technique to a fine art, which his literary successors freely imitated. From the realistic problem play of the late nineteenth century, drama has taken many divergent paths. An attempt has been made in this paper to present as many varieties as possible: from the naturalism of Strindberg to the symbolism of Maeterlinck; from the preachings of Brieux to the triflings of Schnitzler; from the sentimentalism of Sierra to the satiric levity of Shaw; from the romanticism of Rostand to the mechanical innovations of the Capeks; and from the grim realism of Gorky to the fantasy of Barrie.

1. Scandinavian
   a. Ghosts, by Henrik Ibsen

   This play, with its thesis of the tragic effects of heredity, differs from the majority of Ibsen's plays in that it is largely expository.

   The setting is gloomy at the start, since the stage directions call for a view of a fjord landscape, half obscured by rain. The opening is slow: a long conversation between Engstrand, the carpenter, and his daughter Regina, who is in Mrs. Alving's service. Apparently there is no natural affection between the two, as the girl refuses to go with her father to help him start an inn, and even hints boldly that she is not his own daughter. Oswald, the central character of the story, is brought in by the father's suggestion that his daughter
shows too much interest in her young master, who is still asleep at mid-day, exhausted after his return from Paris.

With the entrance of a third person, Mr. Manders, more interest is created in the mystery of Oswald's return home, in such a weary condition. The character of Regina is deftly sketched as a young woman incapable of sincere emotions and always actuated by selfish motives.

Since the play is largely expository, we do not learn until late in the story that Regina is Oswald's half-sister, and that Oswald, the unfortunate victim of his father's sins, is faced with insanity. The play ends at the tense moment when the unhappy mother is faced with the problem of watching her beloved son degenerate into hopeless insanity, or of helping him find a way out in suicide.

b. Hedda Gabler, by Henrik Ibsen

In the same ways as Ghosts, this play begins with a long conversation between a servant and a visitor on the subject of persons returned from a journey. Under the circumstances, the talk is natural, since the visitor is Aunt Julie conferring with her own ex-servant on the important question of the latter's new mistress, Hedda, just home from her wedding journey with George Tesman.

Before the entrance of Hedda, she has been described very accurately and we are quite prepared to find her a selfish, dissatisfied woman, entirely unconcerned about the needs of any one but herself. At the same time, we are curious as to what a woman of that type will do with her two
new relatives: a well-meaning, but doddering aunt-in-law; and a pedantic husband, who is a dull, fussy masculine counterpart of his Aunt Julie.

c. The Father, by August Strindberg

The first few lines of the play are of no importance and are of the kind that could be accompanied by late comers trudging down the aisle. At first sight, the entire opening scene does not seem of particular importance. A youthful soldier is being interviewed by the Captain and the Pastor relative to a misdemeanor with the girl. The whole purpose of this scene is not to characterize nor to start the action, but to focus attention on the point that is to be the main tool for crime in the story: a man can not be sure that he is the father of a child.

This premise having been made, the Captain discusses with his friend the troubles he is having in bringing up his only daughter and the disagreements that have arisen between his wife and him on that question. When the wife comes in, we see at once the clash between the two, but we do not realize just how serious the domestic situation is until we hear the wife's fiendish suggestions to the Doctor.

2. German

a. Maria Magdalena, by Friedrich Hebbel

Although Hebbel was a predecessor of Ibsen, his work was considered a forerunner of modern German drama, in that it represented a revolt from the romanticism of the early nineteenth century, and dealt, in a naturalistic manner, with
bourgeois characters.

The opening scene between Clara, the Maria Magdalena of the play, and her mother, sets the note of pessimism, since it consists chiefly of long speeches by the mother on the subject of death. One by one the other members of the family are brought in, and finally Clara's depraved lover, Leonard. Each character is carefully analyzed for us, by his words, actions, and by the opinions of the others. The characters are, however, conventional types: the dissolute brother whom the mother loves best; the weak-willed heroine, torn by conflicting emotions; and the despotic father.

b. Magda, by Hermann Sudermann

In many ways, this play resembles the preceding one, since both are written in a naturalistic manner and both deal with a despotic father and an erring daughter. In Magda, however, the characterization is much clearer, with contrast used effectively, and the technique of building up the scene climaxes is much more artistic.

This play is noted particularly for the fact that the first act is entirely expository and the entrance of the chief character is held until the second act, when it is made as theatrical as possible. Although the first act has to be expository, there is no lack of action or interest. In the first few speeches, the two characters are at once identified as "Miss Marie" and Theresa, the maid. We learn that father is the member of the household to be feared. The arrival of magnificent flowers from an unknown donor adds a note of
mystery. The great Music Festival is mentioned casually. Marie is obviously a sweet, timid young person, in whose dainty ear father has dinned adequate warnings about observing the proprieties, since Magda ran away twelve years before and left quite a blot on the family 'scutcheon.

In the light of later developments, we see that every casual reference becomes a necessary link in setting forth all the details of Magda's colorful past and present.

c. The Weavers, by Gerhart Hauptmann

The play is unique in that it has no beginning, middle, and end, but is literally a cross-section of life in the weaving communities of Germany in the '40's, without any of the ordinary equipment of drama in the form of plot and central characters. Each act - there are five - in a different setting attempts to show the struggles of the weavers from different angles: from the points of view of the capitalists, of the radical weavers, and of the conservatives. The author is in complete sympathy with the workers, and offers revolution as their solution of the problem.

The first act shows a large room on the ground floor of a manufacturer's shop, with numerous weavers, both men and women, bringing in their cloth to be weighed for their pay. The working people present a general impression of poverty, timidity, suffering, and constant brooding. Only one or two stand out from the crowd: Becker, who stages a revolt for a higher rate of pay; and old Baumert, with his pitiful story of his pet dog that was killed to provide a bit of meat for his
starving family. Pfeifer, in charge of the paying, represents the richer class, and is portrayed as utterly pitiless, turning a deaf ear to all appeals for more pay or for advances.

The play uses what might be called mass effect in exposition, presenting the conflict of class against class, not of individual against individual, with an undercurrent that is felt rather than heard.

d. From Morn to Midnight, by Georg Kaiser

Although Kaiser has contributed many well-constructed plays to the German stage, he is perhaps best known in America as the author of this expressionistic drama, "a modern mystery in seven scenes."

The characters are not named, other than as Lady, Son, etc., since they are only satellites revolving about the central character, the Bank Cashier. The seven scenes represent episodes in his life on the one day when he deserted his customary routine. There is no plot in the ordinary sense, but simply a building up of suspense, culminating in the man's suicide.

The play needs no exposition. Everything happens before our eyes. The first scene, opening with clever use of pantomime, shows the cashier at his ordinary routine, behind the counter of a small bank. At first he is only a cog in the machinery. Gradually he emerges as the man who has become enamored of the lovely lady from Florence, who is having trouble in her attempts to cash a letter of credit. The stage directions, meant to indicate his quick change from an automaton
to a lover pulsating with emotion, are rather ridiculous and far-fetched: "His spectacles glitter; his glance travels slowly upward from her wrist." He is "mesmerized," and ready to forsake his dry routine to help this beauty in distress.

_e._ Grand Hotel, by Vicki Baum

Episodic, too, like Kaiser's mystery play, is Grand Hotel, with its eighteen scenes, which would be impossible of presentation were it not for the invention of the revolving stage. But it is more ambitious, in that, in spite of its kaleidoscopic nature, it weaves the stories of many lives into one pattern, and at the same time gives distinctive characterizations.

In the opening scenes there is much action. The first one is very ingenious, showing a telephone operator at the hotel switchboard, plugging in for her customers' calls. As she announces each connection, the scene shifts to the telephone booth, and all the necessary exposition is furnished by the leading characters, in turn, talking excitedly and confidentially in the privacy of the booth. Accompanying all this talk is the babel of a Grand Hotel lobby, with an overtone of music from an orchestra.

When the scene shifts to the desk of the hotel clerk, the characters who have just told us their secrets appear in person, except the temperamental Russian dancer.

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3. Central European

a. R.U.R., by Karel Capek (Czecho-Slovakian)

This fantastic melodrama in four acts, the story of the world's repopulation with Rossum's Universal Robots, is a socialistic satire on the idea that release from toil would bring happiness to human beings.

The first scene shows a simple interior of an office in the robot factory. An executive is dictating to his stenographer. His letters are expository, as the letter to Hamburg, acknowledging receipt of an order for fifteen thousand robots. With the mention of robots, our attention is drawn to the odd-looking female at the typewriter, and we begin to suspect that she is a machine. The entrance of the pretty daughter of the president provides an excuse for further exposition, as she is on a tour of inspection; and the executive is only too glad to turn from his robot clerk to explain the problems of mass production to a flesh and blood young woman. From that point, the story proceeds quickly to the uprising of the robots against their human masters.

b. Liliom, by Ferenc Molnár (Hungarian)

The play, a legend in seven scenes and a prologue, is a combination of fantasy and realism.

The prologue is short and serves only to establish the hectic atmosphere in a park. The first scene takes place in one section of the park. The action begins quickly. Marie and Julie have been riding on the merry-go-round, but have been asked to leave by the proprietress, Mrs. Muskat. She has
followed them to continue the quarrel, and we find that she is probably jealous because the youthful and pretty Julie has been flirting with Liliom, Mrs. Muskat's assistant. Liliom, however, enters to speak for himself and we understand why he is called Liliom, the Hungarian equivalent for "roughneck."

From that point on, no exposition is necessary. Liliom is discharged by his angry employer, even though he is the "best barker in the park." He orders her to get out, lest he give her "the prettiest slap in the jaw you ever had in your life."

And Julie is left to face a life of misery with this bold, insulting, utterly unreliable man, with whom she was unlucky enough to have a flirtation.

c. Light-O'-Love, by Arthur Schnitzler (Austrian)

Writing with as delicate a touch as he uses in his humorous account of the trifling and amorous Anatol, Schnitzler here turns to tragedy as the aftermath of an intrigue.

The play opens with a good deal of inconsequential talk between two rich young men, Fritz and Theodore, as they return to Fritz's elegantly furnished apartment. By rather slow degrees, it is revealed that Fritz is having an affair with a married woman, who fears her husband may have discovered her guilt. Theodore, to comfort his friend, has invited two shop-girls to supper. The girl who is to be the center of the tragedy arrives late. When she greets Fritz, we see at once that she is sincerely in love with him; but, having heard of his affair with the married woman, we know that the girl is
only a passing fancy to him. Thus, from a trivial beginning, the play proceeds, in rather tenuous fashion, to move into the realms of tragedy.

4. Belgian and French

a. Pélèas and Mélisande, by Maurice Maeterlinck (Belgian)

The theme of this tragedy could be expressed in melodramatic eternal-triangle terms of the love of two brothers for one maiden; but actually the story moves like the flicker of shadows on a screen.

The scenes take place in and about a gloomy castle. We get impressions only. No exposition is necessary, since the action begins in the second scene with the finding by Golaud of a little dream-sort of girl beside a spring in a forest. Who she is we never discover. The opening scene, showing a group of servants trying to unlock the huge castle gates, is symbolic of the tragedy that is to take place later, with the closing of the same gates. The atmosphere is that of an unreal land, peopled by pale shadows of human beings, with one at least, Mélisande, who is probably not human.

b. Cyrano de Bergerac, by Edmond Rostand (French)

Written in a dashing, romantic manner, the play opens on a bustling scene, attendant on the opening of a theatrical performance, with an audience of all sorts and conditions gathering. From the crowd, one or two principals emerge: Christian, who has lately arrived to join the Gascony
Cadets, and who admits that he is "of a simple wit" and dare not speak to the lovely Roxane; and Ragueneau, the great pastry cook, who is in search of his friend, Cyrano de Bergerac. With the mention of Cyrano, exposition begins. Ragueneau furnishes most of the information about the "bizarre, excessive, whimsical fellow" whose nose is out of all proportion. When curiosity develops about this most unusual hero, the audience hears his voice and discovers that he is actually in the audience, ready to carry out his threat of forbidding the performance. After we hear his voice, we suddenly see his arm waving above the crowd, and finally Cyrano himself is visible, standing upon a chair, his nose terrifying, as he shouts, "Ah! I shall lose my temper!" The delay in the hero's appearance is, in this case, very good "theatre."

c. The Red Robe, by Eugene Brieux (French)

Brieux, who is better known for his more sensational Damaged Goods, presents in this play a rather heavy-handed indictment of the effect of political influence on advancement in the French judicial system of his day.

The play opens on a modest drawing-room in an old house. The mistress, Mme. Vagret, in evening dress, is arranging chairs, when her daughter enters with a newspaper. The latter device takes care of the exposition. From the headlines read by the two women, we gather that M. Vagret, as prosecuting attorney, is being criticised by the press for not capturing a murderer. In her worried reception of this news, Mme. Vagret reveals that her husband's failure to capture and convict the murderer may be a serious handicap to her husband's
promotion to the position of Counselor, a position he has coveted and deserved, but to obtain which he will not stoop to using political influence.

The play opens with an atmosphere of worry and disappointment, but the long exposition drags and the action is slow in beginning.

5. **Italian**
   a. **Gioconda**, by Gabriele D'Annunzio

   The play opens in a pleasant room, with a lovely Italian background showing through the windows. Into the fresh spring atmosphere gradually creeps a note of sadness and uncertainty. Two people, whom we identify as Silvia, and the Maestro, discuss Silvia's husband, the temperamental sculptor, Lucio, who is just recovering from attempted suicide. Since a great deal of exposition is necessary, the first act is a succession of conversations between different sets of characters who give us every phase of the opening situation, the reunion of Lucio with his wife, after an affair with the woman who had shared his artistic life, Gioconda. Silvia's extraordinarily beautiful hands are mentioned, since they are to be the center of the tragedy. Gioconda does not appear in the first two acts, but she is clearly set forth as an implacable woman who will not give up the place she has had in Lucio's life.

   b. **Naked**, by Luigi Pirandello

   This is one of the more recent plays by the author who is best known for his *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. In a deceptive fashion, which is characteristic of some of his
other works, he tells the story of a girl who tries to deceive others into believing in her virtue and innocence.

The setting is the cheap room of a poor Roman novelist, with offstage street noises serving as a Leitmotif of the sordid tragedy. The opening scene arouses interest at once. A pale girl, poorly dressed, is brought in by an older man, who tries to put her at ease, although he evidently does not know her very well. An irate landlady enters to indulge in a quite realistic row with her lodger over his dirty birds and his lack of manners as well as of morals, interspersing her remarks with the typical landlady refrain, "This is the house of a respectable lady." With that misleading preface, the exposition begins, but it is not really completed until the very end of the play, when the whole truth is revealed about Ersilia, the unfortunate heroine. The method of imparting exposition is annoying: a statement is made about Ersilia's past, but presently part of the story is discounted; and so on, until the very end.

6. Spanish

a. The Bonds of Interest, by Jacinto Benavente

The Prologue is in the nature of a whimsical introduction, setting forth that "This is a little play of puppets, impossible in theme, without any reality at all."

The action takes place in an imaginary country in the seventeenth century, and it is soon evident that the author was telling the truth in his Prologue.
We are introduced to Leander and Crispin, who announces that he is one of the "free-born subjects of the Kingdom of Roguery," while Leander confides to the audience that "All our wealth is on our backs." That exposition is sufficient to tell us all we need to know about the adventurous pair, who presently begin their hilarious careers, masquerading as a distinguished visitor and his servant, and getting every attention by the simple expedient of putting up a bold front.

b. The Cradle Song, by G. Martinez Sierra

This two-act play, written by the distinguished Spanish dramatist, who collaborates with this wife, using his own name as their pen-name, is considered their best work, although the longer play, The Kingdom of God, is noteworthy. Sierra's dramas, which have been called static, are expository in presenting principles rather than individual characters. In The Cradle Song, the main theme centers about the mother instinct that is still strong, even though it has been thwarted by a nun's cloistered life. The author strives to bring out the theme by means of atmosphere and feeling.

Thus, in Act 1, we find atmosphere at once achieved by the detailed setting of a room in a Dominican Convent, a stately, quiet room, with arches looking on the garden. Ten nuns in their white habits are on the stage in effective groups. Some attempt is made at differentiating the characters of the nuns; the Prioress is a gentle leader; Sister Marcella is still young and impulsive; the Vicaress is belligerent; Sister Inez is greedy. We know at once which is
the Prioresse, as the nuns address her as "Mother," but we are meant to think of the group as an entity, disturbed now and then by little ripples that upset the calm. Gradually we learn the names of some of the others. We watch indulgently the delight of the sisters at the gift of a canary. The idea of mother love is not brought in until Sister Joanna of the Cross almost weeps at the recollection of her baby brother who "nearly broke his little baby heart" when she left home for the convent. From that point on, she gradually holds the main interest as the one in whom mother love is strongest.

There is little exposition in the ordinary sense. The plot is too slight a narrative to require any.

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7. Russian

a. Uncle Vanya, by Anton Chekhov

The play is a quiet but pessimistic expression of the futility of life as seen through Russian eyes. The play begins and ends in the same mood.

The first act, with a setting on the terrace of a country estate, presents one of the leading characters, Astroff, confiding his troubles to a sympathetic old nurse, who listens to his ravings about overwork. Voitski, "Uncle Vanya," enters, without any preliminary mention, to voice his complaints about the Professor and his wife, whose coming has upset the quiet régime led by him and his niece, Sonia. In rather long and angry speeches, Voitski unburdens his soul to Astroff on the subject of the Professor, who has everything he wants, even a
beautiful young wife, while he, Voitski, has nothing but work in his life. We see, from Voitski's excitement, that he is disturbed in particular by the beauty of the Professor's wife, and we are prepared later to find him attempting to make love to her and trying to shoot the Professor, but failing in those two objectives, as he has failed in everything else.

b. The Lower Depths, by Maxim Gorki

This play, sometimes called Submerged, is an exaggerated example of naturalism, in that it presents a section of what the realists like to call the stream of life, but which in this case is the dregs of life. There is no central plot and there are no central characters, but a collection of battered wrecks, who have seen better days, but now have settled to the bottom of existence, figuratively and literally, in a filthy cellar.

The setting for Act 1 is a complicated arrangement of a basement partitioned off to indicate separate living quarters. The scene presents a hodge-podge of quarreling and noise. It is difficult to tell who is the thief, who, the gambler, etc. One, Anna, is dying in bed behind a curtain, and begs the others to stop their fighting. Luka tries to spread the cheer of Tolstoi's doctrines, but even he realizes that his efforts are too late to have any effect on the motley crew.

The atmosphere is one of confusion and intrigue and despair.
c. **He Who Gets Slapped**, by Leonid Andreyev

The one setting is a large, dirty room off a circus hall. The atmosphere is indicated clearly at the start as one of hectic excitement as lived by eccentric circus folk, but there is no indication of future tragedy.

At the beginning, there is an empty stage, but sounds of rehearsal are heard offstage. Presently two clowns enter to practice a new march. They are interrupted by the manager Briquet and Mancini. In the course of their argument, we hear of Consuelo, the bareback rider and leading attraction of the circus. Mancini, as her guardian, takes half her salary.

The mysterious He does not enter the scene until some time after the start. He is introduced as "a gentleman from beyond the grave." When he succeeds in getting a job as a clown, he suggests his own name, He Who Gets Slapped. Although the author creates suspense as to the man's supposedly high station in life and disappointments, he does not attempt to solve the mystery later in the play. This is a case of what might be called unfulfilled exposition.

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8. **English**

a. **Mid-Channel**, by Sir Arthur Wing Pinero

Pinero believed in presenting expository facts to his audience as quickly and firmly as possible: in the course of dramatic action, if possible; otherwise, in frankly obvious fashion. His *Second Mrs. Tanqueray* has been a favorite
with those interested in the technical side of playwriting, but since that play presents particular problems in the handling of much preliminary information about a proposed second marriage, another well-known play of his has been selected for this study.

Although this play is a tragedy, there is nothing in the opening atmosphere to indicate any trouble beyond a domestic quarrel. The scene is a richly furnished drawing-room, with the high-society accessories of a fireplace, a butler, and a "fauteuil-stool." The opening dialogue is entirely expository, with no dramatic action. A mother and daughter, ushered in by the butler to await his mistress's arrival, give all the necessary information needed by the audience. They are calling on Mrs. Zoe Blundell, a charming and wealthy woman in her own right, who is married to a prosperous stock-broker. Zoe and her husband do not get along very well, but they have been married thirteen years, and presumably may have a quarrel now and then.

With the entrance of their hostess, animated, but nervous, a note of tragedy is sounded in her reference to suicide. Another note of unhappiness is brought in, more naturally, with her mention of delightful children she has seen in a play, and her implied wish that she had some of her own.

The exposition concerning Leonard, the third member of the eternal triangle, is very well handled. He is the object of the call: Mrs. Pierpoint, Zoe's guest, has come to inquire about his character and prospects, since he seems to
have intentions where her daughter is concerned. This provides a natural way for Zoe to discuss Leonard frankly. By this time the audience senses that for some reason Zoe does not want this marriage to take place.

With Zoe's character and present unhappiness made clear, the main action of the play begins.

b. *Lady Windermere's Fan*, by Oscar Wilde

Scene 1 shows the morning-room of Lord Windermere's house in London. Lady Windermere is on the stage when the curtain goes up, and is engaged in the perennially feminine occupation of "arranging roses in a blue bowl." With the entrance of the butler, we have an extraordinarily clear piece of exposition in the matter of identifying characters.

"Parker: - Is your ladyship at home this afternoon?
Lady W. - Yes. Who has called?
Parker: - Lord Darlington, my lady.
Lady W. (hesitates for a moment) - Show him up.
Parker: - Yes, my lady. (Exit c.)
Lady W. - It's best for me to see him before tonight.
(Enter Parker)
Parker: - Lord Darlington (Enter Lord D. Exit Parker)
Lord D. - How do you do, Lady Windermere?
Lady W. - How do you do, Lord Darlington?"

Almost at once the fan, which furnishes the title of the play, is brought to our attention, as the birthday present Lady Windermere has just received from her husband.

Lord Darlington makes it obvious that he would enjoy an affair with his hostess. He gives a hint of Lord Windermere's new woman friend, but it is only a very general hint. The loquacious Duchess of Berwick, however, coming for tea with her daughter Agatha, infuses some excitement into the scene by letting us know that Lord Darlington is wicked, and,
after his departure, by telling Lady Windermere that Mrs. Erlynne, "the lady with a dozen pasts", has ensnared Lord Windermere, not to mention the Duchess's own brother, Augustus.

With Lady Windermere's suspicions and jealousy thus aroused, the action begins.

c. *What Every Woman Knows*, by Sir James Barrie

The delightful stage directions give a complete description of the Wylie library, and of Alick, the father, and his son, James, at their game. During the pantomime of the game, David enters, puts on his slippers, and crosses to the fire. The first spoken words are surprising: David suddenly bursts into a romantic verse, which is not at all in accord with his Scotch solidity.

The three men are soon identified by the spoken word. They speak of Maggie, and we learn that, although undersized, she has a passion for romance, but so far has had no chance to indulge that passion, as the latest prospect, the minister, is to be married to some other girl, although Maggie has worked him a pair of slippers, and the family has fed him many a pound of steak. We know, before Maggie enters, that her men folk adore her and sympathize with her romantic aspirations, even though they admit she's getting on in years, although her curls make her look younger.

On Maggie's entrance, John Shand is mentioned as a poor student. Maggie reveals her calmness and honesty when she admits that she has none of the charm necessary to attract men, and calls herself "a little brown hen."
With the mention of burglars, we rapidly are led on to the discovery that the burglar is none other than John Shand, who steals into their library to study their unused books. To David comes the practical idea of education as a bribe to secure this young man as a future husband for Maggie.

This play is one of Barrie's realistic stories, without islands or supernatural happenings, and he handles his exposition and characterization with a skill that is almost baffling in its very simplicity.

d. *Dear Brutus*, by Sir James Barrie

This play is an excellent example of the author's fantastic treatment of a theme. Here, as in *Mary Rose* and *The Admirable Crichton*, he indulges in his favorite trick of transporting his characters to an entirely different setting, in this case for the purpose of showing what might have been.

The opening is mysterious, with the curtain parting on a darkened room, with a garden bathed in moonshine shown through French windows. The stage directions could hardly be followed, and are for the reader's pleasure only. For instance, the flowers in back are smiling, but "it is a smile with a menace in it for the dwellers in darkness." The door from the dining-room opens and voices are heard, saying among other things that this is a strange house. Someone finds a switch and turns on the lights, revealing a comfortable living-room.

Five ladies enter, evidently intent on attending to something important before the men come, particularly before
their host, Lob, comes. With his customary skill, Barrie, while carrying the action along swiftly, also brings out one particular phase of each woman's character, on which he is to concentrate during the play.

When the five ladies intimidate Matey, the butler, the latter, under compulsion, imparts some startling information: that they shouldn't have come; that Lob is so old he talks about Puck and Merry England; that he has asked them to visit him for Midsummer's Night, when something startling is due to happen; and that they had better not go out tonight, especially not into the wood.

That expository scene, written in a manner to arouse instant curiosity, and cleverly characterizing as it goes, gives us sufficient information, without telling us too much about the mysterious wood, nor what its particular fascination might be.

**e. Milestones**, by Arnold Bennett and Edward Knoblock

Since this play takes its leading characters from courtship through their golden wedding anniversary, the setting and time of the first act are important. The stage directions call for a drawing-room of a London house. The time is 1860, and the author brings in frequent references to show that period, as mention by the ladies of the source of their patterns, discussion of the newest styles, references to the innovation of hot water in the bath, but particularly by the arguments as to the merits of wooden and metal ships.
The characterization is particularly good. Mrs. Rhead, entertaining Rose Sibley until the gentlemen join them after dinner, shows that she is quite satisfied to have Rose's brother Samuel as a prospective son-in-law. Her approval of Samuel indicates that he must be a conservative like her. Rose, sweet and pleasant and most agreeable to her hostess, is very obviously in love with the latter's son, John, who is not at all conservative. In the course of their very natural conversation, the two women make clear a number of expository facts, particularly concerning the shipbuilding company, in which John Rhead, as a partner of Samuel Sibley and the elder Sibley, is a radical in his views about metal ships. Even the gentle Rose admits that the two men of her family are "slow-coaches." The appearance of Gertrude to display her latest daring purchase introduces us to another positive Rhead. Before the men have entered, we know what they are like, their differences of opinion, their love interests, and are ready for the quarrel that will break Gertrude's engagement.

The clever handling of the exposition in this play is due to the fact that necessary information is trickled in throughout the first act, and it is combined skilfully with characterization and action. All the more credit is due the author, too, because in this play there are a number of important characters.

f. The Barretts of Wimpole Street, by Rudolf Besier

The time of the play is indicated very definitely as early evening of May 19, 1845. The setting is historically
accurate, since it follows the description Elizabeth Barrett once wrote of her sitting-room to a friend.

The curtain going up, the heroine is shown on her couch. The few facts necessary for the exposition are adroitly taken care of by means of a conversation between the girl and her doctor. He finds her vitality rather low; in fact, she is unable to walk. He fears that her depressing home-life is bad for her, and wishes he could persuade her father that a trip to Italy would help her. She agrees that would be a heavenly change, although she enjoys her intellectual work and study. Two younger sisters, strolling in after a depressing family dinner, help further to prepare us for the later entrance of the sinister father, Edward Moulton-Barrett, who detests company and seems determined on never having a marriage in his family. He has, however, permitted Robert Browning to all, expecting that the visit will be purely platonic. As Arabel says to Elizabeth, "Even when you were younger and stronger, I don't ever remember your having had little affairs with gentlemen."

Although the stern father is proud of his poetic daughter, he is just as severe with her as with her younger sisters, and has insisted that she take porter for her health, even though the drink nauseates her. Even before his entrance, the father's character has been built up for us, piece by piece, and we can well understand when he does actually come in, why an awkward silence falls and why his first words are, "I am most displeased.

Although Robert Browning is an important character
in the story, we do not meet him in the first scene, but only "the Barretts of Wimpole Street," who are all, even the genius member of the family, under the absolute control of the domineering father.

**G. Design for Living, by Noel Coward**

This latest work of the versatile author of such widely divergent types of dramatic entertainment as *Bitter-Sweet* and *Cavalcade* is a rather frothy bit, written expressly to give him and his two friends, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, a chance to appear together as the glib eternal triangle of the comedy.

The first scene, laid in a shabby studio in Paris, begins with pantomime, as Gilda, preparing breakfast, is interrupted by knocking at the door. She admits Ernest. Then begins a rather remarkable staccato dialogue between two old friends, who know each other's weaknesses and are quite frank in discussing them. In spite of the clipped effect of the lines, we learn a great deal about Gilda and her three friends, Ernest, Otto, and Leo. In particular, we learn from the lady's own lips that she has no morals to speak of, and no desire for matrimony. Just as we begin to get a bit weary of smart repartee, we receive a shock, as Otto walks in. We had been led to suppose that he was in bed in the next room, suffering from neuralgia. Now we have to assume that the occupant of the next room is Leo, just returned, very prosperous, from the United States. With this frank exposition of the elastic state of Gilda's affections, evenly distributed between Otto and Leo,
with a bit to spare for Ernest, the eternal triangle is ready to start off on its merry-go-round existence.

h. Richard of Bordeaux, by Gordon Daviot

This historical play, written by the young Scotchwoman who uses an assumed name, is now being featured in New York, with Dennis King in the title role. As a study in exposition, the first scene is very interesting. The author has chosen for her theme the vacillating character of Richard, and in one short scene she presents him to us very clearly as a foppish, tempestuous, uxorious king, with possibilities of becoming very determined and harsh.

The play opens outside the King's council chamber and sounds indicating a stormy meeting are heard. Two attendants, amusing themselves at dice, discuss the vagaries of their royal master, but only very briefly, as he suddenly bursts out from between the curtains. In his elaborate costume, with its exaggerated dagged sleeves, reaching to the floor, we see his vanity; from his excited manner, we learn that he has given way to a flare of uncontrollable temper; from his affectionate greeting to his dainty little wife, we see how much he cares for her; and by the determined spirit in which he returns to the council chamber, at his wife's behest, we have a glimpse of the merciless enemy he is to become in the future.

i. The First Mrs.Fraser, by St.John Ervine

The exposition in this flawlessly constructed modern comedy is well worth studying.

The one setting of the play is the very attractive living-room that reflects the sprightly charm of its owner,
Janet Fraser, divorced wife of James. As the play opens, Janet's younger son Ninian is disclosed, sprawled on a sofa, reading a detective story. There is no obvious preliminary exposition, but action begins at once, as James Fraser is ushered in by the maid. The meeting is embarrassing, at least to the older man, who is paying his first informal visit to his old home since his divorce. Ninian inquires brusquely if the second Mrs. Fraser knows where he is, and proceeds to haul his father verbally over the coals, especially when he learns that the second Mrs. Fraser, young Elsie, wants a divorce.

"Have you been messing about again?" inquires Ninian brutally. Ninian, we are told by his irate father, is a student at that "damned kindergarten," Oxford.

James' character is made very plain to us, by his own words, and as seen through Ninian's eyes. He is a stubborn, quick-tempered, exceedingly selfish Scotchman, concerned at present only with his own predicament, and quite forgetful of the unhappiness he brought upon his wife and children a few years before when, after twenty years of married life, he divorced Janet to marry the frivolous, fickle Elsie. That James is due for a few lessons in wholesome worry is made evident, when Philip Logan enters to have tea with Janet, and James mutters "Blast!" as he realizes that Philip is a privileged friend and possible husband for the still attractive Janet.

J. Justice, by John Galsworthy

The four-act tragedy has as its theme the severity of the British penal system, and has as its central
character William Falder, the junior clerk in a law office.

At the beginning of the play, we see an old-fashioned law office, with the clerk, Cokeson, audibly struggling with his accounts. The office boy announces some one whom he is careful to designate as "a person," not a lady. The person, Ruth Honeywill, obviously worried, inquires for Falder, assuring the outraged Cokeson that "it's a matter of life and death." With that brief introduction, we meet Falder, a pale young man, "with quick, rather scared eyes" and irresolute movements. We learn that he is planning to run away that night with the woman, who is married to a brute. Falder gives the woman money to buy clothes for herself and her children, and we begin to suspect that the money has not been obtained honestly.

The story begins very quickly and the action moves forward with admirable economy of effort. The "austere art" of writing true dramatic dialogue is aptly illustrated, particularly in the first act when Falder is characterized deftly, the extenuating circumstances of his crime are set forth, and the forgery is discovered, following the balancing of the accounts that Cokeson was working over at the beginning of the play.

k. The Circle, by W. Somerset Maugham

That the author deserves his fame as a master technician is apparent in the opening scene of this comedy of manners and morals of English high society. The scene is the stately drawing-room of the Champion-Cheneys, with French windows opening on beautiful gardens. Arnold, the husband enters. He is tall and well-dressed, with a look that is
"intellectual, but somewhat bloodless." His character is revealed in part in his first speech.

"Arnold (calling): Elizabeth! (He goes to the window and calls again). Elizabeth! (He rings the bell. While he is waiting, he gives a look round the room. He slightly alters the position of one of the chairs. He takes an ornament from the chimney-piece and blows the dust from it. A Footman comes in). Oh, George! See if you can find Mrs. Cheney, and ask her if she'd be good enough to come here."

"Footman: Very good, sir. (The Footman turns to go.)

Arnold: Who is supposed to look after this room?

Footman: I don't know, sir.

Arnold: I wish when they dust they'd take care to replace the things exactly as they were before."

With that brief scene, Arnold, we know, is master of a beautiful home. For a man, he is particularly fussy and meticulous about trifles.

Presently a house guest enters. From her conversation with Arnold, we learn that his wife, Elizabeth, has been playing tennis with another guest, Teddie Luton, whose greatest asset seems to be that "he is so breezy." We also learn that two other guests are arriving for luncheon and that the presence of these two, Lord Porteous and Lady Kitty will be embarrassing, especially since Arnold's father has arrived. With Elizabeth's entrance, we find that she, too, is a breezy young person, whose husband treats her good-humoredly.

This much of the first act introduces us to two of the principal characters; we have noted their differences in temperament; the third one of the main characters, Teddie, has been labeled before he appears; and the curiosity of the audience has been aroused as to why Arnold is worried over
his coming guests.

Within the next two pages, we are told that Lady Kitty is Arnold's mother, and that thirty years ago she eloped with Lord Porteous, whose wife has refused to give him a divorce, and then we understand why the meeting of Arnold's father, his mother, and the married man with whom she eloped does present most exciting complications.

1. The Dover Road, by A. A. Milne

The stage directions call for an Arabian-Night-adventure sort of room with purple hangings and alabaster bowls of fruit.

After a brief conversation between the servants relative to having rooms ready for expected guests, Leonard enters to give the identical speech that is repeated at the end of the play by another man: "O - er - is this - er - an hotel? My chauffeur said - we've had an accident, been delayed on the way - he said that we could put up here."

Leonard is surprised to find that Dominic, the butler, expects him and addresses him as "My lord."

In Leonard's next speech, or rather in the hesitation with which he delivers it, we get the first hint of the story: "You can put us up? Just for tonight. My - er - wife and myself - "

Presently, with Anne's entrance, we discover that Leonard, though married to one Eustasia, is eloping with Anne to France, but their car has broken down on the Dover Road near Calais.

Their mysterious host, Mr. Latimer - the only
character not called by his first name in the play - does not come in until later, to be formally announced by Dominic, and to entertain his overnight guests most regally at dinner. Very gradually the host's pet hobby is revealed: the more or less forcible detention of elopers on the Dover Road in an endeavor to make them see the folly of their action.

Some of the exposition in this play is saved for the second act, when we learn first-hand why Leonard was easily tempted to forsake his over-fond Eustasia.

m. Saint Joan, by George Bernard Shaw

The long Preface accompanying the printed play is expository in that it explains Shaw's version of Joan of Arc as a conceited country maid, quite different from the "unimpeachable American school teacher in armor" of Mark Twain. After more Shavian remarks about "the experienced Knights of the blue pencil" who would disembowel his play, and the theatre that is "purgatorial in its Aristotelian moments," Shaw launches into his very extensive representation of Joan's life, including the Epilogue, which shows "the canonized Joan as well as the incinerated one."

The stage directions as to time, place, and character description are very explicit. The latter are particularly lively. The first important character on the stage, Captain Robert de Baudricourt, is "a military squire, handsome and physically energetic, but with no will of his own...disguising that defect in his usual fashion by storming terribly at his steward, a trodden worm, scanty of flesh,
scanty of hair, who might be any age from 18 to 55, being the
sort of men whom age cannot wither because he has never bloomed."

The stage directions are duplicated carefully in
the dialogue, however, Robert is vigorously abusing his steward
because he can furnish no eggs for the table. In the course of
his tirade, he shouts, "Am I Robert, squire of Baudricourt and
captain of this castle of Vaucouleurs; or am I a cowboy?"

As to the servant's identity, Robert tells him he
is "the worst...jabbering idiot of a steward in France."

The Maid is brought into the conversation with the
announcement by the steward that "the girl from Lorraine" is
at the door, so insistent on seeing Robert that no one can
frighten her away. Then her voice is heard outside - a bright,
strong, rough voice. Before she enters, the steward has given
other facts about her: that she prays a good deal; that she
wants to be a soldier and "wear soldier's clothes and carry a
sword."

Her confident interview with Robert is followed by
the granting of her request to send her armed to the Dauphin.

The other expository information about Joan is
given well along in the first scene, instead of giving too
much at the start. In his discussion of Joan with one of his
men, who wishes to go with her, Robert explains that she is a
bourgeois, whose father is a farmer, rather notable in his
village.

This same conversation also serves to introduce the
Dauphin, whom Joan wishes to seek. He is at present "like a
rat in a corner, except that he won't fight. We don't even
know that he is the Dauphin: his mother says he isn't; and she ought to know."

The atmosphere is deliberately kept from being tragic, but the comic mention of the eggs, especially at the end of the first scene, seems too far-fetched.

9. American
   a. Elizabeth the Queen, by Maxwell Anderson

The opening scene is set for tragedy, a gray, grim, and more than a little forbidding "entrance hall before a council chamber in the palace at Whitehall. The entrance to the council room is closed and four guards with halberds stand at the side." It is early morning, and though the guards "stand immobile," they find pleasure in doing their share of gossiping. Their talk runs mostly to the Queen and her moods, which seem to be governed by the Earl's presence or absence. From them we learn that, although the Queen is getting to be an old woman, she manages to keep looking young, with the help of paint, powder, and the love of the Earl.

That trouble is brewing, we learn after the Earl of Essex's noisy arrival, when he confides in his companion, Sir Francis Bacon, "I must keep her favor. Only it makes me mad to see all this...This utter mismanagement, when a man's hand and brain are needed and cannot be used." To which Bacon adds, "take care...You are too popular already...You are loved better than the Queen. That is your danger. She will not suffer a subject to eclipse her; she cannot suffer it. Make no mistake. She will not."
The dialogue is masterly in revealing character: the shrewdness of Bacon, and the sincerity and impetuosity of Essex, as in his speech, "If she were my mother's kitchen hag, toothless and wooden-legged, she'd make all others colorless."

By the time Elizabeth enters in the second scene, the exposition has thoroughly prepared us for the imperious, outspoken woman who is torn by the conflicting desires of love and power.

b. *Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, by Philip Barry

The one setting used in this play is important, in that it reflects the personality of the heroine, Mrs. Eve Redman. The living-room of her comfortable home in a college town combines the quiet and reserve of old things with the charm and freshness of the new. The season is indicated as summer. The time of the opening of the first act is one o'clock in the morning, at which time Gail Redman returns from his class reunion at college.

The opening dialogue is ingenious in its presentation of exposition. While Gail eats the lunch his wife had left on the table for him, he gives scraps of news about his trip, and Eve reports on what has happened in his absence. Gail is seen to be staid and conservative: Eve seems to be unhappy and nervous. She brings out her most important piece of news last, uncertain how her husband will like it. She has invited Dr. Nicholas Hay, a lecturer at the summer session at college, to stay with them during his term.

With the casual mention of a baby born to
neighbors, Eve reveals that, after six years of marriage, she fears she may never have the child she longs for. But her words are wasted on Gail, who has most unromantically fallen asleep. In her low-voiced appeal, we sense that, from this simple beginning, tense drama will develop, verging on the tragic, but bringing Eve back, by devious paths, to her position at the opening of the play, as the devoted wife of a prominent citizen of Redmanton.

c. As Husbands Go, by Rachel Crothers

The opening scene is in the nature of a Prologue, showing the entanglements in which two American women have managed to become involved during a gay visit to Paris. The scene tells much. The women and their escorts are in a corner of a private room in a smart café, with the accessories of dance music offstage, and champagne reposing in a cooler. It is four o'clock in the morning of a summer day, and the party is in the nature of a farewell to Paris by the women, who are sailing home next day, or rather, later that same day.

Mrs. Lucile Lingard, very beautiful in a new French evening gown, is escorted by Ronald Derbyshire, a good-looking Englishman, who is obviously in love with her.

Emmie Sykes, a very young widow of forty-five, is with Hippolitus Lomi, a distinguished foreigner, who has made her feel very young in spite of her years. Emmie frankly likes her Hippie and would marry him, if she were not afraid that her daughter back home would look on him as "something the cat brought in."
When Emmie goes off with Hippie for a last ride and breakfast, Ronald becomes serious and makes Lucile promise that she will tell her husband as soon as she gets home that she wishes a divorce, in order to marry Ronald.

The short and amusing scene is a suitable opening for modern comedy. The characterization is not particularly clear, except perhaps in the case of Emmie, who likes her role of charmer so well that she is hesitant about going back to her previous dreary existence as just mother of a daughter of marriageable age.

d. *In Abraham's Bosom*, by Paul Green

This Biography of a Negro is a powerful tragedy of the life of Abraham McCranie, who killed his white half-brother, and was shot down for his crime, in his own home.

The first scene shows the condition of negroes in 1885. Three workers in the turpentine woods are resting near a spring during their dinner hour. They have little to do with the plot, but help to furnish the atmosphere. Their conversation at first is merely for the purpose of setting the scene and showing what primitive creatures they were, fully agreed that "nigger's place down de bottom." Furtive mention is made by them of lynching as deserved punishment meted out to niggers who do not know enough to keep out of mischief. Their talk drifts to Abe, who is trying to educate himself to be a teacher, because he is half white, the son of their employer, the Colonel. They disapprove entirely of Abe's ambition. During the course of their conversation, they mention Goldie, who has been showing her love for Abe by bringing his dinner every day,
although Abe looks down on her because she is ignorant.

With the entrance of the Colonel and his white son, we soon find that the latter hates Abe with the deep hatred of a white man for the black who dares to claim the same father.

The gloomy, restless spirit created thus far in the exposition is entirely in keeping with the story that will gradually increase in intensity to its abrupt and tragic close.

e. *The Silver Cord*, by Sidney Howard

The interesting stage directions, perhaps in imitation of Barrie's delightful rambling style, call for "A living-room, built and decorated in the best manner of 1905, and cluttered with the souvenirs of maternal love, European travel, and an orthodox enthusiasm for the arts."

The pantomime beginning is effective. Hester is reading the rotogravure sections of the Sunday papers, when the doorbell rings. As David enters, the open door reveals his wife, Christine, taking off her coat. The story then begins very quickly and the characters are at once identified, by the clever device of requiring them to manage their own introductions, as strangers to each other.

"Hester: - Hello! David: - Eh? - Oh, I beg your pardon! The maid said there wasn't anybody home. Hester: - You're David, aren't you? (She advances to meet him). I'm Hester. David: - You're not! (He goes quickly toward her and shakes hands as Christine enters) Look, Chris! Here's Hester, who's going to marry my brother Rob."

One of the chief characters, Mrs. Phelps, David's mother and Hester's prospective mother-in-law, is allowed to speak for herself, without more than a brief reference to her
just before her entrance; but she needs no advance bulletins, as her first speech stamps her what the author tells us she is, in his stage directions. "No great amount of intellect, a super-abundant vitality, perfect health, and a prattling spirit." Her very first words, as she enters hurriedly, reveal her intense love for David, as well as identify her:

"Dave! Dave, boy! Where are you, Dave? Where are you? It's mother, Dave! Where are you, Dave? Come here this minute! Don't you hear me, Dave? It's Mother! - Oh, Dave!"

With that cleverly-managed beginning, the so-called comedy starts on its theme of a possessive mother fighting to keep her two sons exclusively to herself, with no room in her life for daughters-in-law.

f. Of Thee I Sing, by George S. Kaufmann and Morrie Ryskind

Since this musical play had the distinction of winning a Pulitzer prize, it has been included in the study of exposition, even though, as George Jean Nathan admits in the Foreword, it is "broad satire, smeared generously upon a slapstick."

The first of its eleven scenes shows the Main Street of any American city, with a political parade in progress. The men shamble along in front of the footlights, bearing torchlights, and banners with such slogans: "For President - John P. Wintergreen," "The Full Dinner Jacket," "Win with Wintergreen," etc. Fragments of a song float out: "He's the man the people choose, Loves the Irish and the Jews." That is all, but it prepares for the election of the popular candidate,
whose campaign managers are carefully chosen from the Irish and the Jews.

The second scene shows two committeemen, Francis X. Gilhooley and Louis Lippman, at the headquarters, with the regular accessories of cigars, cards, and drinks. They are identified in part by the help of a telephone call, which Lippman answers.

"So what? - Who? What's his name? - Throttle what? - Must have the wrong room. This is the National Committee. - I say this is the National Campaign Committee."

As the two men discuss matters, we gather more necessary information.

"Lippman: - We've got a great ticket, haven't we? For President: John P. Wintergreen. He even sounds like a President. Gilhooley: - That's why we picked him. Lippman: - And for vice-president -- What's the name of that fellow we nominated for vice-president?"

They can not remember that unfortunate's name, and they do not recognize him, Alexander Throttlebottom, when he enters timidly. Neither does the presidential candidate know his co-partner when he arrives; he mistakes him for a waiter and asks him for a dill pickle.

The way is thus paved for the unhappy Throttlebottom's adventures all through the play, as a quite unnecessary piece of political equipment, until a use is found for him at the very end.

The chambermaid in this scene provides the idea that love is the great American interest, and from her suggestion develops the contest to choose Miss White House as
the bride of John P. Wintergreen.

Needless to say, the atmosphere is distinctly flippant and satirical throughout.

g. *The Show-Off*, by George Kelly

Heywood Broun has given this play the rather extravagant praise of being "the best comedy which has yet been written by an American."

The opening scene shows the deserted living-room of the Fisher family of North Philadelphia, on an early evening in May. Clara Hyland, the married daughter, strolls in, and her mother comes from upstairs, with the news that Joe is fussing over his radio in the basement; Amy, the unmarried daughter, is upstairs, primping for company; and Father is out to buy an evening paper. The two women seize the opportunity for a heart-to-heart gossip. Amy is flighty and extravagant. She is encouraging her new suitor, a very "gabby" young man, who calls every Wednesday and Sunday evening, apparently with serious intentions. The family is much perturbed, because the young man is far from popular with them. In fact, Father has gone out purposely to avoid him. Before the entrance of the objectionable young man, we have learned a good deal about him: he earns $150 a month, working as a freight clerk for the Pennsylvania Railroad; he talks so much that the family call him "Windy"; and he wears a white carnation as though he considered himself quite a society man. Before Aubrey Piper, alias "Windy," actually breezes in, we hear his voice booming in the hall, watch the family sneak away, and are impressed by
his self-confident laugh.

Aubrey's characterization is excellent, as is that of Amy, who, from beginning to end, is supremely satisfied with the talkative young man who has honored her with his favor.

h. Mourning Becomes Electra, by Eugene O'Neill

The action of the play takes place outside the Mannon residence, on the outskirts of a small New England seaport town. The house is a large building of the Greek temple type popular in the first half of the nineteenth century. The time is the spring or summer at the close of the Civil War.

Since the play is an experiment in adapting the Greek trilogy of Agamemnon's family in a modern setting, the first scene portrays the homecoming of General Mannon to a wife who has acquired a lover in his absence. Instead of the background of a Greek temple, we have the sombre exterior of a house built like a Greek temple, but casting a gloomy, direful atmosphere as its important contribution to the setting.

The four townspeople who first enter are meant by the author as a "chorus representing the town come to look and listen and sput on the rich and exclusive Mannons." Like a real Greek chorus, they tell the expository facts, with Minnie asking the questions, and Seth, the gardener, answering in detail - a modern Greek leader of the chorus, but using Yankee dialect.

Seth tells that the Mannons are rich, that Ezra is a general, of whom the town is very proud, even though he is "cold-blooded and uppish," and that the family have "been top dog around here for near on two hundred years and don't let folks forget it." But, he adds, the townspeople hate Ezra's wife from New York, because
she's "furrin lookin' and queer," even though she is handsome. The Mannons have their family secrets, too, as that of David Mannon who married "that French Cannuck nurse girl he'd got into trouble." Lavinia, we learn, the Mannon daughter, is queer-looking, like her mother, without being so handsome.

With the entrance of two quite normal people, Peter and Hazel Vines, we find that Peter loves Lavinia, while Hazel loves the Mannon son, Orin, who is also a soldier.

After they depart, and following a brief scene that makes evident the hatred existing between Lavinia and her mother, Seth again acts as leader of the Greek chorus, this time to tell Lavinia that Captain Brant is none other than the son of the "Cannuck nurse girl." In the stormy interview between Brant and Lavinia, we learn that Brant is the lover of Lavinia's mother and that Lavinia intends to use that information for her own fell purposes.

The whole of Act 1 is expository, since the trilogy is very long. As in the case of the Greek play, much past action has to be set forth. They story is ready to begin with the return of Ezra Mannon to a guilty wife and a daughter who is devoted to him, but who hates her mother. Ezra Mannon does not enter until the third act, but we learn before that that his wife hates him and has carefully plotted his murder to marry her lover, Captain Brant.

i. The Emperor Jones, by Eugene O'Neill

The setting for the first of the eight scenes in this play is important: an "audience chamber in the palace of
the Emperor - a spacious, high-ceilinged room with bare, white-washed walls." The one huge chair in the center is painted a dazzling scarlet. It is late afternoon, and the Emperor is asleep onstage. Smithers, his cockney overseer, has apprehended a native negress trying to sneak out, and learned, before she dashes to the forest, that all the natives have run away to the hills. A rebellion is afoot. His whistle awakens the Emperor, who strides in angrily. So far the exposition is of situation, with a striking opening scene.

No exposition is necessary to introduce the Emperor, who is imperious and distinctive, dressed brilliantly, but able to carry off his red and blue and gold without appearing ridiculous. The relations between the two men are instantly obvious: Smithers, the white man, is the underling of the tall, powerfully-built, full-blooded negro. Smithers cherishes a grudge against his master as a usurper, but, nevertheless, secretly admires him for his ability.

Their talk about the rebellion brings in mention of the silver bullet that will be necessary to kill Jones, who has said that he was impervious to ordinary bullets. He shows that he is something of a philosopher, as he "knows dis emperor's time is sho't. Dat why I make hay when de sun shine."

Smithers is rather pleased to drag into the conversation the fact that Jones dare not return to the States, where rumor has it he was in jail for killing a white man. Jones boastfully admits this, but threatens to kill Smithers if he ever tells.

To conclude the discussion, Jones announces that he
can bring back the revolting niggers by ringing his big dinner bell. But they do not answer his summons.

His time has come to depart, to abdicate, and he goes off to the forest to escape. He is nonchalant, a bit apprehensive, but rather confident that his membership in the Baptist Church will help him out of his predicament.

The exposition shows us what kind of man Jones was, as a result of his past of crime and his present of power. The rest of the play deals with his futile efforts to escape.
IV. A Study of Methods of Exposition as Used in the
One-Act Play

In many ways, the problem of presenting exposition in a one-act play differs from that of handling similar material in a longer play. Since the shorter form of the drama deals with only one episode, the amount of exposition necessary should be smaller. A few pages are usually enough for this purpose. That means that many of the expository devices of the longer play can not well be used: the lengthy conversations between friend and confidant, the discussions of servants, the reading of a long letter or newspaper article. Brevity of exposition is most desirable. If many facts must be given, they must not be presented all at once at the beginning, but carefully added as the action progresses. Perhaps most important of all is the fact that, because a one-act play wishes to achieve a sense of unity, the exposition must be an integral part of the story and there must not seem to be a dividing line between the introduction and the beginning of the action.

On the other hand, it is seldom possible to do without exposition in a one-act play, as is sometimes the case in the three-act form, when the action can begin and end on the stage, without preliminary explanations.

In both kinds of play, the problems of exposition are the same in regard to identifying characters, time, and place; indicating the mood; and arousing immediate interest in the action. Characterization is a simpler matter in the one-act play, since the limitations of time require concentration on
one point of weakness or strength, whereas in a longer play many different phases of one personality may be shown, or the character may undergo a complete change.

The following is a brief survey of expository methods used in a variety of one-act plays.

1. The Twelve-Pound Look, by Sir James M. Barrie

The play opens with clever pantomime, showing a man going through the ceremony of being made a knight, while a woman, richly dressed but evidently nervous, watches his performance and dubs him knight. In the course of only a few speeches, we find, as we suspected, that the man is to be made Sir Harry presently, that he is very well satisfied with himself, but that his wife is afraid to call her soul her own. No exposition is given at the start as to Kate, Sir Harry's first wife, who ran away to become a typist. That is managed very cleverly during the course of the action, after Kate's arrival from the employment bureau. The author is content at the start to arouse interest and to present a clash of character, in an atmosphere of domestic unhappiness.

2. The Marriage Proposal, by Anton Chekhov

The comedy note is struck with the entrance of Ivan in dress suit and white gloves, although it is day-time. Stepan, greeting him heartily, calls out his name, "Ivan Vassiliyitch," and calls him neighbor. Ivan, also addressing his friend by name as "Stepan Stepanovitch," is very much excited, but manages to stammer that the object of his visit in gala attire is to propose to Stepan's daughter, Natalia. With the entrance of
the girl, we find that she has one weakness in common with her suitor, namely a desire to indulge in vociferous argument on the slightest provocation.

3. A Night at an Inn, by Lord Dunsany

The scene is laid in a room in a lonely inn. The Toff, the chief character, is reading a newspaper in aristocratic aloofness, while three sailors grumble over their lot in being forced to stay in such a deserted place. Their chief grievance is the fact that the toff will not let them sell the ruby which they stole in India, and for which three black priests have been pursuing them. At first, no one is definitely identified but the toff, but gradually Albert is named and characterized as a conceited Cockney.

The atmosphere is one of foreboding and mystery.

4. The Eldest, by Edna Ferber

The play opens with pantomime. Rose, the eldest, who sacrificed love and happiness many years ago to become the household drudge, is shown hastily finishing her housecleaning. She is annoyed to be interrupted by a doorbell ringing. The neighbor, who comes to borrow a cup of milk, pauses for a chat. She inquires about Ma, who is an invalid, and about Floss, the younger sister, who looks now as pretty as Rose used to look fifteen years ago. Ma's querulous voice calls for a hot-water bag.

The exposition is given here in rather obvious fashion by means of the conversation with the neighbor, who has no important part in the play. The action might have begun more directly with Ma's complaints, and with her possible
queries as to whether the other members of the family were home yet.

5. *Hyacinth Halvey*, by Lady Gregory

The opening scene shows that the action takes place in a small town. The postmistress is at the door of the post-office. The butcher is sitting at his door. A lad is playing on a mouth organ. The dead sheep hanging beside the butcher's door arouses curiosity. Is it there just for local color, or has it a connection with the plot? When a whistle is heard offstage, the postmistress announces definitely, "There is the four o'clock train, Mr. Quirke." Mr. Quirke addresses her, in turn, as "Mrs. Delane." The first speech indicates his business and gives us a hint of his sharp business practices. The woman's second speech tells us definitely that she is the kind of postmistress who feels cheated if she can't read the postal cards. They then proceed to discuss the arrival on this train of Hyacinth Halvey, the young man of such an unusually fine character.

The exposition is very natural, and is here an integral part of the play, since the characters concerned are principal ones of the comedy.

6. *The Valiant*, by Holworthy Hall and R. Middlemass

The play begins at once on a note of tense tragedy, with no awkward pauses for explanations. There is no need to explain that the room with its barred windows is in a jail; that the man at the desk is the warden, and the white-haired man at the window is the chaplain.

"The Warden: - Has it started to rain?
Father Daly: - Yes, it has.
The Warden: - It would rain tonight.
Father Daly: -(glances at a big silver watch) It's
past eleven o'clock... We haven't much longer to wait.
The Warden: - No, thank God!... Was he quiet when you left him?
Father Daly: - Yes, yes, he was perfectly calm and I believe he'll stay so to the very end."

That is enough to tell us that two men are very much upset over an approaching execution.

7. Counsel Retained, by Constance D'Arcy Mackay
The scene opens on a room that indicates extreme poverty, the apartment of Edmund Burke before he attained fame. Into the dark room comes a woman to hide in the shadows, while from outside come cries of "Peg! Mistress Woffington!"

That skilful beginning arouses curiosity as to why a charming young woman has run away from an admiring crowd to seek refuge in a poor man's room. Some slight exposition follows in a short conversation between Peg and the nobleman who has followed her into the refuge.

8. Thursday evening, by Christopher Morley
The play begins very close to the crucial point. Laura, a young wife, entering her kitchen, faces the problem of washing the dishes, after a most strenuous day of taking care of the baby and entertaining her mother and her mother-in-law, all on the maid's day off, Thursday. Gordon, her husband, recognizes that his wife's disposition is not at its best. The two older people do not help to clear the atmosphere by puttering around the kitchen. Trouble is due to begin, and it does begin with a bang and almost immediately.

9. Riders to the Sea, by John Millington Synge
The play is woven in one pattern of tragedy from the first word to the last. The first part of the dialogue
contains a few expository facts, but they are introduced in a way that adds to the emotional intensity of the scene. Two sisters, in the kitchen of a poor cottage of fisherfolk, discuss in hushed tones their mother, who fears that Michael has been drowned, and who is grieving at the threatened departure of her last son.

10. *The Noble Lord*, by Percival Wilde

Pantomime, with occasional accessories of cries and splashes, provides a very effective beginning for this sprightly comedy. A peaceful out-door scene is suddenly disturbed by cries for help. An English voice responds; English legs are heard crashing through underbrush and splashing into a lake. Presently the owner of the voice, a personable young man, enters, carrying a moist and apparently unconscious young woman, also personable. In the midst of his efforts to revive her by the English method of resuscitation, she slips one arm around his neck, as she murmurs, "Kiss me, Mother." "Mother" does as requested.

In this case, to maintain suspense, no exposition is desirable. To know too soon that the young lady deliberately sought that watery method of introduction to his lordship would spoil the fun.
V. Conclusions Based upon this Study of Exposition

The type of exposition used naturally varies with the kind of play. With a comedy, the best beginning is amusing, but leisurely, showing the characters clearly in their ordinary relationships, but confronted by an exciting problem. A tragedy, on the other hand, is most effective when it plunges directly into the action, as near the crisis as possible. Sometimes, however, for effect, a quiet first scene is used to provide contrast with the sadness or horror to come.

Examples of comedy openings are shown in *The First Mrs. Fraser*, *What Every Woman Knows*, *The Circle*, and *The Show-Off*. In these four plays, the important members of a family are first introduced in their own homes. In *The First Mrs. Fraser*, father and son are indulging in twentieth-century exchange of advice on divorce and a parent's behavior, with the divorced father hinting that he'd like the aid of his first wife in getting rid of his second. In *What Every Woman Knows*, the men members of the Wylie family are discussing the problem of what to do to get a husband for Maggie, who has no charm. *The Circle* has the original situation of husband and wife faced with the embarrassing predicament of entertaining his father, his mother who eloped, and the latter's lover. *The Show-Off* has the most ordinary initial situation of mother and daughter discussing another daughter's talkative and unpopular young man friend.

In these cases, the leading character is not on the stage when the curtain goes up, but appears shortly after the necessary exposition has been given. Interest is created at once in an amusing situation or a problem that promises dramatic action.
Tragedies which plunge abruptly into the heart of the action are *Justice* and *The Emperor Jones*. In the former, the chief character is involved immediately in a forgery and a sad love affair. Jones, the leading character in O'Neill's play, is faced with a serious rebellion and the loss of his position as emperor.

The contrasting method of exposition is used in tragedy or serious drama, as in *Mid-Channel*, *Hedda Gabler*, or *He Who Gets Slapped*. In none of these does the chief actor appear at once. In the first play, two minor characters discuss the wealth and charm of their hostess. In Ibsen's tragedy, a servant and an aunt talk over the apparently cheerful topic of the return from a wedding trip of Hedda and her husband. The Russian tragedy begins on a comic note, with two clowns practising their tricks for the circus.

From an entirely different aspect, exposition may be considered from the point of view of the author's desire to place emphasis on atmosphere, character, or plot.

In *The Cradle Song*, Sierra is presenting the subdued atmosphere of a convent. For that purpose, he uses a large group on the stage and needs comparatively little exposition. Gorky, in *The Lower Depths*, likewise dealing with many characters and requiring but few expository facts, concentrates on painting a picture of despair, poverty, and strife.

*Uncle Vanya*, *Liliom*, and *Cyrano de Bergerac* are excellent types of character-emphasis plays. In all three, the leading character is described skilfully by means of his own actions, his words, and the reactions of others. Perhaps this
is best illustrated in *Lilac.* His flirtatious tendencies are the basis for the opening quarrel. His insulting words and swaggering entrance characterize him further. In particular, the effect of his actions on the other three characters in the opening scene helps to build up the picture of a flashy roisterer. In none of these plays is the chief character on the stage at the very beginning. In none of these plays is the chief character on the stage at the start. *Tartuffe* and *Madame* are examples of character plays in which the principal person does not appear until after the first act.

Plays in which the plot is of primary importance are *R.U.R.* and *Design for Living.* This type of play requires clear and careful exposition, presented by degrees, not all at once.

In the amount of exposition required, the plays show the widest variations. A five-act play like *King Lear,* for instance, may require hardly any exposition, but begin at once with the initial impulse furnished by the King's announcement of his proposed division of his kingdom. Ibsen's *Ghost,* on the other hand, is almost entirely expository, with the complication brought to the critical point, but not solved, at the end of the play. The happy medium, of course, is the avoidance of a great deal of formal exposition, and the presentation of necessary facts in a most natural manner, preferably by dialogue or action that involves fairly important characters.

Finally, the desirability of pantomime should be mentioned as a most satisfactory method of opening a play, if it can furnish expository information and arouse interest at the
same time. Barrie is the master of this technique, in spite of his modest assertion that he never could master the difficult principles of playwriting. In his three plays mentioned in this study, he has opened with effective pantomime. The most clever example is The Twelve-Round Look. The prospective Sir Harry's actions, as he goes pompously through the glide, dip, and kiss of the knighthood ceremony, before his nervous wife, unhappy in her handsome presentation gown, make evident to the audience that he is about to be honored, and arouses curiosity as to the reason for a woman's being dissatisfied with life under such apparently prosperous conditions.
SUMMARY

Exposition in Playwriting
A Study of Past and Present Methods

The purpose of this thesis is the presentation of an historical, technical, and practical study of the subject, Exposition in Playwriting. Exposition is considered as the setting forth by the dramatist, to the audience, of the facts necessary to a complete understanding of the play.

The historical phases of the problem are discussed in a brief summary, which aims to show the gradual improvement in dramatic technique, as well as the various national and period influences that have affected drama from the Greek Classical Age down to the present day.

In the discussion of the technique of exposition, references are made to standard authorities, such as George Pierce Baker and William Archer. From this discussion, seven points are determined to be used as a basis in criticising a dramatist's handling of exposition.

In studying methods of exposition as actually used in plays, a comprehensive survey was made, covering the range of dramatic history from the Greek Classical Drama of the Fifth Century B.C., to contemporary drama. This survey takes the form of critical comments on exposition as used in the best-known works of prominent dramatists in each age. For convenient reference, the following arrangement of dramatic history is used: Greek Classical Drama; Elizabethan Drama (not including Shakespeare); Shakespeare; Revival of Drama in
Spain; Revival of Drama in France; Restoration Drama; Eighteenth Century Drama; Romantic Revival; and Modern Drama. Each group is prefaced by introductory comments on the development of drama in that era. Under Modern Drama, nine subdivisions are grouped, with representative playwrights of different nationalities listed. Especial emphasis is given to modern English and American dramatists. In all, seventy-two longer plays are included in this part of the thesis.

In addition to the study of full-length plays, comments on the handling of exposition in one-act plays are included, with detailed reference to ten of these shorter forms of the drama.

The conclusions based on the survey of exposition in drama discuss the type of exposition appropriate for comedy and tragedy, as well as the type to be used for emphasis on atmosphere, character, or plot.
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