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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to throw light on one of the pioneers of early contemporary English drama, John Galsworthy (1867-1933). It shows in what way Galsworthy is naturalistic and tries to prove that some of his plays are purely naturalistic in theme, plot, characters and dialogue, others are naturalistic in theme, characters, but not in plot and situations, and some are not naturalistic at all.

Chapter I, entitled Naturalism as a European Dramatic Movement, traces the origin of Naturalism. It reveals how Naturalism has developed after the Darwinian developments in biological sciences. Emile Zola is an important figure among a group of French writers who identify themselves with the naturalistic movement in literature. The Naturalists depict man in his animal nature and as a product of his environment. They believe that the artist should express himself and his experience in the most natural manner, and with objective fidelity.

In England, Robertson, a realistic writer, is not naturalistic. His plays are very artificial and his characters are not real human beings but marionettes pulled by strings. Pinero, another English realistic writer, is influenced by Scribe and the French dramatists of the well made play. His plays deal with problems of social life and aim at arousing the emotions of the audience. His characters are often theatrical rather than real and the situations have an unrealistic atmosphere.

The end of this chapter gives a glimpse of John Galsworthy as a dramatist who favours the technique of Naturalism within the sphere of Realism. His plays aim at reproducing life as it is and this is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Chapter II begins with an explanation of the methods and aims of Galsworthy's plays. One of his several articles, "The Inn of Tranquillity", is dealt with at length in this chapter. Also discussed is what he himself says about a naturalistic plot and theme. This is followed by an illustration of his impartiality. The plays are discussed in groups to point out Galsworthy's naturalistic themes, his interest in dealing with the bad impact of society and the social system on the individual and his treatment of caste themes. The structure of his plays is studied to show that most of his plots are naturalistic.

Chapter III, entitled "Characters", is a general evaluation of Galsworthy's naturalistic theory of characterisation and his skill in delineating characters who are shown as ordinary people. This chapter also discusses Galsworthy's characters as falling into three groups, aristocratic and conservative characters, people who rebel against the accepted order of things, and those who are victims of the social order and are too weak to stand up against society.

Chapter IV deals with dialogue and technical devices in Galsworthy's plays. It shows that the dialogue used is that of everyday language without recourse to formal

oratory. Also shown is the writer's use of silent action in his plays in order to reinforce some special emphasis or state of feeling. This chapter also gives illustrations of situations which are full of contrasts and parallelism.

In writing this thesis, much use has been made of John Galsworthy the Dramatic Artist by V. Dupont, and John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist by R. H. Coats. Though there would seem to be a great similarity between the way the subject of Naturalism is handled in this thesis and the way it is dealt with by the above mentioned critics, there is the basic difference that Galsworthy's Naturalism, which is the theme mainly focussed upon in this thesis, is only referred to in the books by Dupont and Coats. Dupont deals with technique whereas Coats focusses on themes, plots and characters with special reference to caste in Galsworthy's plays.

CHAPTER ONE
NATURALISM AS A EUROPEAN DRAMATIC MOVEMENT

Naturalism developed in the nineteenth century after the Darwinian developments in biological sciences. Darwin's famous doctrine of evolution, the gradual evolvement of natural species through mutation, emphasized the absolute control of heredity and environment over the nature and development of living matter. "This philosophy held that man was, like other animals, a completely determined being whose character and fate were shaped entirely by heredity and environment."¹ Emile Zola (1840-1902) applied this philosophy to a theory of literature, which he named Naturalism.

Naturalism as a method or style extends and intensifies the methods of realism. The naturalists turn to a depiction of man in his animal nature and as a product of his environment. With such ideas, they naturally explore some of the more repulsive and animalistic aspects of human nature. Man's animal instincts are a dominant concern. In this attempt and in their seeking to show the influences of environment upon the shaping of human nature, they turn to degraded and depressed humanity and to actions in sordid environments.

With their theory of literature, the naturalists have developed a theory of art. "Art should be an exact,

¹Hubert C. Heffner and others, eds. Modern Theatre Practice, a Book of Play Production, fourth edition, New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1959, p. 73.

objective, and faithful rendering of man, his environment, and his conduct..."¹ Arno Holz, who has drawn up the program for Naturalism, writes: "Art, has the tendency to become nature again... The artist, a part of nature, obeys his natural impulse for expressing himself and his experience in the most natural manner."²

Naturalism is a type of fictional writing that aims at reproducing life with absolute and objective fidelity. It fixes its attention on reality and contemporary existence. Its slogan is truth, truth on every path of life. G. H. Lewis, George Eliot's friend, provides an interesting example of this effort in an article which he wrote for the Westminster Review in October 1858.

Art always aims at the representation of Reality,... that is to say Truth; and no departure from Truth is permissible, except such as inevitably lies in the nature of the medium itself. Realism is thus the basis of all Art, and its antithesis is not Idealism, but Falsism.³

Naturalism aims at portraying human society and the lives of the men and women composing it as objectively and as truthfully as possible. It is an objective and a detached method of narration on the part of the writer. It also lays emphasis on the social environment of the characters and their relation to it. It also determines the sense

¹Heffner and others. Modern Theatre Practice, p. 74.

²Frank Wadleigh Chandler. Aspects of Modern Drama, London, Macmillan and Co., 1914, pp. 32, 33.

³George J. Becker, ed. Documents of Modern Literary Realism, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1973, p. 6.

of control over the actions and destinies of the characters put forth by impersonal social, economic, and biological forces, with their efforts for human free will shown as weak and ineffectual.

There should be no authorial voice raised in way of commentary or exhortation, no authorial elbow nudging the reader in the ribs... It means first of all that the writer takes great pains not to allow any personal prejudice or predilection to divert him from presenting things as they are.¹

Naturalism may be called realism pushed to its utmost. George Saintsbury, a critic, vehemently opposed to the naturalists, compares that technique to photography as against an artist's drawing, and accuses it of extreme dullness. Realistic art, to use the convenient distinction drawn by Professor W. A. Neilson, is that in which the sense of fact prevails over reason and imagination. The realistic artist observes actuality and is engaged in the attempt to convey his impression of it, rather than to interpret it by reason or to supplement it by the imagination. The naturalistic artist carries this process to extremes. He relies, even less than the ordinary realist, upon the appeal to imagination. He relies even more upon gratifying the sense of fact. He refuses, so far as he can, to allow his reason to reshape experience. He offers no theory of life, he professes instead to present life itself. The naturalist then does not intensify actuality

¹George J. Becker, ed., Documents of Modern Literary Realism, p. 29.

like the realist, nor does he transform it like the idealist, he endeavours to reproduce it.¹

Both the realistic and the naturalistic writers go to life for their material, but whereas the former selects his subject matter, examines it carefully, and forms it so that it reflects his own personal reactions, the naturalistic writer observes reality and seeks to present a photographic picture of life without the intrusion of his own personality. The facts in a naturalistic work should speak for themselves as they do in life. The naturalistic writer has no preconceived view of how things should be, but he observes and states.

Naturalism lays special stress on the influence of the environment on the hero who is passive rather than active, and on crime and disease, as a result of social and pathological conditions. The naturalist draws his pictures not that we may be made to forget what is painful in human nature and unjust in human society, but on the contrary, he practises his art that we may better understand human nature even in depravity, and that we may be forced to see and know all the difficulties of social problems still unsolved.

Since the milieu is a determining factor of character in the naturalistic theory of art, it has to be carefully represented. Throughout the nineteenth century, persons on the stage talk more and more like ordinary people. Under the impulse of naturalism the incongruity

¹ Frank Wadleigh Chandler, Aspects of Modern Drama, p. 32.

of conventional dialogue disappeared. "Any kind of language, didactic, poetical, brilliant or crude is inartistic, if it causes the spectator to think of the author or the actor instead of the character."¹

France is the fountain head of Naturalism. Emile Zola is the most prominent figure among the group of French writers who in the 1870's and 1880's identified themselves with the naturalistic movement in Literature. In an essay entitled "Naturalism on the stage", Zola wrote, "The development of the naturalistic force has progressed quickly in the novel to the point of triumph; on the stage it is just beginning to appear."² He also defines art "as a corner of nature seen through a temperament".³ He deplores the conventional representation of unrealities in fiction and on the stage. He has strong faith in the future of the theatre. He explains under what conditions the naturalistic movement will be brought about without any doubt. He says that it is not true that the stage must remain stationary, and that its actual conventionalities are the fundamental conditions of its existence, everything goes forward. The stage will enter into a wider and straighter path. People have always resisted the march forward, they have denied to

¹ Donald Clive Stuard. The Development of Dramatic Art, New York, London, D. Appleton and Co., 1928, p. 551.

² Emile Zola. "Naturalism on the Stage" trans. by Samuel Draper, in Toby Cole (ed.), Playwrights on Playwriting, London, MacGibbon and Kee, 1961, p. 5.

³ Frank Wadleigh Chandler, Aspects of Modern Drama, p. 31

new comers the power and right to accomplish what has not been performed by their elders. The social and literary evolutions will cross the obstacles which were said to be impassable.

What Zola seeks is extreme objectivity. He wants a type of drama which shall, without twisting facts in order to prove a thesis, be absolutely true to existence. The drama of ideas assumes that the author devises a plot in such a way as to prove his argument, such an author may present a setting true to life in every respect, he may adopt a dialogue faithful to the terms of contemporary speech, but his basic purpose implies that he must so order his material as to accord with his pre-conceived idea. Zola wants complete objectivity, the depiction of the real in almost photographic exactitude. He attacks the old romantic theatre and at the same time has no desire to revive the classics. Allardyce Nicoll quotes Zola who says "There should no longer be any school, no more formulas, no standards of any sort, there is only life itself an immense field where each may study and create what he likes."¹

He insists that playwrights should observe life and transport it to the stage, instead of building clever but improbable plots and introducing striking coups de theatre. Without advocating a revival of classical drama, he points to the simplicity of the plot

¹ Allardyce Nicoll. World Drama from Aeschylus to Anouille, London, George G. Harrap and Co., Ltd., 1949, p. 511.