



DRAMA

C R I T I C I S M

V O L U M E

34

DRAMA

C R I T I C I S M

Criticism of the Most Significant and Widely Studied
Dramatic Works from All the World's Literatures

VOLUME 34

Thomas J. Schoenberg
Lawrence J. Trudeau
Project Editors

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Preface

D*rama Criticism (DC)* is principally intended for beginning students of literature and theater as well as the average playgoer. The series is therefore designed to introduce readers to the most frequently studied playwrights of all time periods and nationalities and to present discerning commentary on dramatic works of enduring interest. Furthermore, *DC* seeks to acquaint the reader with the uses and functions of criticism itself. Selected from a diverse body of commentary, the essays in *DC* offer insights into the authors and their works but do not require that the reader possess a wide background in literary studies. Where appropriate, reviews of important productions of the plays discussed are also included to give students a heightened awareness of drama as a dynamic art form, one that many claim is fully realized only in performance.

DC was created in response to suggestions by the staffs of high school, college, and public libraries. These librarians observed a need for a series that assembles critical commentary on the world's most renowned dramatists in the same manner as Gale's *Short Story Criticism (SSC)* and *Poetry Criticism (PC)*, which present material on writers of short fiction and poetry. Although playwrights are covered in such Gale literary criticism series as *Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC)*, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism (NCLC)*, *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800 (LC)*, and *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism (CMLC)*, *DC* directs more concentrated attention on individual dramatists than is possible in the broader, survey-oriented entries in these Gale series. Commentary on the works of William Shakespeare may be found in *Shakespearean Criticism (SC)*.

Scope of the Series

By collecting and organizing commentary on dramatists, *DC* assists students in their efforts to gain insight into literature, achieve better understanding of the texts, and formulate ideas for papers and assignments. A variety of interpretations and assessments is offered, allowing students to pursue their own interests and promoting awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Approximately five to ten authors are included in each volume, and each entry presents a historical survey of the critical response to that playwright's work. The length of an entry is intended to reflect the amount of critical attention the author has received from critics writing in English and from foreign critics in translation. Every attempt has been made to identify and include the most significant essays on each author's work. In order to provide these important critical pieces, the editors sometimes reprint essays that have appeared elsewhere in Gale's literary criticism series. Such duplication, however, never exceeds twenty percent of a *DC* volume.

Organization of the Book

A *DC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** consists of the playwright's most commonly used name, followed by birth and death dates. If an author consistently wrote under a pseudonym, the pseudonym is listed in the author heading and the real name given in parentheses on the first line of the introduction. Also located at the beginning of the introduction are any name variations under which the dramatist wrote, including transliterated forms of the names of authors whose languages use nonroman alphabets.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author and the critical debates surrounding his or her work.

- The list of **Principal Works** is divided into two sections. The first section contains the author's dramatic pieces and is organized chronologically by date of first performance. If this has not been conclusively determined, the composition or publication date is used. The second section provides information on the author's major works in other genres.
- Essays offering **overviews of the dramatist's entire literary career** give the student broad perspectives on the writer's artistic development, themes, and concerns that recur in several of his or her works, the author's place in literary history, and other wide-ranging topics.
- **Criticism** of individual plays offers the reader in-depth discussions of a select number of the author's most important works. In some cases, the criticism is divided into two sections, each arranged chronologically. When a significant performance of a play can be identified (typically, the premier of a twentieth-century work), the first section of criticism will feature **production reviews** of this staging. Most entries include sections devoted to **critical commentary** that assesses the literary merit of the selected plays. When necessary, essays are carefully excerpted to focus on the work under consideration; often, however, essays and reviews are reprinted in their entirety. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included.
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- A complete **Bibliographic Citation**, designed to help the interested reader locate the original essay or book, precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

Cumulative Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *DC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in *DC* as well as other Literature Criticism series.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *DC* by nationality, followed by the number of the *DC* volume in which their entry appears.

A **Cumulative Title Index** lists in alphabetical order the individual plays discussed in the criticism contained in *DC*. Each title is followed by the author's last name and corresponding volume and page numbers where commentary on the work is located. English-language translations of original foreign-language titles are cross-referenced to the foreign titles so that all references to discussion of a work are combined in one listing.

Citing Drama Criticism

When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as University of Chicago Press style or Modern Language As-

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Gerhart Hauptmann

1862-1946

German playwright, novelist, poet, and nonfiction writer.

INTRODUCTION

Hauptmann was an early proponent of naturalism in European drama. Following Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen and French novelist Emile Zola, Hauptmann incorporated into his plays the naturalist idea that human behavior is influenced by external environmental and hereditary factors rather than essential characteristics or self-determination. Hauptmann's play *Die Weber* (1893; *The Weavers*) is considered one of the most emblematic examples of early European naturalistic drama. But Hauptmann also was known for his comedies and plays based on Germanic folklore. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1912, but in later decades of the twentieth century his work fell into relative obscurity—according to some critics because he varied his dramatic form and subject matter too much. More recently, critical interest has been revived in Hauptmann's comedies, which are seen as keen satires on the emerging German bourgeoisie of the late nineteenth century.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Hauptmann was born November 15, 1862, in the central European region of Silesia, which is now forms parts of Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic. His formative years in Silesia would have a lifelong influence on him, and he used the distinctive Silesian dialect in his plays. Hauptmann did not distinguish himself in school. He tried an apprenticeship on his uncle's farm but found little satisfaction in rural living, although that period allowed him to befriend members of the peasant class, about whom he would write in some of his most respected plays.

After a time studying art and sculpture in Breslau, Hauptmann moved to Rome to study art. He settled in Berlin in 1885, marrying a wealthy heiress named Marie Thienemann, whose money allowed him to devote himself to literary pursuits. He also befriended many of Germany's most progressive thinkers and artists during this time, including Arno Holz, who had formulated a theory of literary naturalism. Hauptmann's first pro-

duced play, *Vor Sonnenaufgang* (1889; *Before Dawn*), catapulted him to fame in European theater, with audiences and critics alike finding his naturalistic portrayal of a family caught in the grips of alcoholism and degradation compellingly experimental; many viewers, in fact, were outraged and the play caused an uproar in Berlin.

Subsequent dramatic success came with *Das Friedensfest* (1890; *The Coming of Peace*) and *Einsame Menschen* (1891; *Lonely Lives*). While living in Schreiberhau, a Silesian resort town, Hauptmann wrote *The Weavers*, breaking ground once more in the theatrical world with a starkly realistic depiction of an 1844 rebellion by Silesian textile workers against the brutality of the factory owners. At first the play was banned because its depiction of the historical events was considered vulgar.

Hauptmann and his wife divorced in 1904; later that year he married an actress named Margarete Marschalk, with whom he had had a child several years earlier. That relationship was complicated in 1905 by Hauptmann's affair with a seventeen-year-old actress who had performed in a Berlin production of his play *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* (1893; *Hannele*).

In 1907 Hauptmann traveled to Greece, an experience that would have a lasting impact on his later work as he began to incorporate elements of mythology, folklore, and fairy tales into his plays and novels. In 1912 he won the Nobel Prize for literature, primarily for his dramatic works.

Unlike many of his contemporaries in the arts, Hauptmann remained in Germany during the Nazi regime of Adolf Hitler. His refusal to flee the country or speak out against the Nazis led some to accuse him of quiet complicity. Although he was not persecuted by the Nazis, they did repeatedly refuse to award him Germany's coveted Schiller Prize. Four of Hauptmann's last plays, which were posthumously published as *Die Atriden-Tetralogie* (1949), are an indictment of the barbarity of the Nazi era allegorized through the Greek myth of the fall of the house of Atreus. Hauptmann died on June 6, 1946, at his home in the Silesian village of Agnetendorf.

MAJOR DRAMATIC WORKS

Published in book form prior to its October 1889 stage premier at Berlin's Lessingtheater, *Before Dawn* had

caused an uproar before the public had even seen it. Berlin's literati found the play to be an accurate, if disturbing, portrait of a family descending into tragedy. The city's leaders, however, thought it was immoral and unfit for public viewing, both because it was considered "obscene" and because it appeared to advance a socialist agenda. The sensation caused by *Before Dawn* when it premiered was due largely to its depiction of ordinary Germans as having become debauched by their newfound industrial-age wealth. The family in the play, the Krauses, is part of Europe's late-nineteenth-century nouveau riche; formerly peasants, they have been made wealthy by the discovery of coal on their property. The money, however, only brings out the worst in them. As Hauptmann makes clear, most of the Krauses are victims of hereditary alcoholism, which has turned them into adulterers, molesters, and degenerates. Martha, a married adult daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Krause, has already lost her three-year-old son to alcohol poisoning, and at the end of the play her second child has been delivered stillborn. Mrs. Krause is sexually involved with her nephew, while Mr. Krause drinks excessively and pursues his other daughter, the relatively chaste, although by no means virginal, Helene. In the midst of all this enters Alfred Loth, a socialist whose ideals have been challenged. He and Helene fall in love, but when he learns the truth about her family through a discussion with a local physician, he abandons her. Hopeless, she commits suicide.

Like *Before Dawn*, *The Weavers* did not shy away from showing bleak realities. With this play, however, centering on mid-nineteenth-century textile workers, Hauptmann broke from the traditional theatrical device of featuring individual characters in favor of creating a single "character" (the mob of workers) made up of many people, through which he could explore the collective experience of a group—in this case, the weavers who rebel against the brutal treatment they receive at the hands of the factory owners. Highly symbolic and abstract on the one hand, *The Weavers* is also painstakingly accurate in its historical details. Hauptmann wrote extensive stage directions and costuming instructions. The workers are shown as physically gaunt and disfigured from long hours bent over their looms. Their clothing is torn and filthy, while the home of the factory owner that the weavers attack is ostentatiously ornate.

In *Der Biberpelz* (1893; *The Beaver Coat*) Hauptmann again skewered the taste and habits of the bourgeoisie, but this time in a comedy built around Mother Wolff, a hardworking washerwoman in suburban Berlin who advances her family's material stability through petty thievery. The local police constable, however, is too busy hunting down political liberals who oppose the Bismarck government to pay attention to the ongoing robbery problem in town.

Beginning with *Hannele*, Hauptmann incorporated elements of fantasy, myth, and the supernatural into his plays. Hauptmann called *Hannele* a "dream-play," and his intent was to evolve his use of naturalism by blending it with elements of romanticism. Taking place in a poorhouse on Christmas Eve, the play opens with a naturalistic depiction of poverty, with characters ragged and lecherous. The local schoolteacher and a lumberjack enter, carrying a young girl, Hannele, who has thrown herself into a pond to escape her cruel stepfather. Feverish and delirious, Hannele slips in and out of consciousness, entering a dream world where various visions appear to her, including her dead mother and a group of angels. She leaves reality altogether in the second act, in which she envisions a mysterious stranger compelling her stepfather to repent. He refuses, but later he hangs himself in despair, and in her vision the stranger takes Hannele to heaven. The play ends back in the poorhouse, with a doctor declaring Hannele dead.

Hauptmann's *Und Pippa tanzt!* (1906; *And Pippa Dances!*) similarly mixes the romantic with the naturalistic. In a tavern glassmakers drink and gamble while an Italian craftsman named Tagliazoni uses his beautiful young daughter Pippa's dancing to enchant the men into a dream-state so he can cheat at cards. When he is murdered, Pippa is carried off in the arms of the red-haired giant Huhn, who takes her to his forest hut. Other mythic figures appear throughout the play, each using Pippa's dancing for his own purposes. Finally Pippa collapses and dies, along with Huhn, and the mysterious old man Wann is left to encourage the fantasies of a young man who had hoped to marry Pippa.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

For all of his revolutionary effects on German theater during his lifetime, Hauptmann's reputation is not particularly solid. His early devotion to naturalism outraged critics, audiences, and authorities, with political and moral leaders in Berlin labeling *Before Dawn* "bordello theatre." Nonetheless, Hauptmann's plays were never lacking for audiences, even if spectators were disgusted with what they saw. And as he explored different ways to express himself in his plays, observers were even more confused, unsure of what to make of Hauptmann's conflation of seemingly unrelated storylines and literary formulae. Even Hauptmann himself seemed uncertain of the meaning of *And Pippa Dances!*, commenting, "Not only in this fairy tale, but also in my realistic dramas the story line—or the episodes—hardly play a role. My truth seekers are distinguished by the fact that I only show their search but never the truth. And how could I, since I haven't yet found it myself!" Laurent Gousie has argued that these later fairy tale-infused works were not simply fantastic or mythic, but helped to usher in the modern surrealist movement in the theater.

Hauptmann's satirical *The Beaver Coat* was more widely accepted, and certainly understood, than the later fantasy plays. Like many of Hauptmann's other plays, it fell into obscurity for much of the twentieth century. In 2006 it was revived in London, to mixed reviews. Michael Billington, however, pointed out the similarity between Mother Wolff and Berthold Brecht's later iconic heroine, Mother Courage. Likewise, a 1996 production of *The Weavers* in London led critics to acknowledge Hauptmann's work as marking a major turning point in theater—bridging the nineteenth century's tradition of the “well-made play” to the twentieth century's experimentalism and sociopolitical activism. It is, however, Hauptmann's humanity—the unifying element in his diverse canon—for which he is most admired.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Plays

Vor Sonnenaufgang [*Before Dawn*] 1889
Das Friedensfest [*The Coming of Peace*] 1890
Einsame Menschen [*Lonely Lives*] 1891
Kollege Crampton [*Colleague Crampton*] 1892
Der Biberpelz [*The Beaver Coat*] 1893
Hanneles Himmelfahrt [*Hannele*] 1893
Die Weber [*The Weavers*] 1893
Florian Geyer 1896
Die versunkene Glocke [*The Sunken Bell*] 1896
Führmann Henschel [*Drayman Henschel*] 1898
Michael Kramer 1900
Schluck und Jau [*Schluck and Jau*] 1900
Der rote Hahn [*The Conflagration*] 1901
Der arme Heinrich [*Henry of Auë*] 1902
Rose Bernd 1903
Elga 1905
Und Pippa tanzt! [*And Pippa Dances!*] 1906
Die Jungfern vom Bischofsberg [*The Maidens of the Mount*] 1907
Kaiser Karls Geisel [*Charlemagne's Hostage*] 1908
Griselda 1909
Die Ratten [*The Rats*] 1911
Gabriel Schillings Flucht [*Gabriel Schilling's Flight*] 1912
Festspiel in deutschen Reimen [*Commemoration Masque*] 1913
Der Bogen des Odysseus [*The Bow of Odysseus*] 1914
Winterballade [*Winter Ballad*] 1917
Der weisse Heiland [*The White Saviour*] 1920
Peter Brauer 1921
Indipohdi 1922
Veland 1925

Dorothea Angermann 1926
Spuk, oder Die schwarze Maske und Hexenritt [*Spectre, or The Black Mask and Witches' Ride*] 1929
Vor Sonnenuntergang 1932
Die goldene Harfe 1933
Hamlet in Wittenberg 1935
Die Tochter der Kathedrale 1939
Ulrich von Lichtenstein 1939
**Iphigenie in Delphi* 1941
**Iphigenie in Aulis* 1943
**Agamemnon's Tod* 1947
**Elektra* 1947
†*Herbert Engelmann* [adapted by Carl Zuckmayer] 1952
‡*Magnus Garbe* 1956

Other Major Works

Promethidenlos (poetry) 1885
Bahnwärter Thiel [*Flagman Thiel*] (novella) 1888
Das bunte Buch (poetry) 1888
Der Apostel (novella) 1890
Griechischer Frühling (essay) 1908
Der Narr in Christo Emanuel Quint [*The Fool in Christ, Emanuel Quint*] (novel) 1910
Atlantis (novel) 1912
Der Ketzer von Soana [*The Heretic of Soana*] (novella) 1918
Anna (poetry) 1921
Phantom: Aufzeichnungen eines ehemaligen Sträflings [*Phantom*] (novel) 1923
Die blaue Blume (poetry) 1924
Die Insel der Großen Mutter oder Das Wunder von I'le des Dames [*The Island of the Great Mother; or, The Miracle of I'le des Dames*] (novel) 1925
Till Eulenspiegel (poetry) 1927
Wanda (novel) 1928
Um Volk und Geist (speeches) 1932
Das Meerwunder (poetry) 1934
Im Wirbel der Berufung (novel) 1936
Das Abenteuer meiner Jugend. 2 vols. (novel) 1937
Der Schuß im Park (novella) 1941
Der große Traum (poetry) 1942; enlarged edition, 1956
Mignon (novella) 1947

*These four works comprise *Die Atriden-Tetralogie*, published in 1949.

†This work was written in 1924.

‡This work was written in 1914-15.

OVERVIEWS AND GENERAL STUDIES

Hermann J. Weigand (lecture date 1952)

SOURCE: Weigand, Hermann J. “Gerhart Hauptmann's Range as Dramatist.” In *Surveys and Soundings in*

European Literature, pp. 223-42. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966.

[In the following essay, originally delivered as a lecture in 1952, Weigand traces the development of Hauptmann's dramatic technique, from his use of realism in the manner of Henrik Ibsen, to his embrace of naturalism, to his eventual turn to works of "poetic fancy."]

It is easier, if more time-consuming, to write a book about a stimulating author than to say something worth while about him in a lecture. You do not wish me to take you on a Cook's Tour of Gerhart Hauptmann's vast production. It would be unspeakably tedious to enumerate each of his forty-odd dramas and his almost equally numerous novels, stories, verse epics, and other works and to affix to each some characteristic label. What do most of you know about Hauptmann? You all know of him as the author of a famous play about the Silesian weavers. A few of you who are old enough will recall his winning of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1912. And some of you know that he died a very old man in May 1946, having lived just long enough to have witnessed the death of his native Silesia, the sociological extinction of a branch of the German people that had developed its characteristic physiognomy over many centuries in conjunction with the specific landscape of its habitat. Hauptmann died when all but the last of its population had been swept as fugitives to the west of the Polish zone of occupation, a few weeks before the order for his own expulsion was to become effective.

But unless you happen to pursue professional interests in German or in comparative literature, you are not apt to know that more has been written about Hauptmann than about any other German author except Goethe; that to a wide and devoted following he came over many decades to be regarded as the incarnation of the poetic spirit. His appeal was broad, deep, and lasting. Publicity and contemporary popularity are no guarantees of enduring fame, but they are a factor to be taken account of in even the sketchiest treatment of some aspects of Hauptmann's career.

Except for a short period at the beginning of his career, Hauptmann's appeal has always been broad rather than specialized. Unlike his other great contemporaries in German literature, he had little, if anything, of the passion of art for art's sake in his make-up. He seemed always more concerned with the matter than with the manner of what he had to say. Except in the field of drama, he was an indifferent craftsman. One may be shaken to one's depths by the total pathos of a human situation projected by Hauptmann; one is rarely entranced in his work by a conscious experience of aesthetic perfection in the phrasing, in the rhythmic and melodic values of his linguistic material. He does not

give to the trained ear the ecstasy of mutation achieved in the powers of language. He has none of the metallic density of Stefan George, none of the incorporeal incandescence of Rilke. His prose has none of the disciplined suppleness and brilliant phrasing that characterize Thomas Mann's mastery of narrative and essay. But what Hauptmann does in a comprehensive way is to penetrate to the heart of all that is human. Thus he encompasses the contemporary scene in accents which are compellingly authentic. But also in the grand manner of poets like Shakespeare he re-creates outstanding figures of history and myth to revel in an orchestration of passions of incomparably richer scope than the very limited range of modern civilized man.

The story of Hauptmann's youth is a saga of adventure which the old poet has himself recorded in great detail, taking full advantage of the perspective afforded by his subsequent rise to eminence. Born as the son of a hotel manager in a small Silesian spa (1862), he was largely left to his own devices as a youngster. Exceedingly alert and impressionable, he observed a great variety of town and country folk in pursuit of their callings, and visitors at the spa representing all classes of society. He associated with well-brought-up middle class companions, and he chummed and fought with ragamuffins of the gutter. While his adjustment to his home environment was happy on the whole, Hauptmann turned out to be very much of a problem child at school. Twice he had to repeat a year in the lower grades of the Breslau Gymnasium. According to his own account he spent these years in a state of unrelieved stupor, periodically accentuated by abject want. To escape from this hell he tried to fit himself for the career of a farm supervisor. He spent a year and a half doing chores on a country estate. The solitariness of this life made him turn inward and discover and nurse what he believed to be a spark of genius. On this diet of dreaming his ego was inflated to fantastic proportions. Believing himself destined for a career in the plastic arts, he persuaded his father to send him to the art school in Breslau. Again his temperament proved unamenable to discipline. Expelled from school, he was reinstated on the plea of one of his teachers. But at this time, not yet nineteen years old, he had the good fortune to win the love of one of five well-to-do orphaned sisters. Marie Thienemann, beautiful, serious, and young, believed in her fiancé's star, and from now on her purse supplied him with the means to see the world and find himself. He spent a term at the University of Jena, trying by voracious reading and eager discussion to overcome the handicap of many lost years. He took a Mediterranean cruise. In Rome he established himself in a sculptor's studio, afire with grandiose schemes to create a marble gallery of monumental figures. But having laid no foundation of solid craftsmanship, he literally saw his illusions collapse about his head. The shock of this deflation of his ego was cushioned by a severe attack of typhus. His fi-

ancée, having come to visit him, nursed him back to health. They eventually returned to Germany and were married when Hauptmann was in his twenty-third year and had as yet given no proof of outstanding talent. He was convinced by now that imaginative writing was his field, and he had been wrestling rather ineffectually for some time with colossal themes from Roman and German antiquity. Settled now, first in the workers' quarters and then in the environs of the sprawling German capital, Hauptmann was soon caught up in the swing of a vigorous young literary movement that was imbued with a consciousness of pressing social problems and defined the field of vital poetry as the here and now. After much floundering, a summer's trip to his native Silesia led Hauptmann to discover the key to a treasure chest of literary materials stored up in the form of childhood memories. He went to work on a Silesian peasant drama. It was completed and performed in 1889. It evoked a storm of controversy. The spring of Hauptmann's productivity, once tapped, continued to flow steadily and abundantly. Hauptmann soon came to be recognized as the leader of the naturalistic movement. A theater, in step with the new art, aiming at the most exacting standards of performance and devoted to Hauptmann's personal cause, provided a highly effective springboard for his rapid rise to fame.

This early phase of Hauptmann's production commands our particular attention. When I said above that Hauptmann was by and large an indifferent craftsman, that statement requires qualification. It does not hold for the early, spectacular phase of his career. On the contrary, Hauptmann's concern with living drama involved a very conscious craftsmanship, schooled by the great example of Ibsen. Hauptmann set out to advance the authenticity of dramatic representation of life beyond the point achieved by the great Norwegian master. He took over from Ibsen the medium of prose; the strict abandonment of the time-honored stage devices of the monologue and the aside; the imperceptible introduction and filling in of the exposition, the analytic technique, presupposing a long latent crisis which bursts into the open, reducing the play itself to the unfolding of a catastrophe that runs its course swiftly, in the space of a few days, or even a few hours. Thus Hauptmann's *Vor Sonnenaufgang* concentrates its five acts into two nights and one day. The catastrophe of *Das Friedensfest* fills one Christmas eve. *Die Weber*, dealing with conditions of prolonged, acutely intensified misery, presents but the chance touching-off of the spark and an outburst of pathetically blind, destructive, essentially futile mob fury—this in a space of probably not more than three or four days. But Hauptmann the naturalist is intent upon refining on Ibsen's quality of realism in a variety of ways. To a much greater degree than with Ibsen, the local setting, including the background of landscape, season, and weather, is integrally tied in

with the dramatic action. The dramatic emphasis has shifted to the lower strata of society. Social stratification of great complexity is a background phenomenon of prime importance. The social group as such may stand in the focus of interest rather than a representative individual. Folk dialect, or rather folk dialects are employed, in meticulously authentic rendering, Silesian, Saxon, Berlin; and even the speech of characters of the bourgeois level takes on a variety of dialect shadings in response to the degree of nervous excitation evoked by the situation. The dramatic hero, no longer necessarily the focus of our sympathies, is replaced by the mere protagonist who happens to unite in his person a maximum number of the threads that make up the tissue of the segment of life presented. The concept of tragic guilt, so strong in Ibsen's heroes of often monumental individuality, is attenuated, dissipated, and replaced by the inescapable web of circumstance. Lastly, personality in terms of stable, static character, is replaced by multiple dynamic reactivity. As one might say, the matter of character is transmuted into energy. This last point may require elucidation. In *Das Friedensfest* the protagonist formulates his newly found insight as follows: "Das ist mir nun aufgegangen: ein Mensch kehrt nicht nur jedem seiner Mitmenschen eine andere Seite zu, sondern er ist tatsächlich jedem gegenüber von Grund aus anders." [I have now realized the following: a person does not merely turn a different side to each of his fellow human beings, rather he is indeed fundamentally different as concerns each one.] Hauptmann's third play, *Einsame Menschen*, involves the most subtle and consistent exemplification of this doctrine of dynamic character. I think it will come to be recognized more and more as *the* classic exemplar of its type.

Before long Hauptmann introduces another far-reaching modification in his dramatic method: a basic change in perspective. Ibsen had given us only the denouement—the untying of the dramatic knot. The long, intricate process of the tying of all the fateful strands, usually begun many years ago in the past, is glimpsed only in retrospect, often by the device of a startling confession. Ibsen presents the past in highly foreshortened form. Hauptmann shifts the emphasis. Deeply influenced by the scientific trend of the times, the naturalist is concerned with the sympathetic comprehension of a social process. A process is a development. With Hauptmann, the acts presented on the stage come to be but significant moments of the process of development, separated by considerable intervals of time, by weeks and months. These time intervals count heavily. The dramatic configuration of forces presented in each new act has undergone a substantial realignment between the acts. Thus, already in *Einsame Menschen* there is an interval of approximately one week separating each of acts II, III, and IV from the preceding, and in each act

there is a substantial task of reorientation. We are presented with a succession of states, each showing tensions, latent in the preceding, as emergent in the succeeding. The dimension of time as duration is experienced. It gets into one's bones and may leave one with a sense of having lived through, in the space of hours, a development of months or years.

It must be admitted that it taxes the powers of drama, particularly when staged, to convey the sense of mounting tension over a long time interval. An extended present moment is more peculiarly the province of the stage, and the tightening of the screws in the flesh is apt to be felt as more acute when the curtain of time parts at short intervals, revealing ever another skeleton in the closet of the past.

Hauptmann made frequent use of the method of extended duration (which is utterly different, by the way, from the flashing of a series of loosely connected pictures as practiced by Wedekind and the expressionists). Two of his dramas in this manner that rank, I think, with the great dramatic creations of all time, are *Fuhrmann Henschel* and *Rose Bernd*. Both are dialect dramas dealing with Silesian common folk. But a very different curve of tension applies to each. In *Fuhrmann Henschel* (involving a duration of more than a year) the fateful atmosphere thickens from act to act, giving one a sense of impending doom. There is just one sharp, elemental explosion of the emotions, in act iv. The atmosphere of the final act, bringing on the inevitable catastrophe after a brief interval, is hushed throughout. In *Rose Bernd*, on the other hand, the tension is acute from the start. The first act rises to a sharp, anguished detonation of feeling on the part of Rose, the pregnant country girl. Each succeeding act mounts to a more tortured outburst. Only the fourth is an exception: here the sense of helpless distraction reaches a height where both words and any show of feeling fail; instead there is a sense of mute strangulation on the part of the cornered victim. The last act is another prolonged, final outcry, from a region where hope and help have ceased to have meaning.

Merely by way of an extended aside I must remark that Hauptmann's naturalistic drama is not limited to presenting the interplay of social forces in their somber aspect leading to catastrophe. The social process is also shot through with incongruities that make a comic appeal. In the field of comedy Hauptmann is a bold innovator discarding the oldest time-honored conventions. Wherever old-fashioned comedy centered about an individual who craftily violates the moral code, it always ended with the exposure of the culprit and the vindication of the moral order. With this convention Hauptmann pointedly takes issue in two social comedies that have the same locale and the same leading figure,

Der Biberpelz and *Der rote Hahn*. A time interval of some ten years between the action of the two plays suffices to show the social milieu as in a state of mushrooming transition. Both comedies are centered about a woman of humble origin who is possessed of an enormous drive and the ambition to rise in the economic and social scale. Her practice is to do so by fair means wherever possible, but to take advantage of the solid reputation she has earned in order to resort to foul means wherever a special fillip is needed to speed the ship of her fortunes. The point is that she gets away with it, both in a small and a large way. A heart attack terminates her career at the moment when her lifelong ambition has been realized. She had been a washerwoman, a jewel of a washerwoman doing the work of two. But now her daughter is securely ensconced as a well-to-do member of the get-rich-quick section of the middle class. As we watch this spectacle, seeing through all of the mother's craft and scheming, we are as much moved to admiration by the adroitness and steadiness with which she plays the hazardous game as we may be shocked by the dubious means that lead to success in such a society. And if both sets of feelings are tempered by the melancholy realization that, measured by values of a more enduring sort, the game is not worth the candle, the general upshot of the spectacle is: such is life in a competitive modern society. We distinctly feel the career of the washerwoman as a symbol of the same drive and of analogous processes in all strata of our society. *Sansara* they would call it in India. Here is social satire of an all-embracing variety. It is philosophical, not doctrinaire political satire, I hasten to add; for Hauptmann, though leftish in his sympathies, never subscribed to any party line or believed in political action as efficacious for the solving of basic human problems.

Hauptmann made his literary debut in the heyday of naturalism. When he began to write, the air was thick with slogans and programs demanding a literature exclusively of the here and now and in step with advancing science. Hauptmann's early dramatic production was hailed by the adherents of the young movement as the fulfillment of their programs and slogans, and to us looking back it appears indeed as the exemplary embodiment of naturalism in drama. Theorizing had its share in this, unquestionably. But the essential fact is that the awakening of Hauptmann's creative genius occurred in felicitous conjunction with a very vigorous literary movement, and that his intimate contacts with both the humble elements of society and the intellectual middle class had stored away in his memory an apparently inexhaustible wealth of material waiting for the master hand to mold it. Hauptmann spoke the authentic language of the peasant and

proletarian, and without resorting to spurious stage effects he voiced the pathos and the humanity of the underprivileged.

The fresh breeze of naturalistic doctrine first buoyed the wings of Hauptmann's nascent genius. As his prowess grew, he came to realize that it tended to restrict his flight to a very limited zone. It is important to see how Hauptmann first explored the border reaches of the permitted zone before resolutely venturing out on a bolder course. First he reintroduced the quality of imagination and the vehicle of verse into naturalistic drama, in his portrayal of the feverish hallucinations and the euphoria of a dying adolescent waif, in *Hannele*. All the material came out of the girl's background of experience: fairy-tale motifs, religious imagery, wish dreams of love, aggrandizement and revenge on her cruel stepfather were blended with compelling motivation. But how convey to an audience the singing of the blood in the rapture of delirium? The disconnected fragments of speech to be pieced together as the clinical record do not tell the story. All of us have been moved in dreams to wild joy and high laughter, and on awakening suddenly we would find our lips mumbling inane verbal fragments, grotesquely at variance with the emotions vividly remembered. There are states of mind, obviously, where the subjective experience and its observable behavioristic counterpart hopelessly fail to tally. Hauptmann, realizing this, projected a counterpart that would suggest the emotional tone of the girl's experience. At a certain climactic point of tension the prose turns into verse conveying a sense of ecstasy by the sweetness and purity of its strains and the richness of its rhythmic swell. This was a quasi-legitimate extension of the creative process into a field to which outward observation gives no access, a field which could only be known and suggested by the analogy of subjective experience. Having to choose between the alternatives of either being barred from the twilight zone of the mind altogether or of rendering it in a way that preserved its emotional value, the poet chose the latter.

Hauptmann's second venture of exploration into the borderland of the naturalistic zone was an attempt to apply the rules of the here and now to historical drama. In staging the German Peasant War of 1525 in his *Florian Geyer* he endeavored to create the illusion of the same degree of authenticity that applied to his portrayal of the nineteenth-century weavers. This was primarily a problem of language. Hauptmann wanted his embattled knights and peasants of Franconia to speak as they would have spoken in the age of the Reformation. The enormity of the undertaking becomes clear when you imagine a British author presenting Jack Cade's rebellion in the idiom of his day. A basically impossible task. For supposing that by the divination of genius an author versed in modern stagecraft did actually succeed

in casting the peasant dialogue in an authentic mold, where is there a modern audience that could understand its vocabulary, its phrasing, its proverbialisms, its imagery? The dialect pronunciation of an age but little removed from Chaucer would present the least of the difficulties. Hauptmann labored for years on this ambitious attempt, poring over scores of volumes of fifteenth-, sixteenth-, and seventeenth-century documents (in the absence, alas, of phonograph recordings!), of literature, chronicles, broadsides and eye-witness accounts, excerpting countless phrases, figures, homely saws and sentences that to him harbored a latent vitality. He who had been a hopeless dunce at school began to spell out this language, then to master it—not as a trained philologist, of course, but as a poet with an uncanny genius of assimilation. It is safe to say that he ended up with a vastly more intimate knowledge of the language habits and the mentality of that remote age than the great majority of German Ph.D. candidates specializing in that field. In this case I speak with particular conviction. I have played the sleuth tracking down the sources of the language employed by Hauptmann in his *Florian Geyer*, sometimes helped by good hunches to the discovery of startling pieces of Hauptmann's linguistic material. It has been a source of amazement again and again to observe how he would contrive to discover a gem in a dustbin where philologically trained eyes would have seen nothing but dust. The completed play, a flat failure on the stage at its first presentation, has subsequently undergone a pruning process that simplified it and made it more manageable, and now it no longer defies successful presentation. It now draws a warmer response, to judge by reports, than Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*. And there is no question that once the thorny hurdle of its archaic language has been cleared, it has the vitality of real drama, quite unlike Ibsen's ambitious attempt to re-create the tragedy of Julian the Apostate. Ibsen, as little a trained scholar as Hauptmann, got mired in his sources, whereas Hauptmann brought his tragedy of the Peasant War into effective dramatic focus. I would maintain none the less that the stupendous labor lavished on the linguistic side of this recalcitrant subject was worth the effort only as a demonstration of the fact that this approach leads into a blind alley. It proceeded from mistaken premises. It was an attempt of heroic proportions to stretch to the limit the demarcation lines of the material amenable to naturalistic doctrine. That Hauptmann subsequently broke through the bars, after dashing his head against them, is a fortunate result of that experience. (The later Hauptmann has no scruples about having his Carolingians, his Greeks, his Spaniards, and his Mexicans express themselves in modern German verse and prose.) *Florian Geyer*, completed in 1895, was the first theme that, by material alien to his immediate experience, called powers of study and assimilation into play.