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Below are the quotes from each section of the book; *Ghost Light: An Introductory Handbook For Dramaturgy* by Michael Mark Chemers.

I have decided to use quotes as my preferred medium through which I convey my understanding because they highlight what exactly captured my intrigue while reading the book. They also highlight what I ordain as necessary to the study of Dramaturgy and other lines that contextualize the life around that same profession. That said, I have used the following bullets throughout the document to distinguish the different categories each quotation falls into.

- ★ – Highlights the multitude of definitions the author provides “for” and “as” a dramaturg.
- – Highlights the necessary quotations of each chapter of the book.
- ➔ – Usually one short lines, this represents the necessary quotes that recontextualize dramaturgy with the rest of the world.
- ❖ – Followed by a bigger quotation mark, “ “ ” ” are used on quotes that contextualize the history of Dramaturgy without expliciting stating what or where that history is. As such, there are of grave importance due to their explanation trait.
- – With the boldened word, will be used for certain concepts that are important to the study of Dramaturgy

CHAPTER ONE: WHAT THE HELL IS A DRAMATURG?

- “Dramaturgy is a term that refers to both the aesthetic architecture of a piece of literature (its structure, themes, goals, and conventions) and the practical philosophy of theatre practice employed to create a full performance. **Together, dramaturgy is the very blood cursing through the veins of any theatrical production.**”

★ A Dramaturg:

1. Determines what the aesthetic architecture of a piece of dramatic literature actually is (Analysis)
2. Discovers everything needed to transform that inert script into a living piece of theater (research)
3. Applies that knowledge in a way that makes sense to a living audience at this time in this place (practical application)

Difference Between Dramaturg, Director and Critic:

- On Directors... “Bly reminds us, directors were unknown, although what we think of as the director’s *function* was executed by nonspecialists (senior actors, the writer, the producer, and the like)”

- ★ “A **Dramaturg** is a member of the artistic team of a production who is a specialist in the transformation of a dramatic script into a meaningful living performance.” “A **Director**, who provides the leadership and vision necessary to the function of the company, although directors and dramaturgs look at plays and theater practice similarly.”... “ **Critics** engage the product at the site of public contact, the end of the process, while dramaturgs help to build the theatrical product from conception.”

On Phronesis:

- ❖ “ Aristotle called **Phronesis**, “**Practical wisdom**”, which includes everything one must know in order to live a good and harmonious life. Phronesis is employed to advance the greater good for oneself and one’s society in general. It seeks truth and knowledge but specifically for the creation of happiness and harmony for humanity. In the world of theater, dramaturgs are the “**phroneticists**”, keepers both of the knowledge of theater practice of the past and of the wisdom necessary to apply that knowledge to create the theater of the future. ”

★ Who Can Be A Dramaturg

- “I know dramaturgs who began their career as designers, actors, stage managers, directors, playwrights, political scientists, social activists, philosophers, historians, cultural anthropologists, and even one statistician.” They all:
 - I. Think deeply about dramatic texts and their production.
 - II. Are experts in **aesthetic philosophy** and **theater history**.
 - III. Are **strong and versatile writers**.
 - IV. Are **committed and visionary artists** who love being in rehearsals and collaborating with other artists.
 - V. Are **not scared of libraries**.
 - VI. Are **devoted to the principle** that theater should be socially as well as artistically relevant.
 - VII. Are intrepid, frontline operators, **willing to go boldly where no one has gone before**.
 - VIII. Are **versatile and adaptable**, ready to wear a variety of hats in a variety of contexts.”
- **“Dramaturgs often shift emphasis** in their careers to become excellent screenwriters and playwrights, directors, artistic directors, critics, literary managers, story editors for television and film, teachers and professors, and theater theorists and historians.”

On Forking Paths and Ghost Lights:

- “In regular novels, a character sees two futures open before him; he chooses one, and the possibilities of the other collapse. But in Ts’ui Pên’s narrative “Garden”, there are many branching paths, loops, crossovers, intersections, bridges, hidden passages, throughways, and opportunities to double back on or skip to another route. In this novel, you can choose *all* possibilities and the same instance can even be repeated under different circumstances. The dead can live again, and two persons who meet as enemies might have the same meeting as friends. **Since its writing in 1941, Borges’ compelling garden has been used as a metaphor to describe radical preconceptions of topics diverse as quantum mechanics, metaphysics, history, and genetic evolution.**” ... **“Borge’s garden is also a compelling metaphor for dramaturgy.”**
- ★ **“Dramaturgs can be the artist who** functions in a multifaceted manner helping the director and other artists to develop and shape the sociological, textual, directing, acting, and design values.... Alternatively, a dramaturg may appear to overlap with other artists in their duties, especially in interpreting the plot and shaping the production, so that an apparent redundancy may be manifested... Redundancy in both cases, can be a creative fount in service of a larger artistic impulse underlying the production’s development.”
- “When we are granted **the freedom to pursue our own curiosities** wherever they take us, to wander down unexplored and overlapping paths, and to define our work ourselves as dramaturgs, then we develop skills necessary to enrich and empower the process of theater making at all its multifarious and polymorphous levels.”

→ “Like scientists, dramaturgs often have to look back in time for answers.”

- “A ghost light is in reality nothing more than a lighting instrument left illuminated in the middle of the stage when no one is working in the theatre” ... “My personal favorite is that they were originally left on stage to propitiate (or abjure) the ghosts that were known to congregate in theaters where the metaphysical barriers between this light and the next are notoriously thin.” ... “An empty theatre is a space of ghosts (that is to say, of the echoes of the past), but it is also like Ts’ui Pên’s garden, a place of infinite possibilities, a place where, literally dreams become real.”
- “*Dramaturgists* are often listed on programs right below artistic directors and above directors.

On German Dramaturgy

- ❖ “The German model (of dramaturgy) is more formal than the American one. It’s always an institutional position that requires extensive knowledge of philosophy, languages, social policy, and literature” ... “This model encourages dramaturgs to be experts in the application of critical philosophy and aesthetics to dramatic production, to be able to comparatively analyze texts in multiple languages and from historical periods, and to be able to develop strategies for putting even ancient scripts into contexts that make them relevant and immediate for modern audiences.” German dramaturgs must have:
 - ☐ **Historical knowledge both broad and deep**, spanning multiple cultures and periods, and the ability to do historical research, especially in the area of theater production, in any period or milieu.
 - ☐ **Comprehension** of world history of theatrical practice and theory
 - ☐ **Mastery of the fundamentals** of theatrical practices from directing to playwriting to set building to show calling to lighting design to run crew to costume fitting to marketing to season selection.
 - ☐ **Facility with the many roles that theatre can play in society**
 - ☐ **Fluent and precise writing ability** at many levels for different audiences
 - ☐ **Top-notch research skills** and the power to present findings in useful ways to many different audiences
 - ☐ **Meaningful collaboration** with other theatre makers from every aspect of the process.”

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICIZING DRAMATURGY

“When you come into the theater, you have to be willing to say, “We’re all here to undergo a communion, to find out what the hell is going on in this world. If you’re not willing to say that, what you get is entertainment instead of art, and poor entertainment at that.”

– David Mamet, *Three Uses of a Knife*

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- ➔ “History, like theatre itself, is really a garden of forking paths; sometimes, while you are doggedly pursuing some elusive idea through this maze you run into yourself coming back the other way.”

Ikhnofret (ca. 1820 BCE)

- Ikhnofret’s painstaking (but tantalizingly short) account of this colossal festival provides a keen insight into the role that this kind of performance played in that culture: to provide, apparently, a glorious, celebratory context that explained political events in terms of spiritual ones, for the purpose of creating a unified society.”

Plato (424? – 347 BCE)

- “If there is one unifying theme throughout, it has to do with Plato’s concept that knowledge was not gleaned by observation and experience but transmitted from the gods by divine energy. All other kinds of knowledge are derived from acts of imagination (*mimesis*) of this higher kind of knowledge and are therefore inferior as a digital scan of the Mona Lisa would be in comparison to the original hanging in the Louvre” ... “Plato felt that when men, particularly the theatre-loving Athenians, put their faith in this form of inferior knowledge, they are spiritually and politically deranged by it” “Plato’s point, that Ion’s knowledge as an actor is actually utterly useless, even less useful than the knowledge of slaves and women (Plato didn’t think much of *them*, either), which Ion does not even claim to possess.”
- “**Tragedies** really, according to Plato, are lies, deceit, trickery, and willing domination and derangement of the rational mind by the senses, a recipe for disaster in the perfect state he is hoping to achieve: “Hymns to the gods and praises of famous men are the only poetry that should be admitted into our State. For if you go beyond this and allow the honeyed muse to enter, either in epic or lyric verse, not law and the reason of mankind, which by common consent ever have been deemed best, but pleasure and pain will be the rulers of our state.”

Aristotle

- “**Poetics** remain the touchstone for literary drama, the measure against which the great playwrights of history have compared their own writing and the standards for their societies and shows no sign whatsoever of diminishing in importance.” “*Poetics* can be called the Ur-dramaturgy. It is an attempt to define the nature of drama scientifically, according to “first principles” and observable data, classifying it into genres and discerning its components, commenting on its history and its role in the social matrix, and making evaluative judgments about the worth of individual pieces.”
- “The greatest dramas, he said, had but a single action (plotline), which permitted the playwright to delve deeply into the total meaning of a single event. He wrote that the virtue of the tragic drama (as opposed to the “lesser” comedy and epic forms) is both social and psychological, in that it generates both *pity* (an emotional reaction derived from seeing in a horrible occurrence someone suffering more than they deserve to) and *fear* (an emotional reaction derived from the realization that the person in danger *might* somehow turn out to be oneself). When pity and fear are both cultivated to a high enough pitch, the observer will achieve **Katharsis** (literally, “purgation”). A transcendental emotional experience, one of the profoundest possible for humans to feel, **Katharsis** is a purification of the mind and spirit.
- In Part 4 of *Poetics*, Aristotle writes about the origins of dramatic poetry:

- **“Poetry** in general seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature. First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and the other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures; through imitation, he learns his earliest lessons; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated. We have evidence of this in the facts of experience. Objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity: such as the forms of the most ignoble animals and of dead bodies. The cause of this again is, that to learn gives the liveliest pleasure, not only to philosophers but to men in general... Imitation, then, is one instinct of our nature. Next, there is the instinct for “harmony” and rhythm, meters being manifestly sections of rhythm. Persons, therefore, starting with this natural gift developed by degrees their special aptitudes, till their rude improvisations gave birth to Poetry.”

- ❖ “Whereas Plato is pessimistic about general humanity’s ability to determine its own path. **Aristotle is full of hope.** Whereas Plato fears the irrational aspects of humans (in himself as well as in humankind), Aristotle embraces them as part of the total human experience. **Aristotle’s dramaturgy is unflaggingly positive and affirmative** of the human impulse to improve – for him, dramatic poetry and other arts are the highest achievements of human nature, setting us apart from other animals and brings us closest to the gods. Plato devalues all things of the natural world, arts particularly: **for Aristotle, the arts are a natural** (and therefore “good”) product of the very human psychological condition that *learning gives us pleasure*. Since we learn by imitation (*mimesis*), what could be more natural, good, useful, and pleasurable than elevating *mimesis* into a high art? In so doing, Aristotle makes a very profound argument – that the drama is psychologically and sociologically therapeutic. This observation is one that many important psychologists (**like Sigmund Freud**) and sociologists (**like Erving Goffman**) explored in great detail and that became critically important to playwrights of the social-realist school, which has dominated mainstream playwriting in Europe and the United States for a century. ”

Quintus Horatius Flaccus (Horace) (65-8 BCE)

- **A good poet, by exhibiting such balance, acts as a guide and a grand unifier of a just and moral society while a bad poet will be hounded and persecuted for upsetting the balance. *Decorum* has many constituent elements all interrelated, but they may be described in three broad categories:**

- **Unity:** Horace argues that although poets should be granted license for flights of fancy, there are obvious limits, and these are determined, once again, by balance.

Drama, he suggests ought to be unified in terms not only of action, with extraneous plotlines and filigrees trimmed away, but also of tone as well: one should not mix the wild and the tame, for instance. Styles employed by the poet should always be appropriate to the subject matter, and the poet should strive to be “charming.”

- ☐ **Internal Balance:** Horace is all for inventiveness as long as it falls within certain proscribed boundaries. Specifically, he is against slavish, robotics replication of the Greeks, without heart or novelty, but he discourages the Pisos from diverging too far from acceptable custom. Horace is also deeply concerned that poets should strike careful balance between their responsibility to uplift and edify their audiences and their desire to provide titillating fare to sell their books and plays.
- ☐ **Decency:** Horace encouraged artists to be true to life but to avoid at all low costs lewdness, undue violence, indiscriminate sexual behavior, profanity, and indecency, because he contested that poetry was, since the dawn of time, the medium for the communication of proper thought and action.

Bharatamuni (fourth century BCE to second century CE)

- “The *Natyasastra* is a foundational text both for modern Indian performance aesthetics and for a populist branch of Hindu theology.
- “Like Poetics, *Natyasastra* is a self-conscious, esoteric dramaturgical text that is responsible to its own self-contained aesthetic philosophy. It claims theatrical art to be divinely inspired, as did Plato, but like Aristotle, Bharata treats drama as a learnable and valuable human skill (sastra).”

Aelius Donatus (fourth century CE)

- “It is his treatise on Comedy and Tragedy that chiefly interests us as dramaturgs, in which he writes that “comedy employs a story involving the various peculiarities of public and private behavior, which teaches us what is practical in life and what on the contrary is to be avoided.”
- “So influential was Donatus on the education of Middle Ages Europe that his conception of dramatic structure has become part of the basic assumptions we make. Playwrights, consciously or not, often build the acts of plays around his concept, and if a play does not progress more or less in this fashion, it feels very strange to the modern audience.”

Hrosvitha of Gandersheim (930? – 1002?)

- Hrosvitha was both a playwright and a dramaturg who crafted esoteric commentaries about drama and its social function. She self-consciously emulated the dramatic structure of the Roman comedy playwright Terence to create six compelling plays about the lives of martyrs and saints.
- Saint Isidore of Seville (last of the Latin fathers) argued in the seventh century that theater, with its emphasis on dialectical knowledge, was but one form of pagan wisdom among many that could be employed in the service of Christian ministry.

Zeami Motokiyo (1363? – 1443?)

- “The aesthetic quality of Grace is considered the highest ideal of perfection in many arts. Particularly in the Nō, Grace can be regarded as the highest principle. However, although the quality of Grace is manifested in performance and audience give it high appreciation, there are very few actors who in fact possess that quality. This is because they have never had a taste of real Grace themselves. So it is that few actors have entered this world.”
- “The student learns to operate (on stage and rehearsal) at 100 percent capacity but only to show the audience 70 percent and the result creates a sense of fluidity and perfect grace. When the student achieves myōsho, he won’t know it himself because he will be concentrating on maximizing every aspect of his art and skill, but the audience will perceive it, and the artist will achieve a level of unique perfection.”

Lodovico Castlevetro (1505–71)

- “Chiefly of interest for dramaturgs is Castlevetro’s 1570 book *On Aristotle’s Poetics*, in which he interprets Aristotle very rigidly to create a highly disciplined approach to writing drama. Here he formulates and cements the concept of the “Three Unities”; that is, a mandate that drama should have a single plotline (unity of action), take place in a single location (unity of place), and represent action that takes place in a single day (unity of time). The concept draws from the notion of *verisimilitude* (authenticity of representation) that differs from Aristotle’s notion of *mimesis* in some important ways.

Lope Fēlix de Vega y Carpio (1562 – 1635)

- “By appearing to condemn his own writing as “artless” and the demands of the Spanish audience as “crude,” Lope provides an elegant justification for the liberation of drama from overbearing rules and decorum of the kind insisted upon by Castlevetro. Such rigor is impossible, Lope argues, because of the demands of “the uncultured” crowd for novelty and variety, for “customs can do more among those who lack light of art than reason and force.” But beyond these facile excuses is an insightful commentary on the state of popular culture in Spain and an erudite defense of his own creative explorations and his immense body of work.”

Pierre–Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais (1732–99)

- “French architecture, interior design, furniture, painting, sculpture, poetry, and drama were considered the gold standard across Europe, assiduously studied and shamelessly copied. French drama held the neoclassical ideals articulated by Castelvetro as the highest form of theatrical expression, and these ideals were rigorously enforced.”
- “Beaumarchais’ important contributions to dramaturgy rest not only in his progressive use of plays as tools for social change but also in his body of theatrical criticism.”
- **“The fatalism of tragedy is the engine of its ability to generate *Katharsis*.** The tragic protagonist must be skewered by his own greatness, doomed by his own commitment to high ideals or sacred duties. But Enlightenment philosophy takes two premises as central: that it is within human power to improve the human condition and that nothing is inevitable except progressive transformations. Their assumptions underpin all Enlightenment accomplishments in science, social policy, and philosophy. Tragedy, Beaumarchais observed, is incompatible with this notion and “degrades” humanity by robbing it of this most fundamental principle. Beaumarchais’ writing would remain important to those playwrights of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who wished to subvert the dominance of tragedy and to those social thinkers who wished to subvert the sense that tyranny and inequality were equally inevitable. As the Enlightenment swept Europe in this period of widespread political unrest, new dramaturgies would develop to bring theater into accord not only with aesthetic ideals but also with important new principles of philosophy and social progress.”

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81)

- “Lessing would become deeply influenced by this philosophy of liberation and progress. Living by his writing alone (he is said to be the first German of letters to achieve such a feat), Lessing began to build a reputation as a minor playwright and brilliant dramatic critic, hostile to neoclassicism, and published several articles in quarterly literary journals.”
- In the 1760s, Lessing engaged in his crusade against neoclassical aesthetics in earnest. He attacked Horace and argued that aristocratic value systems and rigid HISTORICIZING DRAMATURGY 35 aesthetic rules ought not to substitute for an author’s erudition, imagination, experimentation, and honest critical engagement with society.”
- Lessing did not disregard Aristotle; on the contrary, he considered the Poetics to be “as infallible as the Elements of Euclid.”²¹ But he wrote that in their slavish devotion to

neoclassical interpretations of Aristotle, French dramatists had created a stultified, conformist theater culture.

- Lessing honored the plays of Elizabethan England, in which a playwright's invention was less restricted. Even the minor plays of Shakespeare, Lessing argues, were more faithful than Voltaire's greatest dramas to Aristotelian dramaturgy.
- An expert in play analysis and theater history who is profoundly committed to the notion of theater as a tool for dialectical self-improvement and social change. Lessing's notable accomplishment is to judge a piece of theater not on its adherence to abstract ideals but on its effectiveness within its immediate culture.
- As it views theater as a dialectical tool, dramaturgy shifts its engagement from abstract aesthetic idealism to the development of certain practical philosophical models of interpretation.

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CHAPTER THREE: POWER PLAYS

- The professor's reply contains, of course, an admonition that we dramaturgs particularly should always keep in the forefront of our minds, which is **"Have I really asked enough questions of this play?"** The answer to this must always be a humble **"not yet."** It is a reminder not to rest on our laurels and not to cease exploring the darkened terrain just because we found one possible way to cross it. **A play is a garden of forking paths: it is sheer madness to think that after a month, year, or decade of study, we can exhaust its dramatic possibilities.** But Johnston's reply also is a reminder that in theater, the biggest limitations we ever encounter are the ones we construct ourselves when out of laziness or obtuseness we fail to use our imaginations to their full extent.
- At the end of the day, it's really not possible to **"read too much"** into a good play, not if you approach the process of reading with integrity and rigor.
- Taken as individual movements *the isms* provide powerful precision tools for perceiving the meanings, both intended and unintended, of a piece of drama.

DRAMA AS DIALECTIC

- Fundamental to any logical process, *dialectics* begins when one debater proposes an idea (**or thesis**), then an opponent proposes a counter idea (**or antithesis**), and they argue it out, with the ideal result being not necessarily that the strongest idea triumphs but that what will emerge is a third idea that's better than either of the two initial ones (**a synthesis**). A perspicacious dramaturg will remark that this is a dramatic model, because it is grounded in dialogue and relies on conflict."
- Human individuals and societies, like organisms, evolve, adaptively discarding old useless ideas in favor of new useful ones in response to oppositional forces, both from within the society and without. **Every new social or psychological state of being, Hegel observed, contains in it contradictions and shortcomings that will sooner or later necessitate its destruction and replacement with a new state of being.**
- ❖ " Johnston notes that **in a Shakespearean tragedy, we are introduced to a moral universe that is "closed";** that is, the social order is nondialectical, ordained by God, whose will is manifested in things like who gets to be king. The villain is someone who seeks to be more than he or she was ordained to be and violates the natural order for selfish reasons. Because of an Elizabethan worldview that viewed all the elements of the universe as connected in a rigid hierarchical system, this disruption of the human social order actually affects the entire universe. In the various plays, this results in earthquakes, bad

weather, riots, and odd animal behavior and occasionally causes the metaphysical barriers between this world and the next to become weak and permeable, permitting the presence of supernatural nasties like witches and ghosts in the material world. This state of affairs persists until a hero arises to restore the order (which he can only do by dint of tremendous personal sacrifice). **In romantic tragedy, which appears in the works of Lessing, Friedrich Schiller, and Goethe, for instance, the universe is morally “open.”** That is, there is no hand on the cosmic tiller directing the course of human events, and humans are therefore capable of dialectics, progressively creating their own fates by the choices they make. The hero in this case is the transgressor, standing up to the antiquated, stultifying order and causing tragic but muchneeded disorder. As a result of this disruption, a new order arises that is better (in the sense that it allows humans more freedom to explore their own paths to righteousness and harmony) than the one it replaces. The Shakespearean hero is one who lays down his life for traditional order; the romantic hero is a rebel.”

- **In a society that is dynamic, open to dialectical thought,** and reliant on scientific principles and technological innovations and whose rulers do not resort to censorship, it is possible to employ drama (the most dialectical of all arts) as a critical, even essential component of human self-discovery. This is drama as staged philosophy and the playwright and dramaturg as thinkers.
- Sometimes, productions shore up their shallow dialectical content **with big-budget spectacle** in the form of the designer’s magic and up-tempo song-and-dance numbers.
- **Such plays can even be damaging** if they distract audiences from serious problems by creating the false sense that **“everything is okay.”** In light of the potential of the drama to act as a Hegelian tool for dialectical self-discovery, producing this kind of drama is like using a supercollider particle accelerator to toast a marshmallow and produces a very sanitized theater: commercial and from a dramaturgical point of view uninspiring.
- When **working on drama that is dialectically rich** and intended as a tool for self-discovery and social progress, the dramaturg should be at least as skilled at critical philosophy as the playwright. It is necessary to “read into” such plays as deeply as possible, and critical theories provide excellent tools for doing just that.
- **Actors act, designers design,** directors direct, and dramaturgs ask questions; critical theory is a set of tools for the shaping and answering of questions.

- Any attempt to methodize or categorize philosophical movements cannot avoid giving short shrift to the full range of ideas in the movement, to crossovers and hybridizations between movements, and to internal disagreements within movements.
- ➔ (Historical Criticism)
- The term *Theatrewissenschaft* (“theater science”) was coined by scholars around 1900 to describe a rigorous, objective analysis of the historical contexts and production conditions of plays and periods.
- Historical research (which encompasses biography, ethnography, sociology, and anthropology) **is the cornerstone of humanistic inquiry** for the simple reason that history is identity.
- ➔ History is, after all, presentable only as a series of stories that communities tell about their own origins and developments, triumphs and struggles, and together these create a sense of the society and the individual’s role within it. What is an individual identity except a collection of such stories (national, tribal, religious, familial, and personal)?
- ➔ The philosopher George Santayana (1863–1952) wrote famously in his 1905 book *The Life of Reason* that **“those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”**
- History, done well, **can provide a map of the past** that indicates possible paths to the future. Historical understanding both broad and deep of one’s art is often the determining factor between a great artist (one who makes a mark on that history) and one who is merely interesting for the moment.
- **Historians are tragically aware** that the historical record is fragmentary, full of misdirection, and even lies.
- This realization led British satirist Terry Pratchett to quip in 1997, **“History changes all the time.** It is constantly being reexamined and reevaluated, otherwise how would we be able to keep historians occupied? We can’t possibly allow people with their sort of minds to walk around with time on their hands.”
- **Historians of art have had a tendency to view documents** like laws, records, and other histories as of a different category than aesthetic works. Histories and laws are thought to reveal “truths,” while aesthetic works are believed to encode that truth within untrustworthy fictions.

- In the past four or five decades, there has been something of a territorial battle between “**traditional theater historians**” and “**theater theorists**” in the academy. This is partially because critical theory, following Karl Marx, sees all language, documents, and artifacts (especially histories) as inherently ideological and so has often set itself against traditional historical methods.
- ★ **Historical research is the bread-and-butter** of dramaturgy that provides the basis of understanding that any production needs to succeed.
- ★ **The best dramaturgs are** rigorous historians, sharp theorists, and visionary artists, and they move fluidly between camps at academic conferences and in rehearsal.

→ Structuralism

- Saussure felt that the answers to questions like “**What is beauty?**” or “**What is truth?**” could not begin to be answered until we could actually determine what it is we mean by beauty or truth. Words, he felt, were a barrier to knowledge.
- ☐ Saussure conceived of **semiotics** (or “semiology”) as a tool for describing the structure of human language, that is to say, as a model for describing how “signs” (in Latin, *semae*, human tools for the conveyance of meaning, which include words, gestures, and other forms of communication) mean what they mean.
- ☐ **The signifier** is that part of the sign that is perceived in reality: the utterance of a word, the wink of an eye, or what-have-you. **The signified** is the concept or abstract that is indicated by the signifier.
- ☐ If we think of critical theory as a meal, **semiosis** is the plate upon which the rest of it is served.
- Because the signs do not actually connect to their material referents, they establish systems of meaning that are sometimes based on wild assumptions and omissions and often produce meaning in entirely unintended ways.
- *Semiotics* is sometimes quite disturbing in its facility for revealing the networks of illusions that constitute our lives.
- ☐ **Semiotics** makes theater “readable.”

- The character on stage is not the actress, nor is it a function of the script but a separate entity composed entirely of signs.
- ☐ **Structuralism** describes a broad territory, but its common characteristics are: a focus away from misleading surface elements towards the underlying structures of meaning, an awareness that the meaning of any part of the system is determined in relation to other parts of the system and not to some transcendent “truth,” and an assumption that such structures underlie all systems that produce meaning.
- ☐ aesthetic criticism.

MARXISM

- **Karl Marx (1818–83)** admired Hegel’s devotion to dialectics and agreed with him that history is the product of the collisions of social forces. However, Hegel attributed the evolution of society to an idealized concept of a “spirit of the age” and felt that changes in this zeitgeist determined the way people think and act, the culture that they create, the politics they follow, and so on down to the day-to-day choices of an individual’s life and the material conditions people experience. Marx felt that this idea was correct in every respect except that it was upside-down; it was the material conditions of life that determined how people think, feel, and act. As opposed to Hegel’s “dialectical idealism,” then, Marx offers “dialectical materialism.”
- **The problem, as Marx saw it, was that the Industrial Revolution had generated a state of economic affairs that was deeply unfair to its workers.** The owner turns the profits to becoming richer and expanding his or her economic empire, while the worker languishes at the same level because the worker’s pay is connected not to the value of a widget but to the perceived value of his labor. This worker is alienated from the product of his labor. Meanwhile, lawmakers come from the owner class (they’re the ones with the leisure time and the fiscal resources to be the rulers), so they make laws that are designed to protect this state of affairs, both to keep the value of labor artificially low and to keep the workers from being able to do anything about it.
- ❖ “Marx felt that this state of affairs encouraged oppression, hunger, poverty, violence, and social chaos and envisioned a different society that was just and therefore harmonious. He noted that it was the workers who controlled what he called the means of production: the farms, the mines, the factories, the shipyards, and all the infrastructure of the industrialized West. ”

- **The entire purpose of culture in a capitalist society** is to obscure that injustice; to create myths and distortions that make this unequal power split seem perfectly right and natural.
- **Marx wrote that art ought to** strive to work against this distortion, to expose the workings of this unjust system, to foster a consciousness of class issues, and to rouse the anger of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie.
- Marxist criticism of art is designed to accomplish the following tasks:
 - Expose the narratives of obfuscation that illegitimately naturalize the dehumanization of and violence against oppressed peoples
 - Provide counternarratives of resistance and liberation
 - Act as a base of educating “hearts and minds” to make proper social changes that increase justice and equality
- He views traditional drama as one of the many products of the “**triumphal procession**” of a society that is made possible by the bloody destruction and oppression of others. To disguise this, he writes, drama and other arts are infused with a kind of aura of transcendent beauty that at once illegitimately disconnects art with material reality and erases their true identity as artifacts of exploitation.
- **Bertolt Brecht (1896–1956)**, one of the most important playwrights, directors, and dramaturgs of the twentieth century. In 1926, when he was assistant dramaturg at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin (one of the world’s most prominent theaters), Brecht went so far as to say, “When I read Marx’s *Kapital*, I understood my plays.” Building on the work of other directors like Erwin Piscator and Vsevolod Meyerhold, Brecht developed a radical political dramaturgy that he named “epic theater.”
- **Augusto Boal (1931–2009)** Boalian theater could occur anywhere—on the street, in a restaurant, or in a park—effectively ambushing audiences who had little or no warning before they would suddenly be watching a production. In this respect, **Theatre of the Oppressed** is deeply committed to Marxist principles of alienation, recontextualizing ordinary affairs in the context of these surprise performances. But Boal’s theater is also profoundly dialectical, even to the point of inviting the audiences to help the actors revise the storylines of the performances for more harmonious outcomes.

PSYCHOANALYSIS

- **Freud famously mapped** the psyche as three separate regions in constant, tumultuous, and dialectical relationships with one another. At the base of human consciousness is the

id, the animalistic urges toward pleasure and away from pain that drive all human action. In conflict with the id is the superego, the repository of ideals, laws, and taboos that make existence in human society possible. These two zones are in a perpetual war in which the id's urges are tamped down and redirected by the superego's restraints, but almost all of this conflict takes place in the "unconscious mind," and the individual subject is utterly unaware of it. All the individual subject is aware of is the outcome of that conflict moment-to moment, and that adjusted awareness is called the ego. In a perfect psyche, the superego channels the energetic urges of the id into productive and harmonious activities, and the ego reaps the benefits of this dialectic.

- But social-realist playwrights like the influential **Norwegian master Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906)**, found in **psychoanalysis** a system for explaining the irrationality of human thought and behavior that was rational and above all dialectical, ideal for character development in plays designed to reveal hidden truths about the human condition, without resorting to the mysticism of the romantics.
- **Anton Chekhov (1860–1904)**: Stanislavski's primer on **realistic acting**. An Actor Prepares, remains a central text in the training of actors all over the world.
- ❖ **"The Performance Group**, a collective of American theater artists who applied a less-mainstream interpretation of psychoanalytic theory (espoused by the European theorists Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their book *Anti-Oedipus*) to the creation of a series of counterculture performances in the 1960s and 1970s. These performances included nudity, sensual caressing, violation of actor-audience boundaries, and possible drug use. One notable event was an adaptation of Euripides' *The Bacchae* known as *Dionysos in 69*, in which actors moved fluidly between roles during performances, and audience members were brought onstage to join the performance. The Performance Group, following the pioneering work of French radical theater experimenter Antonin Artaud (1846–1948), sought to make their performances a form of psychological and social therapy not only for the audience but for the performers as well. How well they succeeded is still hotly debated, but there is no doubt that they pushed the boundaries of what is possible in the theater remarkably far and left an indelible mark of liberation on experimental theater."

FEMINISM, GENDER THEORY, AND QUEER THEORY

- **Marxism's humanitarian agenda did little to** liberate women from oppression within the chauvinist social systems that have dominated human cultures for millennia.

- As Marx observed of capitalist cultural products, patriarchal cultural products are largely engaged in making the oppression of women seem normal, usually by asserting that women are somehow “**less than**” men in terms of physical and mental capability
 - **Feminist thinkers present as evidence** for this, among other things, the absence of women thinkers and artists from the historical record, which they argue is the result of a misogynist process of validating the contributions of men more highly than women. Semiotically speaking, these male-dominated millennia have resulted in a way of thinking that so devalues women that even our language is stacked against female liberation, and almost all characteristics culturally associated with women are considered weak and ineffective when compared to male-associated traits.
- Where feminisms depart from one another is in how best to bring these states of being about.
- ☐ “**Radical**” or “**cultural**” feminism assumes that men and women are fundamentally different, with irreconcilably different ways of seeing the world and that the feminine viewpoint is fundamentally better than the masculine. Such feminists see the problems of sexism as inherent in any system guided by a masculine perspective, and the only solution is to tear down these systems completely and replace them with female-dominated ones.
 - ☐ The second broad category is “**liberal**” **feminism**, which sees patriarchy as a problem of the system but not of any fundamental, essential quality of men and women. Radical action is not needed to create equality between men and women, merely a process of enlightening both men and women to the pernicious effects of sexism and creating a new, more harmonious political sphere free from patriarchal influence.
 - ☐ A third broad category is “**materialist**” **feminism**, which sees the entire identity of femaleness itself as a social construct, like other identities, inscribed expediently in the service of the wealthy and powerful. Instead of looking for an “authentic” femaleness, materialist feminists focus like Marxists on the material conditions of reality that create false expectations and illusionary realities at the expense of women and men both.
 - ☐ Feminism is particularly interested in what is called the “**male gaze**,” a socially conditioned process of “seeing” women represented that guides a sexist interpretation, and theater provides ample examples of that gaze and of opportunities for subverting and redirecting it.
- ➔ **Scripts take on new meanings each time they are performed.**

- *Queer Theory* also fosters a “queer-conscious” tradition of playwriting and dramaturgy that liberates homosexuals from the typically denigrating representations they have historically suffered.

READER-RESPONSE AND RECEPTION THEORY

- Traditionally, the artistic process has been seen as one of transmission, in which an artist viewing the world develops an idea and expresses that idea through the artistic medium. In this model, the audience or reader or viewer is a more or less passive receptor of the idea, and the work’s value was assessed largely on its effectiveness as a medium for transmitting the idea. Audiences, then, should strive to be the ideal receptors for the “truth” of the piece, revealed by the author in the process of viewing.
- **The ideal audience is a fiction**, which is a good thing, because such a theory frees the viewer from the dictatorship of the author, permitting a “readerly” approach to art that allows and even encourages multiple interpretations and multiple meanings.
- The play’s longevity stems not from the impact of the original production but rather from its facility in speaking to many audiences in many cultures over many periods.
- ★ Theater is really all about reception and the ways in which it can alter the production of artistic meaning.
 - ❖ *Maria Irene Fornés (1930–)*, Cuban-born playwright whose work experiments with subverting of traditional audience reception. In the first production of her important 1977 play *Fefu and Her Friends*, the audience was physically divided into separate groups, and each group saw the scenes of the second act in a different order. As a result, people’s perspectives were weighted differently, and each group effectively saw a different play than any of the others. No single individual’s perspective could be wholly trusted nor wholly discounted; therefore, the interpretation of the acts of the powerful, violent final scene was impossible except through sharing perspectives with members of other groups.
 - ❖ *Harold Pinter (1930–)*, British Nobel laureate, whose plays are stripped of definitive meaning in many critical areas, leaving the interpretation up to the audience. In Pinter’s plays like *The Birthday Party* (1957) and *Betrayal* (1978), human psychology (especially in such crucial areas as character and memory) operates perversely in accordance with unseen inner forces and desires. “What happened” is entirely dependent on whose perspective the viewer is following, and even that can change suddenly and radically. Language is meaningless—silences, however, are pregnant with potential. An air of menace

surrounds this ambiguity; its consequences are dire. The reception of Pinter's plays by audiences around the world exemplifies the importance of reader-response theory: Pinter is celebrated in certain quarters, vilified in others, categorized alternately as "absurd" and "Leftist." Like Mamet, Pinter refuses to clarify, so it is up to the viewer to determine meaning for him- or herself.

POSTSTRUCTURALISM AND POSTMODERNISM

- ☐ The term **modernism** broadly describes social and cultural movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that put a strong emphasis on the ability of humans, through logic and diligence, to eliminate barriers to progress towards superior states of being. In modernism, the past is usually examined, found wanting, and discarded in favor of the next big thing, while a classical sense of "high art" is preserved and even sacralized.
- ➔ These thinkers, beginning perhaps with **Friedrich Nietzsche**, forecast that this way of life would in violence, decadence, and nihilism.
- ☐ **Deconstruction theory** enables a new school of thought, poststructuralism, of which postmodernism in art is thought to be a product. Poststructuralism, like its forebear structuralism, is concerned with the systems that underlie everyday interactions, but it does not adhere to the idea that such systems are closed and unchanging. It sees them instead as chaotic, founded on nothing much but illusionary connections, an observation that enables poststructuralists to interrogate systems of authority and reconfigure their interpretation to respond to new questions, without the traditional pious regard of institutionalized readings.
- ☐ **poststructuralism** is generally concerned with, to paraphrase Dan Latimer, the shish-kebabbing of every sacred cow it can find.
- ☐ **Postmodernism**, then, is what replaces the deconstructed modernism. It is a conception of social and cultural processes as perverse operators that are generated not from any underlying reason or truth but from capricious human desires alone.
- Particular emphasis is placed on the subject of identity, which is understood by **postmodernists to be grounded not in any real**, material truth but constructed by social processes.
- ➔ **Race is a system of exclusion and persecution that is only vaguely tied to actual skin color.**

- In abandoning the search for truth, **postmodernism dissolves hierarchies of all kinds.**
- **Postmodernism has proven popular because** it provides what appears to be an excellent description of modern life, particularly in the West (where mass consumerism, the privileging of the viewpoint of the “regular Joe,” the chaotic representations of reality provided by the electronic media, the Internet, a general suspicion of elite institutions like universities and the government, and the facility that public figures have for “spinning” facts to fit their agendas all appear to confirm the futility of the search for “truth” and the joy available in the fetishization of surfaces).
- **Viewpoints** is actually a body of techniques for actors and directors when approaching a play, notable for its deprivileging of the text, which becomes subservient to notions of space, emotion, movement, and time. Actors are encouraged to do their own research, without limits on their curiosities, to bring in other texts to enhance or alter the meanings present in the original script.
 - *Robert Wilson's (1941—)* work emphasizes the postmodern view of language as a site of crisis, beautiful yet always on the verge of collapse, by including images and sounds (like screams, a baby’s “crib poetry,” or animal vocalizations) or calling attention to the constructedness of language with visual verbal graffiti.

POSTCOLONIALISM

- ➔ The native inhabitants of those colonies, however, could not participate in the political processes that determined the conditions of their lives, nor could they enjoy the fruits of their own labors as the wealth of their nations was siphoned off to line the coffers of their European (and, later, American) masters, who battled one another for control of colonies and trade routes.
- Said argued, **Orientalism** did not really describe the conditions it purported to analyze; it actually created them by using a language that was preemptively weighted against the East. In effect, the prejudices were built around vague notions that had no referents in reality, and the goal of Orientalist studies was to justify the prejudices (thereby legitimizing Western colonization of those peoples) by finding evidence to support them.
- **Postcolonial theory has also been widely applied** across the disciplines of the academy but has a particular home in the criticism of drama. Drama, with its emphasis on dialectics, its wide accessibility for many audiences, and its ability to be performed cheaply, has a special appeal for writers from colonized communities.

- ★ **The better a thinker can** put him- or herself into someone else's shoes, the more effective that thinker will be as a cultivator, innovator, and creator of a vibrant and important theater culture.

- ★ – Highlights the multitude of definitions the author provides “for” and “as” a dramaturg.
- – Highlights the necessary quotations of each chapter of the book.
- ➔ – Usually shorter lines, this represents the necessary quotes that recontextualize dramaturgy with the rest of the world.
- ❖ – Followed by a bigger quotation mark, “ “ ” ” are used on quotes that contextualize the history of Dramaturgy without explicitly stating what or where that history is. As such, there are of grave importance due to their explanation trait.
- – With the boldened word, will be used for certain concepts that are important to the study of Dramaturgy
- – This is used to highlight quotes that are absolutely necessary to the study of theatre in general, in the sense that they provide danger warnings for the field.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE STEP PROGRAM FOR SCRIPT ANALYSTS

To reduce the latter to the former, to weigh the latter against the former, everywhere to exclude chance, to cause everything that occurs to occur so that it could not have happened otherwise, this is the part of genius that works in the domains of history and converts the useless treasures of memory into nourishment for the soul.

—Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy* #30

- **The work of genius** is characterized not by those sudden flashes of insight that sometimes come but by a process of engaged, humble, and methodical discovery and refinement that eventually results in something good and useful. In dramatic writing, this is a process that has remained astonishingly uniform throughout the historical record.
- ★ **The answer is that a play is a machine, one that manufactures meaning.**
- When a dramaturg reads a play, he or she does so with the expectation that pretty soon someone, probably an artistic director, is going to come up and ask, “So, what’s that play about?” That’s a question about the meaning of the play; that is to say, about the thematic elements of the play. Deriving a theme from a script is an intense process of deep critical engagement and strict attention to detail.

Step 1. Admit That You Don’t Know Everything

- ***The art of theater cannot be taught, only experienced.*** The art of the theater does not occur in the script but rather in performance; that horribly brief moment when months of study, training, collaboration, rehearsal, budgeting, and planning meet a live audience head-on.
- As ***Diderot*** said, we must move the audience, and the only way we know to do that is to drill our technique so long and so hard that we are able to create the illusion that there is no technique at all.
- All the skills of the theater begin with reading; that is, with understanding the fundamental mechanics of dramatic literature.
- ★ The dramaturg’s main task is to be the custodian of the script and its meaning (which means, also, its context, its philosophy, its spirituality, its sexuality, its theatricality, and any part of it that can be mined by the company to create meaning).

- ★ It is our job to ask questions, constantly, of the script, the director, the cast, the design, the audience, and most important, ourselves and our own preconceived notions. Developing an ability to read plays critically means looking at the mechanisms that shape and drive the play and figuring out how the playwright meant them to work in their original contexts. Then, and only then, are we prepared to try and make them work in our own contexts.

Step 2. It's All About the Performance

- the script is not the finished work of art.
- ★ **The poem** is activated by your reading of it, and the complex processes that generate meaning and pleasure and everything else we read poems for are all right there. The poem needs you, the reader, and only you in order to become art.
- A dramatic script resembles sheet music more than it does any other form of writing.... , a dramatic script is actually written in a complex code, and it requires a lot more than the imagination of one reader to activate. It's not a work of art. It is rather a blueprint; a plan, or if you are of a more devious frame of mind, a plot for creating a work of art (more on that later).
- **Playwrights** count on the cohesive operation of many, many systems of meaning in order to bring their vision about: space, sets, lights, sounds, gestures, vocal stress and intonation,

Step 3. Action

- The lines of text on the printed page are the script are not actions but instructions for actions; some specifically described, some apparently only when staged.
- ☐ **the action of the play** is made up entirely of smaller units of action, which nowadays we usually group into, appropriately, acts.

Step 4. Reading Backwards

- ☐ **A beat** is as the smallest actable unit of action..... each beat describes an action whose result is actually the beginning of the next action.
- ★ There is only one way to read a script backwards, and that is to read it forwards, twice.

Step 5. The Agonists

- it's profitable to identify **a protagonist and an antagonist**. People often make the mistake of thinking that the protagonist and the "hero" are the same person. Nothing could be more obfuscating.
- The term **protagonist** derives from the Greek root *agon*, which means "**ordeal**" or "**struggle**." It's also the root of the English word *agony*. **Agon** was a term that the ancient Greeks used in reference to things that involved the opposition of two discursive forces, most notably a legal or political case.
- The terms **protagonist and antagonist** transferred to the Athenian theater sometime in the sixth or fifth century bce. When we seek to identify the protagonist of the play, it becomes (like everything else) a question of action.
- ➔ In Ibsen's masterpiece *A Doll's House*, a loyal, middle-class wife who has never rebelled against patriarchy in her life decides to leave her husband and children, and the drama produced by that choice is so compelling that the play continues to fascinate us more than a hundred years after its creation.

Step 6. Given Circumstances

- **Given circumstances** is an important term used by directors, actors, and designers when they are trying to determine the shape of their ideas about characters, sets, costumes, and so on.
- ➔ **A play is like a shark:** it has to keep moving forward at all times, or it dies. It is not a sense of lost stasis but, rather, the given circumstances of a particular play that determine its internal logic and by extension the various paths that the action can take.
- ❖ "Sometime after the opening beat comes a point in the development of the action that presents a choice to the protagonist that will irrevocably shape the rest of the drama. Playwrights and dramaturgs call it variously the "pointof-no-return," the "inciting incident," or the "attack."

Step 7. Needs, Obstacles, and Conflict; or, "Gee Whiz! Thanks, Dad!"

- ❖ "What Shakespeare, Arthur Miller, and August Wilson knew is that if plays are machines that are made of actions, **they are fueled 100 percent by conflict**. The process by which playwrights create conflict is mechanically very simple. Given circumstances give rise to needs; needs incite characters to action. Obstacles appear that block the characters from getting what they want. That generates conflict that is emotionally or intellectually compelling to an audience (but only when the audience cares whether the characters get what they want). The characters develop tactics and strategies to get around those

obstacles, and that process puts flesh on the skeleton of the play's action. How characters act to resolve conflicts reveals their traits: is a character willing to kill to get what he wants, like Macbeth? Does he resort to trickery, like Puck from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? Does he turn his back on his family, like Tom in Tennessee Williams's *Glass Menagerie*? Conflict, in its many flavors, is the essence of drama. ”

Step 8. Lines of Conflict: Peer Gynt's Onion

- It is critical to identify the various nexus points of conflict in the drama, because how they play out will give us our most important clues to the themes of the piece.
 - Playwrights can generate conflict on multiple levels of awareness simultaneously, each one resting on the other and supporting yet another like Russian nesting dolls, and each one with a different observation about the human condition to divulge.
- ☐ **Line of psychic conflict.** Here is where the subconscious battles of the individual ego take place, the eternal war between our drives and our sensibilities that create (and disturb) our sense of self.
 - ☐ **Line of personal conflict.** This tracks the conscious awareness of our proclivity to be our own worst enemy (the protagonist and antagonist are the same character).
 - ☐ **Line of individual conflict.** This is the most commonly seen line of conflict, that between two people (the protagonist and antagonist are two distinct characters)/
 - ☐ **Line of social conflict.** Conflict here deals with institutions, responsibilities, bonds of family and tribe, class and other political identities, and history (the antagonist is not a character but a social institution, a norm, or a group).
 - ☐ **Line of natural conflict.** Here are fought battles that deal with larger perspectives than human societies encompass: weather, extreme temperatures, time, distance, light, and darkness (the antagonist is not a human thing but something found in nature).
 - ☐ **Line of supernatural conflict.** Metaphysical concerns are in play: here the protagonist's struggle is against gods, fate, ghosts, devils, space aliens, witches and also abstractions, ultimate values, and recognitions that lie beyond the scientifically knowable universe.
 - ☐ **Line of supertextual conflict.** These aesthetic concerns involve other plays, traditions of playwriting and production, common symbolism or allusion, or dialogues with other cultural forms. This is not a question of contention between a protagonist and antagonist but about the relationships between streams of cultural products.
 - ☐ **Line of supertextual conflict.** These aesthetic concerns involve other plays, traditions of playwriting and production, common symbolism or allusion, or dialogues with other cultural forms. This is not a question of contention between a protagonist and antagonist but about the relationships between streams of cultural products.

- ★ Plays derive a significant portion of the meaning they produce through their (sometimes obscure) relationships with other plays (as well as with music, novels, philosophy, poetry, art, and other forms of expression).
- ➔ Historian Andrew Sofer notes in *The Stage Life of Props* (2003) that whole eras of dramatic literature might employ the same symbolic object, like a skull or a fan, so the use of such a prop specifically taps into a discussion that is greater than the scope of the play itself.

Step 9. The Climactic Plot

- ☐ The “**Aristotelian**” or **climactic plot**, which dominates Western dramatic literature, tends to follow a basic parabolic shape that is easily recognizable (techniques for plotting nonclimactic dramas will be dealt with explicitly in the following chapter).
- ☐ **The plot** is the sequence of actions that appears on stage. **The story** is a narrative concept that the playwright uses to frame the plot and make sense of the actions in a larger context.
- **For a climactic graph** (see fig. 1), the x-axis (the horizontal line) denotes the time that passes as the play unfolds, and the y-axis (the vertical line) denotes the level of emotional intensity experienced by the audience

The Major “Fixed” Plot Points Are The Following:

- ☐ **Closing beat.** This is the last complete action of the play. Where have we wound up? What’s been resolved? What was the aftermath of the resolution? Who was rewarded, and who punished? What lessons about the human condition have been learned and by whom and how?
- ☐ **Climax.** The climax is defined in this model as the beat that incites the highest intensity in the audience. If it is a classically constructed piece, this moment is usually when the central conflict of the play is resolved, for good or ill, and the chain of actions that began with the attack (which is major plot point 3) has concluded. The whole play has looked forward to this point, and the remainder of the play looks back at it; this is why we refer to this kind of plot as “climactic.”
- ☐ **Attack (or inciting incident).** This beat is the moment when the protagonist makes a choice that irrevocably leads to the climax.
- ☐ **Opening beat.** This is the first complete action of the play—often the source of given circumstances. Where are we? What’s going on? What has happened already?

- ❖ “The actions in the section of the play encompassing points 4 and 3 were called *protasis* by the Roman dramaturg Aelius Donatus, or the moments when the given circumstances of the play are revealed. Donatus called the beats between 3 and 2 *epitasis*, or “intensification,” when the circumstances laid out in the protasis interact and raise the emotional pitch of the action. Because of the rising slope of the plotline between points 3 and 2, it is also called “rising action.” Donatus referred to point 2, the climax of the play, as the *catastrophe*, literally the “downturn,” and called the beats between and including points 2 and 1 the *catastasis*, literally the “settling,” because the intensity of the play drops off after the climax as we assess the consequences of the plot’s resolution. Another name for this segment is the *dénouement*. ”

- ☐ **Discovery beats.** Also anagnoresis. These are beats in which some critical information necessary to the plot development is revealed
- ☐ **Reversal beats.** Also peripeteia. These are beats in which the flow of action in the play is radically altered, such as when Oedipus’s search for Laius’s murderer becomes a inquiry into his own history.
- ☐ **Expository beats.** These beats reveal “backstory,” that is, all the things that happened before the plot began. In Oedipus, almost the entire play is expository, but most plays deal quickly with exposition, as it can really drag down the forward motion of the plot if it’s not handled well. The worst example is *featherdusting*, referring to the practice of having the servants in the manor house discussing the events of the day while dusting the armoires.
- ☐ **MacGuffin.** This term may have originated with Alfred Hitchcock, but it refers to the age-old practice of creating beats in which something more or less random happens to “hook” the protagonist into the storyline:

→ Students of social psychology and cultural anthropology will recognize that this “arc” structure repeats itself quite often in human events—we tend to organize religious and social rituals along the same lines from bar mitzvahs, revivals, and faith healings to political debates and courtroom procedures. Even sporting events tend to resolve themselves in arcs (if they don’t, we say they are “anticlimactic”). There is a rhythm here that humans find very familiar—its absence, particularly in a play, can be disorienting and disturbing (see chapter 5).

Step 10. Aesthetic Distance

- ☐ **Aesthetics** is a cognitive, evaluative process by which humans assess abstractions like beauty, sublimity, profundity, horror, and other matters of what we call “taste.”

- Plays that dramaturgs are most likely to handle on a day-to-day basis are usually designed to elicit aesthetic responses either from the head or the heart.
- Plays that aim to elicit an emotional response, such as Aristotelian katharsis, are far more common, running the gamut from classical tragedy to melodrama to romances. But the best plays in the canon do not exist exclusively in one category or another.

Step 11. Theatricality, or, “the Unseen Shark”

- **Theatricality**: Smiley called this quality “**a play’s capability, as a staged performance, of interesting and entertaining an audience.**”.

➔ Unquestionably, the most theatrical thing is change.

- **Theatricality** specifically takes advantage of those qualities of the theater that no other medium can reproduce. As the old theater aphorism goes, “Theater is life, film is art, television is furniture.” Unlike the action of film and TV, theatrical action exists in space and time along with its audience. The audience can actually shape the performance with its reactions. Unlike any other art form except live music and dance, theater is present. A theatrical imagination looks for solutions that enhance the theatergoing experience, not distract from it.

ON THEATRICALITY:

- He removes the need for any onstage effects that would distract the audience from the emotional impact of the act:
- The second feat of theatricality Sophocles achieves here is that because the scene is being created in words, he can carefully direct the audience’s eye to the goriest details and steer them towards interpreting the vision in a way most conducive to his goals as a playwright.
- We don’t see the shark, so the one we create in our minds is scarier than the one they could come up with in the effects lab.

Step 12. Thought and Theme

- ➔ Aristotle’s term in the *Poetics*, translated as both “theme” and “thought,” is actually **διάνοια** (diánoia), a concept he learned from his own teacher Plato. Plato used the term specifically to emphasize that true knowing is a dialectical process (as opposed to the then–more commonly used term “noesis,” or mere “understanding”). So when Aristotle talks about the diánoia of a play, he is talking about the dynamic, dialectical wisdom that lies at the heart of all this production of meaning.

- If plays are supposed to be dialectical tools for self-discovery, then the process only works if the audience participates in the discussion and therefore in the creation of artistic meaning.
- ☐ **The thought or theme of the play** is the intellectual, spiritual, mystical, psychological, visceral, or emotional cargo it carries—some artists like to speak of the “truth” of a play.
- ★ it is our job as dramaturgs to come up with an approach to a text that a director can build a performance upon.
- ❖ “ The point I’m making here is that the theme of any great play is meant to be a discussion of its truths, not a pat moral aphorism suitable for a fortune cookie. The best I can do, as a dramaturg, is to read deeply, engage critically, deduce my conclusions, and present them as clearly as I can to my production team. Then we can wrestle our way through them together in a manner that hopefully makes for a night of entertaining, even important, theater. ”
- ★ from a dramaturgical perspective, the right answer is the one that produces the most interesting things on stage.

- ★ – Highlights the multitude of definitions the author provides “for” and “as” a dramaturg.
- – Highlights the necessary quotations of each chapter of the book.
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CHAPTER FIVE: FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION

- “As the blueprint for that machine, **the script of the play** has to actually work—in other words, it has to be performable. All good scripts have that characteristic in common.
- But humans are complex creatures and produce complex art forms. Where free experimentation is valued, form follows function as playwrights try new ways to reach audiences.

COMEDY

- He (Aristotle) notes that comedy has great versatility and employs all kinds of poetic devices (book 1); that it is mimetic (although tragedy represents men as better than they really are, and comedy as worse, as said in book 2); that it was invented and developed in the outlying villages (kommai) of Greece by wandering troupes who were not sufficiently sophisticated for the city audiences (hence, comedy was played for the kommoi, “commoners,” book 3 relates); that it is for poets who prefer satire and lampooning, and like tragedy it was initially improvisational (book 4); that the nature of comedy is the mocking of “low persons,” ugliness, and defects that are not painful or destructive, and that it has no clear recorded history because it was never taken seriously (book 5); that it is more artificially constructed than tragedy (which is based on history), because it deals more primarily with the probable rather than the possible (book 9); and finally, that comedy may have multiple plots and different catastrophes for different characters and that everything is resolved in the end (book 12).
- ❖ “Aristotle’s writings lead to the conclusion that the different pleasures of tragedy and comedy both result from watching a character violate an important social rule. Of course, they do so for very different reasons. In tragedy, the characters know the rule is inviolable, but they violate it anyway (consciously or unconsciously) because they must—something in their noble nature demands it, and then they must pay the terrible consequences. The Aristotelian view of comedy suggests that its pleasure derives from watching a character violating an important rule after succumbing from ignorance, lust, greed, or some other human failing to a low, bestial nature. The katharsis of tragedy, he says, is a result of the spectator’s fear that he or she, too, could be profoundly affected by the tragic protagonist’s choices; in comedy, for Aristotle, the stakes are a lot lower, so we are free to enjoy it without fear.”
- The most important aspect of comedy, as a very old vaudeville joke goes, **is timing**, and this is as true for the delivery of an individual joke as it is for jokes that traverse the millennia.

- On the other hand, ancient problems of warmongering, nationalism, and sexual politics are still prevalent, so most of *Lysistrata* does continue to be relevant and hilarious. comedy depends utterly on context, and context is always changing.
- Like katharsis, **laughter** is a release of tension.
- Aristotle felt that it was the lowering of personal stakes that made laughter possible in drama and so gave it short shrift in the *Poetics*.
- So meaningful is **laughter** that it is often considered politically or spiritually dangerous because the pleasure we get from laughter is so great that we will sometimes value it more highly than the rule that was broken.
- When it comes to politics (from global to playground), laughter can be a weapon. When employed by powerful people against the weak, laughter is derisive and humiliating, but when employed by the weak against the strong, laughter is an equalizer. Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975) wrote, “Laughter presents an element of victory not only over supernatural awe, over the sacred, over death; it also means the defeat of power, of earthly kings, of the earthly upper classes, of all that oppresses and restricts.”
- **Comedy depends on context.**
- ★ Comedy is boundary blurring, so naturally it is often very difficult to describe its structure except on a case-by-case basis..... who is the butt of the joke? What secret truth is revealed in the laughter? Why laugh instead of cry?
 - ☐ **Old Comedy** refers to a genre of Athenian comedies dating to before the end of the Peloponnesian Wars, of which only the plays of Aristophanes survive. These plays are, like Athenian tragedies, highly ritualized with large choruses and musical numbers.
 - ☐ **Satire** pokes fun at human failings and usually is used in plays that are critical of political figures in some way.
 - ☐ **Farce**, a cousin of satire, describes a frenetic, sometimes violent form of comedy in which fabulous plot contrivances are brought to bear in the service of exaggerating some peccadillo or weakness of human nature.
 - ☐ **Commedia dell’Arte**, a Renaissance form of comedy, relies on stock characters that date back to New Comedy and probably even earlier, to the Greek comic form that Aelius Donatus called “*commedia attellana*.”

- ☐ **Black Comedy**, which takes particular delight in finding the humor in things that are horrific or taboo, reveals that attraction and repulsion are really two sides of the same psychological coin.
- ☐ **Parody** is a term that refers specifically to drama (and other art forms) created to mock through imitation a subject usually treated with seriousness (this could be a person, an idea, an institution, or another work of art, for instance).
- ☐ **Kyōgen** often parodies Buddhism, with an emphasis on slapstick and stock characters.
- ☐ **Comedy of Humours** refers to a comic form popular in the Renaissance that capitalized on the idea (which dates back to Hippocrates) that human personality varieties were generated by bodily substances known as “humours.” An excess of blood made a person sanguine, an excess of choler (yellow bile) made one angry (choleric or bilious), an excess of black bile (in Greek, “melas khole”) made one melancholy, and an excess of phlegm makes one uncaring and apathetic (phlegmatic). “Humourous” comedies create comic archetypal characters based on these principles.
- ☐ **Comedy of Manners**, popular in the Restoration, is a form of satire (often sexual in nature) mocking the dominant social class in which witty, educated, and sophisticated people attempt to politely destroy each other.

OVIDIAN (EPISODIC)

- ☐ **Metamorphoses** is often called an “epic” poem (or a “mock-epic”), which places it in the same category as poems like the Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Aeneid. Certainly, Ovid intended such comparisons to be made, as he wrote in dactylic hexameter (in which Roman heroic poetry was always constructed).
- ☐ Aristotle defines “**epic**” writing in opposition to tragedy, as an alternate form of mimesis. The epic, Aristotle says, is like tragedy (and unlike comedy) in that it imitates “characters of a higher type” but differs in verse form and narrative style.
- ★ Tragedies tend to confine themselves to a single event that unfolds in “a single revolution of the sun,” but epic plots have no such limits. Epic poetry does not unfold as a single action but as many different actions in separate episodes.
- It is in the interest of the powerful to promote fatalism among those it oppresses, Marx wrote; it is their most powerful tool because it utterly undercuts the will to resist.

- **Epic theater** is structured in episodes rather than in a single arc, follows multiple storylines, has a clear leftist social agenda, and focuses on the lives of real people instead of dimly remembered figures from history or fictional monarchs.
- ★ **epic theater** is designed to be dialectical and open, with the audience included in the creation of meaning.
- ★ **Epic dramaturgy** argues that life does not actually unfold in the neat arcs described by climactic plays; instead, our lives are a series of events that seem only peripherally connected, at best, and we struggle to make sense of them.
- But in the work of all of these playwrights, there is a sense of inevitability in their destruction, a sense that they are doomed no matter what choices they make. This fatalism seems to be what gives tragedy much its emotional force, and it is the problem Epic dramaturgs find irresolvable.
- ➔ **Epic theater is explicitly Marxist** and revolutionary, but the efficacy of this kind of dramaturgy need not be limited to such a specific agenda.
- **Ovidian plays** would then be those that, for whatever reason, adopt episodic rather than climactic structures in order to reflect a less-rigid approach to the theatrical experience. When subjecting an Ovidian play to analysis, keep firmly in mind that the fluidity of the play's structure is not a weakness of the writing but a sign that the play's form is subservient to its content and its larger social goals.
- ❖ **WAITING FOR GODOT**

“**Waiting for Godot** presents a thorny problem for dramatic analysis. After an early performance in Paris, critic Vivian Mercier wrote in the Irish Times that Beckett had “achieved a theoretical impossibility—a play in which nothing happens, that yet keeps audiences glued to their seats. A lot happens. There is a great deal of action, much of it funny, some of it violent, a good deal of it tragic. There are plenty of expository beats, MacGuffins, anagnoreses, and peripeteias..... David Ball called *forwards*, actions that move the plot along. The actions of the play do not logically lead to new actions, nor do they grow from previous ones. If you were to plot this play, it might look like an electrocardiogram of someone having a heart attack—arrhythmic spikes of intensity that just drop off and go nowhere. There is no arc. There is no climax. Because there is no climax, there is no way to distinguish protagonist from antagonist, nor is there any way to tell which portions of the play mark protasis, epitasis, or catastasis.....

In 1957, *Waiting for Godot* was directed by Herbert Blau with inmates at the San Quentin prison in a theater that had once been a gallows room. An inmate of a German prison had translated the play himself in 1954 with the intention of doing a production. He wrote to Beckett, “You will be surprised to be receiving a letter about your play *Waiting for Godot*, from a prison where so many thieves, forgers, toughs, homos, crazy men, and killers spend this bitch of a life waiting . . . and waiting . . . and waiting. Waiting for what? Godot? Perhaps.” It is not a poorly constructed play, Esslin argued, nor is it a play that has a secret meaning. It is rather a dramatic expression of a stark and extremely bleak worldview. In addition, Esslin notes that Beckett had suffered personal violence for which he could find no logical originating cause and no purpose. In such a universe, where our best efforts lead to chaos and death, what is the point of human existence? If humans determine what is right for themselves, and there is no larger purpose to life, then any individual action is no better or worse than any other. If there is no hope of salvation or progress, there is no moral order to the universe that guides our actions. Even suicide suggests the possibility for improvement. Without that hope, why bother? What’s to be done? The first line of the play tells us: “Nothing.”

- ➔ Recognizing that part of this bleakness is humorous, Esslin called this worldview “Absurd” in reference to the work of French philosopher **Albert Camus**..... The **Absurd worldview restores that anti-Enlightenment, anti-Marxist fatalism that utilitarian dramaturgy like Brecht’s had wished to purge out of Aristotelian drama.** ”
- The plays of British playwright Caryl Churchill, including *Cloud 9*, also contain structural similarities to Absurd plays, but they are certainly neither apolitical nor uncommitted to a sense of drama as a tool for dialectical self-improvement. To accommodate *Waiting for Godot* and these many descendants, “diffused crisis” is an attractive term because it groups these plays together by structure, not by content or any presumed authorial intent.
- ❖ “ One of the most important effects of *Waiting for Godot* was its effectiveness in widening the expectations of mainstream audiences about what a play can look like and do. Experiments in this form include altering the way structurally that an audience experiences the event. While the avant-garde experimented with forcing direct confrontations with the audience, certain playwrights have written diffused-crisis scripts that actually generate different experiences for different members of the *same* audience. Among them are María Irene Fornés’s 1977 *Fefu and Her Friends*. This play is presented in three parts. – Only from a perspective that involves multiple views and accommodates multiple narratives intersecting, a perspective that no single audience member can achieve alone, can this performance be understood in its totality..... A second play that fractures its audience is Griselda Gambaro’s 1971 *Information for Foreigners*. ...

Designed to take place in a house with many rooms, the play requires that the audience be split into several groups, each one with a tour guide. The guide takes each group through the house, and in each room, and in the hallways, the group encounters performances that range from darkly humorous exchanges to vivid depictions of brutality..... Obviously, in a play like this, terms like *protasis*, *protagonist*, and *climax* have no meaning at all. The effect structurally is that each spectator will have a unique experience of the performance, but on a more profound level, the play works to make the audience feel intimately involved, even complicit in (and therefore culpable for) the horrific events being staged. ”

BOTTOM LINE:

- ★ **Keep asking questions**, remain open to the answers, and remember that dramatic analysis is, like everything else playwrights do, a process. Reading is to dramaturgy what inhaling is to lungs—an intake, assessment, and compartmentalization of material necessary for survival. What a dramaturg exhales is discussion, which largely manifests itself as writing. The next chapter describes formulas and techniques for turning an analysis into something clear and useful—written documents that encapsulate dramaturgical ideas for the people who need them most: the cast, the crew, and the audience.

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CHAPTER SIX: WHY THIS PLAY NOW

“What does a dramaturg do?” – “I question.” it is the question that guides the dramaturg’s inquiries, lines of research, and relationships with the rest of the troupe and the audience.

WHY THIS PLAY NOW?

- Why have we chosen this play to present at this moment in history in front of this audience? Why is it important? To what concerns of ours, and theirs, does it speak? For that matter, who is our audience? Who are we? What is it we wish to say? Why is this text the best way to say it? Do we have anything new to say, or are we recapitulating an older idea? How will we make it relevant? How will we make it work? What values do we wish to convey? What values do we actually convey? Why are we doing a play and not some other form of art or political action? Why are we doing this play and not some other play? Why are we doing theater at all?
- ★ Research is half of the dramaturg’s process; the other half is transforming the research into useful ideas and integrating them into the production. Often, that means writing. Research and writing are the particular skills of the dramaturg—the better a dramaturg is at them, the more useful he or she will be to a production process.
- But therein lay our greatest obstacles as well, because, as Zappa said, information is not knowledge. the Internet can make our work significantly easier, but it notoriously has three characteristics that impede research:
 - ★ First, it has no way of distinguishing between valuable information and total garbage. Unlike brick-and-mortar publishing, the Internet has very few gatekeepers, few experts on hand to evaluate the quality and utility of a piece of writing before it is presented to you. it’s weaker the further back in time you need to go.
 - ★ Second, the Internet has a tendency to try very hard to distract you from whatever task you are trying to accomplish.
 - ★ Third, the ease and speed of the Internet have dramatically cheapened the perceived value of information and communication. The upside of this convenience is that the ’net proliferates information—it’s much harder to restrict knowledge

... The better you are at these tasks, the more useful you will be as a dramaturg:

- ☐ **Clarify your topic.** It's really a process of sifting the noise from the information....The better you contextualize and historicize, the more solid the foundation and the clearer the research.
- ☐ **Go to the source.** a lot of the work dramaturgs do is in other languages or with ancient texts,
- ☐ **Listen to the chatter.** What are the experts saying about your topic?..... A modern dramaturg should become familiar with the discourse of scholars
- ☐ **Contribute.** You have a unique set of experiences that have formed in you a unique pattern of thinking, and that's valuable.
- ☐ **Rinse and repeat.** As you progress through the development of your production, you will be required to return to the library and repeat these steps several times. New ideas or information will emerge, and it will be your job to place them into the proper context with an evolving WTPN.

WRITING A PRODUCTION HISTORY

Creating a production history should be the first step in the dramaturgical process for any show you do.

- **Has it ever been done before? If not, has something like it been done?**
 - **What did that production look like?**
 - **Who was involved?**
 - **What were its goals (Why this play then)?**
 - **Was it popular? controversial? Unnoticed?**
- ★ Artistic directors, directors, designers, and actors all devour production histories with great relish, not only because it helps them properly contextualize their own work but also because it gives them a sense of being part of theatrical history.
- ★ You must discover the what (title), when (date), where (country, city, and theater), and who (author, translator or adapter, dramaturg, director, designers, actors, and production team) of the first production (of a contemporary play) or a recent significant production (of a classic play).
- ★ You need to put it in context by retrieving the reviews of that performance. Begin by writing a condensed summary of the reviews, getting a sense of what the production meant to the author and the people who saw it originally.

WRITING A PERFORMANCE REVIEW

You also need to develop methods of figuring out how other production teams have answered WTPN in their own work.

→ Goethe's 3

- What were they trying to do?
- Did they do it?
- Was it worth doing?

❖ “ In order to answer the first of Goethe's 3, “What are they trying to do?” you must have already done some preliminary research before you even get to the theater. At the very least, you have already read the script, if it is available, and executed a preliminary structural analysis. What is the play's action? What kinds of choices do the characters make? What are the lines of conflict? How are they resolved? What is the theme of the play? What moral, spiritual, psychological, cosmic, sexual, social, or intellectual weight does the play carry? Now it's back to the library. Do a production history: find out what you can about the author, the context of the play's writing, and what motivated the author to write the play in the first place. You don't necessarily have to write a full formal document, but the more about the play you know, the better prepared you will be for the next step. Take notes in a small notebook with a good pen, and bring the notebook (and the pen) with you to the theater. ”

★ The job of a dramaturg is to determine to the best of one's ability what choices the production team made in transforming the raw material of the script to life. That's the interesting part for theater professionals! You will be unable to do that well, if at all, unless you are familiar with the original text beforehand (if it was not a devised or documentary piece).

- Look carefully at the posters outside, the décor of the lobby, the program notes (especially the program notes; that's the production dramaturg talking to you), advertising, previews, and any other piece of information that you can identify as an attempt by the production to prepare you for the performance. Everything you encounter between the moment you arrive at the theater and the moment the performance begins is a manipulation of your aesthetic sensibilities.
- What is their overall mission?
- How does that impact their choice of this play?
- you can cash in on that relationship by getting your neighbors' reactions and including them in your own analysis.....

Ask the following questions:

- What happens onstage and in the audience?
- What are you led to expect?

- Have they changed the script? If they have, are the changes minor cuts or more substantial alterations? Why have they made changes? Is the production faithful to the authorial intent?
- At intermission and when the show is over, pay close attention to the audience. What are they discussing? How did they react to the show? Are they confused about what they just saw? Angry? Agitated? How is the social ambience compared to how it was when you arrived?
- If there's a post-show talkback, don't dare miss it. If not, hang around and wait for the actors to come out, and eavesdrop on their interactions with the audience and one another.

Analysis

- Was the action of the play clear? If not, why not?
- Was the direction coherent? Were the stage pictures meaningful? Did the show appear to have a unified sense of theme and purpose?
- Was the acting cohesive and fluid? Was it appropriate to the material? Was it skillful?
- How did the various design elements (costume, set, light, sound) influence the overall effect? Did they enhance or detract from the play's meaning?
- Was the adaptation of the script logical and coherent? Did any changes made to the script enhance or detract from the play's meaning?
- Were the various elements of the total production harmoniously integrated? Did it all make sense?
- What x-factors (events outside the control of the production, like weather, politics, traffic, riots, stampedes, or rains of fish) affected the audience's experience?
- Bring it into a larger context. What's up in the world? What's up with this theater? How are we supposed to understand such a performance? Bring in your critical theories here. Analyze audience reaction as far as you can.

EVALUATION:

- Discuss the worth of this work as a piece of art overall.... But your liking it or not liking it needs to be a total evaluation of all of the above points, including the play's relationship to the rest of the world and the audience's reaction.....
- You have to come up with an explanation of why the actor chose that action. You can't make such a judgment until you get the whole picture. What is the production trying to do?.....
- Your evaluation of every aspect of the production needs to be made on the production's own merits and against a standard that was set for you by the production team, as well as by your own sense of what kind of theater is important.....
- The final element of your review answers the question Why this play now? What's going on in the world that makes this play relevant?..... Did it teach me anything? Was I entertained?

CHAPTER SEVEN: NEW PLAYS

- ★ Dramaturgy is a process of artistic discovery and creation that intersects many creative disciplines, and a dramaturg is a specialist in that process.
- ★ There is also a great deal of interest in adapting established scripts into new forms. The dramaturg's task in these situations is to spearhead a process that cultivates the script toward a production of some kind—usually in phases.
- many dramaturgs become specialists in new-play development. The four kinds of new-play Development are working with playwrights, devised theater, documentary theater, and adaptation.

WORKING WITH PLAYWRIGHTS: FORGING AN ALLIANCE

- **Working with a new play** is the ghost-lighting equivalent of navigating a ship into unexplored waters. Neither the dramaturg nor the playwright knows exactly what's out there, but there the script must go, and the dramaturg's job is to help the script get there in one piece. There are some institutional guidelines, however.
 - Prepare the script for a preliminary production (usually a staged reading)
 - Facilitate the artistic relationship between the playwright and the producing agency (especially with the director)
 - Help the playwright get and assimilate the most useful knowledge possible from the production
- ❖ **Dramaturgs** are known to have a lot of exposure to theater practice, and the best new-play dramaturgs are deeply engaged ones who are as committed to the playwright's mission as the playwright, who use their skills in dramatic analysis as the beginning of their process, not the end, and who bring to the table immense critical acumen and broad knowledge sharply focused by the production realities of the art.
 - The dramaturg should inform the playwright that the dramaturg is at the service of the play; **it is the dramaturg's job to help the playwright prepare the script for production**, to ask constructive questions, to give advice, and to facilitate exchanges with the director and the rest of the production team, not to take over the writing process. In fact, the dramaturg isn't going to do any writing on the script at all.
 - *Is the dramaturg the writer's pal*, nurturing him or her gently along to production? Or is he an acknowledged authority, like a professor, there to give direction? what a playwright really needs from a dramaturg is neither a buddy nor a teacher but an ally. Playwriting can be a very isolating process, particularly if the playwright is covering new territory or trying something controversial. The playwright needs to know that the

dramaturg will get right in there alongside to fight those battles. The playwright needs to be able to trust the dramaturg not only to be there to support the good changes but also to provide honest, engaged criticism for the improvement of the script. The playwright needs someone in the trenches who understands what he or she is trying to say and helps to say it in a way that will work on stage. The playwright needs an objective, critical eye, one that is smart and informed by years of training in theater history, theory, and practice. “Attaboys” and “attagirls” are all well and fine, but at the end of the day, what we’re looking to create is a script that will stand up to the immense pressures of production, and a dramaturg who is an engaged but critical ally rather than an intimate buddy or an aloof professor will be better able to predict and prepare for the worst.

- ➔ When a theater decides to foster the development of a new script, it brings in the dramaturg for the same reason a shipping company would hire a navigator: to protect its investment.
- ★ **The dramaturg’s presence** provides a contact point for the theater and a skilled critical eye to help the playwright make the best out of the work at hand.
- ★ ***An aspiring dramaturg should definitely take*** at least some playwriting classes, because the more he or she understands what the playwright’s mission is, the more effective that person will be as a new-play dramaturg. working as a dramaturg is one of the best ways of improving skills as a playwright—helping someone else navigate the perils of script craft gives great insights about one’s own.
- ❖ “ Think of dramaturg and playwright as two different hats to wear. When acting as dramaturg on a new play, never pursue the thought “I could write this play a lot better than this playwright.” You couldn’t, because it wouldn’t be this play.....if you are acting as dramaturg on someone else’s play, do that with the total commitment and dedication that you would want from a dramaturg working on your play. ”
- ★ **The dramaturg is supposed to be a bridge**—in this case, **between the playwright and the potential audience**. A dramaturg who has the same background as a playwright can be extremely useful, but a playwright can take tremendous advantage of a dramaturg from a different background by asking, “Is this getting through to you?”
- ***Critical Theory*** trains the mind to extend beyond the narrow lived experiences of the thinker. It enables us to philosophize, which is to consider the human condition from more positions than the one that fate decreed we must occupy. That’s more or less the point of philosophy, and a dramaturg with that kind of ability can be a powerfully ally to almost any writer.

THE PROCESS

working with the playwright has three steps, which match neatly with Goethe's 3:

- ☐ **Analysis.** *What is the playwright trying to do?* The first task of the dramaturg is to read the new play, and I mean really read it. Do a full-bore analysis of each of the play's beats, and an equally rigorous analysis of how the beats fit together to create a total plot. Analyze character breakdowns: isolate motives and analyze decisions. Identify the various lines of conflict. Is the playwright thinking about individual problems, social ones, spiritual ones, or what?.....Finally, do thematic analysis. What is the playwright trying to say?
 - ☐ **Diagnosis.** *Did he or she do it?* Is the action of the play clear? Is it easy or hard to follow the plotlines? Is it clear or unclear how the playwright's ideas are communicated by the character's actions? Are the characters presented coherently? Is their behavior consistent? Is the dialogue cohesive and fluid? Do the various elements of the production integrate harmoniously? Is it original, or has it been done before? How well do the play's themes come across? Is there reason to suspect that any of it has been plagiarized?1 Then, ask questions about the practicality of the piece. Is it producible? Can it be cast? Can it be directed? Can actors act these roles? Can the sets, lights, and costumes be designed and built?2 Is there anything in it that might be considered controversial?
 - ☐ **Evaluation.** *Is it worth producing?* Start with Why This Play Now? (WTPN). Can you articulate why this play is worth doing right now? If not, what needs to change in order to make it worth doing? If yes, how can it be made sharper, clearer, or more moving in the time left? A good dramaturg has an open, questioning mind.... **great playwrights break rules.** the more self-aware the playwright is about the choices he or she is making, the better the play will work in front of an audience.
- ❖ “ Particularly when just starting a relationship with a playwright, your main focus should be (like always) to ask questions, and like all the questions you ask as a dramaturg, these should be pointed, direct, and constructive, designed to help the playwright clarify what he or she is trying to say, and why, and how best to say it. ”
- **I am opposed to the idea** that playwrights need to be treated like hothouse orchids, coddled and gently misted—playwrights are tough (or they should be), and my experience on both sides of the table has always been that once the playwright knows that the dramaturg is an ally and a supporter, the level of serious (but engaged) criticism the playwright can receive is actually pretty extensive. Let the playwright know it is okay to mix it up a little, even to argue.

WORKING TOWARD PRODUCTION

★ **do question! And question!**

- ★ do share your concerns about the road ahead; point out potential
- ★ problems and crises.
- ★ do reinforce your commitment to the play.
- ★ do know when to shut up and listen to the writer.
- ★ do help the writer answer questions by drawing on your own skills as a researcher, philosopher, and lover of drama.
- ★ do admit when you are wrong or don't know something.
- ★ don't tell the writer how to solve a problem.
- ★ don't write any of the script yourself.
- ❖ This last point is very important (**see “Maintaining Boundaries” below**). Remember that the dramaturg's most important goal in this process is helping the playwright to find his or her voice—that is, to be able to articulate what, why, and how. The tight wire that the dramaturg walks in this relationship is balancing the level of input. You don't take over the process, but on the other hand you do not serve the playwright well by utterly subverting your knowledge, instincts, and skills.
- ★ **A dramaturg brings** something to the table that the playwright cannot: objectivity (or we might say *philosophy*).
- Apart from working closely with the playwright, dramaturgs often find themselves called upon to act as intermediaries between the writer and the rest of the production team, particularly the director.
- ➔ redundancy is productive
- **The playwright** wants to see a “faithful” first production, while the director wants to “interpret” the script according to the dictates of his or her own artistic sensibility. The dramaturg (as the one with the least ego involvement) can often act as a representative of both parties, fostering the amicable (or at least functional) collaboration that is indispensable to theatrical production.

MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES

- ❖ If in the past the problem was dramaturgs and playwrights not getting along, the danger now seems to be that dramaturgs and playwrights will get along *too well*.
- ☐ The events surrounding the development of the blockbuster musical *Rent* were deeply painful to the dramaturgical and playwrighting communities of the United States.
- ★ **Dramaturgs** are now usually made to sign contracts that stipulate the dramaturg's work as work-for-hire, which means that the dramaturg is relinquishing claims to royalties or other future remunerations.....

- ❖ “ The lesson of Thomson v. Larson for dramaturgs entering the profession is simply this: among the questions a dramaturg must ask is whether the contractual obligations are being exceeded when working with the playwright. The dramaturg’s job is to assist the playwright, not to do the playwright’s job for him or her. This can be a tough call, but the question of “Am I making a ‘copyrightable contribution’ to this play?” is one that must remain in the forefront of the dramaturg’s mind, because he or she will likely not be able to claim coauthorship later. A dramaturg must maintain an engaged objectivity to work as a dramaturg. ”

DEvised THEATER

- ❖ “ For Artaud, **theater was not mimetic** but actually a completely different form of reality that is poorly understood by our logical, individualistic society and much better understood by “primitive” and collectivist cultures. His theater would present itself as a kind of excursion to a primal state, one that would induce delirium and therapeutic exorcisms in the audience, who would participate in the creation of the piece. Such a theatrical experience could rely neither on texts nor on intellectual interpretation but instead would rely on inspiration and transcendent spontaneity. ”

☐ In their 2008 book, Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrndt define a **devised performance** as one for which “the performance text is, to put it simply, ‘written’ not before but as a consequence of the process.” In other words, instead of directing the rehearsal, the text emerges from (and is therefore directed by) rehearsal.

☐ In a conventional performance, **the script** is the structural and ideological frame upon which the performance is built, and the dramaturgy is the approach that guides the construction of the one upon the other. In a devised piece, the dramaturgy itself is the frame, and the script is a consequence of it.

→ **Perception** is equal to creation.

➤ If there are not a certain **level of distance and objectivity** from the creative process, the dramaturg will not be able to function as the translator of the troupe’s ideas into a larger context, understandable by a wider audience. Again, the dramaturg walks a tight rope.

★ **So what exactly does a dramaturg do when** he or she finds him or herself in an empty space full of brilliant, passionate, cutting-edge actors and a likeminded, visionary, experimental director, all really excited but with no idea what comes next? Again, there is

no hard and fast rule, because the process generates itself out of its own action. A devising rehearsal is the true garden of forking paths;

A basic list of tasks (or, at least, points to keep in mind) for dramaturgs working in this exciting creative atmosphere.

- ☐ **Facilitate the process of exploration.** A dramaturg does this partially by providing visual, historical, and contemporary research, just as for any production. But there are no particular “right” ways to take the development of this research into a text.... Companies often find themselves returning to their first ideas after weeks of exploration. Keep an open mind as well as a critical eye to encourage the process.
- ☐ **Look for emerging patterns.** Find similarities. Note when the process seems to dwell on a particular theme, idea, image, or moment. Uncover the hidden tunnels; if necessary, dig them yourself. From such connections, a dramaturg will perceive (and thereby create) the eventual shape of the whole, and it will enable suggestions of strategies for the next step.
- ☐ **Record the journey.** This is a critical task of the dramaturg in the devising process, even more so than in a traditional production, because one never knows in a devising process when the company is going to have to backtrack to the last crossroads and go the other way. Without a map of the area already explored, the dramaturg will have to rely on people’s memories of a chaotic and unstructured process and invent new terrain and explore it all over again to get there. The dramaturg is the company’s mapmaker as well as navigator.
- ☐ **Watch in the place of the future audience.** One problem that devisers sometimes encounter is that stuff that makes perfect sense in rehearsal might make less sense to the audience. . While the others submerge themselves completely in exploring the garden, a dramaturg’s job is to keep consulting the map he or she is drawing and trying to see where it might be headed.
- ☐ **Ask questions.** The dramaturg’s main task is if anything more important in this context. The question is WTPN, and the job is to constantly ask it of everyone involved, including the dramaturg, in the process. Why are we doing this? What do we hope to achieve? What is this going to mean to an audience? What does it mean to us?

DOCUMENTARY THEATER

All plays succeed to the extent that the audience finds them relevant and topical.

the idea of creating performances based on current events (as opposed to “history”) is not really a new one.

- ☐ **“Documentary theater”** took on a unique character in the twentieth century as both the right and left wings of the avant-garde experimented with consciously using the theater as a way to spread the news (even as it comments upon it). A characteristic of the

avant-garde, from whatever political leaning, was its Lessing-like desire to liberate itself from reliance on established texts and their authoritative interpretation.

- **In 1919, the Communist Party in Russia** issued a decree advocating the public reading of the news accompanied by performances of various kinds (in the proper revolutionary context, of course). In response, Meyerhold created a Living Newspaper–style theater. In 1923, a theater troupe called the Blue Blouse, heavily influenced by Meyerhold’s innovation, was formed by Russian journalists precisely to perform Living Newspapers ordinary workers around the Soviet Union.
 - The actor-journalists would condense real newspaper stories into loose performance outlines in which they performed as easily recognizable stock characters (workers, bosses, and so on). The actors wore blue smocks like the factory workers, who composed their audience (hence the name). Blue Blouse was tremendously popular and even toured internationally but could not survive Stalin’s brutal crackdown on the dissemination of information (and the government’s promotion of Socialist Realism) and was disbanded in 1927.
 - For Moreno, as John W. Casson observes, documentary theater was a means for stimulating spontaneous and ultimately therapeutic (socially and psychologically) acts in both the performers and the audience.
 - Using presentational, Brechtian staging techniques including music and dance, projections, and a disembodied “Voice of the Living Newspaper,” American Living Newspaper theater would form a dramaturgical guide for activist (usually left-wing) documentary theater makers John Allen, Alope Roy, and Augusto Boal.
- **Augusto Boal, In 1973, he wrote his influential dramaturgy *Theatre of the Oppressed*.** This book starts with a detailed repudiation of Aristotle’s Poetics as elitist and antirevolutionary and advocated a Hegelian performance that is more engaged, interactive, and confrontational. Dramaturgy of the Oppressed emphasizes breaking down the barriers between performer and audience and encourages audiences to stop the action and explore with the actors possible alternative choices that the characters might make to achieve a better outcome. One of the best-known techniques innovated by Boal is the “Invisible Theatre,” in which performances take place in crowded public places without any prior warning.
- **From a dramaturgical perspective, documentary theater overlaps with “drama therapy”** (the psychotherapeutic use of various kinds of role-playing) as well as “devised theater” somewhat but diverge from either in their explicitly political and educational mission. Today, documentary theater is growing in popularity, particularly as artists feel a growing need to respond to political crises.

- **Culture Clash.** This San Francisco–based Chicano/Latino company adapts personal interviews into cutting-edge satirical and revolutionary comedy.

ADAPTATION

Indeed, some of the great adaptations are ranked alongside their ancestors in terms of literary quality.

- ☐ Like generating devised theater and documentary theater, **adaptation** requires many of the skills of the playwright, but it is at its heart a dramaturgical activity. From a certain point of view, it could be considered the pinnacle of the dramaturg's art: the ultimate consummation of Why This Play Now in the complete reconstruction of a performance text.
- ★ **Dramaturgs turn their hands to adaptation** for a variety of secondary reasons, but the main reason derives from a need to retell a well-known, solidly established dramatic story in order to reveal some truth about it that has been obscured by its age, fame, production history, criticism, changes in production values or theatrical conventions, or any or all of these. Adaptation can do many things: it can unlock an immediacy and relevance to the play that has been lost; it can reveal a radical truth subversive to the play itself that the author did not intend; or it can use an ancient story as a platform for a new dialectic of ideas.
- ☐ **as a cumulative peak of the dramaturg's art, adaptation** requires nothing more than judicious and artistic application of all of the philosophies, analyses, and practical skills

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE COMPANY

- ★ The best troupes use dramaturgs the same way that a ship uses a navigator, as a resident expert in plotting a course from A to B, avoiding hazards known and unknown, and for finding the way again after getting lost.

- ★ – Highlights the multitude of definitions the author provides “for” and “as” a dramaturg.
- – Highlights the necessary quotations of each chapter of the book.
- ➔ – Usually shorter lines, this represents the necessary quotes that recontextualize dramaturgy with the rest of the world.
- ❖ – Followed by a bigger quotation mark, “ “ ” ” are used on quotes that contextualize the history of Dramaturgy without explicitly stating what or where that history is. As such, there are of grave importance due to their explanation trait.
- – With the bolded word, will be used for certain concepts that are important to the study of Dramaturgy
- – This is used to highlight quotes that are absolutely necessary to the study of theatre in general, in the sense that they provide danger warnings for the field.

- **An artistic director (AD)** is an individual typically hired by the theater’s board of directors who is responsible for the artistic vision of a theater. The AD usually works hand-in-hand with a managing director who is responsible for the day-to-day business and audience relations. With the managing director, the AD plans the season, hires many of the artists, supervises the press materials, and supervises artistic decisions made by others.
- **The director is the primary artistic voice** of an individual production but is usually hired by (and reports to) the artistic director..... Most other departments are accountable, more or less, to both the artistic director and the managing director.

The in-house dramaturg has to ask not just “Why this play now?” but “Why this play now here?”

- **A mission statement** is a prerequisite for the legal creation of any not-for-profit organization. The board of trustees is mainly responsible for keeping the organization financially afloat and following this mission..... Theater missions are generally broken down into broad categories:

- ☐ **Artist driven.** The theater's mission is to advance the work of a single artist or artistic vision (possibly that of the theater's founder, or of a major figure like Shakespeare or Shaw).
- ☐ **Management driven.** The theater's mission is determined by the artists who brought the company into being (such as the Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago).
- ☐ **Community driven.** The theater's mission is a direct response to a need from the community (most children's theaters have this kind of mission)

★ **A dramaturg ought to have** a detailed understanding of the theater's mission and how it was executed in past seasons..... The dramaturg helps to contextualize the work in productions and with audiences within that larger view. Understanding the theater's mission doesn't mean that the dramaturg needs to abandon his or her own artistic vision; it would hardly be useful to become an aesthetic philosopher only to be a cipher for someone else's ideas.

REPRESENTATION IN REHEARSAL

The dramaturg may be called upon to act as a representative of the theater's mission in the rehearsal hall. This representation is necessary because theaters make promises to their patrons and audiences, and it is part of the AD's job to make sure those promises are fulfilled..... The dramaturg can also provide a rich basis for collaboration by suggesting innovative choices that will engage this particular audience. Dramaturgs also have a responsibility to defend the intellectual and artistic integrity of the scripts they encounter, and sometimes, of playwrights themselves if they are present.

- **The dramaturg can damage the production process** if he or she is too willing to stifle the creativity of the production team in the service of the theater's mission but can also run the risk of alienating the audience or the patrons (or being unfaithful to a text or playwright) if he or she is too lax in representing these concerns.
- ➔ **Theaters choose programming according to** the demographics of their patronage..... A small community theater is focused on its local audience and its membership. An academic or university theater, funded by student tuitions, makes choices that are largely pedagogical (that is, concerned with the education and edification of students).
- ☐ **Creating a Dossier:** a good dramaturg will create dossiers composed of the following:
 - ☐ **A production history.** This includes a critical-response summary, copies of reviews, significant revivals, and production stills or other images if available (this is not applicable, of course, for a new play)

- ☐ **An authorial biography.** A quick summary of the facts of an author's life and a description of the impact that author has had on the theater (use the biographies in chapter 2 as a model) are included.
 - ☐ **A formal letter to the artistic director.** This letter is a formal document proposing a script for production (see the next paragraph for details).
- ★ A well-crafted letter to the AD conveys professionalism and insight and becomes the seed of later work. A good letter to the AD should include the following:
- ☐ **A plot summary**, based on one's own analysis of the play's action (see chapter 4) with a discussion of the play's major themes
 - ☐ **A preliminary theoretical outline**, that is, a critically engaged concept of how to approach the script
 - ☐ **A cast breakdown**
 - ☐ **An articulation of any significant design or production challenges**, including to do with casting
 - ☐ **A discussion of the larger sociopolitical context of the play**
 - ☐ **An articulation of WTPN that is specific to this theater**

WORKING WITH THE DIRECTOR

- John Glore admonishes, "**There is no room for arrogance among dramaturgs.** God knows there's enough arrogance and ego in the theater as it is, so dramaturgs have to be the least arrogant and most self-abasing. Maybe that's concomitant with having one of the most over-arching views of the process.
- ❖ **Productions are headed by the production director** (usually just called the director). The relationship between director and dramaturg is possibly the most important one developed as a dramaturg. Directors are the people with whom dramaturgs will have the most extensive contact, the members of the troupe whose work is most similar to the dramaturg's own, and the ones who will rely on them most strongly.
- **The director is responsible for** the successful execution of the production. His or her primary job is to provide a vision for the production. The basic task a dramaturg does for a director is to help develop WTPN.
- **It's the director's job to provide leadership** to a complex organization, to bring the various disparate elements of the production (including the dramaturgy) into a single cohesive whole, to deal with actors who sprain their ankles or get the wrong haircut, and to keep everybody from storming out at any given moment because of what he said about her at the last production meeting.

➤ **Once in rehearsal, a dramaturg's job is not to** direct the show nor to give notes to the director in the context of “If I were directing this show, here’s what I’d do . . .”

→ **Some dramaturgs compile a director's packet**, which includes the following:

- ☐ **A letter of introduction**, which includes a description of what dramaturgy means at this particular house (what a dramaturg is expected to do in prerehearsal and in rehearsal, what kinds of outreach will be done, and whatever special skills the dramaturg brings to assist the director in developing and implementing his or her vision for the production)
- ☐ **A well-theorized preliminary dramaturgical approach to the script**, focused on answering WTPN with a sense of why the AD chose the play for the season (and including any suggestions for cutting)
- ☐ **The play dossier** created previously for the AD
- ☐ **New contemporary and historical research**, which includes:
 - ☐ **Any notes, interviews, or commentary** from the playwright
 - ☐ **Scholarly articles and essays** about the play and its context
 - ☐ **Information about recent productions elsewhere**, if possible
 - ☐ **Information about the sociopolitical context** in which the play was written and in which it is going to be performed
 - ☐ **Anything else you think the director will need** to get a jump on developing the vision
- ☐ **Visual research**, which includes:
 - ☐ **Images relating to the sociopolitical context** of the play's writing
 - ☐ **Images relating to references within the play** (historical figures, important places, pieces of art, whatever is appropriate)
 - ☐ **Maps**
 - ☐ **Timelines**

Be creative in producing these elements.

★ **Dramaturgs work best when** they offer the director a collaborative menu of skills and when they demonstrate their acumen as aesthetic philosophers who are there to support, refine, and enhance the director's choices, not to control them.

★ **A dramaturg can become a director's most intimate professional confidant**, a sounding board for ideas, even an aesthetic conscience.....dramaturgs have been fostering relationships with directors that can turn into lifelong collaborations. Since increasingly many production directors started their own careers as dramaturgs (and vice

versa), directorial relationships with dramaturgs are becoming much more “normal” and easier to negotiate.

WORKING WITH DESIGNERS

While a dramaturg is working with the director in developing WTPN, the director is also engaged in working with a design team. Dramaturgy is demonstrably central to theater design, as it is to all other aspects of theatrical production. In training programs, students of theater design learn how to dissect scripts and then resurrect them as productions, using research and other creative tools to bring the text to life; Since the Renaissance, designers have acted as “conceptual engines” for the theater, responsible for generating many significant innovations.

- ❖ “ When working with designers, dramaturgs have a tremendous opportunity to exchange knowledge, viewpoints, and theoretical approaches to germinating scripts into living theater pieces. Like dramaturgs, designers rejoice in the redundancy of research because it is in that overlap that important thematic patterns appear. A dramaturg works best when he or she helps designers solidify those patterns, and a dramaturg adds depth and focus to the designer’s research in order to help construct a conceptual framework for production..... In order to be effective, a dramaturg should have some familiarity with the basic principles and lexicon of design and some understanding of how designers go about realizing the unified aspirations of the production team.....In professional practice, a “design launch,” where all the designers meet in a single large group to discuss their ideas and make plans, is ideal but fairly rare. If one exists, the dramaturg must be there to share the background information and contextualizing theories already assembled. ”

- ★ **The dramaturg should privately discuss** with the director how to proceed in this area, before the designers are brought in, and should discuss all interactions with the design team with the director.

WORKING WITH ACTORS

- ★ ***If dramaturgy is the blood of a production, as Mark Bly notes, then acting is its eyes, its ears, its breath, and its beating heart. Actors are what make theater alive.*** The acting of a production is arguably its most important quality, because if the acting is weak, the audience will not even notice how great the directing, design, or dramaturgy is.
- ➔ **Acting relies on instinct and** split-second decisions as much as on extensive training, deep discipline, and unshakeable self-control. Acting training in many parts of the world teaches the actor to “look inward” for answers to questions of performance as much as to search the historical record.

- ❖ **The more experienced an actor grows**, the better he or she learns how central the dramaturg's work is to the process and the more often he or she will take advantage of it, but it is unrealistic to expect actors to emerge as professionals ready to work with dramaturgs. The dramaturg must be ready to articulate to the actor why his or her work will be enriched by the dramaturg's art. This includes but is not limited to:
 - ☐ **Helping articulate the director's vision and WTPN** in a way that is useful to the actor's process of making choices
 - ☐ **Providing essential support materials and contextualization** to help the actor understand the purposes of the playwright
 - ☐ **Forming a vital bridge between** the actor and the audience with outreach
 - ☐ **Helping the actor maximize his own research**, emphasizing the important and eliminating the nonessential
- ➔ **The dramaturg should be present for** every minute of the auditions, sitting close to the director at all times to be ready to consult. Because the dramaturg has been part of the process as long as (or longer than) the director, the dramaturg is the perfect person to act as a sounding board for ideas as the director tries to puzzle out the best combination of actors.
- ☐ **Actor's packets.**
 - ☐ **A short statement from the dramaturg regarding WTPN**
 - ☐ **The play's production history**
 - ☐ **Articles and essays about the play** (perhaps including one written by the dramaturg) and notes from the playwright
 - ☐ **A glossary of unfamiliar terms, phrases, and ideas** (including visuals is often a good idea)
 - ☐ **A guide to pronunciation** for strange words
 - ☐ **Contemporary research** that puts the WTPN in context
 - ☐ **An explanation of any cuts**
 - ☐ **Visual research**, including maps and timelines
 - ☐ **Anything else** that will help the actors do their jobs
- ➔ **Actors need** to be supremely flexible and disciplined, intellectually speaking, and they also need to have a strong grasp of their work within a larger context. Winnow data down to the most relevant, the most critical, the most compelling, and set the rest aside (don't throw it away—it'll be needed later!). The actors have to work very fast—an actor's packet that is longer than thirty or so pages is going to look daunting and superfluous to most actors, and that risks the possibility that they will ignore the packet completely.

- ❖ **Making a good actor's packet** requires a lot of forethought, particularly in the area of the glossary. The dramaturg needs to read the play very carefully, with an extremely sharp critical eye geared towards answering this question: "What does the actor need to know to convey the proper meaning of this line?"Always be asking questions: what else does an actor need to know? The best way to figure that out is to get to know actors and as much about their process as possible.

- ❖ **The actor's packet comes with** the dramaturg to each rehearsal, and anyone, including designers and others, should feel welcome to consult it and add to it.

The dramaturg is its custodian and ultimately makes the choices about what stays in, but the more openly the dramaturg employs it, the more useful it will be to the production.

SIDEBAR: REHEARSAL ETIQUETTE AND PROTOCOLS

The dramaturg should be sure to discuss his or her role in rehearsal beforehand with each new director. In general, observe the following protocols:

- ☐ **Punctuality.** Call time is the beginning of the rehearsal, not arrival time. Be early! This is often a good time to exchange a few words with the director. Be set up and ready to work when the rehearsal starts.
- ☐ **Courtesy.** The dramaturg should never, ever draw focus away from the director, unless the director specifically requests that the dramaturg speak to the actors. Never leave during rehearsal; the director will often want to talk to you during breaks.
- ☐ **Watch.** If a dramaturg is bored, he or she is not doing the job properly. The dramaturg is not sitting in rehearsal waiting to be given a task. He or she is watching the rehearsal process, also taking notes to share with the director at a later time: these notes are details on rehearsal process, in relation to how the production is answering WTPN. The dramaturg holds up his or her end of the contract to be the director's confidant and sounding board by being present, focused, and engaged.
- ☐ **Engage in appropriate activities.** It is appropriate for the dramaturg to pitch in as a full, responsible, friendly, helpful member of the professional team.

Don't appear at rehearsal under the influence of anything stronger than *the Saint Crispin's Day Speech from Henry V*.

TABLE WORK

- ❖ **The first three or four days of rehearsal** are ones in which the dramaturg plays a critical role. Here, the actors are reading through the script together for the first time. The dramaturg should be right in the thick of it, prepared to define any strange terms, to provide a larger context, to explain how an individual moment fits into the work of the

larger plot, to provide guidance if new cuts are proposed, and to question, at every moment, whether the team as a whole completely gets what's happening in the scene.

- ★ **The dramaturg will work with** actors and designers throughout the process, just as he or she will continue the collaboration with the director. For the first week or two, the dramaturg should be in rehearsal every night. However, during the period when the director is blocking the play, the dramaturg's presence in rehearsal becomes less necessary.
- ★ **During the rehearsal process, keep a production journal.** Take the notes from each night, and record them in this journal, along with information about interesting things that happened in rehearsal.

- ★ – Highlights the multitude of definitions the author provides “for” and “as” a dramaturg.
- – Highlights the necessary quotations of each chapter of the book.
- ➔ – Usually shorter lines, this represents the necessary quotes that recontextualize dramaturgy with the rest of the world.
- ❖ – Followed by a bigger quotation mark, “ “ ” ” are used on quotes that contextualize the history of Dramaturgy without explicitly stating what or where that history is. As such, there are of grave importance due to their explanation trait.
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CHAPTER NINE: AUDIENCES

- *In the intense and high-powered machine that is theater production* in America, **the dramaturg is something of a liminal figure**, neither this exactly nor that exactly. Some students of dramaturgy initially find this liminality frustrating, but it is indeed what makes dramaturgy work because the dramaturg is at home in the worlds of criticism and

scholarship as well as administration, preproduction, and rehearsal. The dramaturg is as comfortable working with writers, actors, and designers as with directors and artistic directors.

- ★ **The dramaturg understands** what’s going on in rehearsal in a way the artistic director cannot and knows what goes on in the boardroom in a way the cast and crew cannot.
- ★ **The dramaturg knows the company’s history** and helps plan its future. As a result, the dramaturg is uniquely able to build bridges of understanding among all of these groups, who must collaborate in order to produce exciting and relevant theater. Just as the dramaturg keeps his or her eye on the “**big picture**” in terms of *history, philosophy, and aesthetic movements*, so does the dramaturg become privy to the “big picture” of the theater company as well.

THE FRONT LINE

- **Actors bow at the end of** each performance not to accept praise but to thank, on behalf of the whole company, the audience for coming.
- ★ **The dramaturg is particularly concerned with** the specific people who are coming to see the plays and must ask questions of them as of everything else. Who exactly are they? Why are they coming? What do they expect? What do they want out of the experience? How will they react to something new and different?
- ☐ **Lessing sees the theater as a tool for social and individual liberation.....**
- **Audiences will pay for good theater, and** there’s no reason whatsoever why a big-ticket Broadway lung-buster can’t also be serious, innovative, and challenging;
- ★ **Dramaturgs** who are in-house develop deep and sometimes quite intimate relationships with their audiences,

PUBLICITY

- ☐ **A close working relationship with marketing has two upsides**—it facilitates the dramaturg’s connection with the audience, and it keeps the publicity faithful to the artistic vision of the production.
- **Getting butts in seats is marketing’s job**; the dramaturg’s job is making sure those butts belong to people who are well prepared to be the production’s ideal audience.

- ★ **When it comes to brochures and press releases, the dramaturg can be extremely helpful** by providing thoughtful and engaged copy (written material for distribution) to whoever is writing the release. Like everything else dramaturgs write, marketing copy should be driven by WTPN,

EDUCATION

- **Many theaters are** required, as a condition of their grants, to provide some form of education; others do it as part of their regular missions.
- **Theater companies tap dramaturgs to** devise and implement various types of educational programs.
- **Theater, as the adage goes,** is life. Every play ever written touches on some aspect of the human condition, and people respond to that.
- ★ **The dramaturg must include** in his or her list of questions new ones like, *“What kind of people would want to see this play apart from the subscribers? What new audiences can we bring in?”*
- ★ dramaturgs should constantly be scanning the horizon for groups that might appreciate the production and on finding them should extend an invitation to participate.
- ☐ **CREATING AN EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION REQUIRES CREATIVITY AND FINESSE.** The dramaturg, using materials he or she has already developed, like the dossier and the various packets, and starting with WTPN, can craft a twenty-to-thirty-minute presentation designed to be a “peek behind the scenes” of the production. Prepare this talk ahead of time, and rehearse it. This might include:
 - ☐ **A discussion** of why this play was initially proposed and selected
 - ☐ **Historical background** about the play and its productions
 - ☐ **Biographical information** about the author(s)
 - ☐ **Visual research**
 - ☐ **The sociopolitical context** for the production
 - ☐ **Exciting things** that are happening in rehearsal
 - ☐ **Why the play** is of particular interest to this group
- ❖ **When giving the presentation,** the dramaturg needs to remember that he or she is both an ambassador of the company and probably the first contact most of the audience will have with the production. Dress, speak, and act professionally. Be prepared, open, and friendly. Let them know how important the audience is to the production.....for a dramaturg, it’s less about getting butts in seats than it is about creating an audience that is

ideally prepared to get the most enriched experience possible out of attending the production..... the dramaturg can develop his or her own workshops; perhaps host an adult-education class that meets regularly to discuss dramaturgy issues. The only limit here is the imagination.

PROGRAM NOTES

- ☐ Many dramaturgs consider their *program notes* one of their chief artistic products. It is one of the few discrete elements of the production that a dramaturg can point to and say, “I did that.” It is a critical piece of the artistic pie, because once the audience has arrived, checked their coats, found their seats, and schmoozed a little, they will check the program. The program will also be heavily exploited by the critics later that night when they are writing their reviews. Finally, the program will provide one of the only lasting traces of the production, the main source of information for future historians.
- ☐ As with the actor’s packet, a dramaturg does not want to overburden the reader; instead, he or she wants to use the five or ten minutes the reader will give the program to create the perfect viewer of the piece. At base, notes should include the following:
 - ☐ **Biographical information** about the author(s)/adaptors/ translators/ lyricists/and the like.
 - ☐ **Summary of production history** of show
 - ☐ **Brief WTPN:** Significance of show, summary of dramaturgical theory, hopes, challenges, and so on.
 - ☐ **Historical context, glossary of strange terms, maps, timelines, images,** anything else the audience needs to know to be the perfect viewer for the production.
 - ☐ **Resources** for pursuing more information
- ☐ **Program notes** are not meant to match the scholarly rigor of an academic paper, so they should be written in an easy, accessible style without jargon or obscure references.
- ★ **A dramaturg’s notes need to be** a direct outgrowth of his or her own process of questioning the play, the theater, the audience, the director, and the production team. If a dramaturg is stealing someone else’s notes, what other responsibilities is he or she abdicating?
- ❖ “ At a recent production of *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, a play written by celebrated radical Italian playwright Dario Fo about the absurdity and violence necessary in a police state, the audience was handed a program that looked like a piece of government propaganda. At a production of Bertolt Brecht’s tragic antiwar comedy, *Man Is Man*, the programs appeared to be military recruitment pamphlets. At a production of

Czech playwright and humanist Václav Havel's *The Memorandum*, the programs looked like declassified political documents. ”

LOBBY DISPLAYS

- ★ In some theaters, **dramaturgs have the responsibility of** curating lobby displays.....
The display is a great place for exploring the production more deeply, for instance, by presenting information that doesn't fit into the program notes or including visual research that enriches the audience experience (like charts, timelines, maps, photographs, and the like).

PRESHOWS AND POSTSHOW TALKBACKS

- ☐ **Talkbacks are events** that connect the audience directly to the artists and when moderated by a dramaturg, can be extremely rich opportunities for increasing your theater's audience and helping them towards a deeper appreciation of your company's work. Preshows and postshow talkbacks have in common that they are held in the theater, but they differ in several ways.....Don't hesitate to be creative, but remember the audience.
- ★ It is a very good idea to invite any groups you have met with previously to attend on talkback nights—as noted above, they'll feel comfortable with you, and that will help get the conversation going. **Talkbacks are typically led by the dramaturg**, but members of the cast, the playwright (if available), the director, and some of the design team are typically present.
- If someone has a genuine criticism, delve. **Air it out.** Be brave.
- ★ **The dramaturg's job is not to** rigidly direct the course of the discussion—that should flow naturally.

BLOGS

- ❖ Dramaturgs are all over the blogosphere and use blogs widely for any of the following functions:
 - ☐ To **keep a philosophically astute diary** of the theater culture of their region
 - ☐ To post (sometimes anonymous) **criticisms or commentaries about productions** or dramaturgical news
 - ☐ To **provide a forum for discussions** about particular issues
 - ☐ To keep **running production journals**
 - ☐ To **post actor's packets and casebooks online** (cuts down on paper and allows actors, designers, and directors to contribute directly)

- ☐ To **keep in touch with an international network** of like-minded artists and thinkers.
- ☐ To **give detailed information** to the public **about their work**.

CHAPTER X: JUSTIFICATION OF JOURNAL

The Journal was done this way, in a way such as using just the quotes of the book, and not paraphrases, out of a necessity and a bid to take in the work as a whole. The book, *Ghost Light*, is probably one of a handful that I might ever study on Dramaturgy, and thus, this method of journaling my understanding should be seen as an effort to take in the most of the book without ever overlooking the other important aspects of it.

For example, rather than just defining what *Phronesis* is according to the Aristotle;

- ☐ Aristotle called **Phronesis**, “**Practical wisdom**”, which includes everything one must know in order to live a good and harmonious life.

I rather give more content than just the definition, because the bulk of the content further enhances one’s understanding of Poetics beyond just what it is defined as.

- ❖ Aristotle called **Phronesis**, “**Practical wisdom**”, which includes everything one must know in order to live a good and harmonious life. *Phronesis* is employed to advance the greater good for oneself and one’s society in general. It seeks truth and knowledge but specifically for the creation of happiness and harmony for humanity. In the world of theater, dramaturgs are the “**phroneticists**”, keepers both of the knowledge of theater practice of the past and of the wisdom necessary to apply that knowledge to create the theater of the future.

Such a way of documenting *learnings* invites the reader of the journal to view much of the work as opposed to the little the author of the journal might have supplemented when just paraphrasing. This way deems the whole process of learning something that happens over and over again, everytime the journal is looked upon since the understanding and interpretation of the work is not on the pages of the journal. However, it is the contents that brought upon the understanding of the work that the reader faces each time they look back on Dramaturgy from this book: *Ghost Light*. This is why various bulletins are used; to distinguish one quote from the other in order of their essence to interpret the work. To highlight the categories they fall in and by that virtue, their importance to the overall study.

Thus, each reading of this work subsequently brings upon the understanding gotten from reading the book when engaged with the mind. This is why the very quotes of the book are used instead of just the essential definitions and the mind’s interpretation of them in relation to the subject.

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George Kuku

Greg Doran

TST 4560-01

04 April, 2025

DRAMATURGY PORTFOLIO

FOR *DARK ROADS* BY LAURA LUNDGREN SMITH

CONTENT:

1. Social/period reference information
2. Information on the playwright
3. Research done on any historical people
4. Any images found in research
5. Any other materials found that help to define the world of the play
6. The play's structure, including plot and character analysis
7. Pictures of the production
8. Copy of the program notes
9. Bibliography
10. Videos of the post-show talkbacks if available

❖ Vocabulary lists:

The vocabulary of the play, written in 2016, is quite modern and fitting of both the era it is set in, and the current day. Most of the dialogue will be easy to run through as a result, with only a few words or phrases listed below in need of better clarity.

1. **Witch of Ravensbruck:** A created title for the protagonist of the play, Greta.
2. **“The past has sharp teeth”** – This is one of the many Personified statements within the play, which highlights the complexity of the narrative, especially in its bid to drive home mental images that convey meanings.
3. **Vermin, Filth, Scum, and Pig:** These are insults used by the guards at the camp on the female Jews and Gypsies.
4. **Jewess** – A female Jew
5. **Gypsies** – “A member of a traditionally itinerant people who originated in northern India and now live chiefly in Europe and in smaller numbers throughout the world.”
6. **Reich** – “the German state, especially during the Nazi period.”
7. **Fuhrer** – a leader in German, most famous title of Adolf Hitler while he was Chancellor.
8. **Gastrocnemius** – “The gastrocnemius muscle is a complex muscle that is fundamental for walking and posture. Gastrocnemius forms the major bulk at the back of lower leg and is a very powerful muscle.”
9. **Incision** – a surgical cut made in skin or flesh.
10. **Sulfa drugs:** A class of synthetic antibiotics that work by interfering with bacterial folate synthesis, preventing bacterial growth and multiplication, but not necessarily killing them.
11. **The Bunnies:** Women used by the Third Reich as laboratory animals for medical experiments.
12. **Kristallnacht** – (The Night of Broken Glass) A series of pogroms and attacks that had shattered glass littered on the streets afterward the destruction of Jewish-owned businesses, synagogues, and homes.
13. **Pacifist** – A person who prefers peace to war, and that war is unjustifiable.
14. **An opal** – A precious stone

15. **Leni Riefenstahl** – A famous German filmmaker who is suggested to have worked with Adolf Hitler.
16. **Marlene Dietrich** — A famous German actress who was known to be anti-Nazi and Hitler.
17. **An Infirm** — A person too weak or ill, due to old age or long-term impairments, and in need of more assistance than someone of the same age.
18. **Mercy Killing** – Also known as Euthanasia, is the practice of painlessly taking one's life when it has been wrought with pain or suffering.
19. Roll call — The calling aloud of names of all the people on a list to ascertain their presence.
20. The Gestapo — Official secret police of Nazi Germany, created by Hermann Goring in 1933.

❖ Social/period reference information: **Nazi Germany, 1946.**

1946 was a full year after the Second World War's end, and as such, is a year remembered for the Denazification of Germany. Of course, the denazification process started in 1945, when the US, Britain, Russia, and France divided Germany into four occupation zones, which operated more or less independently within Germany until 1949. However, even with the occupied zones on the ground, it was still hard for a country like Germany to be put back together. This was because it had been war-torn, and economically, politically, and socially, it was in ruin. People had no homes to go to and much rubble was everywhere. There was no sense of living and worst of all, there was much spite and anger, hate is the true word, for the average German in 1946. There was hardly any ordinary life as a result. 1946 was however also a year in which The Nuremberg trials took place. The trials of Nazi appointees and officials occurred in the year, and such trials are where the play routes its setting from.

Of course, the play jumps back in time to that of Hitler's reign, when the Nazi war was still on, and in such time Germany was all but a police state. Hitler used mainly The Gestapo and the SS (otherwise known as The Blackshirts) to control Germany, as both agencies aimed for and targeted enemies and critics of Hitler's regime. The country was in its War Machine era, meaning that its economy and policies were set up to support the war effort. Thus, those not in government-aided jobs found it hard to get by. Added to that, multiple concentration camps were

also set up where political opponents were kept before eventually Jews and gypsies were added as prisoners.

Away from the military force, the Nazi German leaders also used propaganda in the everyday running of the state. Newspapers, films, and radio, as well as educational institutions, all told tales of German greatness and race superiority, as well as German victories on the battlefield. The state was also heavily censored as more than a million books were burned, and political rallies were held to amass constant support. Hitler was also responsible for the creation of a new religion to combat Christianity's influence in Germany, in a bid to revigorate the people to Nazi beliefs.

❖ Research done on any historical people:

While *Dark Roads* does set itself in the real-life world, its characters are rather fictional, occupying a space in history that many would probably have found themselves in 1946 Germany. However, a few notable persons would be beneficial to know, when trying to interpret and make sense of the play.

Irma Grese: Grese began her life as a female concentration camp guard at age 18, and worked in the camp of Ravensbrück until she was transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau where she served as second in command of the female staff. There, Grese was responsible for deciding which camp prisoners were fit to work and which were to be sent to the gas chambers on arrival. Following time Auschwitz, Grese then served in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp as its command leader until its liberation by British troops in April 1945. Consequently, she was tried in Lüneburg and was found guilty, thus leading to her execution by hanging in November 1945. However, it was said that Grese shared not a single remorse for all she did, believing in her ideology, that of the Nazi regime, right until the end.

Ilse Koch: Otherwise known as the "The Witch of Buchenwald" was the wife of a commandant of Buchenwald concentration camp, Karl Otto Koch. In the mentioned camp, Ilse was known for her cruelty to the prisoners, which she often expressed for her own amusement. She lived a lavish life in the camp despite the prisoners starving to death and was even rumored to host orgies for other SS workers. Ilse's husband was executed in 1945 after being found guilty of

corruption by the SS, and she herself was imprisoned by The Allies after Germany's loss in the war. However, due to her position in the camp as the wife to an official and not an official herself, prosecutors found it hard to keep her in prison, especially with the brewing of the Cold War at the time. As such, she was released from prison in 1949 but was arrested on the same day by the West German government. From then, she received charges mainly of abuse against German citizens and was sentenced to life imprisonment. In 1967, she hung herself while serving time.

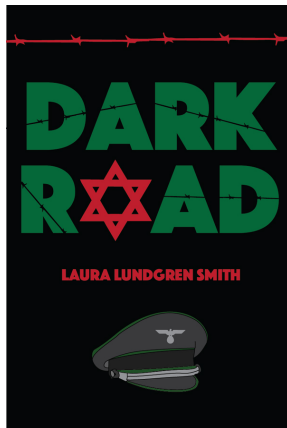
Maria Mandi: Maria claimed that she lost a position in a post office because she was not a Nazi, and thus subsequently began life as a camp guard in Lichtenburg because she wanted to earn more. A year later she was sent to Ravensbruck where she fully came into her own, showcasing a brutality that preceded her reputation. She attained the highest-ranking position there as a chief guard and was even known to sign off documents regarding the selection process of prisoners; deciding those who were fit to work, and those who were not. After being posted to a subcamp in Dachau in 1944, Mandi was arrested in Bavaria, in August 1945 before being extradited to Poland the following month. There, she penned her defense, claiming that she ought to bring order and discipline as chief guard and that she did so in such a way that even helped the prisoners. She was tried in Auschwitz, sentenced to death, and was finally executed by hanging on January 24, 1948.

❖ Information on Playwright

Laura Lundgren Smith is a native of Texas, United States who has a Bachelor of Arts with Honors in Theatre and English and a Master of Arts in Theatre from Texas A&M University at Commerce. She has been a playwright since 1999 and in 2004, received an Arts Council of Ireland Commissions Grant for playwriting. She has written a number of plays including *Sending Down the Sparrows* (2001), *Digging up the Boys* (2007), and *The Shape of the Grave* which have all been produced countless times across the United States. In 2007, her play *Seamless* was chosen by Dallas' Kitchen Dog Theatre to be part of their renowned New Works Festival.

❖ Images Found in Research

- The following photos are mainly cover works for the different productions of the play



- The following pictures are then from the Nazi era of history that highlight mostly female campguards and the atrocities they are complicit in.





LEFT: Some of the S.S. women guards of Belsen whose bestiality and brutality equalled that of their male colleagues. This picture was taken after British troops had entered the camp and forced them to help in the burial of their victims. RIGHT: A girl prisoner shows evidence of having been brutally beaten by Nazi guards.





❖ Any other materials found that help to define the world of the play

[Life in Nazi Germany Revision Guide](#)

[Life in Berlin 1946 | Benjamin B. Ferencz](#)

[Germany 1945-1949: a case study in post-conflict reconstruction - History & Policy](#)

[The Female Face of Brutality: Examining the Gruesome Acts of SS-Helferinnen](#)

[Not only did the Rabbits work together to keep one another alive after the surgeries, but other inmates in the camp risked their lives daily, secretly bringing them food, water, and even medications to help them survive.](#)

❖ The play's structure, including plot and character analysis

An in-media res play, the structure of the short play is fluid yet simple, with it having only one Act entirely. It has multiple scenes in the act however, which intersect upon one another. The singular act allows the play to go back and forth in time, giving us multiple scenes that serve as exposition and setups, as well as scenes of conflict/rising action in both past and present, before finally giving the two timelines each their own climactic scene before the resolution takes place in the present.

The plot follows Greta, a former Nazi camp guard awaiting execution following her sentence. She is visited by a journalist Daimler who requests of her to tell the truth of the past, and the play takes us to life before camp work for Greta. She is with her sister, Lise who dislikes her antisemitism but Greta follows through to working at the camp; after expressing financial difficulties to Daimler however. She justifies herself to the journalist while the past unfolds, and in the past, she is visited by her sister at her new workplace, while she is just in the middle of brutalizing a camp prisoner with her fellow guards.

Lise eventually demands from Greta a promise, the latter of who in the next scene watches a Nazi doctor carry out experimental research practices on a female prisoner. Greta engages Daimler in the present again, yet trying to justify the research experiments. The following scene then has her take a personal belonging from one of the prisoners after mistreating her. The item, she subsequently gives Lise. The latter rejects it however, on grounds of it being taken by force

by Greta, the grounds for which she believes a gift cannot stand. In the present again, the journalist tries to appeal to Greta's conscience, but the sentenced guard holds strong to her beliefs.

Beliefs she then stands on further, when the two discuss euthanasia, which the Nazis carried out. The past has Greta accepting to kill those prone to the option before she once again engages Lise, who condemns her. Their argument this time ends with Greta slapping Lise. Still, however, Lise speaks with defiance in her tone. Thus, when Daimler subsequently reveals his true origins to Greta, she ends the story of her past by relating how she allowed Lise's imprisonment. Lise was caught returning the gift Greta once gave her to a prisoner at the camp, and for that, Greta's commandant had her locked up once Greta gave the go-ahead.

Unsurprisingly then, Daimler in the present finds leaving easy when Greta's execution is upon them. He wishes mercy upon her, but from God alone. Greta is then taken to the gallows as people watch, and the play ends with the noose around her neck.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS:

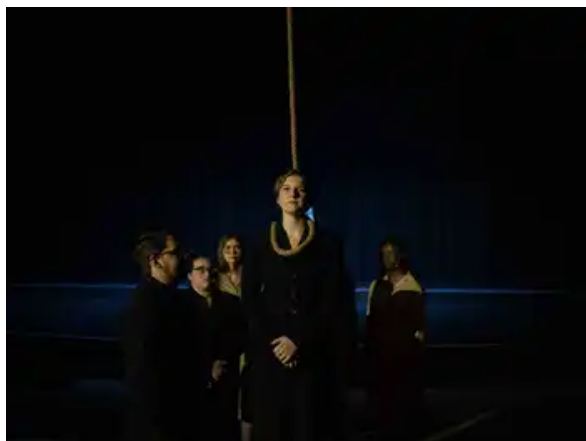
- **GRETA:** Being the protagonist of the play, Greta is central to it. In a sense, she is a flat character seeing as her beliefs do not change throughout the play, though her situations do. She is our relation to the past, and her narration guides the audience to an understanding of what Nazi Germany was. One of her strongest attributes is devotion, and honor, for even in the face of death, she does not abandon what she believed and was loyal to. She has no remorse for her victims and thus ultimately ends the play in an antagonist's light, following the revelation of Lise's demise. Greta can then be said to be both antagonist and protagonist of the play, given that she never had the emotional appeal that sat with the audience and was much rather a force to be reckoned with.
- **DAIMLER:** The guide of the audience, Daimler is chief in asking questions and speaking on behalf of the audience. He is the sole visitor of Greta while in prison and he persists in learning her past. He is a judgmental character of the sort, as he constantly demands feedback from Greta with each addition to her past. He hopes to understand the ideology of Nazi Germany and how a normal citizen such as Greta became plunged strongly into its beliefs. Ultimately, he is disappointed when he learns that she, Greta has

no remorse for her past. In that sense, he is an emotionally demanding character, a spectrum through which the audience sees themselves, since like him, they would also want to know of Greta's past and of her belief status when faced with death. However, Daimler also has no remorse for Greta when he understands that the latter lacks the same for Germany's victims. In that light then, like Greta, he is also a staunch believer in what he believes in, steadfast in that sense, which makes him Greta's opposition.

- **LISE:** Like the two above, Lise is a staunch believer in what she believes in as well. She was a German who criticized the Nazis regime, and the sister to Greta who contradicted her. She is placed as the heart of the play, since she indeed meets a tragic end. The sentiments for Lise is driven by the play's perspective of her being against cruelty to human beings, even if she met a cruel fate in the end. She is the light against Greta's darkness, a ghost that haunts our protagonists' past, who had no bone of wickedness in her body. In that sense, she is the main victim of the play, and can be said to be an activist in it, much like Daimler.

❖ Pictures of Production







A Youtube Video of The Play: ['Dark Road' - A Powerful Holocaust Drama](#)

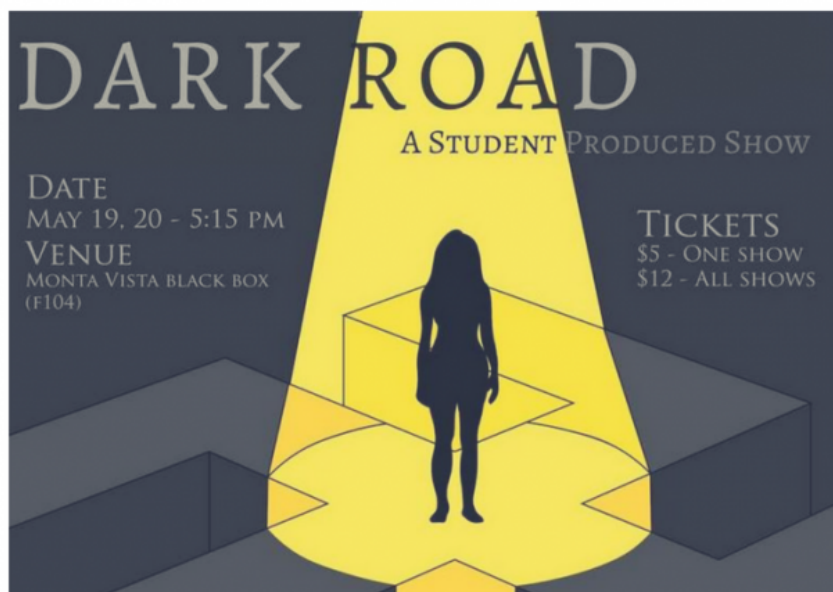


❖ Copy of the program notes

“Dark Road”

"I think there was that extra practice time of getting comfortable with doing things you don't feel comfortable watching."

DIRECTOR SENIOR
SHREYA ROY



"Dark Road" told the story of a guard at a concentration camp in Nazi Germany. She tells her story through a series of flashbacks. The main character Greta is played by junior Savannah Stevens.

"DARK ROAD"

DIRECTED BY SENIOR
SHREYA ROY

❖ Videos of the post-show talkbacks if available

While no video is available, these are a few transcripts from a handful of directors speaking on directing the play.

FROM: Western University's Official Student Newspaper, The Gazette

Director: Role Cutman, a second-year creative arts and production student.

“It’s a story of how evil becomes ordinary and how any of us can fall down that path if we’re not careful,” says Rutman.

“It is only a one-act play, so it packs a powerful punch,” says Rutman. “It’s extremely captivating.”

FROM: Loughborough Stage Society

DIRECTOR: Abbie Walkden, a second-year Sociology student

“it was one of the best things I have ever done’ and that she ‘loved every minute of it and that even through the lows she wouldn’t have changed it for the world’.

FROM: Ohio’s Christian University’s Drama Team

DIRECTOR: Alana Bradley

“morality is already being loosened in our culture, slowly unraveling our perception of right and wrong. We must forever remember what humanity is capable of when we exchange the truth for a lie.”

FROM: Groom High School, Texas, USA

DIRECTOR: Aimee Fields

“If I could sum up ‘Dark Road’ in one word, it’s evil,” Fields said. “A woman takes a job because she needs to take care of her sister and is brainwashed and changes. It’s the classic good versus evil.”

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