



# DRAMA

C R I T I C I S M

V O L U M E

16

# 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 16

Allison Marion  
Editor

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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.
- A **Portrait of the Author** is included when available.

- 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 and general studies 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.
- 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.

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Eugene M. Waith, *The Herculean Hero in Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare and Dryden* (Chatto & Windus, 1962); excerpted and reprinted in *Drama Criticism*, vol. 1, ed. Lawrence J. Trudeau (Detroit: Gale Research, 1991), 237-47.

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# *Exiles*

## James Joyce

The following entry presents criticism on Joyce's play *Exiles* (1918).

### INTRODUCTION

Joyce wrote *Exiles* (1918), his only existing play, while finishing his first novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), and beginning work on *Ulysses* (1922). He was influenced by the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, and *Exiles*, in many respects, echoes the themes and characters of Ibsen's last play, *When We Dead Awaken*. Described by Joyce as "three cat and mouse acts," *Exiles* follows a group of individuals who are struggling with idealistic principles that are in conflict with their own passions.

### PLOT AND MAJOR CHARACTERS

The major characters in *Exiles* are Richard Rowan, a writer; Bertha, his common-law wife; Robert Hand, an old friend of the couple; and Beatrice Justice, another old friend who is more intellectually equal to Richard than is Bertha. Richard is an artist who rebels against convention. When he refuses to either pursue or marry Bertha, she decides to accompany him to Rome, become his common-law wife, and bear him a son. Richard is unfaithful to Bertha, and after confessing his infidelity, he encourages her to follow her own desires.

When the play opens, the couple has returned to Dublin after a nine year absence because Richard has been offered a teaching position at the university. Their old friend Robert admires Richard, but secretly attempts to seduce Bertha. Beatrice, who also thinks highly of Richard, has come to give piano lessons to Archie, Richard and Bertha's son. When Richard openly enjoys Beatrice's company as an intellectual equal, Bertha becomes jealous and tells him of Robert's advances. Richard responds by telling Bertha that she must feel free to follow her own desires. Bertha becomes upset by his answer, wanting Richard to become faithful and express his need for her. Instead, Richard—who is torn by the thought that he may be holding Bertha back from her own fulfillment—gives Robert complete freedom to try to take Bertha from him. Robert and Bertha have a tryst, but the exact details of what happened between them is never made clear. The conflicts that surround each character's view of freedom, how each chooses



to exert their free will, and the expectations that the characters have of each other creates confusion for all of them about their principles, passions, and intellect.

### MAJOR THEMES

Because of the complexity of *Exiles*, there has been disagreement about the primary themes of the play. One theme is that of exile—man exiled from man, man exiled from woman, man exiled from society, and man exiled from internal peace. Another primary theme is that of personal freedom. Richard's ideal of complete freedom within personal relationships is challenged by his own passions and desires. As he tries to force Bertha into the freedom he envisions, he finds himself betrayed by his own need for love and friendship.

### CRITICAL RECEPTION

Critical reaction to *Exiles* has been decidedly mixed. Ezra Pound, one of Joyce's most ardent supporters, wrote "Mr.

Joyce's play is dangerous and unstageable because he is not *playing* with the subject of adultery, but because he is actually driving in the mind upon the age-long problem of the rights of personality and of the responsibility of the intelligent individual for the conduct of those about him, upon the age-long question of the relative rights of intellect, and emotion, and sensation, and sentiments." Pound was not alone in his belief that the play was unproducible, and it was extremely difficult for Joyce to get it staged. In fact, the first production, in 1919, was in Munich in a German translation, and the public was warned that the play was not appropriate for a general audience. Following the example of Ibsen, Joyce had written a play that was so outside the conventions of the theater of the day that audiences found it incomprehensible.

The first English language production of *Exiles* was at New York's Neighborhood Playhouse in 1925, and the show received mixed reviews. The next year, it was produced in London. Reviews were unfavorable, but George Bernard Shaw admired the play and defended it in a public debate. It was not staged again until 1950, when Esmé Percy produced it in London at the Q Theatre. This time the reviews were kind, but not enthusiastic. T. C. Worsley was the first reviewer to criticize *Exiles* on its merits as a play, saying that he liked the dialogue and action. The most successful production was staged by Harold Pinter in 1970 at the Mermaid Theatre, and it was almost universally praised. This production was partially re-cast and moved to the Aldwych under the auspices of the Royal Shakespeare Company in October of 1971, but it was considered inferior to the previous production. *Exiles* was finally produced in Dublin in 1973 to favorable reviews. However, the play received a mixed reception for a 1977 production in Dublin and a similar reaction for a 1977 production at New York's Circle in the Square.

Over time, as conventions both in and out of the theater have changed, *Exiles* has come to be considered a less radical drama than it was when it was originally written, although its message is still complex. Theo Q. Dombrowski commented: "Long considered an inferior work of largely curiosity value, *Exiles* has increasingly been recognized as a significant, if problematic, part of Joyce's works . . . part of the play's very significance depends upon the problems it raises and fails to solve."

## PRINCIPAL WORKS

### Play

\**Exiles* 1918

### Other Major Works

*Chamber Music* (poetry) 1907

*Dubliners* (short stories) 1914

†*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (novel) 1916

*Ulysses* (novel) 1922

*Pomes Penyeach* (poetry) 1927

*Finnegans Wake* (novel) 1939

*Stephen Hero: A Part of the First Draft of "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man"* (novel) 1944

\**Exiles* was published in 1918; it was first produced in Munich, Germany, in 1919.

†First published serially in *Egoist*, February 2, 1914–September 1, 1915.

## PRODUCTION REVIEWS

### Benedict Nightingale (review date 1971)

SOURCE: Nightingale, Benedict. "Frontiers." *New Statesman* 82 (15 October 1971): 518.

[In the following review, Nightingale responds unfavorably to Harold Pinter's production of *Exiles* at the Mermaid Theater.]

Last autumn, I was part of the critical consensus that almost unreservedly applauded the revival of James Joyce's *Exiles* at the Mermaid; this, I'm not so sure. Harold Pinter's production hasn't been improved by partial recasting and removal to the Aldwych. The introspective tone has become somewhat mechanical; the silences, too studied and self-conscious. Where it was meditative and even profound, it now often seems merely downbeat. On the second night, a man near me fell asleep and gently snored, and the audience as a whole reacted in a detached, relaxed manner when Richard Rowan (John Wood) extracted from his wife (Vivien Merchant) the physical details of her embryo affair with his best friend (T. P. McKenna). They laughed, as if the scene which had held us fixed and agog at the Mermaid was now no more than comic relief, and I found myself internally growling at the insistent artificialities of Miss Merchant's performance. Why do so many of her speeches seem to start with an emphatic, raucous pant and end in a tremulous gasp? What might have been the most interesting character in the play, a gauche, warm, ingratiating, frightened woman, very aware of her mental and her husband's emotional limitations, has become a gracious, slightly nervous nonentity.

It is a pity, because the play itself is undeniably interesting, notwithstanding Joyce's bookish tendency to cram in more information and implication than the naturalistic form will happily tolerate. The idea, as I see it, is to map out some of the frontiers of intimate relationships. 'Who am I that I should consider myself master of your heart, or of any woman's?' asks Rowan of his wife, and he is, of course, absolutely right in principle. Marriage shouldn't be a property contract; it should depend on choice and consent. But she's bewildered and hurt by the freedom he

grants her; and he can neither be sure that his motives in granting it are genuinely altruistic nor quite control a nagging jealousy. The experiment ends sadly, with the best friend making a furtive, embarrassed escape from Dublin to the presumed safety of Surrey. People, it seems, need their frontiers and their maps; they cannot bear too much uncharted freedom. Joyce's conclusion is certainly a conservative one, but you feel it emerges from long reflection and personal pain. It can't be disregarded, and the play should still be seen by those who missed it at the Mermaid, both for itself and for the one performance that has not deteriorated: Wood's Rowan, a tense, lugubrious ironist, sudden and snappish when he speaks but abnormally still when he sits, watches and broods. He is the lizard and the others the flies: no wonder they fear his tongue.

**Harold Clurman (review date 1977)**

SOURCE: Clurman, Harold. A Review of *Exiles*. *The Nation* (11 June 1977): 732-33.

[In the following review, Clurman asserts that the lack of believability of *Exiles* supports the notion that Joyce was "no playwright."]

Extraordinarily intelligent, supremely self-conscious, James Joyce did not wholly understand himself. What eluded him was the fact that he was seeking within himself the essence of godhood that could not be found there. A lapsed Catholic, he believed himself an enemy of the Church, when in truth he never ceased being deeply, ineradicably *Irish* Catholic. His formidable intellectual equipment served on the personal level to addle his brain and conscience. Fortunately he was a lord of language and a genius.

If I begin my review of *Exiles*, the play Joyce completed in 1915 shortly after writing *A Portrait of the Artist*, in this abstruse way, it is because there is something in *Exiles* and in much of Joyce's work that leads to fuzzy comment.

I have seen the play three times in different productions. (The latest is now at the Circle Repertory Company's theatre.) On each occasion I have had difficulty remembering its by no means tangled plot. It seemed to me that it was not taking place in the "world," or even on the stage but within Joyce's turbid subconscious. At first, I was under the impression that the ruminative quality I found in *Exiles* was due to productions which were so subdued or "faraway" that the characters appeared to be speaking from the bottom of a well.

But the Circle Company's production has been directed by Rob Thirkield to be more normally dramatic and much more lively than the two others I have seen. As I left the theatre I felt that at last I grasped the play, which is on its surface not the least bit arcane; but when I came to "explain" it to myself, I found once again that it had all become unreal, as if it had vanished in vapor.

It is an autobiographical play. It is about Joyce's relation to the beautiful, uneducated girl he took off to Europe as he exiled himself from his native land. In the play she is called Bertha. When Joyce, here renamed Richard Rowan and the author of a highly esteemed book, returns to Ireland after nine years abroad, now the father of an 8-year-old son, he is visited by his onetime rival, a journalist named Robert Hand, based on Victor Cosgrave, a friend from Joyce's university days. Another character figures in the play, Beatrice Justice, Hand's Protestant cousin, with whom Rowan evidently had had an affair before he took up with Bertha.

Though still Rowan's admirer and champion, Hand nevertheless desires Bertha and is bent on possessing her. Bertha appreciates Hand's feeling without returning it in kind. Almost encouraged to do so by Rowan, she accepts Hand's advances though she is not actually tempted by them. She is, however, jealous of Rowan's former liaison with Beatrice Justice who, being an educated woman, can share Rowan's lofty concerns; Bertha is especially hurt by his continuous promiscuity.

The dramatic crux of the play comes from Hand's inviting Bertha to an assignation in his private quarters, which she is egged on to by Rowan. She accepts the challenge of the invitation. Rowan wants her to feel free as he is. He will not prevent her doing anything she wishes to do and he tells Hand the same. There is even his passing suggestion that, if Bertha were to give herself to Hand, he might feel closer to both!

In Bertha's encounter with Hand, nothing happens, except conversation. She assures Rowan of this, but we suspect that he had almost hoped as much as he feared that they had consummated their contact. (Rowan speaks of sexual union as "the death of the spirit.") Despite Bertha's avowal of innocence and enduring love for him—her "strange, wild lover"—Rowan is wracked by jealousy. "I have a deep, deep wound of doubt in my soul," he says. Indeed, he doubts *everything*. Knowing himself to be a sinner he is ridden by guilt, the old Irish-Catholic-inspired guilt which extends, except for art, to doubt of all human existence.

Though it seems forthright realism, there is a veil over the play's proceedings that no amount of straightforward acting can penetrate. Hidden behind that veil is the author's masochism and the painful mental effort to rid himself of it and the feeling of guilt which causes it. But for all Rowan-Joyce's lucidity of expression, it never brings about anything more concrete than a yowl of distress.

Everything spoken in the play could, and may have, been said in life, yet the dialogue sounds like an interpretation of, or brooding on, Joyce's past and present experiences. It is not living speech, speech uttered as things are taking place. A dramatist, no matter how poetic or stylized his play, must make us believe in the immediate reality of its action. That does not happen in *Exiles*, which means that



Joyce is no playwright. Yet the psychological turmoil of which his play is wrought still exercises a degree of fascination, if only because it is the stuff of the author's spirit and suffering.

One need not complain of the production. It attempts a lightness which makes the play appear more overtly dramatic than it really is. To its credit, the cast—especially Neil Flanagan—plays with candid understanding. But a much more complex inwardness, a greater maturity of mind and sensibility are required to make *Exiles* Joycean.

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## CRITICAL COMMENTARY

### Ezra Pound (review date 1916)

SOURCE: Pound, Ezra. "Mr. James Joyce and the Modern Stage." *Drama* 6, no. 2 (February 1916): 122–32.

[In following review, Pound declares *Exiles* to be unstageable in the atmosphere of the contemporary theater.]

Two months ago I set out to write an essay about a seventeenth century dramatist. As I had nearly finished translating one of his plays into English, my interest in him must have been more than that of a transient moment. His own life was full of adventure. The play had a number of virtues that one could quite nicely mark out on a diagram. It was altogether a most estimable "subject"; yet, when I began to ask myself whether my phrases really corresponded to fact, whether it was worth while causing a few readers to spend their time on the matter, I was convinced that it was not. I believed that old play and the author had fallen into desuetude from perfectly justifiable causes. I agreed to let the dead bury their dead, and to let other people write about the drama, and I returned to some original work of my own.

Last week I received a play [*Exiles*] by Mr. James Joyce and that argumentative interest, which once led me to spend two years of my life reading almost nothing but plays, came back upon me, along with a set of questions "from the bottom up": Is drama worth while? Is the drama of today, or the stage of today, a form or medium by which the best contemporary authors can express themselves in any satisfactory manner?

Mr. Joyce is undoubtedly one of our best contemporary authors. He has written a novel, and I am quite ready to stake anything I have in this world that that novel is permanent. It is permanent as are the works of Stendhal and Flaubert. Two silly publishers have just refused it in favor of froth, another declines to look at it because "he will not deal through an agent"—yet Mr. Joyce lives on the continent and can scarcely be expected to look after

his affairs in England save through a deputy. And Mr. Joyce is the best prose writer of my generation, in English. So far as I know, there is no one better in either Paris or Russia. In English we have Hardy and Henry James and, chronologically, we have Mr. James Joyce. The intervening novelists print books, it is true, but for me or for any man of my erudition, for any man living at my intensity, these books are things of no substance.

Therefore, when Mr. Joyce writes a play, I consider it a reasonable matter of interest. The English agent of the Oliver Morosco company has refused the play, and in so doing the agent has well served her employers, for the play would certainly be of no use to the syndicate that stars *Peg o' My Heart*; neither do I believe that any manager would stage it nor that it could succeed were it staged. Nevertheless, I read it through at a sitting, with intense interest. It is a long play, some one hundred and eighty pages.

It is not so good as a novel; nevertheless it is quite good enough to form a very solid basis for my arraignment of the contemporary theatre. It lays before me certain facts, certain questions; for instance, are the excellences of this play purely novelist's excellences? Perhaps most of them are; yet this play could not have been made as a novel. It is distinctly a play. It has the form of a play—I do not mean that it is written in dialogue with the names of the speakers put in front of their speeches. I mean that it has inner form; that the acts and speeches of one person work into the acts and speeches of another and make the play into an indivisible, integral whole. The action takes place in less than twenty-four hours, in two rooms, both near Dublin, so that even the classical unities are uninjured. The characters are drawn with that hardness of outline which we might compare to that of Dürer's painting if we are permitted a comparison with effects of an art so different. There are only four main characters, two subsidiary characters, and a fishwoman who passes a window, so that the whole mechanics of the play have required great closeness of skill. I see no way in which the play could be improved by redoing it as a novel. It could not, in fact, be anything but a play. And yet it is absolutely unfit for the stage as we know it. It is dramatic. Strong, well-wrought sentences flash from the speech and give it "dramatic-edge" such as we have in Ibsen, when some character comes out with, "There is no mediator between God and man"; I mean sentences dealing with fundamentals.

It is not unstageable because it deals with adultery; surely, we have plenty of plays, quite stageable plays, that deal with adultery. I have seen it in the nickel-plush theatre done with the last degree of sentimental bestiality. I admit that Mr. Joyce once mentions a garter, but it is done in such a way . . . it is done in the only way . . . it is the only possible means of presenting the exact social tone of at least two of the characters.

"Her place in life was rich and poor between," as Crabbe says of his Clelia; it might have been done in a skit of a night club and no harm thought; but it is precisely because

it occurs neither in fast nor in patrician circles, but in a milieu of Dublin genteelness, that it causes a certain feeling of constraint. Mr. Joyce gives his Dublin as Ibsen gave provincial Norway.

Of course, oh, of course, if, *if* there were an [Henrik] Ibsen stage in full blast, Mr. Joyce's play would go on at once.

But we get only trivialized Ibsen; we get Mr. [George Bernard] Shaw, the intellectual cheese-mite. That is to say, Ibsen was a true agonist, struggling with very real problems. "Life is a combat with the phantoms of the mind"—he was always in combat for himself and for the rest of mankind. More than any one man, it is he who has made us "our world," that is to say, "our modernity." Mr. Shaw is the intellectual cheese-mite, constantly enraptured at his own cleverness in being able to duck down through one hole in the cheese and come up through another.

But we cannot see "Ibsen." Those of us who were lucky saw Mansfield do the *Peer Gynt*. I have seen a half-private resurrection of *Hedda*. I think that those are the only two Ibsen plays that I have ever had an opportunity of seeing performed, and many others must be in like case. Professionals tell us: "Oh, they have quickened the tempo. Ibsen is too slow," and the like. So we have Shaw; that is to say, Ibsen with the sombre reality taken out, a little Nietzsche put in to enliven things, and a technique of dialogue super-added from Wilde.

I would point out that Shaw's comedy differs essentially from the French comedy of Marivaux or De Musset, for in their work you have a very considerable intensity of life and of passion veiling itself, restraining itself through a fine manner, through a very delicate form. There is in Shaw nothing to restrain, there is a bit of intensity in a farce about Androcles, but it is followed by a fabian sermon, and his "comedy" or whatever it is, is based solely on the fact that his mind moves a little bit faster than that of the average Englishman. You cannot conceive any intelligent person going to Mr. Shaw for advice in any matter that concerned his life vitally. He is not a man at prise with reality.

It is precisely this being at grips with reality that is the core of great art. It is Galdos, or Stendhal, or Flaubert, or Turgenev or Dostoevsky, or even a romanticist like De Musset, but it is not the cheesemite state of mind. It is not a matter of being glum; it can be carried into the most tenuous art.

The trouble with Mr. Joyce's play is precisely that he *is* at prise with reality. It is a "dangerous" play precisely because the author is portraying an intellectual-emotional struggle, because he is dealing with actual thought, actual questioning, not with clichés of thought and emotion.

It is untheatrical, or unstageable, precisely because the closeness and cogency of the process is, as I think, too great for an audience to be able to follow . . . under present conditions.

And that is, in turn, precisely the ground of my arraignment.

All of this comes to saying: can the drama hold its own against the novel? Can contemporary drama be permanent? It is not to be doubted that the permanent art of any period is precisely that form of art into which the best artists of the period put their best and solidest work.

That is to say, the prose of the *trecento* was not so good as Dante's poetry, and, therefore, that age remains in its verse. The prose of the Elizabethan period was at least no better than Shakespeare's plays and we, therefore, remember that age, for the most part, by drama. The poetry of Voltaire's contemporaries was not so good as his prose and we, therefore, do not remember that period of France by its verses. For nearly a century now, when we have thought of great writers, we have been quite apt to think of the writers of novels. We perhaps think of Ibsen and Synge. We may even think of some poets. But that does not answer our problem.

The very existence of this quarterly and of the Drama League means, I take it, that an appreciable number of people believe that the drama is an important part of contemporary art . . . or that they want it to be an important or even great art of today.

It is a very complex art; therefore, let us try to think of its possibilities of greatness first hand.

#### ACTING

I suppose we have all seen flawless acting. Modern acting I don't know, I should say flawless *mimetic* acting is almost as cheap and plentiful as Mr. A. Bennett's novels. There is plenty of it in the market. A lot of clever, uninteresting people doing clever, tolerable plays. They are entertaining. There is no reason to see anyone in particular rather than any other one or any six others. It is a time of commercial efficiency, of dramatic and literary fine plumbing.

But great acting? Acting itself raised to the dignity of an art?

Yes, I saw it once. I saw Bernhardt; she was so wobbly in her knees that she leaned on either her lover or her confidant during nearly all of the play, *La Sorcière*, and it was not much of a play. Her gestures from the waist up were superb. At one point in the play, she takes off a dun-colored cloak and emerges in a close-fitting gown of cloth of gold. That is all—she takes off a cloak. That much might be stage direction. But that shaky, old woman, representing a woman in youth, took off her cloak with the power of sculpture.

That is to say, she created the image, an image, for me at least, as durable as that of any piece of sculpture that I have seen. I have forgotten most of the play; the play was of no importance.

Here was an art, an art that would have held Umewaka Minoru, great acting.

#### SPEECH

But it is impractical? Perhaps only a crazy, romantic play would give a situation of abnormal tragedy sufficient to warrant such gestures? And so on.

I noticed, however, one other thing in that Bernhardt performance, namely, that the emotional effect was greater half an hour after I had left the theatre than at any time during the performance. That, of course, is a "secret of Bernhardt's success."

Maybe, but it is due to a very definite cause, which the practical manager will probably ridicule. It is possible, by the constant reiteration of sound from a very small bell, to put a very large room in a roar, whose source you cannot easily locate. It is equally possible by the reiteration of a cadence . . . say the cadence of French alexandrines, to stir up an emotion in an audience, an emotion or an emotional excitement the source of which they will be unable to determine with any ease.

That is, I think, the only "practical" argument in favor of plays in verse. It is a very practical argument . . . but it may need the skill of Bernhardt to make it of any avail.

I might almost say that all arguments about the stage are of two sorts: the practical and the stupid. At any rate, the rare actor who aspires to art has at his disposal the two means; that is, speech and gesture. If he aspires to great art, he may try to substitute the significant for the merely mimetic.

#### THE CINEMA

The "movie" is perhaps the best friend of the few people who hope for a really serious stage. I do not mean to say that it is not the medium for the expression of more utter and abject forms of human asininity than are to be found anywhere else . . . save possibly on the contemporary stage.

Take, for example, the bathos, the *bassesse*, the consummate and unfathomable imbecility of some films. I saw one a few weeks ago. It began with a printed notice pleading for the freedom of the film; then there was flashed on the screen a testimonial from a weeping Christian, a "minister of a gospel," who declared that having had his emotions, his pity, stirred by a novel of Dickens in his early youth, had done more to ennoble his life, to make him what he was than any sermons he had ever heard. Then we had some stanzas from a poem by Poe (Omission: we had had some information about Poe somewhere before this). Then we had some scenes out of a Poe story in before-the-war costume; then the characters went off to a garden party in quite modern raiment and a number of modern characters were introduced, also a Salome dance in which the lady ended by lying on her back and squirm-

ing (as is so usual at an American garden party). Then the old before-the-war uncle reappeared. There were a few sub-plots, one taken from a magazine story that I happened to remember; later there came Moses and the burning bush, a modern detective doing the "third degree," Christ on Golgotha, some supernatural or supernormal creatures, quite nondescript, a wild chase over the hills, the tables of the law marked, "Thou shalt not kill," some more stanzas from a lyric of Poe's, and a lady fell off, no, leapt off, a cliff. There had been some really fine apparitions of the uncle's ghost somewhere before this, and finally the murderer awakened to find that he had been dreaming for the last third of the film. General reconciliation!

This film, you will note, observes the one requirement for popular stage success; there is plenty of action . . . and no one but a demi-god could possibly know what is going to come next.

Nevertheless, the "c'mat" is a friend to the lovers of good drama. I mean it is certainly inimical to the rubbishy stage. Because? Because people can get more rubbish per hour on the cinema than they can in the theatre, *and* it is cheaper. And it is on the whole a better art than the art of Frohman, Tree and Belasco. I mean to say it does leave something to the imagination.

Moreover, it is—whether the violet-tinted aesthete like it or not—it is developing an art sense. The minute the spectator begins to wonder why Charles Chaplin amuses him, the minute he comes to the conclusion that Chaplin is better than X—, Y—and Z—, because he, Chaplin, gets the maximum effect with the minimum effort, minimum expenditure, etc., etc., the said spectator is infinitely nearer a conception of art and infinitely more fit to watch creditable drama than when he, or she, is entranced by Mrs. So-and-So's gown or by the color of Mr. So-and-So's eyes.

On the other, the sinister hand, we have the anecdote of the proud manager of "the Temple of Mammon" (as a certain London theatre is nicknamed). It was a magnificent scene, an oriental palace *de luxe*, which would have rivalled Belasco's, and the manager, taking a rather distinguished dramatist across the stage, tapped the lions supporting the throne with his gold-headed cane and proudly said, "Solid brass!"

Is it any wonder that the simple Teuton should have supposed this country ripe for invasion?

Well, benevolent reader, there you have it. The drama, the art of Aeschylus and of Shakespeare, the art that was to cast great passions and great images upon the mind of the auditor! There is the "drama" staged for the most part by men who should be "interior decorators" furnishing the boudoirs and reception rooms of upper-class prostitutes, there is the faint cry for art-scenery with as little drama as possible, and there is the trivialized Ibsen, for Shaw is the best we get, and all Shaw's satire on England was really done long since in a sentence quoted by Sterne:

"Gravity: A mysterious carriage of the body to cover the defects of the mind."

Even so, Shaw is only a stage in the decadence, for if we must call Shaw trivialized Ibsen, what shall we say of the next step lower, to-wit: prettified Shaw?

What welcome is this stage to give the real agonist if he tries to write "drama"? These problems are your problems, gracious reader, for you belong to that large group whose hope is better drama.

Also, in your problem plays you must remember that all the real problems of life are insoluble and that the real dramatist will be the man with a mind in search; he will grope for his answer and he will differ from the sincere auditor in that his groping will be the keener, the more far-reaching, the more conscious, or at least the more articulate; whereas, the man who tries to preach at you, the man who stops his play to deliver a sermon, will only be playing about the surface of things of trying to foist off some theory.

So Mr. Joyce's play is dangerous and unstageable because he is not *playing* with the subject of adultery, but because he is actually driving in the mind upon the age-long problem of the rights of personality and of the responsibility of the intelligent individual for the conduct of those about him, upon the age-long question of the relative rights of intellect, and emotion, and sensation, and sentiment.

And the question which I am trying to put and which I reform and reiterate is just this: Must our most intelligent writers do this sort of work in the novel, *solely in the novel*, or is it going to be, in our time, possible for them to do it in drama?

On your answer to that question the claims of modern drama must rest.

### ***Times Literary Supplement* (review date 1918)**

SOURCE: "The Mind to Suffer." *Times Literary Supplement* (25 July 1918): 346.

[In the following review, the critic makes a plea for the production of *Exiles*.]

Many men have written interesting books about their childhood and youth, and never succeeded again in the same degree. Not only was esteem for Mr. James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* subject to this discount, but it unfortunately raised both friends and enemies whose excitement about it was unconnected with its merits: here brilliant, there tedious, the book itself rendered the stream of opinion yet more turbid. An unacted problem play is not the book to clear the public mind. Yet this work does prove the author's imagination independent of stimulus from self-preoccupation; and, though a first play, roughly

straining its means, it reveals resources of spiritual passion and constructive power which should greatly cheer the friends of his talent.

Richard Rowan, like so many gifted young men, has early rebelled against current compromises. He will not stoop either to seduce or to marry Bertha, yet of her own impulse she accompanies him to Rome, where they live in voluntary exile for nine years and bring up their little son. Meanwhile scholarly and brilliant work has won him the first fruits of renown, and by absorbing him has oppressed Bertha with the loneliness of the unequally mated. Her man is one who clings to the soul's absolute integrity as feverishly as others cling to material existence. He suffers agonies of shame and remorse when he finds himself less faithful to her than she has been to him; he confesses everything to her, and insists that she is equally free. When the play opens they are back in Dublin. Robert Hand, the great friend of his youth, a journalist, zealously prepares the University and the Press to ignore the fact that Richard and Bertha's happy union owes nothing to the law, but at the same time he undermines their domestic quietude by covertly courting Bertha. She, jealous of Richard's relations with an intellectual lady who is able to discuss his ideas in a way she cannot, and constantly indoctrinated as to her absolute freedom, receives Robert's addresses, yet relates every advance as it is made to Richard, partly in hopes of rousing his jealousy, which her own prescribes as its proper antidote, partly because, like himself, she has never hidden anything. He perceives that his old friend is acting like "a common thief" and precedes Bertha to the first assignation. But Robert, cynic and rake though he is, genuinely loves and admires his friend. His humility touches Richard, in whom, as he listens, dread wakes lest, like the ghost of his own passion, he may stand between Bertha and experiences which are her due. Like another Shelley, he decides that their rivalry must be open and unprejudiced by the past. Does he any longer really possess Bertha's heart? She arrives; he explains to her again her absolute freedom, and leaves her to meet his friend. The second curtain falls before that interview has ended. In the third act both Bertha and Robert, equally admiring and loving Richard, assure him that nothing has happened between them; but he has doubted both and cannot recover his faith—the torture of a night of suspense has been too great.

I have wounded my soul for you—a deep wound of doubt which can never be healed. . . . I do not wish to know or to believe. . . . It is not in the darkness of belief that I desire you, but in restless living, wounding doubt.

and she can only answer:—

Forget me and love me. . . . I want my lover. . . . You Dick. O, my strange, wild lover, come back to me again!

So the play ends—a situation after Browning's own heart, and seen more distinctly, less as a case put, than he would probably have seen it; only the machinery used is Ibsen's.