

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

The Role of the Professional Dramaturg in Contemporary North American Theatre

by

David R. Gowen

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA

CALGARY, ALBERTA

JANUARY, 1993

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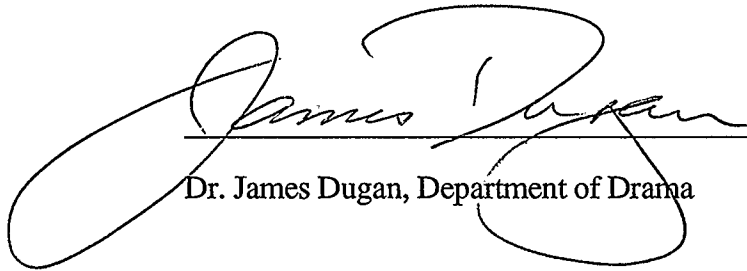


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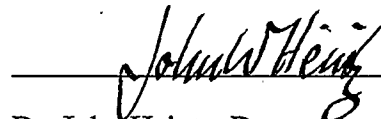
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Supervisor, Dr. Robert Moore, Department of Drama



Dr. James Dugan, Department of Drama



Dr. John Heintz, Department of Philosophy

January 28, 1993

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the role of the professional dramaturg in contemporary North American theatre. Chapter I provides an account of the uncertainty characterizing various definitions of "dramaturgy" and the role of the "dramaturg." Chapter II details the origin of the dramaturg and the role he has historically assumed both in Europe and in North America. Chapter III offers an account of modern/contemporary dramaturgical function in Europe and North America, defining "modern/contemporary" as the period beginning after the Second World War and continuing to the present. Chapter IV summarizes the findings of the previous chapters in order to arrive at an essential two-part definition of the role of the North American dramaturg.



## PREFACE

In the following work, the words "drama" and "theatre" are used, not as synonyms, but rather as complementary terms, both of which will be employed in the definition of the dramaturg ultimately advanced. Briefly, "drama" equates with "dramatic literature," play texts and the reading, writing and criticizing of plays as *literary* texts. "Theatre" equates with "performed drama," staging techniques and the rehearsing, producing and criticizing of plays as *performance* texts—performances in space and time. "Criticism" equates with "analysis," "interpretation" and "judgment" (Hornby x)—not only of literary texts and performance texts but, most importantly, of the potential for the former to be realized successfully as the latter.

Except in those contexts which are clearly gender-specific, the pronouns "he," "him" and "his" in the following work imply, respectively and respectfully, "he or she," "him or her" and "his or hers."

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this work has been dependent upon the guidance and support of numerous individuals.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Robert Moore, a gentleman from whom, throughout the period of my research and writing, all criticism has been constructive. His interest in, and support of the project have been equaled by the care and insight with which he has reviewed, influenced and enriched its development—formally and thematically—patiently but persistently reminding me of my intention to graduate in the present millennium.

A large section of the work exists only because of the generosity of the professional Canadian theatre community, several members of which took the time and trouble to respond to the survey which I distributed in December of 1992. Their names appear throughout the third and fourth chapters, and in the concluding appendix.

I am indebted also to Dr. Roberta Bramwell for encouraging me to pursue the topic of Dramaturgy toward a master's thesis—and for bolstering my spirit with her own at a particularly critical juncture; to Dr. James Black, professor of English and a dramaturg, who kindly agreed to read and reflect upon a late draft; to Dr. James Dugan and Dr. John Heintz for serving, with Dr. Moore, on my examination committee; to my friend Elke Paul who, throughout the stages of my writing, continually offered her feedback and encouragement; and to Tanya Lynn Palmer for the cheer, inspiration and insight she has lent to the duration of my residency at Calgary.

Without question, my deepest debt of gratitude is to my parents, Dorothy and Bob Gowen, for the unconditional love, trust and encouragement with which they have ceaselessly provided their favourite, if only, child.



*For Mom and Dad*

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"What's a dramaturg...?"

Samuel Beckett

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of "dramaturgy" and the role of the "dramaturg" in contemporary North American theatre remain at best equivocally defined (Bennetts; Ballet qtd. in Bly 32; Gianakaris 69; Lord 59-60; Morrow). This is due in part to the "constantly expanding" role of the contemporary dramaturg (Czerwinski and Rzhnevsky 3). Robert Brustein, artistic director of the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts, claims that dramaturgs perform "a function without a single name, which suggests that it may not even be a single function" (qtd. in Bennetts). This speculation is supported by Gunter Skopnik's description of the dramaturg as a "maid of all work" (236). Arthur Ballet admits "the job varies so widely that I honestly cannot see a pattern at this point" (qtd. in Bly 31); and Russell Vandenbroucke asserts that "the practice of dramaturgy can be as ephemeral and evanescent as acting" (qtd. in Bly 15). Dramaturg Dennis Powers recalls a time when the word "dramaturg" was even less well-known than today:

Everywhere I went people would say—even friends!—"What the hell is a dramaturg?" And then they would make unkind puns . . . (qtd. in Kleb 36)

Critics and practitioners offer a wide range of descriptions pertaining to dramaturgical function. These include accounts of an essentially administrative position, involving fundraising and budget balancing; a purely academic pursuit, concerned exclusively with the reading of plays; and a powerful and active participation within and throughout the entire rehearsal process. Some directors consider the dramaturg to be in an entirely subservient position—to the playwright, to themselves, to the actors. Other directors regard a good dramaturg as an equal collaborator through much of the rehearsal process. Vandenbroucke sees "very little difference between a dramaturg and a producer

except that precisely the same idea or suggestion will be heard more clearly—and treated more seriously—if you're wearing the producer's hat" (qtd. in Bly 16). Some companies consider dramaturgy to be unnecessary for any works other than new plays being produced for the first time. Other companies challenge their dramaturg even more with the classics, hoping that he will help to articulate the relevance of their *particular* production, even if the play has been repeatedly staged throughout the years. This latter approach is the one more heavily influenced by the German attitude toward the staging of classical works (Eustis qtd. in Bly 8).

Some artistic directors regard the production role of the dramaturg to be minimal—others, vital. Some stage directors refuse to work without a dramaturg—others refuse to work *with* one (Bennetts; Bly 6; Cattaneo qtd. in Bly 26; Devine, Letter; Brownstein qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 18; Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 8; Jenkins and Pettingill 54; Lahr 13; Rischbieter 52; Rosen 45; Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 91). Anne Cattaneo believes that in certain situations a director sees a dramaturg "as a threat to his power" (qtd. in Bly 28). Russell Vandenbroucke suggests that some directors assume dramaturgs to be "intellectually-oriented amateurs who know history and literature, but not how to make theater" (qtd. in Bly 14, 18). Upon being asked, in the early 1980s, to explain what a dramaturg is, an American student is reported to have replied, "I'm not sure, but I think it's German for 'smartass'" (qtd. in Davis and Hutchings 561).

Richard Nelson, dramaturg at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, believes that "someone, somewhere has always functioned as a dramaturg in any given theatrical situation, so it's not really something new" (qtd. in Bly 41). Nevertheless, given the range of opinion as to both the meaning and importance of dramaturgy, the challenge remains to develop a definition of the role and function of the professional dramaturg in the contemporary North American theatre. (This study will not address the subject of dramaturgy in the academic theatre, acknowledging this to be an area of research unto

itself.) While it may be impossible to include every opinion in a single statement, a comparison from among the variety of descriptions found yields a number of similarities: dramaturgs are, almost without exception, considered instrumental in the reading and selecting of plays from which seasons are formed; they are frequently assigned the tasks of script development, adaptation, translation and editing; they are expected to conduct any research demanded by the production; they may be called upon to criticize the production in rehearsal; and they are often responsible for the literature accompanying a performance, usually in the form of program notes. Peter Hay offers a summary definition of dramaturgy as "a process of making sense both for the production and the audience." Hay claims that the duty of the dramaturg is to help "articulate that sense" ("American Dramaturgy" 7).

The task of establishing an acceptable definition for the role of the dramaturg is complicated by the fact that, in English, the words "dramaturgy" and "dramaturgical" have come to be associated with almost everything pertaining to the history, theory, criticism or practice of specifically *written* drama: a given playwright's "style" (another polyseme) is his "dramaturgy"; recurring images or repeating plot devices signal the presence of "dramaturgy"; when the investigation centres around language—even as it remains frozen within the literary text—the investigation is "dramaturgical."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, "*dramaturg-*" is part of the root found in the English, French, Spanish and Italian equivalents of "dramatist," and it is therefore not difficult to see why "dramaturgy" is often simply equated with "play-writing"—and why "dramaturg" is often simply equated with "playwright."<sup>2</sup> Most critics and practitioners contend that the best dramaturgs do possess play-writing talent; but their theoretical, critical and historical skills are expected to exceed those that would normally be demanded of the writers they ultimately serve. Only the German definition of "Dramaturg" mentions a "dramatic... [or] literary... *adviser*" (emphasis added)—only the German definition of "Dramaturgie" includes the "*theory* of... dramatic art" (emphasis added). It is with the German understanding of dramaturgy and the dramaturg that this study is



concerned. For this reason, the German spelling of "dramaturg," which lacks the "e" found at the end of the English spelling, will be used wherever possible. Michael Devine, Artistic and Executive Director of Playwrights' Workshop Montreal, prefers "the German version of the word," regarding the word-final "e" variant as "yet another indication of the insensitivity of anglophones" (Letter). Ronald Bryden, retaining the word-final "e," is concerned that he will be viewed as "a fierce old German professor poring over folios and popping toads into cauldrons"—until he is reminded by his publicist at the Royal Shakespeare Company that he is a "dramaturge" and not a "thaumaturge" (Bryden 1). And Canadian playwright David Fennario has defined a "dramaturge" as "That piece of music played at the death of a playwright" (qtd. in Podbrey).

As additional meanings are attached to the single root, "*dramaturg*-" its ability to denote a specific occupation diminishes still further. For example, "dramaturgical" analysis is currently a popular methodology in the field of social psychology. In this approach to understanding human interaction, life is regarded as a series of dramatic constructions, involving the role-playing performances of actors—onstage, backstage, offstage and in the audience (Hare and Blumberg 3).<sup>3</sup>

The word "dramaturg" was, for many years, interchangeable with the title of "literary manager." A distinction must be observed between dramaturgy as it was practised in Germany, Austria and Eastern Europe before and after the Second World War. The following chapter details the origin of the dramaturg and the role he has historically assumed both in Europe and in North America. The presence of the so-called "production dramaturg," who frequently attends and influences the rehearsal process, is often thought to have characterized German theatre for the last two hundred years; but in fact this function is almost as new to many European acting companies as the notion of dramaturgy itself is to the North American companies. For the majority of the two hundred years during which dramaturgy has flourished in Europe, particularly in Germany, "literary manager" serves as

an entirely appropriate paraphrase, since the greatest emphasis was placed on the writing, reading and selecting of particular plays for particular theatres.

Although dramaturgy has been practised and written about in Europe for over two hundred years, its growth in North America is still a relatively recent development, most of it having taken place within the last twenty-five years, and in particular during the 1970s. Peter Hay attributes this to "the gulf that separates a public institution from a private concern," referring to Europe and North America respectively ("American Dramaturgy" 15). The third chapter offers an account of modern/contemporary dramaturgical function in Europe and North America, defining "modern/contemporary" as the period beginning after the Second World War and continuing to the present. Alexis Greene describes the field of dramaturgy as "yet aborning" in America. But while there is already a fairly extensive body of literature treating the subject of dramaturgy in the United States, such literature pertaining to the Canadian theatre is almost entirely lacking. This aspect of theatre production should be better understood by Canadians, in both its theoretical and practical applications; but with fewer than half a dozen articles written on the subject of dramaturgy in Canada, the challenge of becoming more acquainted with the profession increases. The subject of Canadian dramaturgy in this study has therefore been approached with the assistance of a written survey, devised by the author. The responses to this questionnaire, solicited through the mail, from busy producers, directors and managers working in Canada, are not entirely comparable to the numerous published essays from the United States which detail the dramaturgical work done there. Nevertheless, the spontaneity characterizing the responses of the Canadian practitioners lends an immediacy to this section of the study. The final chapter summarizes the findings of the previous chapters in order to arrive at an essential two-part definition of the role of the North American dramaturg.

Finally, the dramatic political restructuring of much of Europe in the early 1990s may render obsolete some of this study's findings pertaining to the practice of the European dramaturg—particularly in formerly communist countries such as Russia. However, with regard to the work of the German dramaturg, Canadian stage director Guy Sprung states in a recent interview with the author that reunification appears not to have adversely affected the profession of the dramaturg. In the country where, more than two centuries ago, the term "dramaturgy" was first understood to include an element of constructive criticism, such criticism is still an active part of theatre life.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup> Examples of works in which the word "dramaturgy" is used to refer broadly to an author's use of form and treatment of theme include Burk's "Dramaturgy of the Subject"; Chaudhuri's "Dramaturgy of the Other"; Coiner's "Dramaturgy and Theme"; Cope's *Dramaturgy of the Daemonic* (and a review thereof by Radcliff-Umstead); Cox's "Stuart Dramaturgy" and his *Dramaturgy of Power*; Foster's "Dramaturgy of Mood"; Gilbert's "Exclusive Dramaturgy"; Hildahl's "Dramaturgy and Philosophy"; Kipp's "Dramaturgy of Edvard Radzinskii"; Longworth's *Religion and Dramaturgy*; Javed Malick's "Arden's Dramaturgy"; Shah Jaweedul Malick's "Dramaturgy of John Arden"; McKenna's "Impact of Female Consciousness on Dramaturgy"; Price's *Political Dramaturgy*; Rogowski's "Implied Dramaturgy"; Smith's "Romantic Dramaturgy"; reviews of Stephens's *The Dramaturgy of Style* by Everman and Wilson; Stockenström's *Strindberg's Dramaturgy*; and Suvin's "Dramaturgic Space."

<sup>2</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "**dramaturge**" as a "composer of drama," equivalent to a "dramaturgist" or "play-wright"—and defines "**dramaturgy**" as "dramatic composition"; *Harrap's French-English Dictionary* translates "**dramaturge**" as "dramatist, playwright"—and translates "**dramaturgie**" as "the dramatic art"; *Cassell's Spanish-English Dictionary* translates "**dramaturgo**" as "dramatist, playwright"—and translates "**dramaturgia**" as "dramatic art"; Sansoni-Harrap's *Italian-English Dictionary* translates "**drammaturgo**" as "dramatist, playwright"—and translates "**drammaturgia**" as "dramatic composition"; and Katzner's *Russian-English Dictionary* translates "Драма<sup>т</sup>у<sup>р</sup>" (dramaturg) as "playwright"—and translates "Драма<sup>т</sup>у<sup>р</sup>г<sup>и</sup>я" (dramaturgy) as "plays."

<sup>3</sup> Examples of works in which the word "dramaturgical" is used to describe the analysis of interpersonal behaviour include Allen's "Dramaturgical Quality"; Hare and Blumberg's *Dramaturgical Analysis of Social Interaction*; Kapit's review of Cochran and Claspell's *Dramaturgical Approach to Understanding Emotion*; Mitchell's *Social Exchange, Dramaturgy and Ethnomethodology*; and Scheibe's review of Cochran's *Dramaturgical Approaches to the Study of Persons*.

## CHAPTER II

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF PROFESSIONAL DRAMATURGY

#### INTRODUCTION

There is a very real sense in which the duties and responsibilities of the dramaturg have existed—and have been executed—for as long as drama itself has been performed. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing has been described as "the German father of the dramaturg's profession" (Bryden 5); but Lessing, notwithstanding his brilliance and foresight as a playwright, historian, theoretician, critic and practitioner, did not invent the practice of dramaturgy. It was Lessing himself who pointed to the Greek tragedians and to Shakespeare as examples of playwrights who fulfilled a dramaturgical function in productions of their own works; for they unfailingly included, in their scripts and in their staging, an intimate knowledge of their audience—its relationship to the theatre in question, and to the play at hand.

Lessing very possibly was, nevertheless, the first person to delegate such enormous critical responsibility to one specific member of the theatre. Furthermore, he coined the term "dramaturgy" to include far more than its original sense of "dramatic composition ... or theatrical acting" (Oxford English Dictionary). Perhaps Ronald Bryden's suitably respectful phrase could be modified to read "the German father of the *modern* dramaturg's profession." While Lessing may not have invented dramaturgy, he most certainly articulated it brilliantly. In so doing he bestowed upon the profession tremendous prestige and dignity; and he established, with lasting impact, the importance of a critical perspective to the art of the theatre (Clark 260).

This survey of historical dramaturgy begins with Lessing in the state-supported theatres of late eighteenth century Germany and Austria. The subsequent development and

influence of East European dramaturgy is seen to have progressed westward toward the Scandinavian countries and Great Britain, crossed the Atlantic Ocean and come to rest on the northeastern shores of the United States.

## **GERMANY**

### **The Hamburg National Theatre**

In December of 1766, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing agreed to assume the position of resident critic at the Deutsches Theatre of Hamburg (the Hamburg National Theatre). This was to be Germany's first permanent subsidized repertory company. Lessing had recently completed, in 1765, a survey of the European literature of his day; and he was now asked to shift his attention to a specific genre in a specific locale. Although the Hamburg National Theatre itself did not open until the following spring on 27 April 1767, Lessing's duties as resident critic began in January of 1767. He advised the theatre's management on play selection, carefully evaluating new scripts, in addition to writing his own. In so doing he played a major part in the development of the repertory. He was also actively involved in the creation of an ensemble at the theatre. While his work at the Hamburg National Theatre is widely held to have pioneered the profession of dramaturgy, Lessing accepted the position only because he was too financially destitute to refuse it. His preference would have been to work as a librarian at the Royal Library in Berlin; but he was in no position to argue with King Frederick the Great, who had already hired a Frenchman to serve in that capacity. The theatre's managing director, J. F. Löwen, in his attempt to create a national theatre in Germany, had initially requested that Lessing become resident poet at Hamburg; but the experienced playwright, critic and theoretician turned him down, feeling unable to promise a regular output of dramatic literature. Löwen then suggested the role of in-house critic, in which Lessing would publish information about the plays performed in the theatre supplemented and enriched by continual critiques of their performances. Lessing was



committed both to the advancement of new plays and to the establishment of a theatre freed from commercial pressures. He saw the offer from Löwen as a chance to involve the public in a debate about what the theatre was doing and how it fit in with the literary and theatrical trends in the rest of Europe. He wanted to educate the public, refusing to confirm prejudices, through the moral and instructive force of theatre—practical, theoretical and critical; so he agreed to write bi-weekly sheets of criticism, recording his impressions as a critic *in* the theatre, and not merely *of* the theatre (Tynan 48).

### ***Hamburg Dramaturgy***

These regular critical writings, authored between April 1767 and April 1769, at first appeared twice each week, and later less frequently. They were widely read and frequently copied without permission from, or acknowledgement of their author. In 1769 Lessing published in a single volume all one hundred and four of the essays, in which he had reviewed most of the plays produced at the Hamburg National Theatre. Lessing entitled his essay collection *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (Hamburg Dramaturgy), affording a lasting popularity both to the word "dramaturgy" and to the dramaturgical profession (Sobieski).<sup>1</sup> As far as Lessing was concerned, the word "dramaturgie" originally meant merely a catalogue of plays: he cites Leone Allaci's catalogue of plays, *La Drammaturgia*, of which Lessing probably owned the second edition, printed in Venice in 1755. While Lessing appears to have considered Allaci's title to contain the earliest modern usage of the word, J. G. Robertson suggests that it actually originated in a passage from Lucian's *De Saltatione*, in which δραματοουργία (dramatourgia) implies "dramatic composition" (Robertson 120-21; 120 n.2). The task of the "dramaturgy" advocated by Lessing in his collection of essays, however, was to "create an informed and articulate public for a literature and a theatre that should be 'the school of the moral world' and that would engage the most serious concerns of an emerging, enlightened society" (qtd. in Lange xxi).

### Gotthold Lessing's Dramatic Predispositions and Theatrical Assumptions

Lessing's strong and unhidden preferences were for the Aristotelian theory of tragedy and for the plays of Shakespeare. His tendency was to examine the contemporary dramatic repertory of his day with Aristotelian assumptions. He praised the audiences of ancient Athens—as well as its poets—comparing their theatrical sensibilities favourably with those of the socialites in his contemporary Germany, most of whom he believed went to the theatre out of idle curiosity, to be fashionable, to see people and to be seen. He made no attempt to conceal his resentment of such aristocratic attitudes and courtly views of the function of theatre. To these playgoers—and to all—he strongly advocated the reading of Shakespeare; and yet, somewhat paradoxically, Lessing also disdained Germany's neglect of its own playwrights, and felt that his country's dramatists copied too much from other countries, especially France. He disliked Voltaire and Corneille, feeling that the French misunderstood the rules of ancient drama—particularly those of tragedy. The problem with which Lessing was confronted during the writing of *Hamburg Dramaturgy* was that at that time truly great comedies and tragedies were not being written in Germany (Schechter, "Lessing" 100).

Lessing considered drama to be the highest form of artistic creation and the most telling mirror of the moral life—and the dramatic form to be the most stirring vehicle of the life of the mind (Lange, x). He wanted to share his enthusiasm with the theatre audience, hoping that they would come to the same conclusion, but always respectful of their right to judge for themselves. He argued that a poet needs critical perception as well as talent and that "not the mere fact of invention but invention adequate to its purpose, marks a creative mind" (qtd. in Lange, xvi). He recognized as essential the mediation between the theatre and the public—between a performance and its audience: in order for the theatre to gain social relevance poetic images would have to be accurate enough to prod spectators to adopt

standpoints. This was where the dramaturg could best serve his theatre in a literary capacity. Lessing believed that the dramaturg should accompany every step of a dramatic production, working not just with the playwright but with the actors as well. He further believed that each individual artist should be subordinated to the process of collaboration. Though many of Lessing's criteria are predominantly literary, he balanced his dramatic theories with practical theatrical criticism. Noting that theatre and drama had existed in large measure as separate concerns, he advocated bringing the two realms into a productive relationship, pooling the resources of the poet, the performer and the audience—as he perceived the Greeks to have done. He stressed the absolute interdependence of the word of the playwright and the speech, expression and gestures of the performer, calling upon the actor to think "with" the poet. He argued that the intelligent combination of a play's conception and the subtle suggestions afforded by an actual performance give shape to the intention of the production (Lange xvi; xviii-xix). Here the dramaturg's practical theatre skills would be of paramount importance. Lessing even defines a good critic as one with the ability to distinguish a bad script from a poor performance, contrasting the permanence of the literary text with the ephemeral nature of the performance text (Lessing 3-4).

### **Reaction to Lessing and His Influence on Subsequent German Dramaturgy**

It is likely that Löwen, the managing director, expected Lessing to write very favourably about the productions staged at the Hamburg National Theatre, lending prestige to its season by virtue of his name, and thereby promoting its success. However, Lessing was outspokenly critical of much of his own theatre's work, and he soon aroused the anger of many of the actors whose performances he critiqued. By the end of June 1767, after only his third month at the Hamburg National Theatre, Lessing ceased almost entirely to comment upon the specific performances of its ensemble members because of numerous complaints from the actors. As a result, only twenty-five of his one hundred and four

essays—fourteen weeks out of two years—treat the acting done by the company. Lessing continued writing textual criticism and refining his aesthetic theories, confident that no serious playgoer within his readership would be discouraged from attending plays because of his critiques of the Hamburg National Theatre.

Lessing is today considered to have been talented enough to have assumed any role he might have wished in the theatre (Czerwinski and Rzhovsky 3). It is therefore ironic that his influence on the ill-fated Hamburg National Theatre for which he worked was quite minimal. On 4 December 1767 the theatre was forced to close, less than eight months into its existence. It was eventually bankrupt in March of 1769. In the summer of 1768 Lessing resigned from the Hamburg National Theatre, feeling ignored and embittered by his perception that "art" had degenerated to the level of "trade" (Schechter, "Lessing" 94). He nevertheless continued to issue with reasonable regularity the critical writings which were bound into *Hamburg Dramaturgy* twelve years before his death in 1781. But in spite of the brevity of Lessing's relationship with this one particular theatre, the significance of his writing to future dramatic criticism and to the practice of dramaturgy in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries cannot be overstated. In 1775 state-supported playwright Von Gemmingen wrote *Mannheimer Dramaturgie* (Mannheim Dramaturgy); from 1783 to 1784 Schiller served as dramaturg at the National Theatre of Mannheim;<sup>2</sup> in 1789 Von Knigge published *Dramaturgische Blätter* (Dramaturgical Notes); and in 1791 Albrecht completed *Neue Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (New Hamburg Dramaturgy).

Dramaturgs with strong grounding in playwriting and dramatic theory continued to be hired by Germany's public theatres for the purpose of reading and assessing new plays. Their position in the theatre strengthened as they began to exert more influence on play selection and adaptation than Lessing had ever been able to at Hamburg. Joel Schechter suggests one reason for the increasing prominence of the German dramaturg in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

As the number of subsidized repertory theatres increased in Germany, more productions of untried plays could be risked by managements no longer wholly dependent on popular taste or box-office success for their financial backing. (Schechter, "Lessing" 101)

Such "risky" productions could be still more easily entertained by theatres who employed a dramaturg to help make sense of the work. In 1824 Ludwig Tieck, Germany's second major dramaturg,<sup>3</sup> was appointed to the theatre at Dresden. More than half a century after Lessing's debut at Hamburg, and despite the progressive advancement of the dramaturgical office, some of Tieck's criticisms of both his culture and his theatre almost echo those of his predecessor: Tieck resented what he perceived to be a generally low level of public taste; he found the bureaucrats within his theatre deaf to many of his ideas; and he engendered the wrath of some of the actors and playwrights whom he dared to criticize. In 1834 Karl Immermann, dramaturg at Dusseldorf, initiated the staging of Shakespeare's works. In the late 1800s, Otto Brahm was premiering Ibsen, Strindberg, Zola and Gerhart Hauptmann.<sup>4</sup> Ludwig Tieck's disappointments notwithstanding, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's influence on the development of the drama of his country is unequivocal, and he can be seen to have, in the words of Ronald Bryden, "invented the majority theatre of the nineteenth century" (5).

### **German Dramaturgy in the Early Twentieth Century: Bertolt Brecht**

By the end of the nineteenth century, the role of the dramaturg had been, in some theatres, reduced to that of "literary advisor"—essentially a reader who spent much of his time merely considering from among numerous submissions and periodically writing adaptations, occasional poems, prologues or verses. Nevertheless, even within this purely literary role some dramaturgs excelled at their craft, such as Luise Dumont who, before World War I, became a precedent-setting program publisher and editor to whose written work all German theatres aspired.

In 1923 Bertolt Brecht became dramaturg of Munich Kammerspiele at age twenty-five. Instead of producing Shakespeare as had been planned, he adapted Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*, translated and transformed through Brecht's collaboration with Lion Feuchtwanger. Brecht was both the show's director and dramaturg. Two years later in 1925, Brecht became one of several literary editors and advisors to Max Reinhardt at the Berlin National Theatre. Reinhardt's chief-dramaturgs at that time were Kahane and Hollaender; but Brecht did achieve the status of co-dramaturg—with Carl Zuckmayer—for one season. Brecht made impossible demands, requesting complete programming control and permission to change the theatre's name. Soon after being refused these concessions, Brecht's dramaturgical function in the theatre diminished considerably: he began to work almost exclusively as a playwright, soon coming in only to pick up paychecks (Schechter, "Heiner Müller" 152).

Following Brecht's 1926 conversion to Marxism, he worked as a dramaturg with Erwin Piscator in a "collective" of twelve writers at Berlin's Theater am Nollendorfplatz. These dramaturgs in Piscator's "Political Theatre" were on an equal level with all others involved in the production. This development of the collective, simultaneously occurring in Russia, restored to the role of the dramaturg a more complete involvement with the entire production process and not merely its preparation. In August of 1928, Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* achieved great success at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, after which Brecht took a more dominant role in that theatre. He then began experimenting in opera and didactic play, collaborating with Kurt Weill, Hanns Eisler and Paul Dessau (Brown 55-56). Like Gotthold Lessing, Brecht wrote adaptations, translations and new plays of his own; like Lessing's, Brecht's was an "oppositional dramaturgy" which challenged the norms and expectations of both the theatres and the audiences for whom he wrote (Schechter, "Enter Dramaturgs" 5; Sjöberg, Alf 67); like Lessing, Brecht both magnified the role of the dramaturg and simultaneously submerged it into the collective of the company; and like

Lessing, Ludwig Tieck and Otto Brahm before him, Bertolt Brecht advocated a theatre form—in this case "epic" drama—which, although initially unpopular, later found a substantial audience.

## AUSTRIA

If the dramaturgical profession, so named, began in late eighteenth-century Germany, it was being practised with equal enthusiasm in Austria by the early eighteenth hundreds (Berlogea 7). The term "literary advisor" often denoted the person filling the role of dramaturg in an Austrian theatre. At Vienna's Burgtheater between 1814 and 1832, Schreyvogel's title was that of "dramaturg and artistic secretary." The word "secretary" was understood in this context to denote a collaborator with, and not a subordinate of the theatre director.

In 1846 Heinrich Laube, the Director of the Burgtheater in Vienna, published "Letters About the German Theatre" in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, a popular newspaper. In this piece Laube describes the dramaturg as an "intellectual monarch" and a natural commander of actors, whose responsibility it is to effect the practical realization of a play, to relay the play to the stage director after the first rehearsal and, ultimately, to decide whether or not a play is ready for public performance. Laube contends that the role of the dramaturg is to unite the play with the actors, remaining present throughout the rehearsal process in order to assist in the effective realization of pace, pauses, tempo, tone and emphasis within the action (Schumacher 49-50). This mandate greatly benefitted an ensemble approach to theatre production, since the dramaturg could maintain control of an entire cast of actors and, in so doing, avert conspicuous performances by individual actors. Perhaps Laube's desire to define the dramaturg's task was occasioned by his inability to do so when asked by Prince Schwarzenberg what a dramaturg really was: the director's



response at that time was, "Highness, that is what no one could tell you in a few words" (qtd. in Skopnik 233).

Gradually a division of labour developed within the dramaturgical function itself, and the job began to be described as four nearly discrete areas of responsibility—planning; development; production; and public relations. "Planning" was usually the domain of the chief-dramaturg and involved decisions concerning the profile of the theatre, its repertory, the ensemble and most personnel policy. "Development" included the promoting of new works and the contemporary adaptation of classics. "Production" entailed the presence of the dramaturg throughout the rehearsal process, in order to work with the director, actors, designers and musicians. "Public relations" involved the compiling of the program, interaction with the press, contact with subscribers and all documentation of the theatre's season (Schumacher 51).

## **EASTERN EUROPE**

Like Austria and Poland, Russia had employed literary advisors in its theatres since the nineteenth century. The founding of the famous Moscow Art Theatre was in part the result of a lengthy meeting between Stanislavski and his dramaturg, Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, who was also a producer and a playwright (Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 16-17). Dramaturgs in Meyerhold's theatre in Moscow were given equal billing with the rest of the production team, as Viennese director Heinrich Laube's notion of the "intellectual monarch" was replaced by a strong and rapidly growing sense of the "collective." By the 1920s Soviet collectives, paralleling the work of Bertolt Brecht in Germany, had restored the socio-critical life to the dramaturgical profession, ensuring that the dramaturg remained involved throughout the entire production process, and not merely during its preparatory stage (Voelker 47).

In Romania the term "literary secretary" has always been used to name the individual whose duties most closely correspond to that of the dramaturg. In 1899 Scarlat Ghica, the director of the Romanian National Theatre in Bucharest, asked the Ministry of Education to provide him with an expert to read the numerous play submissions he was regularly receiving. In December of that year Haralamb Lecca, himself a dramatist, was appointed "literary secretary" to the National Theatre in Bucharest. Soon after this, the staffs of the National Theatres in Craiova and Iasi were also expanded to include literary secretaries. This new position was usually filled by young dramatists or poets who were devoted to the stage. They would work with Romanian playwrights, perfecting original pieces in preparation for performance in the three Romanian National Theatres (Berloghea 8).

Between 1911 and 1912 Liviu Rebreanu, a prominent Romanian novelist and playwright, was the literary secretary of the Romanian National Theatre in Craiova. Later, in the 1940s, he became the director of the National Theatre in Bucharest, but while in Craiova he served as an invaluable aid to the principal director there, Emil Girleanu. Rebreanu is described by his wife as "the right hand of Emil Girleanu," and is credited with having played a large part in the selection of foreign plays due to his thorough knowledge of world theatre. Rebreanu also assumed responsibility for the correspondence of the theatre, all newspaper copy and the designing and printing of playbills (Berloghea 7).

The National Theatres in Bucharest, Iasi and Craiova sought a common cultural identity. For this reason the role of the literary secretary in Romania became very particular to the theatre of that country—and was much more than the mere imitation of the previously existing models found in the German and Austrian theatre. After the First World War a fourth National Theatre was established in Cluj. The assignment of literary secretary was consistently given to intellectuals, writers, journalists and playwrights. To a certain extent, the personalities of these individuals helped to determine their function within each theatre.

In 1920 Ivan Massof was appointed to the National Theatre in Bucharest and, along with Haralamb Lecca and Dimitri Nanu, became the most prominent literary secretary in that theatre's history. Massof was famous for his discipline, hard work, self-sacrifice and love of the stage. He later became an important Romanian theatre historian. Between 1925 and 1926 Adrian Maniu, a poet, was the literary secretary at Craiova. Like Rebreanu before him, Maniu's contributions to his theatre were highly valued, and he became very influential in helping to shape the dramaturgical role for subsequent literary secretaries (Berlogea 8).

The dramaturg in Hungary made his first appearance in the early 1900s. Here the role was modeled after the German example, now more than a century into its existence. Between the First and Second World Wars, the dramaturg was becoming a common presence in the state-subsidized National Theatre of Budapest—and even in some private theatres particularly concerned with literary quality (Sza'nto' 35).

In Bulgaria, prior to 1944, only the National Theatre had a permanently appointed repertory director, serving in a position equivalent to that of dramaturg. The various directors at the National Theatre were outstanding Bulgarian poets, writers and playwrights who translated and adapted foreign and Bulgarian texts (Mintchev 41).

## SCANDINAVIA

In 1930 Alf Sjöberg began a forty year career as Sweden's leading dramaturg at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm. Between 1923 and 1925 he had been a student of the Royal Dramatic Training Academy; and from 1925 until 1929 he had performed as an actor at Dramaten. In addition to his experience as a scholar and an actor, his circle of friends contained a large number of artists and designers (Sjöberg, Leif 61).

Norway's Henrik Ibsen can be considered to have performed a dramaturgical role by virtue of the number of plays he rewrote for his theatre, and by virtue of the social

relevance characterizing his twelve major prose plays (Price 244). However, he—unlike Sjöberg and the other European dramaturgs discussed in this chapter—was never employed in specifically this capacity. Ibsen has always been thought of, first and foremost, as a great playwright, and not as a dramaturg.<sup>5</sup>

## ENGLAND

As Peter Hay observes, the theatres of the English-speaking world, from the time of the Restoration in 1660 to the end of the Second World War, have been almost entirely privately run. For this reason, the box office has been a significant factor in determining the seasons of such theatres, which depend on commercial success for their continuation. When large-scale commercial appeal is a leading criterion in play selection, the need—and evidently the desire—for a dramaturg is greatly reduced (Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 17).

Perhaps in response to the proliferation of privately run, commercial theatres at the turn of this century, William Archer and Harley Granville-Barker dreamed of an endowed art theatre in England, similar to the state-run public theatres which had already characterized many central European countries for one hundred years or more. In 1904 they published *Scheme and Estimates for a National Theatre*, a proposal in which Granville-Barker coined the term "literary manager" (Cottrell 329). This title described an office of responsibility comparable with that of the European dramaturg:

*The Literary Manager*, an official answering to the German *Dramaturg*. His duties should be to weed out new plays before they are submitted to the Reading Committee; to suggest plays for revival and arrange them for the stage; to follow the dramatic movement in foreign countries, and to suggest foreign plays suitable for production; to consult with the scene-painter, producers, &c., on questions of archaeology, costume and local colour.

The Literary Manager would be a member of the Reading Committee, but in all other matters would be subordinate and responsible to the Director. (Archer and Granville-Barker 13)

Eighteen years later in 1922, in a book of his own entitled *The Exemplary Theatre*, Granville-Barker called on the theatre critics of his day to assist in the "intelligent and responsible connection between the three parties—between dramatist, actors and audience—[which] having been so wantonly broken ... can be set up again" (97). Although the English critics discussed in *The Exemplary Theatre* are not necessarily in-house critics, this account of their function vividly recalls Victor Lange's description of the task Lessing set for himself and, ultimately, for all dramaturgs—that of helping "the poet, the performer and the audience ... to pool their resources once again" (Lange, xviii).

Granville-Barker also stressed the need for a powerful play reader—and playreading secretary—to work with new scripts and their authors. The reader would be in a position to make suggestions for textual alterations and rewrites, with which he might assist. The playwright could even be brought into the theatre for a few weeks, during which time his work might be brought to the preliminary stages of production. This idea, conceived in England seventy years ago, of "workshopping" new scripts by promising playwrights retains its integrity in North America today, both at Playwrights' Workshop Montreal, in Canada, and at the National Playwrights Conference at the O'Neill Centre in Waterford, Connecticut, U.S.A.

## UNITED STATES

William Archer and Harley Granville-Barker's *Scheme and Estimates for a National Theatre* was published in the United States in 1908. Although Granville-Barker had coined the term "literary manager" four years earlier, he and William Archer were making very little progress with their plan for an English national theatre. As a result the first literary manager was an American and not an Englishman. A successful Boston theatre man named

Winthrop Ames wrote a set of rules and regulations for the New Theatre which bear remarkable similarity to those set out in the *Scheme and Estimates for a National Theatre* on the subject of the literary manager:

The Literary Manager shall examine all plays sent to the Theatre and indicate to the Reading Committee such as seem to him worthy of their consideration. It shall further be his duty, subject to the Director, to follow the course of dramatic art in foreign countries, suggest foreign or old plays for revival, and give such aid in revision, arrangement and translation of plays, and such advice on questions of history, archaeology and English as may be required. (qtd. in Shyer 10)

The American dramaturg was to enjoy greater autonomy than his hypothetical English counterpart and, in so doing, was expected to keep an objective artistic check on the director.

The popular American newspapers of the day scorned the creation of this position, finding the title pretentious. Nevertheless in 1908 John Corbin, a Harvard graduate and former drama critic, was appointed Literary Manager of the New Theatre at a salary of ten thousand dollars per year. Corbin wanted to develop native American playwriting, discover talent, and collaborate with the authors in an ongoing process of criticism that had as its goal a practical working theatre script. He advertised for plays and received over two thousand of them—most very poor—from a great variety of people including housewives, lawyers, shopkeepers and the clergy. With each submission he returned, Corbin included a short personal note. After one and a half years in his position as Literary Manager, Corbin frankly stated the unlikelihood of finding an unknown talent from within the submissions he had received (Shyer 10-11).

Because of the huge number of submissions received, the New Theatre established a bookkeeping system for cataloguing incoming scripts: upon arrival each play was registered, numbered and sent to a reader, who recorded his impressions in three sections—identifying details, such as number, title, author, reader and date of reading; plot

summary; and the conclusion. Occasionally Corbin might make a few changes to a script before returning it; but his comments usually were, understandably, extremely brief. He was unsuccessful in his bid to solicit scripts from established writers, some of whom failed even to answer his inquiries (Shyer 12-13).

On 2 March 1910, after two years at the New Theatre, Corbin declared his intention to resign from his position as Literary Manager, effective upon the conclusion of the first season. He was exhausted, having read an average of about five plays each day for an entire year. And, in a theatre in which the director—not a dramaturg—determined policy and dominated every aspect of production, he felt worn down by the repetitive, dull task of mere script reading. The office of Literary Manager was abolished, and a year later, in 1911, the New Theatre was closed due to a lack of audience interest (Shyer 13-14).

Although a great many Americans visited Moscow in the 1920s and 1930s to observe the work of Russian dramaturgs, the essentially private theatre of the United States to which these travellers returned could not readily accommodate the distinctive format which for more than a century had characterized the public theatres of Russia and central Europe, and which invariably included the presence of a dramaturg or his equivalent (Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 19). It was not until a half century after John Corbin's resignation that non-commercial theatre returned to the United States, this time permanently: the advent of regional theatre marked the return of the professional Literary Manager (Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 88).

## CONCLUSION

Gotthold Lessing's immediate influence on the Hamburg National Theatre was almost exclusively literary—choosing which plays would form the season; reading and assessing the merits of new scripts; creating new works of his own; and writing information and criticism about the productions at his theatre. Due to the popularity of



Lessing's essays, the performing of these tasks has commonly come to be known as "dramaturgy." But Lessing was simultaneously advocating a critical examination of his theatre's relevance—to its time; to its public; and to the rest of Europe. This less tangible mandate was adopted by only a few of Lessing's early successors. In fact, with the exception of the work of Bertolt Brecht and some of the Russian theatre collectives in the mid-1920s, most of the dramaturgy practised in Europe and North America prior to the Second World War was primarily concerned with only the literary aspects of the play at hand. Brecht's return to Europe, following his exile in the United States, marked the advent of what has come to be known as "production dramaturgy," in which the dramaturg assumes a far more active role throughout the entire rehearsal process than that enjoyed by his former counterpart, the literary manager. With this increased involvement in the practical work of the theatre, the contemporary dramaturg frequently resumes Lessing's preoccupation with the social, political and theatrical relevance of his own theatre. Richard Nelson defines this return to Lessing's original mandate as a third type of dramaturgy: "'theater dramaturgy'... [involves]... helping to articulate the aesthetic of the whole theater as opposed to that of a particular production" (qtd. in Bly 39). Contemporary dramaturgy, production dramaturgy and theatre dramaturgy will be discussed at length in the following chapters.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup> While Lessing's book is today regarded as a seminal work in the area of practical theatre criticism, it should be noted that it was not the first monograph ever to detail the organization of a national theatre: in 1764, only three years before Lessing began writing for the Hamburg National Theatre, another German author, Johann Elias Schlegel, was writing *Schreiben von Errichtung eines Theaters in Kopenhagen* (Writings on the Establishment of a Theatre in Copenhagen) and *Gedanken zur Aufnahme des dänischen Theaters* (Thoughts on Initiating a Danish Theatre) in preparation for a national theatre in Denmark (Robertson 121-22).

<sup>2</sup> E. L. Stahl describes Schiller as differing from Lessing in the extent to which the former incorporated philosophical viewpoints into his work in the theatre, compared with Lessing's predominantly literary interests. Schiller's influence on the German playwrights of the nineteenth century can be seen in the increasing preoccupation with philosophy in their work (Stahl 1). While at the National Theatre of Mannheim Schiller wrote *Die Schaubühne als eine moralische Anstalt betrachtet* (Viewing the Stage as a Moral Place) (Stahl 163).

<sup>3</sup> In his article "Lessing, Jugglers, and Dramaturgs," Joel Schechter appears to be excluding Friedrich Schiller from the category of "major dramaturgs" (94). Barret H. Clark supports this assessment, describing Schiller's theories on dramatic art as "not of the epoch-making sort," and referring to Lessing as "an incontestably greater critic" (263).

<sup>4</sup> Brahm's career in the theatre included work as a theorist and critic, during which time, like Lessing, he wrote many essays and reviews. His additional dramaturgical contributions to German theatre in the late nineteenth century include the formation of company repertories and several re-workings of established play texts (Claus ix-x).

<sup>5</sup> Another genius of the theatre seldom thought of as a dramaturg is the great French director André Antoine. In his work at the Théâtre-Libre in the late nineteenth century, Antoine set out to "attack ... the tenets of the existing theatre"; and in the early 1900s at the Odéon he continued his "struggle against official traditions and administrative routine" (Antoine 1)—a mandate strikingly reminiscent of Lessing's plea for the theatre to break free from commercial pressures (Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 88). One hundred years before Antoine, famed English poet Lord Byron served on a management sub-committee at Richard Brinsley Sheridan's Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. During the 1815-1816 season Byron's chief responsibility was to "encourage the writing and submission of new dramas," almost five hundred of which he perused in the single year during which he held this position (Lansdown 48).

## CHAPTER III

### CONTEMPORARY DRAMATURGY IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

#### INTRODUCTION

While dramaturgy in North America was not revived until the 1960s, the end of the Second World War brought about significant changes to the dramaturg's profession in Europe. Bertolt Brecht returned to Germany and immediately resumed his activities as a director and dramaturg, establishing—and teaching—with authority the practice of "production dramaturgy" in his work with the Berliner Ensemble. The theatres of Eastern Europe were rapidly procured by the governments of their respective countries, resulting in the presence of dramaturgs or literary managers in virtually all major theatres east of Berlin. For a time, some of these state-subsidized theatres lost much of their artistic license due to the political interests of their sponsors; and even where censorship was not a problem, the increased bureaucracy characterizing the public theatre of the late 1960s led to the discontent of many of its artists. But, as the following study indicates, the dramaturg has continued to enjoy a prominent role in the production of contemporary European theatre.

In North America the popularity of dramaturgy began in earnest fully two centuries after its commencement in Europe. Nevertheless, the responsibilities of the North American production dramaturg closely resemble those of his German and East European counterpart. In both Europe and the United States, the dramaturg is responsible for helping to determine which plays will form his company's next season, and which will be included in its repertory. He reads numerous unsolicited manuscripts from aspiring playwrights while remaining informed about other theatrical happenings around the world. Often the dramaturg works in collaboration with a playwright in order to develop a new script to its fullest potential. The dramaturg's production role begins in consultation with the stage

director of the play to be produced, discussing the director's concept for the production. If adaptation, translation or editing of the text are required, these duties will likely fall to the dramaturg, who is also responsible for much of the research done on the production. Frequently the production dramaturg attends auditions and assists the director with casting decisions. The dramaturg almost always attends the first read-throughs and early rehearsals, and serves as a literary, historical, artistic and conceptual resource to the director, the playwright, the designer and the cast. During the majority of the rehearsal period the dramaturg acts as a liaison among the various personnel at work on the production, offering objective criticism to the director, often in the form of notes. Frequently the production dramaturg is responsible for the writing and editing of the program accompanying the production on which he has worked. Additionally, he is frequently the theatre's spokesperson to the press and to the media. He often conducts public relations in the form of lectures and seminars. Although many production dramaturgs have impressive academic credentials, virtually all of them emphasize the greater significance to their success of extensive, wide-ranging experience in practical theatre production.

## **EUROPE**

### **Germany**

After his exile during World War II in the United States and Switzerland, Bertolt Brecht returned to Germany in 1948. He immediately resumed his work as a director, and soon thereafter formed his own theatre troupe, the Berliner Ensemble. Brecht's work was state-supported, giving him the freedom to rehearse at great length and to train not only actors and designers, but dramaturgs as well. As a team, Brecht and his apprentice dramaturgs would select the plays to be performed, adapt the texts to suit their production, and study the play in detail. Included among Brecht's methods of research were numerous

field trips to visit with the sort of people being portrayed in his plays, such as farmers and factory workers. Some plays were even performed on location, in factories; and when audience members were asked for their feedback, the resulting criticism informed all subsequent performances of the work. Lessing would almost certainly have approved of this approach to making the theatre relevant to its specific audiences. Brecht's dramaturgs were encouraged to make whatever cuts and alterations to the text were necessary in order to achieve the most direct presentation of the play possible (Brown 56-57). In the early 1950s, Brecht and his dramaturgs at the Berliner Ensemble rewrote plays by Molière, Farquhar and Shakespeare (Schechter, "Brecht" 57).

Also at this time Brecht initiated the idea of the model book—a collection of photographs and analyses which constitutes a visual production log of the play produced. Other dramaturgical publications include the detailed accounts of six productions by the Berliner Ensemble, containing numerous photographs and essays pertaining to the productions (Brown 57).

Although it was through Brecht's influence that the dramaturg began to participate in all phases of the production process, the actual term "production dramaturgy" was coined after Brecht's death—either in the 1960s (Sobieski), or the 1970s (Schechter, "The Return"). It was during the late 1960s and early 1970s that production dramaturgy was most widely practised in Germany (Sobieski). By the mid-1970s, however, rehearsals in some German theatres were used merely to teach and repeat very detailed gestures and actions, some of which had been devised without the actors even present. Many stage players began to question the extent to which they retained any freedom of their own expression in such a controlled environment, and an attitude against such meticulous pre-planning quickly spread (Rouse 26). At around this time, a number of dramaturgs were themselves growing dissatisfied with the division of their craft into the artificially discrete categories of "development," "production" and "public relations"—dissatisfied also with

the underlying indeterminacy characteristic of their profession. Many of these dramaturgs became stage directors or switched to television and radio dramaturgy (Schumacher 52). Nevertheless, Brecht had transformed the role of the theatre dramaturg from one of exclusively literary involvement into one incorporating every facet of theatre production.

The German dramaturg has always been responsible for suggesting which plays might form his theatre's coming season, usually in collaboration with the artistic director and stage directors (Elwood 254). In keeping with Lessing's mandate, the repertoire of any given theatre should be suited to the public most likely to attend that theatre (Esslin, "The Role" 48)—and should offer challenges both to the actors and to the audience (Schechter, "Lessing" 103). Dramaturg Hermann Beil, Chief Dramaturg at the Stuttgart State Theater, defines his theatre's repertory as "a collection of tendencies and wishes, curiosity about new plays and excitement about the writers." Beil claims that at his theatre they "never announce a completely scheduled season in advance," preferring to adapt according to their "relations to the audience" (qtd. in Stumm 55). This is the very sort of flexibility and relevance advocated by Lessing in *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, in describing which Richard Nelson has coined the term "theater dramaturgy" (qtd. in Bly 39). Antony Price reports that in Germany "[m]ost theatres try to produce at least one World Première and one German Première per season." Connected with the planning of the season is the continuous search for and assessment of new plays and playwrights (Price, Antony 242). This ongoing contact with contemporary dramatic literature helps to ensure that the dramaturg's preoccupations connect with the present realities of his society (Skopnik 235).

Once a play has been chosen the dramaturg's production role begins. According to Volker Canaris, Brecht's sense of dramaturgy—production dramaturgy—"comprises the entire conceptual preparation of a production from its inception to its realization" (qtd. in Schechter, "Brecht" 59). And it is the production concept with which the dramaturg, in collaboration with his theatre's artistic director and the play's stage director, begins his

production work. Meetings and discussions among directors, designers and dramaturgs sometimes begin as early as two months before the first rehearsal. Working as a dramaturg at the Schiller-Theater, Berlin, in 1979, dramaturg Henriette Beese prepared two hundred pages of background material for the actors based on the pre-rehearsal sessions at which they were not present (Rouse 28, 29). Hermann Beil stresses the importance of the dramaturg's presence at rehearsals in order to "find the errors and the strengths of the concept" (qtd. in Stumm). For a 1979 production of *Antigone*, Frankfurt director Christof Nel and his dramaturg Urs Troller "attempted to develop their working concept as a series of questions to be explored with the actors" (Rouse 31). They began working on the stage after only a few reading rehearsals in order to preserve their objectivity in relation to the text. While interviewing Berlin dramaturg Ernst Wendt, Henning Rischbieter argues that a "social and political interpretation of each play" staged is imperative in order for its "conceptualization" in production to be of any consequence (52).

Soon after an agreement has been reached with regard to the conception of a production, the dramaturg's literary skills may be exploited for any number of functions. His opinion is frequently sought regarding textual interpretation (Schechter, "Heiner Müller" 152). In the case of an older play, he may be asked to write an adaptation more accessible to his company (Stumm 53), or one better suited to the time and place of the current production (Voelker, 46). In the case of a foreign play, he may translate the original himself (Price, Antony 242), or he might work with a translator specifically hired to do the job (Elwood 256). He may even rewrite the entire play, as Brecht and his dramaturgs did in the 1950s (Schechter, "Brecht" 59). A theatre founded by Roberto Ciulli in 1981 in Mülheim an der Ruhr is devoted almost exclusively to the adaptation of dramatic and narrative works (Schäfer 57).

The dramaturg is responsible for a great deal of research in connection with the play on which he is working. A usual starting point involves compiling a general background of



information pertaining to the social, political and economic climate of the play's authorship, and of its setting. Mythological and philosophical allusions may need further clarification, as may the language of the text itself. The dramaturg will sometimes recommend to the cast various additional sources they can consult if they wish to further pursue a particular topic of interest (Rouse 26, 29, 35). In the case of plays set in "period," the dramaturg will provide enough written and pictorial material pertaining to costumes, set pieces and properties to ensure historical accuracy (Elwood 256). The research conducted by Dieter Stürm, Peter Stein's dramaturg at Berlin's Schaubühne, involves the use of such diverse resources as readings, literary studies, scientific works, political analyses, films and paintings (Zipes 53).

The dramaturg often has a say in the casting of the actors for individual productions. Once the show is cast readings usually begin, sometimes extending over a period of two weeks or longer. In some instances the dramaturg's function at readings is to share with the cast the results of whatever research he has already conducted (Rouse 29). In other cases dramaturgs such as Hermann Beil benefit as much as the actors from the discovery process of the meetings and readings:

The dramaturg has to learn along with everyone else. He has to hear what the director, designers, and actors are thinking, he has to move around within their imaginations. These long-winded early sessions can be wild and exciting. (qtd. in Stumm 54)

During the rehearsal period the dramaturg frequently serves as a liaison between various theatre personnel, including the director, the designer, the actors and the playwright. When new works are being rehearsed, for example, the dramaturg's time is often spent with both the playwright and the actor playing a specific role, in order to create as faithful a rendering as possible of the author's script (Elwood 255). In addition to mediating the interaction of these artists, the dramaturg may also offer his own advice to any of them. Hermann Beil particularly enjoys "the work with actors—when you can see

ideas being transposed and becoming visible" (qtd. in Stumm 56). The dramaturg himself, while working in the theatre, could even be said to represent a self-contained liaison between critic and artist.

The final major responsibility of the dramaturg in the German theatre is that of publicity and public relations. The program notes and book accompanying every play are often written, and almost always edited by the dramaturg. These programs frequently include a series of quotations and pictures related to the production, and must be approved for printing six months before the play opens (Schechter, "Heiner Müller" 152). According to Reinhardt Stumm, the Stuttgart State Theater and the Schaubühne in Berlin produce the most extensive program notes in all of Germany. The Stuttgart programs, compiled by dramaturg Hermann Beil, have become collector's items. Beil includes the entire text of the play in his program which, when the play is *Faust*, swells to enormous proportions. According to the dramaturg, "it's Goethe's fault for writing so much!" (qtd. in Stumm 56). Beil also frequently visits schools to discuss the work of his theatre; and Heiner Müller began post-play discussions with young audience members at the Berliner Ensemble when he first assumed the role of dramaturg in 1972 (Schechter, "Heiner Müller" 153).

Most German dramaturgs have a strong academic background in theatre history and criticism, dramatic literature, history and languages. Most possess doctoral degrees (Skopnik 237). This notwithstanding, most will assert that a sound knowledge of practical theatre work, and years of experience, are far more valuable credentials toward serving as a dramaturg (Schäfer 58; Schechter, "Brecht 59; Schumacher 53; Skopnik 236; Stumm 53; Voelker 45, 47). Many German dramaturgs have extensive experience in acting, directing, playwriting and practical criticism (Elwood 255; Rouse 34; Schechter, "Brecht" 59; Voelker 45, 47). Perhaps the most important qualities of all in a good dramaturg, however, are cooperation and humility. The dramaturg must be able to work *with* virtually everyone involved in the production—particularly the director. And although his opinions may be

highly regarded by all who are involved in a production, the dramaturg in contemporary German theatre ultimately has the final say on absolutely none of the artistic decisions made during the months of his labour.

### **Austria**

In April 1945, Austria's most famous playhouse, the Burgtheater, was severely damaged by fire during the bombing of Vienna. It was more than ten years later that, on 14 October 1955, the restored theatre opened its doors once again. Since that time the Direktor (artistic director) at Vienna's Burgtheater has had complete control over all production decisions made during the course of the theatre's season. However a dramaturg serves as an essential advisor to the artistic director, performing several functions reminiscent of his contemporary German counterpart. The dramaturg informs the artistic director of the availability of any new plays he has discovered through various publishers; he suggests which plays might comprise the coming season; and he sometimes recommends that a certain Regisseur (director) be assigned to a certain play. The dramaturg's role in any given production begins in consultation with the theatre's artistic director and the play's stage director. Together these three establish the show's concept. The dramaturg offers advice with regard to the casting of the production and the designers to be used. His literary skill usually earns him authority over which version of the play will serve as the script for the production—or, when applicable, which translation will be used. He is further responsible for making any alterations to the text which he feels are necessary. The design of the play program is another duty of the dramaturg. He writes all the program notes pertaining to the play as well as the production credits. The Burgtheater dramaturg can function as an in-house critic well into the run of the play if the artistic director wishes such an evaluation made (Loup 61).

In 1976 this essentially literary role was expanded by artistic director Achim Benning to include involvement of the Austrian dramaturg throughout the rehearsal process. "Stück Dramaturgie" (production dramaturgy) allows the dramaturg to participate in the execution of those plans of which he formerly only conceived. Five dramaturgs are now employed at the Burgtheater alone; and several visiting dramaturgs have participated in individual seasons, such as Poland's Jan Kott in February 1977 (Loup 67, 70).

Some dramaturgs at Vienna's Burgtheater have held their positions for several years longer than the artistic directors who first appointed them (Loup 61). Such long-term contributions to the seasonal offerings of a single playhouse greatly influence the artistic stance of the Burgtheater as a whole and, in so doing, conform to Richard Nelson's definition of "theater dramaturgy" (qtd. in Bly 39)—the quest for relevance, initiated by Lessing more than two hundred years ago.

### **Eastern Europe**

If little is remembered about Russian theatre between the mid-1940s and mid-1950s it may support Alexey Kazantsev's description of the period as one of "so-called 'conflictless' dramaturgy" (86). However, in the 1970s and 1980s the experimental Taganka Theater brought the research of its dramaturgs right onto the stage. Printed images and words which would previously have wound up in the play program were instead enlarged and displayed to the audience, actually incorporating the literary text into the performance text (Rzhevsky, "The Program" 97). This innovative presentation notwithstanding, the role of the dramaturg in the Russian theatre has remained a predominantly literary one, closely resembling that of a literary manager. All dramaturgs, many of whom are also playwrights, belong to the Writers Union (Londré 83). Some also work as actors and directors (Kazantsev 86).

Most Russian theatres run shows in repertory, with anywhere from ten to thirty plays being performed in a single season (Kazantsev 93). Yet there is no shortage of material from which to choose: the dramaturgs receive so many new scripts each season that seeking them out is unnecessary. Preference is often given to contemporary Russian plays. Anatoly Mitnikov, dramaturg with the Mossoviet Theatre in Moscow, is uncomfortable with the idea of revising the text in any script before consulting with the playwright and with the director of the show. This sort of collaboration appears to be typical of Russian dramaturgs. They are in regular communication not only with the directors, designers, technicians and actors in their own theatres—but also with the dramaturgs at other theatres (Londré 83). Alexey Kazantsev claims that the "ideal condition is when the dramaturg and director are united, when neither is primary or secondary but when they work together" (86). The playwright also shares in this equality of status: the dramaturg of any show must be able to "grasp the personality of its creator and to grasp the atmosphere of the work" before such tasks as editing, rewriting and adding to the original text are even considered (Kazantsev 88, 92).

Once the season has been determined, Anatoly Mitnikov views his production role as primarily that of researcher. He usually attends only the early rehearsals of a play. But it is the director of any given show who has the final say on the extent to which the dramaturg will be involved in the production process (Londré 83-84). In addition to the preparation of the program, Russian dramaturgs frequently publish articles, give lectures and provide consulting services (Rzhevsky, Introduction to "Soviet Dramaturgy" 85). These tasks, in combination with the search by dramaturgs for plays which are "needed by the country and by society" (Kazantsev 86), characterize a uniquely Russian version of theatre dramaturgy.<sup>1</sup>

The emphasis in Polish dramaturgy is decidedly on the literary aspects of play production, "not only the general structure of the drama, and of its every scene, but also

such apparently minor details as sentence structure, grammar, vocabulary, different uses of verse and prose, rhythms and cadences, even punctuation" (Makarewicz 27). In 1984 Kazimierz Braun's theatre, Teatr Współczesny (The Contemporary Theatre) in Wrocław had a literary department and a literary staff which included a literary advisor, a literary chief, a literary secretary and an editor (Braun 25). The dramaturgs assist in the planning of the season and in the reviewing of all new scripts which arrive at their theatre (Makarewicz 27). They may also order new scripts for their theatres, and write adaptations and translations of plays once such plays have been confirmed for the season (Braun 22, 25).

In the context of a production, the role of the Polish dramaturg can include collaboration with playwrights—and their translators—whose works are being rehearsed; preparation of research materials for the cast, through access to the theatre's library and archives; and, occasionally, participation in some of the readings, rehearsals and dress rehearsals. Dramaturgs also edit and contribute articles to the theatre program that accompanies each play, and are responsible for most of the remaining publication and promotion of the their theatres as well, such as bulletins, leaflets and posters and even books (Braun 22):

Once a year we published a book by one of "our" authors (Tadeusz Rozewicz, Helmut Kajzar, and others). Every five years we published a book about the theatre's work involving participation in theatre festivals, and activities such as tours abroad. (Braun 25)

Andrzej Makarewicz stresses the constraints imposed upon Polish dramaturgs by the government paying their salaries, "making them first and foremost responsible for public relations" (27). Makarewicz also suggests that two of the requisite skills necessary to the contemporary dramaturg are "his ability to cooperate smoothly with the censor" and "his connections" (28). The primarily academic background of these literary advisors includes the study of philosophy, literature, languages and criticism. Some Polish dramaturgs have

a practical background which includes work as scene designers, writers and directors (Czerwinski 115).

In 1947 several Literary Secretariats were created in Romania following the passing of a law which facilitated the founding of thirty-two new theatres in addition to the four already in existence. Not only was a literary secretary—or dramaturg—assigned to each of these theatres, but he would be accompanied by at least one literary reviewer (Berlogea 8). In 1954 the Institute of Theatrical and Cinematographic Art was formed. It included a Department of Theatre which, since its inception, has been responsible for the training of a number of dramaturgs. In the 1970s this department became the Department of Performance Art and Methodology, and it now trains students for the various media of radio, film and television as well as for the theatre (Berlogea 9).

In helping to plan a varied season for his theatre, the Romanian dramaturg searches for new playwrights and new works to produce. Those experienced in playwriting or translating will often adapt a variety of texts, theatrical and otherwise, for their stages. Sometimes translations are written for specific actors after the show has been cast. Radu Nichita, dramaturg at Teatrul Mic (The Small Theatre) in Bucharest, has been responsible for most of the translations into Romanian of English and American plays—often knowing in advance of his efforts the actors for whom he is writing (Berlogea 10-11).

The professional Romanian dramaturg is responsible for most of his theatre's public relations work. His production role includes overseeing the design of the playbills by which performances are advertised. He lectures on the subject of theatre history. He also devises the program book by means of which a great deal of information is conveyed to the audiences at his theatre. These programs include illustrations, biographical information about the actors and the playwright, a description of the concept for the production and the stage history of the text. On one level this information attempts to attract people to whichever theatre the dramaturg is working at. But perhaps more importantly, the

dramaturg is striving to "contribute to the increase in the cultural level of both the audience and the theatrical performance... to the education of the audiences and to an exchange of experiences between theatre people" (Berlogea 11, 12). These surely constitute examples of the desirable "theatre dramaturgy" implied in Lessing's *Hamburg Dramaturgy*.

In Czechoslovakia the Theatre Law, passed in 1948, outlawed all private theatre franchises. At this point the state became the governing agency for all theatres, and guaranteed a subsidy to each of them. The inclusion of a dramaturg in many of these funded houses soon followed. By the late 1950s and, particularly in the 1960s, dramaturgy was flourishing in Czechoslovakia (Hedba'vny' 32).

According to Zdeněk Hedba'vny', a Czechoslovakian dramaturg, "theatre dramaturgy" precedes and informs all the proposals made by the dramaturg:

... a dramaturg, first of all, must be able to formulate the ideological and aesthetic program of his theater and to clarify *what* a theater considers to be important and also *how* what is important is to be conveyed. Such specific criteria create the rules by which a dramaturg functions. The foundation of a dramaturg's work is a philosophical and aesthetic view of reality and of theatrical production. (32)

With this "philosophical and aesthetic view" defined, the dramaturg can begin his tasks, which include recommendations toward the seasonal repertory, the playwrights to be performed and the translations, if any, to be used. None of these decisions is made without the consultation and consent of the director, playwright or translator in question.

Hedba'vny' repeatedly stresses the need for full cooperation among all members of the theatre's staff. On the condition of such cooperation, the dramaturg in Czechoslovakia is responsible for finding and preparing the texts of new plays, and for adapting new translations. His production role involves helping the director to formulate a concept for a given work; recommending certain actors for particular roles; taking part in rehearsals, including discussing ideas with the director and the actors; offering critical commentary



throughout the rehearsal process; and evaluating the entire production after opening night. Additional responsibilities of the dramaturg include the preparation of the theatre bulletin, which accompanies every play staged at his theatre; and the appointment to and dismissal from the company of individual actors (Hedba'vny' 32).

Research is regarded as an essential tool for the Czechoslovakian dramaturg at the earliest reading rehearsals. The potential benefits to the cast of his research are most fully realized when the knowledge shared stimulates an increased interest in the play at hand. Examples of the background material with which Hedba'vny' furnishes his casts include information on the life and work of the playwright they are performing, and historical data pertaining to the setting of a classical work (Hedba'vny' 33). According to Hedba'vny', "Graduation from a university is a condition for acceptance of a dramaturg in the professional theatre in Czechoslovakia" (34). This notwithstanding, the dramaturg's "human qualities" are considered to be a deciding factor in his position in the theatre (Hedba'vny' 33).

1948 marked a turning point for the theatres of Bulgaria. In that year the Theatre School of the National became a State Theatre Academy. But, of even greater significance to the development of Bulgarian dramaturgy is the year 1954. In that year the state-run academy was renamed the Krastjo Sarafov Theatre Institute, and a new department was opened—the Institute of Dramatic Arts—in which dramaturgs would be trained for the professional theatre. In 1986 all thirty-six state drama theatres in Bulgaria enjoyed the services of a repertory director—or dramaturg; and the Institute of Dramatic Arts remains a training ground for Bulgarian theatre critics, historians and dramaturgs (Mintchev 41).

The Bulgarian dramaturg's chief responsibility is the development of his theatre's repertory. To this end he is in close contact with as many native playwrights as possible, since it is expected that fully half of the plays he recommends for selection will be Bulgarian. When a play has been approved for the theatre, the dramaturg works closely

with the playwright, editing the final version of the script. During this procedure the stage director may join in the collaboration, demanding of all three practitioners a similar spirit of cooperation to that described above as characterizing the Czechoslovakian dramaturg's relationship with his fellow artists (Mintchev 41). The remainder of the repertory may be sought, in part, from a wide variety of foreign plays, for any of which the dramaturg must seek the best available translation. An alternative pool from which the dramaturg may elect to draw his season is comprised by the body of classical literature, both world and national, with which he should be fully acquainted. The production role of the Bulgarian dramaturg is primarily that of "literary advisor" (Mintchev 42).

The Bulgarian dramaturg is also responsible for the advertising and publicity connected with the play on which he works:

He prepares, orders, and edits the materials included in the stagebill. He works with the producer and the managing director of the theatre, assessing and approving the special poster for the play made by the scene designer. [The dramaturg] is also in constant contact with theatre critics, the press, radio and television. (Mintchev 42)

In his capacity as a spokesperson for the company, he may arrange to speak either privately or publicly about individual shows or the theatre's repertory, generally. In many Bulgarian theatres the dramaturg is even responsible for the organizing of rehearsals and the planning of performances.

The nationalization of all Hungarian theatres occurred in 1949. The results here were similar to those in Romania and Czechoslovakia: virtually every theatre in the country, no matter how small or remote, soon discovered a dramaturg on its staff (Sza'nto' 35). By the early 1950s it became increasingly apparent that the dramaturg was being used by the Stalinist-influenced government of Hungary to conform the product of its theatres to its political agenda. The dramaturg was expected to discourage his theatre's association with all plays and playwrights who contravened party policy. As Judith Sza'nto' ironically

observes, the dramaturg in Hungary was simultaneously gaining acceptance and losing integrity (35). Fortunately this trend toward censorship ended in 1956 with the political consolidation of the Hungarian government.

Sza'nto' limits the dramaturg's production role to the period preceding the rehearsal process, claiming that, in Hungary at least, dramaturgy "is not generally considered to be a creative artist's work but rather a sort of clerical position, in which only application, diligence, and a sense of order are necessary" (35-36). Of course, exceptions to this generalization exist, particularly in the case of one of Hungary's senior dramaturgs, József Czimer. While many dramaturgs around the world have attested to the lack of virtually any decision making power in their position, Czimer may be the only one to have found an advantage in such circumstance:

The lack of special privileges or of power to make decisions enables me to argue mercilessly with an author, manager, or director. They are well aware that they are not obliged to follow my advice. They also know that if a play or production is allowed to reach its optimum, the value of their own work will be enhanced. (qtd. in Sza'nto' 36)

The dramaturg reads all the scripts received by his theatre and suggests the plays that might be included in his company's forthcoming season. If the play is a new Hungarian work, the dramaturg will consult with the author in an effort to maximize the "theatricality" of the literary work. If the play requires translation or adaptation the dramaturg will either provide or procure these services. Other responsibilities of the Hungarian dramaturg include editing and sometimes writing the play programs; and maintaining communication with a variety of press media (Sza'nto' 36).

In former Yugoslavia almost every theatre is equipped with two or three individual dramaturgs. Their task is not only to read all the submissions received by the theatre, but also to "answer all queries made by writers before and after the selection of the repertoire" (Ivic' and Cvjetkovic' 15). The choosing of the repertory is a collaborative process

involving the dramaturgs, directors, actors and managers. Every script is reviewed for its strengths and weaknesses, with special consideration given to the preferences of the actors and directors most likely to be involved. Dramaturgs are also very involved in the study of foreign drama. The Archives Department of the Hrvatsko Narodno Kazaliste (HNK) provides information on various European repertoires; and this knowledge is supplemented when the theatre's personnel travel to work in American or other European cities (Ivic' and Cvjetkovic' 15, 16).

In his production role the dramaturg participates in readings and analyses of the text. He may suggest that specific cuts be made to the script. From the moment he is assigned to a particular play, the dramaturg begins extensive research into the text, the time in which the play is set, comparative literature and the playwright as well. In former Yugoslavia the dramaturg is "very much involved with the actors" and will often prepare research materials for individual performers. The same is true of his relationship with the set and costume designers (Ivic' and Cvjetkovic' 17).

Advertising and public relations is another significant aspect of the dramaturg's role in his theatre. He is responsible for the information received on the radio, on television and in the press. He is also responsible for the content of the program book. The skills required of the dramaturg in former Yugoslavia include the knowledge of a number of foreign languages. Among the three dramaturgs employed at the HNK, a total of seven languages are spoken and read. In addition to a strong grounding in the study of literature and music, the Theory of Drama and History of Art, "strong nerves, a positive bearing... imagination and invention" comprise additional qualifications for successful work as a dramaturg (Ivic' and Cvjetkovic' 15).

## England

John Russell Brown suggests that as early as 1948 Harley Granville-Barker was serving in the capacity of literary adviser to the Gielgud *Lear* (qtd. in Beacham 38). It is significant that Granville-Barker should fulfill a function that he himself promoted almost half a century earlier with his call for a "literary manager" at the proposed English National Theatre (Archer and Granville-Barker 13). But Kenneth Tynan became the first English theatre man officially to hold that office when, in 1963, Laurence Olivier appointed him as his literary manager at the National. Not long after this, the Royal Shakespeare Company also began employing literary advisors, including Ronald Bryden, who began working as "play adviser" at the RSC in the early 1970s. The Royal Court also has literary advisers on its staff (Beacham 38).

The principal responsibility of the English dramaturg is to advise and assist in choosing his theatre's repertory. This process often begins with the reading of hundreds of unsolicited manuscripts that yearly arrive in the offices of such literary managers as Brown, Tynan and Bryden. Walter Donohue, literary manager at the RSC Warehouse, estimates receiving twelve plays each week, most of which "aren't very good" (qtd. in Rosen 43). Tynan claims that about twenty plays per week are sent to the National, rarely more than one of which is "worth even a second reading" (44). Bryden received exactly three hundred, sixty-five during his second year on the job, most of a "dispiriting... quality." He describes his job as that of "play salesman," referring to his function as a spokesperson for playwrights who are attempting to attract the attention of a professional director (Bryden 5). As so little promising material is actually received unsolicited, dramaturgs are forced to look elsewhere for additional material with which to furnish their repertories. Tynan encourages new work from playwrights he already knows and admires (Tynan 46, 47); and Bryden looks to the classics—in particular to Shakespeare and nineteenth century melodrama (Bryden 5).

Given the decidedly literary emphasis of the English dramaturg's position, it is not surprising that many of the men and women working in this capacity have a background in writing. Several of the literary managers working in the major English theatres are themselves playwrights; and the smaller repertory companies that cannot afford to hire someone for the sole purpose of play reading often ask their resident dramatists to take turns at this duty (Beacham 38). When playwrights are invited to bring their new scripts to the theatre, it is the dramaturgs who meet with them to discuss possible readings or stagings. In the event that a translation is required at the National, John Russell Brown functions as liaison between the translator and the playwright (Cook 68).

Seldom do the English dramaturgs actively participate in actual rehearsals: their work is usually completed before the rehearsal process even begins. Donohue attends the first read-through of a play "just to hear what it sounds like," and occasionally attends a run-through "just to look at it"; but as far as he is concerned, the literary manager "doesn't have anything to do with 'the line means this or that,' for the director can do that" (qtd. in Rosen 45). Brown expresses his disdain for traditional European dramaturgy somewhat more metaphorically: "It's like standing around in a kitchen peering into other people's pots, or like back-seat driving." He too feels that the director "ought to do his own research: he knows what he's looking for if he's any good" (qtd. in Beacham 39).

Clearly "production dramaturgy" remains virtually absent in the British theatre of the late twentieth century. The idea of regularly involving a dramaturg in the rehearsal process simply has not caught on in most of the better-known theatres currently staging plays in England. Nevertheless, English literary managers appear very involved in trying to define and articulate their companies' identities, thereby demonstrating a healthy preoccupation with "theatre dramaturgy." Ronald Bryden promotes, with as much vigour as any of his international contemporaries, the continuing importance of Lessing's original

desire for a theatre that holds relevance for the audience to which it performs—for the society in which it exists:

Gothold Ephraim Lessing, the German father of the dramaturg's profession, invented the majority theater of the nineteenth century.... The definition of a dramaturg's job... must be to define what majority theatre is, not only for today but for tomorrow. (Bryden 5)

## NORTH AMERICA

### United States

Peter Hay explains the advent of contemporary American dramaturgy in terms of the emergence of public theatres and the formation of collective companies:

It was the season and the need to sell to a stable, knowable audience a whole season of plays rather than just one that more than anything else led to having dramaturgs and literary managers in the American theatre. ("American Dramaturgy" 19)

Numerous American theatres have employed dramaturgs since the mid-1970s and earlier, among them the O'Neill Theater Center, the Mark Taper Forum, the Yale Repertory Theatre, the American Conservatory Theatre, the Guthrie Theater, the American Place Theatre and the Manhattan Theatre Club (Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 88). In 1986 over one hundred people worked as professional dramaturgs in the United States (Greene 56). In the summer of 1993, the ATHE Playwrights Program will assign a dramaturg—as well as actors and a director—to the scripts selected for its New Play Development Workshop to be held in Philadelphia (Brockman).

The vast majority of dramaturgs working in the United States are involved in selecting the plays that will comprise their theatres' seasons (Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 9). This procedure is usually subject to collaboration with, and the approval of the theatre's artistic director (Schechter, "The Return"). Mark Bly, dramaturg at the Guthrie Theatre, explains that his planning of a season takes into account not only the proposed plays and

their characters, but also which actors, directors and designers are likely to be available and involved. He creates a chart showing the variety of roles suitable for the various actors in the company. Against this he compares the cast lists and character descriptions of the plays under discussion in order to determine whether the company will be able to accommodate the proposed season. He is simultaneously able to conclude how many actors will be needed from outside the company so that casting arrangements can be made and the additional expenses calculated. Bly estimates the time required to complete the entire season planning process, including the final scheduling, at between four and six months (qtd. in Moore 44-45). William Ball, founder of the American Conservatory Theatre, describes a similar method undertaken by his dramaturg, Dennis Powers. Additional considerations at ACT include the preferences of its guest and resident directors, and the search for "roles that will involve growth or stretching for the actors" (qtd. in Kleb 33).

In addition to choosing plays which may form their theatres' current seasons, some dramaturgs also assist in the formation of the larger long-term repertory of the company ("Dramaturgs in America" 27). Others, reading through a "mountain of manuscripts," do not: Johnathan Alper, literary manager at the Folger Theatre Group in Washington, asks only, "Does the Folger want to produce this play *now*?" (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 15).

The reading of new scripts submitted to his theatre is typically the responsibility of the dramaturg (Gianakaris 71). Many American theatres receive far more unsolicited scripts each year than one dramaturg could possibly read on his own. At Arena Stage in Washington, dramaturg Douglas Wagner reads only those scripts recommended to him by the theatre's primary script reader ("Dramaturgs in America" 29). In the case of the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, as many as one thousand new scripts are read each year for the second stage alone, independent of the selection of plays for the upcoming mainstage season ("Dramaturgs in America" 20). In such cases the dramaturg may head up a team of



assistants which collectively peruses all the submissions (Gianakaris 71). Linda Walsh Jenkins and Richard Pettingill report that in Chicago many dramaturgs supervise the critiques of all new scripts submitted (51). Every year at the Phoenix Theater, dramaturg Ann Cattaneo gives her artistic director a list of new plays she would like considered for production. She limits her recommendation to between ten and fifteen titles (qtd. in Bly 26). Johnathan Alper bases his recommendations on "sheer 'produceability.'" Alper's responses to the playwrights who submit their work to the Folger are limited to "expressions of interest in further work, or simple rejection" (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 15).

In addition to searching for quality in the new material they continually receive, dramaturgs will sometimes track down and assess the merits for their theatres of plays which are seldom performed (Bank). Dramaturg Richard Nelson makes use of libraries and used bookshops in his quest "to uncover old, lost, and unknown American plays" for the Brooklyn Academy of Music (qtd. in Bly 40). Martin Esslin, internationally acclaimed author, theatre scholar, and dramaturg at the Magic Theater in San Francisco, states that part of the job also involves "find[ing] out about what is being done elsewhere" (qtd. in Bly 22).

Not every play with theatrical potential is ready to be fully mounted in a given season, or immediately added to the company's repertory. But the dramaturg can still assist promising playwrights with their work ("Dramaturgs in America" 20). Douglas Wagner regularly corresponds with several playwrights, "providing detailed criticism and acting as a sounding board when they need one" (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 29). Dramaturgs at some theatres have established workshop programs in which the scripts-in-progress of new playwrights are worked on in various stages of production, from readings to run-throughs. Often the dramaturg will direct these workshops, especially when the play involved is by a writer in residence at his theatre with whom the dramaturg has been

working closely. Jenkins and Pettingill cite the example of dramaturg Larry Sloane's collaboration with Wole Soyinka on the African playwright's script for *The Road* which, after being adapted for an American audience, ran at the Goodman Theatre (51). Bonnie Marranca, literary advisor at the American Place Theater in New York, frequently spoke informally with playwright Maria Irene Fornes through a lengthy period of rewrites of *Fefu and Her Friends*, long before auditions were held ("Dramaturgs in America" 25). Ann Cattaneo attempts to assist playwrights improve their work structurally, by discovering with the authors their "initial impulses" for writing a given play in the first place. Through readings and workshops she hopes to rectify as many textual problems as possible before the play goes into production (Bly 27). Frequently it is up to the dramaturg himself to raise the funds necessary to establish these workshops (Greene 57). When he is working as a dramaturg on a new play, Russell Vandenbroucke, at the Mark Taper Forum, likes to make contact with the playwright as early as possible in order to develop a common language and establish mutual trust (Bly 15). Periodically a number of dramaturgs will feel strongly enough about the talents of a playwright to award him a grant collectively (Greene 57). Sometimes the authors attracting the attention of the dramaturgs are not even playwrights. Peter Zeisler, director of the Theater Communications Group in the early 1980s, states succinctly the task of the dramaturg in dealing with writers of non-dramatic literature—"turn... them on to playwriting" (qtd. in Bennets).

Like his European counterpart in the German theatre, the American dramaturg begins his production role in consultation with the director, discussing his conception of the upcoming production (Davis and Hutchings 561). Sometimes the show's designer is present for even the earliest of these discussions (Bennets). Occasionally the theatre's management will attend as well ("Dramaturgs in America" 18, 22). According to Oskar Eustis, dramaturg at the Eureka, the dramaturg should help the director articulate "as precisely as possible in objective terms" his intention in doing the play (qtd. in Bly 11).

Martin Esslin stresses the need for the dramaturg to "know the play thoroughly" before engaging in conceptual discussions with the director:

You have to read it several times, think about it, and do the necessary research. You must have a very good idea of the genre to which the play belongs, its style in performance, and the deficiencies of the piece itself.  
(qtd. in Bly 21)

The dramaturg immediately furnishes what background he can to the ideas he hears expressed in the early meetings (Gianakaris 72); and he begins to sense the areas into which his preliminary research will delve (Jenkins and Pettingill 53). In 1980 Shelly Berc served as dramaturg for an adaptation of Frank Wedekind's *Tragedies of Sex: Earth Spirit and Pandora's Box*. Directed by Lee Breuer, the play was performed at the American Repertory Theatre. Berc advised Breuer on possible "thematic concepts, characterizations, and blends of acting styles" well in advance of the ART production (Berc 71). A clear understanding of the director's concept often informs the choices made by the dramaturg with regard to any textual alterations for which he is responsible (Kleb 31). In other cases, the influence runs in the opposite direction: the clarity of the concept is enhanced as a *result* of early revisions to the text. For example, Richard Nelson states that his work with directors on conceptual issues has usually been limited to productions for which he has provided the translation:

Many directors don't think out, philosophically, intellectually, a concept...  
So it's very hard sometimes for a dramaturg to pull from the director the goal of the production even if the director knows what he wants. (qtd. in Bly 41)

In still other cases, a degree of indeterminacy is permitted both from the director and from his dramaturg. Mira Rafalowicz, dramaturg in collaboration with Joseph Chaikin, describes a process of discovery:

[W]hat are we attempting to explore and express with this work? (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 27).

Oskar Eustis also uses an interrogative in his definition of "conceptualization":

... what are the conflicts and contradictions that the text was originally trying to bring out; and what are the conflicts and contradictions that have since arisen? (qtd. in Bly 9)

Eustis argues that this essentially German approach to conceptualization is "so difficult, so complex, and so creative" that it necessitates a "separate job function" from that of the director—namely that of the dramaturg. Eustis spends about a week going over the text with his director, "line by line," attempting to confirm with the director their mutual understanding of the playwright's intention. Eustis considers himself "the author's representative" at this stage in the production, communicating whenever possible with the playwright (qtd. in Bly 8, 9, 11).

Peter Hay stresses the importance of the dramaturg's strong critical skills and extensive theatrical experience to the enhancing of the "intention and integrity" of any play he is adapting ("Requiem" 44). For Lee Breuer's ART production of Wedekind's *Tragedies of Sex*, much of the adaptation had already been executed (by Michael Feingold) before—and without—the dramaturg's participation. In a diary she kept of her work at ART, dramaturg Shelly Berc recalls her preoccupation with the literary aspects of a production she sometimes felt was slipping away from her:

I've got four translations of the *Sex Tragedies* falling out of my lap. I'm frantically comparing word choices, protesting line rewrites that throw off the rhythm or meaning of the text. We're hunting for contemporary analogies to Wedekind's satire. We need slang for Juan dos Tres but no one's Spanish is beyond high school rudiments. I'm dreading the proposed research trip to a local Hispanic bar... "Excuse me, what is the Panamanian idiom for 'Kiss my ass'?" (Berc 74)

In adapting Ghelderode's *Phantagleize*, Barbara Field, literary director at the Guthrie Theater, dramatized a section of text which, in the original, was purely narrative exposition. For the same production Field transformed "some of the wordier set speeches"

into songs ("Dramaturgs in America" 21). In the case of a production for which he has written additional text, Dennis Powers attends the first two weeks of rehearsals in order to hear in the early readings whether his adaptation "sounds right," and to confirm with the director that his interpretation is being accurately represented by the changes the dramaturg has made (qtd. in Kleb 32). Plays that are to be televised often require restructuring in order to adapt to the new medium while retaining, as much as possible, their original impact ("Dramaturgs in America" 20). Shelly Berc concludes that "rewrites are a lesson in balancing artistic license and textual integrity":

For the ART production, Breuer, myself, and the cast radicalized parts of the Feingold script in order to further integrate it with the production motif. Primarily, this meant creating "pop" dialogue which filtered in and out of the adaptation. We also reinstituted some Wedekind archaisms in order to mix styles of language. This allowed the language to switch in and out of historical time, and to jump nonlinearly from pop mythology to classical mythology. This strategy reflects the idea that the characters in *Lulu* are in... contemporary circumstances, embroiled in mythological sexual situations. (71, 74)

Under certain circumstances, however, the insertion of brand new dialogue into a script may have nothing to do with "artistic license and textual integrity": William Ball remembers needing "a couple of extra lines to cover Marsha Mason's getting down from her balcony in *Cyrano*" (Kleb 32-33).

Throughout the rehearsal process the dramaturg serves as a "textual advisor" for the director and cast (Davis and Hutchings 562). Ann Cattaneo describes herself as "the one person in rehearsal besides the playwright solely concerned with the script" (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 19). The cutting and editing of the text "to suit the circumstances of any given playhouse and its audiences" is frequently one of the dramaturg's responsibilities. Additionally his presence, especially at early rehearsals, provides the cast with a source of literary information regarding word meaning and pronunciation

(Gianakaris 72-73). Richard Pettingill, dramaturg at the Court Theater in Chicago, attempts to clarify the "obscurities and ambiguities" in difficult texts produced by his theatre (Jenkins and Pettingill 53).

When the production is from the classical repertory, the dramaturg is often responsible for the creation of a working script. Ann Cattaneo sometimes refers back to the sources of the text, and other times focuses her attention on cutting the script most effectively. Preceding either course of action are her discussions with the director concerning "possible interpretations" of the play (qtd. in Bly 27). Literary director Barbara Field privately cuts and edits the Shakespeare plays to be performed by her company, then meets to compare her new text with that of the theatre's artistic director who has also been privately cutting and editing the same play. Field occasionally takes the liberty of rewriting brief passages she feels are too archaic to be understood by the majority of contemporary audiences ("Dramaturgs in America" 20).

The process of cutting a script is not always completed before rehearsals begin. Often the dramaturg will realize the shortcomings of his initial editing only after hearing his working script read by the actors. He will then be responsible for "mending the splices" and, in some cases, may write new passages of his own to preserve coherence (Davis and Hutchings 562). Dennis Powers even attempts to suit his editing of a line to the particular actor playing that role (qtd. in Kleb 31). In the case of a new play whose author is involved in the production, the dramaturg will discuss all possible cuts, rewrites, reordering of scenes and changes in blocking with the playwright (Moore 48; Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 88). Jonathan Alper questions the appropriateness of anyone other than the show's director making cuts to the text. When he directs at the Folger, he prepares his own working script, often preferring to work from an uncut text until well into the rehearsal process ("Dramaturgs in America" 16).

Plays whose venues suddenly change may require extensive textual alteration in order to make them more accessible—or acceptable—to their new audiences. Ann Cattaneo cites her involvement in the removal of potentially inflammatory language from the script of Wendy Wasserstein's *Uncommon Women and Others* prior to its taping for television and hence a larger, more mainstream market (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 20). Oscar Brownstein, director of the Iowa Playwrights Workshop, points to yet another occasion on which the dramaturg may be called to apply his writing skills: when an old play, no longer intact, is to be staged, it will fall to the dramaturg to write new scenes to replace those which are missing (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 18).

The research undertaken by American production dramaturgs exploits a variety of media and materials. Books and libraries are, of course, consulted (Bly 14, 28; "Dramaturgs in America" 15). Sometimes for the production of classic texts, particular sources, editions or variants of the text will be sought (Bly 28; Davis and Hutchings 562; "Dramaturgs in America" 15; Gianakaris 71, 72; Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 89). Often a dramaturg will look into the critical history and production history of the play at hand (Bly 28; "Dramaturgs in America" 15; Gianakaris 72, 78; Moore 45; Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 88). Music is another resource for the dramaturg to examine (Gianakaris 77), as are photography and visual art (Moore 45). Sometimes the research is entirely literary, concerned with allusions, orthography, pronunciation and word meaning (Davis and Hutchings 564; Gianakaris 72, 73; Jenkins and Pettingill 53). On other occasions the director or designer might wish specific pictorial information pertaining to costumes, set pieces or properties (Gianakaris 77; Moore 45). Or the dramaturg might research the political climate of the time in which the play is set (Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 89). For her dramaturgical work on Frank Wedekind's *Tragedies of Sex*, Shelly Berc researched Wedekind's life, his writings and "the meaning of his topical allusions" in order to ensure that the American Repertory Theater's updating of the script

retained the sense of the original text (Berc 71). Richard Pettingill describes the inventive research of his fellow Chicago dramaturg Stuart Hecht:

For rehearsals of *Terra Nova*, Stuart brought in a University of Chicago glaciologist who showed slides of Antarctica to the director and cast, and described what it's like to be snowblind or frostbitten. Stuart asked questions for the benefit of all, like: What does it sound like there? What does it smell like? How cold is it? How bright is day and how dark is night? (qtd. in Jenkins and Pettingill 55)

The majority of American dramaturgs are involved in the casting of the shows on which they are working (Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 9). The opinions of the dramaturg regarding casting may be sought by the director following the auditions (Davis and Hutchings 562). C. J. Gianakaris considers the dramaturg to be an "obvious choice" in assisting with casting decisions, given his involvement in the "formulating strategy" for the production (72). Bonnie Marranca "occasionally drop[s] in" to watch auditions (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 25). At the American Conservatory Theatre nearly eighty per cent of the acting company is retained from one season to the next; but dramaturg Dennis Powers still travels to Chicago and New York to attend the auditions for the remaining actors needed, as well as attending the auditions in San Francisco, where ACT is based (Kleb 33, 35).

Dramaturgs are sometimes asked to speak to the cast at early group readings in order to provide background information on the play to be produced. Such background often includes an overview of the playwright's other works, information on the social context in which the play is set, and a discussion of some of the themes treated in the text (Davis and Hutchings 563). Often the dramaturg himself conducts the first read-throughs in order to answer textual questions from the actors (Hay, "Requiem" 44). Russell Vandenbroucke has an additional reason for always attending first readings:

My goal is to become a familiar enough sight so that in late rehearsals or run-throughs I'm not an intrusion. (qtd. in Bly 16)



American dramaturgs spend three times as much of their time reading scripts as they do attending rehearsals (Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 10). However, they almost always attend a number of early rehearsals in order to answer textual questions involving word meaning, pronunciation and obscure dialogue (Gianakaris 73). Oskar Eustis states, "It is the production dramaturg's job to help the director achieve the desired effect in the scene" (qtd. in Bly 12). The dramaturg is sometimes referred to as "the third eye" or "a second pair of eyes" for the director during the rehearsal process (Gianakaris 74). Some dramaturgs function as a "sounding board" for the director's ideas during rehearsals (Gianakaris 72, 74). Ann Cattaneo feels free to "offer comments to the director on how the play is working at any given time in the rehearsal period" (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 20). Apparently so does Shelly Berc: throughout the rehearsal period for Wedekind's *Tragedies of Sex*, Berc questioned director Lee Breuer on the effectiveness of the adaptation they were using, at one point suggesting incorporating previously cut scenes back into the working script in order to preserve the sense of tragedy found in the original play (Berc 73).

It is the dramaturg's responsibility to ensure that actors adhere to the script in order to preserve its intended meaning and rhythm (Hay, "Requiem" 44). In the early stages of rehearsals the dramaturg may discuss with individual actors such concerns as characterization and motive; but this is almost always subject to the approval of the director (Davis and Hutchings 565). At the O'Neill Theater Center, Arthur Ballet, author, director, critic, consultant, professor and dramaturg, "learned never to talk to actors directly, because that is a director's or playwright's job" (qtd. in Bly 30). Ann Cattaneo may be one of the few exceptions to this rule. She spends a lot of time talking to the actors, approaching each of them individually with the offer of help when they need it, and "suggest[ing] possibilities, possible courses of action or interpretation" (qtd. in Bly 28).

It is continually stressed by a number of professional dramaturgs that they frequently function as a liaison between various collaborators in the production process. Mira Rafalowicz describes this function as working "in dialogue" with the director and the playwright (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 27). In productions at which the playwright is present throughout rehearsals, the dramaturg may encourage the playwright to alter his dialogue in certain scenes, if it becomes clear that the problem is in the writing and not in the actor. Arthur Ballet claims that good actors "can take anything—the alphabet in Polish—and make it interesting, but you've got to give them the whole alphabet." In his collaboration with a playwright during production, Ballet asks "what is he trying to do with this play? Did he do it? Can he do it more effectively?" (qtd. in Bly 30). Martin Esslin encourages the dramaturg to "play devil's advocate with a playwright... [to] challenge him" (qtd. in Bly 21). Mira Rafalowicz too expresses part of her dramaturgical relationship to the playwright as one of "asking questions and finding doubts" (qtd. in Bly 27). Ann Cattaneo "basically... sit[s]... and listen[s]" with the playwright during the first weeks of rehearsal (qtd. in Bly 27).

While there may be truth in Mark Bly's assertion that a dramaturg can best serve a production with which he is in constant contact (qtd. in Moore 48), many professionals believe that an objective eye is one of the greatest benefits a dramaturg can offer to the rehearsal process. Oskar Eustis strives to maintain "an overview that is separate from the rest of the hustle and bustle" (qtd. in Bly 12). Mira Rafalowicz serves as an "audience eye" at Open Theatre rehearsals, offering "an 'outsider's' perspective on the gap between 'what it is we're trying to say, and what the audience sees'" (qtd. in Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 91). For this reason, not all dramaturgs attend every rehearsal. Oscar Brownstein suggests that attending rehearsals at "regular intervals" of unspecified frequency best equips the dramaturg with the "inside/outside perspective" necessary to be of benefit to the director, both as a colleague and as an observer (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in

America" 18). Ann Cattaneo specifies "three times a week" as an optimum frequency of rehearsal attendance, "in order to keep a bit of distance from the play and to be able to see how it is developing" (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 19-20). When rehearsals move into the blocking stage, Russell Vandenbroucke attends less frequently, but still shows up to observe and critique run-throughs and previews (Bly 16). Chicago dramaturgs Stuart Hecht and Richard Pettingill attend the majority of their rehearsals early in the production process. Pettingill returns to rehearsals in the final week, considering himself "a more objective eye" in "making observations and suggestions to the director." Nevertheless, both dramaturgs agree that the "process of discovery" inherent in their production dramaturgy "extends from pre-production to strike" (qtd. in Jenkins and Pettingill 53, 55). And Mira Rafalowicz, her quest for objectivity notwithstanding, hopes to be "part of the process from beginning to end" (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 27). The Guthrie Theater has the benefit of two dramaturgs: the primary production dramaturg attends nearly all rehearsals, working in close consultation with the director; the secondary "consultant" dramaturg attends only run-throughs and previews, providing a "check or reminder system" (Moore 45). In most theatres, however, a single dramaturg must both familiarize himself with almost every detail of the production *and* maintain enough distance to evaluate the work in progress. Martin Esslin describes the dichotomy inherent in the quest for objectivity:

The best dramaturg must be schizophrenic: with the left side of his brain he knows the play better than anybody else; with the right side of his brain, he is a completely naive spectator who has never heard the play before. (qtd. in Bly 21)

Ann Cattaneo is one of many dramaturgs who describes her function during the later rehearsals as that of "in-house critic" (Bly 27; Davis and Hutchings 566; "Dramaturgs in America" 27; Hay, "Requiem" 44; "John Lahr" 2; Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 89, "Enter Dramaturgs" 5). She keeps an objective eye on the tempo of the work, offering suggestions to the director regarding any problems she sees. Her attempt is to "keep the

structure of the whole in mind," simultaneously making sure that the playwright's intentions are being realized in each scene (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 20). Similarly, Oskar Eustis endeavours to keep his "eye on the overall track... the overall scheme" (qtd. in Bly 12). In the diary she kept during rehearsals of Wedekind's *Tragedies of Sex*, Shelly Berc expresses her misgivings about "the possible distortion of Wedekind in this production because of the extreme liberties being taken with his language." She describes her attempt to discuss her concern with director Lee Breuer, and her obligation to accept his answer that "the spirit of a Wedekind line" is of greater interest to him than "the letter of it" (Berc 72). Dennis Powers tries to solve problems that are not discovered until the reactions of preview audiences have been observed (Kleb 33).

However important to the production the objectivity and freshness of the dramaturg's eye may be, he is still called upon to draw attention to very specific points and for the "fine tuning" of individual scenes (Gianakaris 74). According to Oskar Eustis, "It is the job of the production dramaturg to understand the importance of this particular scene and its position in the arc of the play and to convey this knowledge to the director if he has not already arrived at this understanding..." (qtd. in Bly 12). Russell Vandenbroucke states that "through time the dramaturg's focus must grow tighter... [because] there comes a point where the director needs very specific responses" (qtd. in Bly 15). Arthur Ballet feels that the production dramaturg's primary function is "[t]o clarify":

Note that "clarify" is not the same as "simplify." A clear production can still be very rich, complicated, and contradictory. (qtd. in Bly 30)

Mark Bly has discovered that the best way to approach a director about a scene requiring clarification is simply to ask the question, "What was your intention?" (qtd. in Moore 47).

In many professional theatres the dramaturg will sit near the director in rehearsals and take notes. Following the rehearsal or at a break, the dramaturg can summarize these notes to the director in private. Richard Pettingill describes the notes of fellow Chicago

dramaturg, Stuart J. Hecht at the Wisdom Bridge theatre, as "say[ing] to the director: 'Here's what your production is "reading"'" (qtd. in Jenkins and Pettingill 55). Although both will often have observed and noted the same sections as needing clarification, the dramaturg nevertheless serves to confirm the director's suspicions (Gianakaris 74). However, in the opinion of Mark Bly, most dramaturgs would be wise to remember that part of their task is to seek "a solution," and not merely to verbalize "some general observation that any audience member could make." But Bly admits that solutions are often elusive; and in his own notes he tends to "raise more questions... than make direct pronouncements." He prefers to give notes personally, rather than in written form, in order to avoid potential misunderstandings (qtd. in Moore 47). Like Bly, dramaturg Russell Vandenbroucke prefers to "talk through" notes rather than write them down, feeling that written notes are "cold... too definitive... [and] a bit anonymous" (qtd. in Bly 15-16). Richard Nelson is cautious about all notes, written and otherwise:

Notes are a very, very tricky question. Unless you've been really involved in the production, you're going to misread some of the mistakes. One night a misread light cue might be enough to make you think that the whole rhythm of the scene is off. (qtd. in Bly 42)

In some productions the dramaturg may offer notes to the actors as well as to the director (Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 92).

In some cases dramaturgs are responsible for recording their progress in production histories (Bank). In the 1970s, Yale's Robert Brustein, then Dean of the Drama School and Artistic Director of the Repertory Theater, initiated the idea of a "production log"—essentially a diary—to be compiled by the dramaturg (Bly 14). Richard Pettingill agrees that, by "documenting entire productions in our writings," he and his fellow dramaturgs can contribute to "an enlightened theater world" (qtd. in Jenkins and Pettingill 55).

The dramaturg is frequently responsible for writing notes for the program accompanying a given production on which he has worked. Sometimes the theatre's

dramaturg regularly produces and edits the program (Moore 45). At the Guthrie Theater Mark Bly's program book consists of two parts: the "outer wrap" section, containing scheduling information and articles and interviews about the theatre's season; and the "center section," in which the dramaturg attempts "distilling the essence of a production into sixteen pages of words and graphics." Bly claims that on certain occasions visual images transmit to an audience the intention of the production more quickly than text (qtd. in Moore 49). Ken Davis and William Hutchings also argue for program notes which are "non-literary," in addition to being "concise [and] non-technical," and which suggest the "overall intention of the production, the background of the play, and the major themes" (568). However, Richard Pettingill describes program notes of his own which seem to expand somewhat on the simplicity demanded by such a mandate:

The program notes for British director Maria Aitken's production of *The Rivals* included... an essay on the social milieu of Bath (by Maria herself), a compilation of references to Bath in contemporary literature, and an essay on the correspondences between Sheridan's life and the events of the play, capped by a list of recommended readings. (qtd. in Jenkins and Pettingill 53)

Program notes can serve to guide the expectations of the audience, ideally increasing its appreciation of the play. Furthermore, these notes can often inform the journalists who will be reviewing the production. Genie Barton declares that, in the notes she writes for the Folger Theatre Group, "[w]e are trying to teach the critics; I make no bones about that" (qtd. in Davis and Hutchings 568). On some occasions critics will even quote program notes in their columns. In these cases the dramaturg has essentially helped to write the reviews for the play on which he has worked (Davis and Hutchings 568).

At some theatres dramaturgs write for the subscriber newsletter, a vehicle through which some of the company's artistic choices can be explained to its patrons ("Dramaturgs in America" 16). Additionally, some dramaturgs write copy for all brochures and publicity

flyers sent out by their theatre (Kleb 33; Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 90). At the Guthrie Theater, the literary department, headed by dramaturg Mark Bly, gives the final approval to all written copy concerning its productions (Moore 44).

The dramaturg often represents his theatre to the press in the weeks prior to the opening of a new show. Such representation may take the form of interviews, news releases or feature stories in newspapers (Gianakaris 73; Kleb 31). The dramaturg's answers during interviews should, like his program notes, be concise and non-technical. He should attempt to characterize the play briefly without giving away too much of the plot. A clever device of the experienced dramaturg is to make his statements "as 'quoteworthy' as possible without being sensational," attempting through the interview, as in the program, to help shape critical reaction to the production (Davis and Hutchings 567).

Dramaturgs with various companies are often responsible for the "educational outreach" of their theatres (Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 10). They sometimes offer free lectures in community centres and libraries; they visit high schools to discuss productions with staff and students, both before and after they have been staged; and they often teach drama classes at their own theatres (Jenkins and Pettingill 52). Dennis Powers compiles "study guides" for those high schools attending matinees at the American Conservatory Theatre, and also leads discussions with the students following the performances (Kleb 31, 33). Jonathan Marks, literary manager at the Yale Repertory Theatre in New Haven, also teaches at the Yale School of Drama ("Dramaturgs in America" 24). The Guthrie Theater's literary office, directed by Barbara Field, teaches public classes four times each year ("Dramaturgs in America" 20). Richard Pettingill organizes preview discussions at the Court Theater in order to get audience feedback during the early stages of the run (Jenkins and Pettingill 53). Bonnie Marranca moderates post-play discussions with audiences at the American Place Theater, following performances of plays on which she has served as a dramaturg. Often the playwright will attend these discussions as well ("Dramaturgs in

America" 26). At the Guthrie Theater the dramaturg participates in two public symposia following the opening of a show (Moore 48). Dramaturgs are sometimes also responsible for fundraising and grant writing (Kleb 33). Mark Bly asserts that the "achievement of artistic goals and financial goals are not mutually exclusive" (qtd. in Moore 49).

Like most of their German counterparts in the European theatre, many American dramaturgs have a strong academic background. Yet, like their German counterparts, most will assert that a working knowledge of live theatre, in combination with extensive practical experience, forms the single most valuable criterion for successful work as a professional dramaturg (Bly 19, 23; "Dramaturgs in America" 20, 25, 30; Gianakaris 71; Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 12; Hay, "Requiem" 44; Jenkins and Pettingill 54; Lahr 12; Moore 47; Schechter, "The Return"; White 43). The academic background of American dramaturgs includes pursuits such as criticism, doctoral degrees, dramatic literature, English, history, languages, philosophy, research, teaching, theatre history and study at Yale.<sup>2</sup> American dramaturgs have worked variously as actors, administrators, authors, critics, designers, directors, editors, literary managers, playwrights, producers, script readers and translators.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, several dramaturgs have previously adapted plays (Bly 38; Esslin, "Playwrights" 214); some have been involved in radio drama (Bly 13); others have served as resident directors (Bly 7); a few have founded theatre companies and organizations (Bly 7; Moore 43); and virtually all can claim to be avid playgoers (Bly 38; Gianakaris 78; Kleb 35).

The breadth of skills required of a successful dramaturg is repeatedly stated by numerous theatre professionals. The qualifications named by a variety of dramaturgs themselves include an academic background (Bly 19); acting training (Bly 27); administrative abilities (Bly 14, 18); business skills (Kleb 35); directing experience (Bly 27); editing skills (Bank 6; Bly 14); flexibility (Bly 42; "Dramaturgs in America" 17, 20, 25; Gianakaris 79; White 43); imagination (Jenkins and Pettingill 55); presence (Bly 16,



41); tact (Bly 21, 23, 31; Esslin, "Playwrights" 215; Moore 47, 48; White 43); timing (Bly 14, 15, 30, 35); and translation skills (Bank 6; Berc 74; Bly 26; "Dramaturgs in America" 18, 20, 28; Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 9; Hay, "Requiem" 44; Jenkins and Pettingill 51, 53; Kleb 31; Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 88, 92; Schechter, "The Return"). Martin Esslin suggests that an ideal dramaturg would be "a kind of Renaissance man who knows everything" (qtd. in Bly 20). Gitta Honegger too claims the "Renaissance persona" to be "necessary" to the profession (qtd. in Bly 35).

Perhaps the two qualities most frequently alluded to by dramaturgs as vital to the profession are a spirit of cooperation and a sense of humility. As has been previously noted, the dramaturg often functions as a liaison between and among various combinations of theatre personnel including actors, directors, designers and playwrights. One of his tasks is to maintain positive, productive relationships with and among all these people while simultaneously contributing his own knowledge and talent to the production. This requires of the dramaturg not only excellent communication skills, tact and a sense of timing—it further requires a high degree of enthusiastic, team-spirited cooperation (Bly 10, 15, 35; "Dramaturgs in America" 22, 27; Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 12; Jenkins and Pettingill 54; Kleb 31; Moore 47, 48; Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 89; Schechter, "Enter Dramaturgs" 5). It is further true that the dramaturg must often defer to the wishes and decisions of these same theatre personnel. It is almost always the director—or the artistic director—who makes the final decisions, and upon whom the dramaturg's choices are therefore dependent ("Dramaturgs in America" 22; Gianakaris 72). Even when the dramaturg is used as "a surrogate for an absent playwright," such as at the Iowa Playwrights Workshop in Iowa City, he has, in the words of Workshop director Oscar Brownstein, "no power to veto" (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 18). Russell Vandenbroucke admits his frustration at the fact that "no matter how good you are at your job, you ultimately have very little decision-making power within a theater" (qtd. in Bly

17). Jerry Patch, literary manager for the South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa, California, summarizes the position of gracious service characterizing the American dramaturg:

The thing you have to live with... is that you do not function as an artist.  
You are the one who is involved in everything and who decides nothing.  
(qtd. in Bennets)

The continued efforts of dramaturgs who clearly value the quality and integrity of the production as a whole more than noisy recognition of their own contributions to it must be supported by a sense of nearly "ego-less" humility (Bennets; Davis and Hutchings 561, 566; "Dramaturgs in America" 17; Gianakaris 75, 77; Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 12; Hay, "Requiem" 44; Jenkins and Pettingill 54; Lahr 12; Moore 46; Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 89; White 43).

## Canada

According to Michael Devine, "a recognizable Canadian theatre did not exist until the 1960s," when Playwrights' Workshop Montreal was founded, providing "the Canadian playwright... [with] a centre of play development" ("Forging Drama" 33). Today Canada encourages new-play writing with additional programs such as Workshop West in Edmonton, the summer program at the Banff Centre for Continuing Education, the New Play Centre in Vancouver, and independent programs given by Factory Theatre and the Tarragon Theatre in Toronto (Devine, "Forging Drama" 33; Hay, "Canadians" 19). In Calgary, Alberta Theatre Projects has mounted its annual *playRites* festival for seven consecutive years. Inspired by Louisville's Humana Festival of New American Plays, ATP's producing director, Michael Dobbin, wanted to create a similar forum for new Canadian works. In 1992 the establishment of the PanCanadian Chair in Canadian New Play Development provided "a \$50,000 research, training and development programme that will allow ATP to rustle up new writing on a year-round basis" (O'Quinn). The former artistic director of Playwrights' Workshop Montreal, Michael Springate, claims that the

"value of dramaturgy has never been in question" (qtd. in Devine, "Forging Drama" 33). But Michael Devine, current artistic and executive director at PWM, asserts that "[o]nly recently... have organizations in Canada begun to actually incorporate dramaturg[s]... and dramaturgy into the theatrical hierarchy" ("Forging Drama" 33).

The duties of the dramaturg working in Canada are reported by the respondents to a six-item questionnaire which was mailed to forty-nine theatre companies, asking for their help in defining the role and function of the contemporary dramaturg (Appendices A and B). Participants were asked to comment on the production role, requisite skills, areas of responsibility, research techniques, academic background and practical background of the dramaturg—or his equivalent—in their theatre. Twenty-three theatres responded to the survey (Appendix C). These responses provide a composite picture of the Canadian dramaturg which can be compared to the composite pictures of his European and American counterparts.

Canadian dramaturgs are extremely busy people. This is evidenced by the number of survey respondents who apologized for their delay in returning the questionnaire, or the haste in which they completed it (Chevrier; Devine; McIntosh; Raby). Further evidence of the demanding schedule facing these theatre practitioners is the fact that, almost without exception, the person serving as the dramaturg for his theatre company is also fulfilling at least one—and often more than one—additional function. Maja Ardal, artistic director at Young People's Theatre in Toronto, indicates that the directors at her theatre frequently serve as their own dramaturgs. The same doubling of the director/dramaturg roles holds true at the Popular Theatre Alliance of Manitoba in Winnipeg, where Margo Charlton serves as artistic director; at Theatre New Brunswick, where Micheline Chevrier is the associate artistic director; at the Manitoba Theatre Centre in Winnipeg, where Larry W. Desrochers is the associate artistic director; at Theatre Passe Muraille in Toronto, where Sally Han has served as an associate director; at Necessary Angel in Toronto, where

director D. D. Kugler has also served as dramaturg for six years; at the Richmond Gateway Theatre in Richmond, British Columbia, where Ken Neufeld is general manager; and at the Shaw Festival Theatre, where Christopher Newton serves as artistic director. In other cases the theatre's artistic director will be the one to serve as the dramaturg. Such an arrangement exists at Toronto's Tarragon Theatre, where Urjo Kareda "combine[s] the function of Artistic Director and Dramaturg"; and at the Centaur Theatre Company, whose artistic director, Maurice Podbrey, adopts the dual role "or give[s] it to the playwright-in-residence when appropriate." At Northern Light Theatre in Edmonton, where Gyllian Raby serves as artistic director, an "'Artistic Advisory' committee... comprised of artists" has been formed to fulfill certain dramaturgical functions.

In 1991, only a handful of companies listed with the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) included literary managers among their personnel. Only one company listed a dramaturg, so named—and she has since been released and not replaced. However, as evidenced above, the job is often assumed by the remaining theatre personnel. This may be inferred as an almost unanimous agreement among Canadian theatre practitioners regarding the benefits of dramaturgical contributions to the production process.

Urjo Kareda and D. D. Kugler are the only survey respondents who specifically include the planning of their theatre's seasons as one of their duties as dramaturgs:

I select the plays, select the directors, and work actively with the playwright up to (and often including) production. (Kareda)

Sally Han agrees that season planning is an important responsibility, believing that "any medium-sized theatre company should and must have a person whose main job is to read plays new, old... [and] foreign for production consideration."

Some of the Canadian theatres whose personnel responded have a specific mandate for the formation of their repertory. Artistic director Sky Gilbert's Buddies in Bad Times

Theatre and Annie Kidder's Factory Theatre produce "only new Canadian work." In Kidder's company, for which she serves as associate director, the "main focus is the development of new work." At the Shaw Festival, Christopher Newton "specialize[s] in old plays for a modern audience."

Based on the responses of Annie Kidder and D. D. Kugler, the reading of unsolicited manuscripts is as much a part of the Canadian dramaturg's function as of his American counterpart. Sally Han emphasizes the importance of "reading plays, plays and more plays," including "scripts published in *CTR* [*Canadian Theatre Review*] or *Theatrum*" magazines. Han records what she has read by "writing script reports." Having completed numerous such reports, she concludes that a valuable asset to any dramaturg is the "ability to discern good writing in poor scripts, original ideas in clichéd forms." She follows up such reports by "writing letters to playwrights" and occasionally finds herself "dealing with irate writers." Gyllian Raby, who frequently receives scripts but rarely finds the time to read them all, nevertheless values the chance to hear from contemporary playwrights:

Last year Eileen Sproule worked as my assistant—on a special grant—and responded with "dramaturgical correspondence" never over one page to the writers of the fifty or so unsolicited manuscripts I receive in the mail and can seldom get to.

Although Jan Carley's Arts Club Theatre does not employ anyone in the position of dramaturg, they nevertheless "have a reading committee made up of Arts Club employees and other interested friends." Committee members "read new scripts and meet to discuss production possibilities" with Carley, the theatre's associate director.

Urjo Kareda stresses the importance he places not only on reading "all submitted scripts," but also on reading "very widely in contemporary theatre from other countries." Sally Han attempts to "keep... abreast of plays being developed at other major new play centres: BLYTH, Canadian Stage, PW [Playwrights' Workshop] Montreal, CEAD (Centre d'essai des artistes dramatique), ATP [Alberta Theatre Projects]." Part of Han's discovery

of new material results from "going to see a lot of 'fringe' theatre, plays in development... [and] other people's workshops locally." Michael Devine asks Canadian dramaturgs to "[h]ave a clue [about] what's going on in the rest of Canada":

[And i]f possible, have outside areas of expertise—for instance, my theatre influences are heavily Central European, and I've worked over there. This reduces the all-too common phenomenon of theatre artists recreating the work they grew up seeing in Canadian theatres, because that's the extent of their true (i.e., empirical) theatre knowledge. (Letter)

D. D. Kugler tries to attend "as many productions in Toronto, and across the country, as possible—to see the range of work by actors and designers, to hear the voices of new writers."

The development of new works and new playwrights is another of the Canadian dramaturg's responsibilities (Moynihan; Tomlinson). Maja Ardal attributes to the dramaturg the responsibility for "all areas of support for commissioning/workshopping and general development of the play." Sally Han includes "casting and running readings and workshops of new plays along with [the artistic director]" and "shortlisting scripts for development" among the duties of the dramaturg. At Margo Charlton's Popular Theatre Alliance of Manitoba, Per Brask is fulfilling "[t]he role of a dramaturg when working with a playwright in developing a new script for production":

The dramaturg working on the development of a new script meets with the playwright prior to the play being written.... Per is very involved in this early stage and throughout the development of the first draft, the workshop and the subsequent rewrites.

Playwright Bruce McManus describes Brask's role as that of a "sounding board, someone to bounce ideas off" (qtd. in Charlton). While Joan MacLeod usually relies on other playwrights for this sort of feedback, Annie Kidder claims that dramaturgs "are a vital part (in our theatre) of the development of the script which begins sometimes years before the production":

[T]hey would have one-on-one meetings with the playwright and be involved in workshops of various drafts as they progress... working one-on-one with playwrights... [and] workshopping new plays at various stages of development.

The Manitoba Theatre Centre's Associate Artistic Director, Larry Desrochers, describes his dramaturgical collaboration with playwright Maureen Hunter on her new work, *Beautiful Lake Winnipeg*:

From my point of view, I was particularly interested in knowing why she wrote the play she did and what she wanted to say with it. And I am sure she wanted to make sure she could trust me to help her develop her play.... We continued to meet periodically and discussed various aspects of the play, primarily the structure of the action, and the notion of action itself.... I continually stressed to Maureen the need to make the characters' objectives clear and to keep the play's action moving forward at all times.... After a period of about two weeks to a month Maureen began working on a rehearsal draft for the play—the draft that we ultimately took into production in January of 1990.... This entire process from my first encounter with the script to its first production took about 11 months.

General manager Ken Neufeld wants to "encourage new work" at the Richmond Gateway Theatre. He "hire[s] directors to deal with workshops"; and although his "mandate is not necessarily to produce new works," his theatre nevertheless runs "a provincial playwriting contest, and... [is] producing the winner this year." The Gateway is also "doing a second production of a new script with significant rewrites." Sally Han observes of actors "in the workshop process," that they "often offer the most revealing comments and also often the most misleading/damaging." Playwright John Murrell describes the special talent required of a dramaturg in order truly to be of use to a playwright:

It is very easy to fix someone else's play. To see from the outside what to cut or how to chop and channel the idea. What is much more difficult and much needed in this country are people who can dig inside the writer and draw out perhaps a much greater piece. (qtd. in Selody)

Michael Devine stresses the need for patience on the part of the dramaturg in Canada, who must be "a good teacher, able to inform playwrights at any level of development without shredding their egos":

Inform them of the greater world beyond Canadian theatre, of the demands of various genres, of the mandates of various Canadian theatres, of the realities of play production without stripping away the ideals which produce the play in the first place." (Letter)

D. D. Kugler's collaborative work with playwrights at Toronto's Necessary Angel Theatre Company sometimes extends "over several years."

Both D. D. Kugler and Michael Devine specify the "conception" of a production as one responsibility of the Canadian dramaturg. Sometimes a director and his dramaturg will discuss the director's production concept over several months prior to the first rehearsal (Devine, Letter). Several other respondents mention their involvement in the early stages of preparation. Blake Brooker, artistic director at the One Yellow Rabbit Theatre in Calgary, sits "in rehearsal and planning sessions"; Ken Neufeld "work[s] with director and designer to bring the work to fruition"; and Urjo Kareda, in addition to "work[ing] actively with the playwright," is also "involved with discussions about design... [and] music... as well."

The Canadian dramaturg appears to be at least as involved as his American counterpart in the adaptation and translation of older and foreign plays. Stratford's literary manager, Elliott Hayes, includes "adapting" and "play-writing" among the dramaturg's responsibilities. Michael Devine requires of his dramaturgs a reading knowledge of at least one other language (Letter). Sally Han agrees that "coming up with ideas for adaptations... [and] translations" is the duty of the dramaturg. The Manitoba Theatre Centre's production of *Hedda Gabler* was adapted and translated by dramaturg Per Brask (Desrochers). Larry Desrochers describes another adaptation produced at MTC:



With *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, [dramaturg] D. D. Kugler and Richard Rose (director) worked together to adapt Timothy Findley's novel.... They consulted Findley through the entire process but they ultimately determined the shape of the play.

At the Shaw Festival, Christopher Newton "adapted *The Lost Letter* from the Romanian." Even from theatres whose "product" renders "no need for a dramaturg," the responses imply that translation is customarily a part of dramaturgical function:

The OKC [O'Keefe Centre] functions as a rental facility. As such, the product is bought intact and presented in finished form. There is no developmental process, no editing or translating of product. (Onrot)

The emphasis placed on textual considerations by the Canadian dramaturg "[v]aries, according to play—i.e., classical or new script" (Hayes). Nevertheless, "editing" is considered an important part of his function (McLennan). The dramaturg for a classical production "is a resource for research, period information [and] various translations." The dramaturg for a new play in production "may be required to edit, revise or write additional material" (Hayes). Hayes states that in either situation the dramaturg sometimes makes "instinctual choices in editing and revision/adaptation." Michael Devine considers "superior text analysis skills" to include "the ability to jettison biases and see the script in the context of what the author is trying to achieve" (Letter). Christopher Newton claims that each production of an older play "[n]eeds... [a] definitive text." According to Newton, the quest for the ideal working script is "[d]ifficult sometimes even with Shaw":

Try finding the original libretto of the operetta *Naughty Marietta* or the original band parts for Cole Porter's *Nymph Errant*... [or the] text of an early farce (first version) such as *It Pays to Advertise*.

Newton claims that although the "'deep' stuff is there... no one wants to do it. It feels dead." Furthermore, the selection of a working script is based on factors other than merely its age and authenticity: "An 'ur' text is not necessarily the best playing text" (Newton).

Gyllian Raby does "complete structural analyses" of her scripts, especially if she has written them herself—"a job often associated with Dramaturgs."

A wide variety of research subjects is tackled by Canadian dramaturgs—both "academic and in the field depending on the subject matter of the play" (Ardal). Sally Han describes the research function of a dramaturg working on a new play at Theatre Passe Muraille:

At TPM we do new plays almost exclusively. Therefore, the dramaturg may... do research on any aspect of the play—historical, cultural, linguistic... [F]or example: *The Butcher's Apron* by Charles Tidler was about August Strindberg... therefore biographical, historical research was required.

Han includes, among other areas of potential research, "libraries... art history... microfiche documents... [and] whatever is necessary." Elliott Hayes cites the "facilitating [of] archival research and exhibitions," the "documentation of productions around the world," and the reading of "essays, documents and critical writings on plays and subjects" as various methods of "textual and historical" research he employs. Additionally, Hayes can consult Stratford's own "production archives for previous text changes and production choices." Michael Devine is similarly interested in the compilation of "translations, production histories... [and various additional] critical data" as part of the dramaturg's pre-rehearsal research (Letter). Savannah Walling's dramaturg at Special Delivery Moving Theatre sometimes concludes such research with "lectures to ensemble members outlining productions' historical context[s]." Christopher Newton warns that conventional "academic research has to be modified for the theatre" as it serves a "different function." Blake Brooker makes use of a great variety of such "modified" information sources, and prefers to work in collaboration with the playwright:

I never research elements of someone else's text, but help them to find things in nonconventional information gathering possibilities—library, electronic (on-line), or other flexible poetic techniques—cut up, random selections, improvisation.

Savannah Walling includes "improvisations" and the "participation in performance, ceremonies and performance training" among the non-conventional areas of research explored by her dramaturg. D. D. Kugler's research provides "materials which shape a historic, but more importantly, a contemporary framework for the production." When she is directing a production, Gyllian Raby does all her own research and "would not entrust this to another person."

The role Canadian dramaturgs play in the auditioning process of their productions may be less significant than that of their American counterparts: D. D. Kugler and Sally Han are two of the very few respondents who specify "casting skills" as necessary credentials of the successful professional dramaturg. Ken Neufeld too attempts to find suitable performers for the project at hand: "I try, when we are doing new work, to engage directors and actors with experience and sympathy towards new plays and playwrights."

As appears to be the case with casting, the presence of dramaturgs at the early read-throughs of their productions may be somewhat less common an occurrence in Canada than it is in the United States: Annie Kidder and D. D. Kugler are the only respondents even to mention readings. Kugler attends the "first week (around the table) of rehearsal to help shape preliminary discussions of the text." Savannah Walling includes "discussion sessions with ensemble members to discuss character objectives" among the duties of the dramaturg. Kidder claims "the dramaturg attends the first reading... of a play once it is in production." Kidder further considers "attending rehearsals of plays in production" to be part of the dramaturg's function, as does Blake Brooker. Kugler attends "all 'review' rehearsals—first runs in rehearsal hall, tech runs, dresses, previews." Kidder expects the dramaturg to "attend... all run-throughs of a play once it is in production," and to "go to all

the previews and suggest changes right up until opening." Margo Charlton has her dramaturg "present throughout the rehearsal process."

The image of the dramaturg as a "sounding board" for the director is offered by Blake Brooker, and by Micheline Chevrier, who offers the additional metaphor of the "third eye" to suggest an "assistant" to the director. However, since much of the emphasis in Canadian dramaturgy is on new works produced for the first time, Margo Charlton's interest in the dramaturg's assistance to, specifically, the playwright is easily understood:

The dramaturg can help cut to the bone, to see what is needed and what is excess. The writer is not always able to see this as each idea is precious, but not every idea has dramatic potential. The dramaturg can help point this out.... Once rehearsals start he is available to the playwright to discuss further rewrites and also attends some of the first rehearsals.

Sky Gilbert too sees the dramaturg as "a resource for the playwright." Gilbert stresses that the dramaturgs at Buddies in Bad Times are "resource people only... at the service of the playwright": They offer their "knowledge of theatre, knowledge of play structure... if asked"; but since "[n]o one knows more about the play than the playwright... [t]he dramaturg... may contribute... [only] if asked" (Letter). Elliott Hayes also has great respect for the intentions of the playwright:

With a new play one facilitates the discussion between director and playwright. One makes suggestions on the text, but allows the author—authority.

The objectivity desired of American production dramaturgs in rehearsal characterizes the respondents' descriptions of Canadian dramaturgs as well. Michael Devine states that the production dramaturg "keeps an eye (a third one) on conceptual continuity, looking out for incongruities in... characterization," such as an "inappropriate acting manner or a characterization guided by the director that is out of sync with the setting and world of the concept" (Letter). Blake Brooker and Margo Charlton both see the dramaturg as an "outside eye." At this stage in the production, Brooker is looking for an

"impassionate" observer who will "pos[e]... pertinent questions," and whose notes offer the "presentation of possibilities." Charlton wants "[s]omeone who can keep the overall shape of the play in mind while also thinking of staging problems and how to best bring the ideas of the play to life for the audience." In Charlton's opinion the dramaturg "assists the production by focussing on the need for clarity." D. D. Kugler helps maintain his own objectivity by "purposefully avoid[ing]... interim rehearsals which make me privy to how choices were made." Kugler, Urjo Kareda and Christopher Newton all give notes to directors for whom they are functioning as a dramaturg.

With regard to the theatre program and dealings with the press, Elliott Hayes is one of the few respondents to refer to the dramaturg's production role as including "some programme copy and interviews." Like many American literary managers, Hayes, Christopher Newton and Michael Devine conduct a certain amount of public relations work as one of their responsibilities. Hayes engages in "public speaking... lecturing and open seminar discussions"; Newton schedules colloquia with the audience at the Shaw; and Devine speaks to "students, teachers, and theatres about Canadian theatre, playwrighting, and dramaturgy." Devine also writes articles "for various publications on the same topics" (Letter). Maja Ardal and Sally Han include fundraising as one of their responsibilities. Ardal pursues "cultural grants" on behalf of her theatre. Han is involved in "fundraising for new play development including grant proposals."

The academic background of Canada's dramaturgs includes post-secondary training in theatre studies (Ardal; Hayes; Kidder; Newton) and literature (Newton); bachelors degrees (Brooker; Han; Walling); masters degrees (Devine, Letter; Kareda; Kugler; Neufeld; Raby); doctoral work in progress (Kareda; Kugler); teaching (Kareda); and scholarly writing (Charlton; Newton). But just like the American and European dramaturgs, the Canadians stress the far greater importance to their success of that which Sky Gilbert terms a "working knowledge of theatre—what works and what doesn't"

(Brooker; Charlton; Devine; Gilbert, Letter; Hayes; Kugler; Raby). Gilbert considers the academic background of the dramaturg to be "[i]rrelevant!" (Letter).

The extensive practical background informing the work of Canada's dramaturgs includes experience in writing (Brooker; Charlton; Devine, Letter; Hayes; Newton; Raby; Walling); research (Brooker); directing (Brooker; Carley; Charlton; Chevrier; Devine, Letter; Han; Newton; Raby; Walling); design (Carley); publicity (Carley); stage management (Carley; Han); translation (Charlton); acting (Charlton; Devine, Letter; Han; Newton; Raby); puppeteering (Devine, Letter); radio broadcasting (Devine, Letter; Han; Kareda); administration (Han); script reviewing (Han); production management (Han); editing (Hayes); theatre criticism (Kareda); and journalism (Kareda). Annie Kidder speaks of Factory Theatre's artistic director Jackie Maxwell having "worked in theatre for fifteen years, with a concentration on new work for the last seven." Kidder herself has been "working on new plays here at Factory for four years." Ken Neufeld has benefitted from "fifteen years experience in professional theatre," yet has received "no training as a dramaturg." Gyllian Raby counts "[b]asically, eleven years of professional production" in her theatrical background, with "twelve original scripts (produced)... three or so years teaching experience (directing, acting, writing)... [and] several dozen new script workshops (director/dramaturg)." Raby describes her expectations when looking for a dramaturg:

Any dramaturg I hired I would have to look up to—so they'd need at least the above. Plus something training can't buy—an aesthetic and commitment to it.

Among the various additional skills required of a competent professional dramaturg, D. D. Kugler specifies "[I]ove of language." Sally Han includes an "understanding and love for writers... [the] ability to visualize a script... [a] knowledge of music... [and a] good knowledge of Theatre History." Maja Ardal, Christopher Newton

and Gyllian Raby all include a strong grounding in theatre history as a necessary attribute of the dramaturg. Urjo Kareda lists four particular qualities he feels to be most important:

When, on occasion, I have hired others to perform dramaturgical functions, I would look most for (1) intelligence; (2) verbal skills; (3) eclectic tastes; and (4) most critical of all: an ease and comfort in working one-on-one with writers.

Successful dramaturgy in the Canadian theatre relies on teamwork, just as it does in the United States. D. D. Kugler speaks of the "artistic collaboration which theatre requires." Blake Brooker stresses the need for the dramaturg "to obtain the respect of the creators he/she is working with. If not, the process is seriously compromised." Sky Gilbert asserts that "[s]ocial skills [are] very important"; and Sally Han emphasizes "critical skills which are supportive." Michael Devine asserts that it is not enough that the dramaturg merely possess "excellent verbal and written articulation skills"—he must further "mould them to the listener's frame of reference" (Letter). The willingness to accept a position of service is vital to a successful relationship between the dramaturg and both the playwright and the director. Sky Gilbert wishes his dramaturgs "to be submissive to the playwright"; Devine demands that a dramaturg "subordinate... [his] ego" (Letter); Gyllian Raby admires a good dramaturg's "ability to detach from ego in personal interactions"; and Maurice Podbrey describes the ideal dramaturg as "ego-less and constructive." Perhaps another one of Podbrey's descriptions best captures the delicate balance of insight, cooperation, selflessness and enthusiasm typifying the best Canadian—or American, or European—production dramaturgs: they "perceive where the best energies are coming from."

## CONCLUSION

The close similarity seen to exist between the production roles of both European and North American dramaturgs is due to the influence of Brechtian "production dramaturgy" on the theatres of virtually every country outside the United Kingdom. The

work of most contemporary English literary managers varies only slightly from the plans devised by Archer and Granville-Barker almost a century ago. Seldom do British dramaturgs involve themselves with matters outside the literary realm in which they enjoy their expertise; and only occasionally are they actively or regularly involved in the actual rehearsal process. In the rest of Europe, in the United States and in Canada, former literary managers are expanding the scope of their influence on production work and enriching the theatre they are helping to create. In the following chapter, a common thread linking Great Britain with the rest of Europe and with North America will be discussed at length. "Theatre dramaturgy" will be shown to provide the means by which a definition of dramaturgy—and the role of the dramaturg—universally applicable to all practitioners can be devised.



## NOTES TO CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup> According to Kazantsev, the Russian theatre has always been "a podium, a faculty, and a second university." He believes that a "serious theater" is possible only when it attracts playwrights "who express themselves frankly, with a free language, about the problems which arise in society, in the life of a country." A good dramaturg may even put greater value on the "social questions" raised by a play than on its strength "from an aesthetic viewpoint," assessing the degree to which the ideas expressed in the play are necessary to his nation and its people (85-86).

<sup>2</sup> For references to American dramaturgs with an academic background in **criticism**, see Bly 13, 14, 18, 25; "Dramaturgs in America" 24; Gianakaris 78, 79; Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 10; Hay, "Requiem" 44; Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 89; Schechter, "Enter Dramaturgs" 5. For references to American dramaturgs whose academic background includes a **doctoral degree**, see Bly 33; Jenkins and Pettingill 54, 55; Moore 43; Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 90. For references to American dramaturgs with an academic background in **dramatic literature**, see Bly 13, 14, 19, 25; Cardullo; Davis and Hutchings 560; "Dramaturgs in America" 20, 24; Gianakaris 71; Hay, "Requiem" 44; Schechter, "Enter Dramaturgs" 5. For references to American dramaturgs with an academic background in **English**, see Bly 19; Davis and Hutchings 560. For references to American dramaturgs with an academic background in **history**, see "Dramaturgs in America" 18. For references to American dramaturgs with an academic background in **languages**, see Bly 19-20, 25-26. For references to American dramaturgs with an academic background in **philosophy**, see Bly 19. For references to dramaturgs with a background in academic **research**, see "John Lahr" 2. For references to American dramaturgs with an academic background in **teaching**, see Bly 7, 19, 26, 29, 33; Davis and Hutchings 560-61;

"Dramaturgs in America" 25; Moore 43. For references to American dramaturgs with an academic background in **theatre history**, see Bly 14, 18; "Dramaturgs in America" 20; Gianakaris 78; Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 10; Schechter, "Enter Dramaturgs" 5. For references to American dramaturgs with an academic background at **Yale**, see Bly 13, 25; "Dramaturgs in America" 18, 23, 24; Moore 43; Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 90.

<sup>3</sup> For references to American dramaturgs with a practical background in **acting**, see Bly 33; Davis and Hutchings 560; "Dramaturgs in America" 16, 17, 20, 24; Gianakaris 79; Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 9. For references to American dramaturgs with a practical background in **administration**, see Jenkins and Pettingill 51. For references to American dramaturgs with a practical background in **authorship**, see Bly 13, 19, 29, 33; Davis and Hutchings 560; "Dramaturgs in America" 21, 25; Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 10; Moore 43. For references to American dramaturgs with a practical background in **criticism**, see Bly 25, 29, (30); "Dramaturgs in America" 15, 21, 25; Esslin, "Playwrights" 214; Gianakaris 78, 79; Hay, "Requiem" 44; "John Lahr" 2; Lahr 12; Moore 43; Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 89; Schechter, "Enter Dramaturgs" 5. For references to American dramaturgs with a practical background in **design**, see Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 9. For references to American dramaturgs with a practical background in **directing**, see Bly 7, 10, 19, 29, 30, 33, 38; Davis and Hutchings 560; "Dramaturgs in America" 15, 20, 24, 29; Gianakaris 79; Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 9, 10; Jenkins and Pettingill 51. For references to American dramaturgs with a practical background in **editing**, see Bly 33; "Dramaturgs in America" 20; Esslin, "Playwrights" 214; Moore 43. For references to American dramaturgs with a practical background in **literary management**, see Bly 13, 25, 29-30, 38; Esslin, "Playwrights" 214; Moore 43. For references to American dramaturgs with a practical background in **playwriting**, see Bly 38; "Dramaturgs in America" 15, 20, 24; Esslin, "Playwrights" 214; Gianakaris 79; Hay, "American Dramaturgy" 9, 10; Jenkins and Pettingill 51; Schechter, "American Dramaturgs" 92. For

references to American dramaturgs with a practical background in **production**, see Bly 13, 19. For references to American dramaturgs with a practical background in **script reading**, see Ballet; "Dramaturgs in America" 29; Jenkins and Pettingill 55. For references to American dramaturgs with a practical background in **translation**, see Bly 33, 38.

## CHAPTER IV

### DEFINING THE ROLE OF THE NORTH AMERICAN DRAMATURG

#### INTRODUCTION

The role of the contemporary dramaturg, professionally employed in the North American theatre, can be defined in terms of the dramaturg's function as a "liaison," and in terms of his participation in "theatre dramaturgy." Such generalizations are unavoidable in describing a profession characterized more than anything else by its diversity. As Mark Bly, dramaturg at the Guthrie Theater, asserts, "[T]here is tremendous variety in the way production dramaturgy is conceived and practiced" (6). Chicago dramaturg Stuart J. Hecht claims, "[I]t's impossible to write a general job description" of the practising North American dramaturg (qtd. in Jenkins and Pettingill 55). Gitta Honegger, resident dramaturg at the Yale Repertory Theater, states that "there is no single prescribed method that works in every case" (qtd. in Bly 34). Joel Schechter reasons that "the practices are too new and diverse to be codified" ("The Return"). This comes as little surprise when, with Mark Bly, one acknowledges dramaturgy to be "a vocation in which so few rules exist" (6). It is tempting to define the role of the dramaturg as simply "indefinable."

However, there are decided advantages to dramaturgs of such indeterminacy—in particular, a great degree of flexibility regarding the execution of their duties. As Joel Schechter points out, because "there are as yet few if any rules for dramaturgs... the field is open to innovation" ("Enter Dramaturgs" 6). Furthermore, each dramaturg can, to a certain extent, tailor the role to his own interests and abilities. Literary director Barbara Field observes that "[t]he job has always been defined by the particular skills of the person holding the position" (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 20). D. D. Kugler, a freelance Canadian dramaturg based in Toronto, explains that the role of "dramaturg" is often "a

self-proclaimed role ('I'll call myself one, therefore I am one'—which is certainly true of me)." With few or no precedents set, North American dramaturgs are free to experiment, to personalize their work, unpressured by the need to conform to a prescriptive model.

The corollary of this freedom and flexibility is the lack of an adequate method by which to train prospective dramaturgs. Mark Bly states that, as a result of the indeterminacy characterizing the role of the North American dramaturg, "a majority of us are still neophytes, learning primarily through trial and error" (6). Literary manager Russell Vandenbroucke says he does not think "the practice of dramaturgy is particularly mysterious, but it isn't scientific either.... I suspect the best way to learn is simply by doing" (qtd. in Bly 15). Dramaturg Anne Cattaneo appears to support Vandenbroucke's suspicion, claiming that "[a]s a dramaturg, I just learned as I went along" (qtd. in Bly 26). This pragmatic approach to learning may have more to do with the nature of the profession itself than with its relative novelty in North America; for, as it has been repeatedly asserted by numerous dramaturgs, practical skills are of at least equal value to academic training in their profession.

Modulation, as well as indeterminacy, characterizes the role of the contemporary North American dramaturg. E. J. Czerwinski and Nicholas Rzhevsky state that "the duties of the dramaturg are constantly changing" (5). This assertion is supported by a number of working professionals. Stuart Hecht claims that "[e]verything changes from show to show, and there's a lot of freedom. There's no set procedure... [even though] there are set objectives" (qtd. in Jenkins and Pettingill 55). James Leverett, director of literary services for the Theater Communications Group, explains that in addition to the variety of duties assumed by the dramaturg in any given company, different companies will further vary their incorporation of the role according to their artistic mandate:

Each theater is going to define it in its own image, and that will change from day to day according to the needs of the theater, the needs of the play and the needs of the writers. (qtd. in Bennetts)

The diversity of the American dramaturg's role is reflected in that of his Canadian counterpart. Maurice Podbrey, in Montreal, asserts that "[t]here is no defined role: the involvement will vary according to the specific need and talents." Calgary's Blake Brooker states that "each project is different depending on how the various collaborators are working." And Sally Han, working in Toronto, explains that the role of the dramaturg at her theatre "entirely depends on the production." Arthur Ballet considers the positive aspects of the elusiveness of a universal definition of dramaturgy: "There will surely always remain many different styles of production dramaturgy, but we all can benefit from sharing ideas" (qtd. in Bly 32).

Accepting the challenge of summarizing the multifarious duties of the dramaturg, a number of critics and practitioners have attempted to define the position, often rather figuratively. Martin Esslin, dramaturg at the Magic Theater in San Francisco, claims that the dramaturg "acts as an artistic conscience," and can also serve as "the resident intellectual in a theater" (qtd. in Bly 22)—somewhat reminiscent of Berlin dramaturg Henriette Beese, who referred to the dramaturg as "the production's 'scholarly spirit'" (qtd. in Rouse 26). Literary advisor Steve Lawson defines the dramaturg as "an artistic conscience" for the theatre in which he works (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 23). C. J. Gianakaris declares the dramaturg to be "the literary-textual-cultural 'expert' in residence" (74). In the experience of literary manager Andre Bishop, he finds he has acted "as a nurse, father, confidant, teacher, dictator... [and] diplomat" (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 17). Des McAnuff, addressing a conference of the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of America, offers a vivid, if metaphorically mixed, description of the North American dramaturg striving to preserve the integrity of his company:

If a theater was a political party, one might call [the dramaturg]... a party-philosopher—someone who reminds everyone else, when they're up to their asses in crocodiles, that their original intention was to drain the swamp. (qtd. in Greene 56)

This image of a mediator among various "party" members accurately describes the dramaturg's continuous function as a liaison within his theatre.

## THE DRAMATURG AS A LIAISON

Perhaps the one capacity in which all dramaturgs can be seen to serve is that of "liaison." As it has been noted in the previous chapter, dramaturgs have very little decision-making power in the productions on which they work. Nevertheless, they mediate between and among almost everyone involved in the theatre. Gitta Honegger defines production dramaturgy partly as "a matter of finding ways to exchange information" among the various theatre personnel with whom the dramaturg interacts (qtd. in Bly 34).

Whether a play is old or new, the dramaturg can be seen to serve as the author's representative. Peter Zeisler, director of the Theater Communications Group, describes the relationship between the playwright and the theatre producing his play, in which the "dramaturg... functions as the literary talent scout, the literary marriage broker who makes the marriage between the theater and the playwright" (qtd. in Bennetts). Andy McKim, associate artistic director at Toronto's Tarragon Theatre, describes the dramaturgical aspects of artistic direction as involving "working with the writer to ensure that what is in their head gets put down on paper and winds up on the stage.... [T]he dramaturg... helps the writer translate his/her ideas to the theatrical milieu" (qtd. in Schwager 15). Dramaturg Anne Cattaneo articulates her mediation between playwright and theatre metaphorically:

I often describe the dramaturg's function using the analogy of a car stalled by the side of the road. A dramaturg's job is not to get behind the wheel and drive the car away. Rather, our job is to point out to the driver/playwright the possible ways to fix the car himself. Does he remember the jack he put in the trunk or the gas station half a mile back? (qtd. in Bly 27).

Michael Devine, at Playwrights' Workshop Montreal, mediates between playwrights and theatres in a slightly different way—by "recommend[ing] plays to theatres and Artistic Directors around the country" (Letter).

Perhaps the liaison most frequently reported by dramaturgs as one of their responsibilities is that between playwright and director. Stuart Hecht declares, "My job is to put the director in contact with what I think the playwright's original intention is or was" (qtd. in Jenkins and Pettingill 54). Peter Hay describes the professional dramaturg as "the go-between, the interpreter of the author's ways to the director and vice-versa" ("Requiem" 44). And Canada's Michael Devine offers the opinion that "the dramaturg's role is to plug in as closely as possible to the director's concept after thoroughly familiarizing himself with the text and the author's intention." Devine is also very involved in the liaison between playwright and actor: in his role at PWM he works "with the playwright prior to, during, and after the workshop, where we work with actors to assess the script" (Letter).

The rendering of the playwright's written work onto the stage necessitates the creation of a performance text from the literary text. Literary manager Andre Bishop describes this active liaison in terms of "pushing and pulling in order to realize onstage what used to be just text" (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 17). Peter Hay elegantly articulates not only the distinction between dramatic literature and theatrical performance, but also the role of the dramaturg in mediating between the two: "The [literary] text is inert but lasting, the performance [text] is evanescent but alive; the two are fused for a few hours to create a unique meaning" ("American Dramaturgy" 14). These accounts correspond with Andrzej Makarewicz's description of a dramaturg as "someone who is able to assist in translating a literary work into a theatrical production... the link between the two art forms" (29). Oskar Eustis further describes the dramaturg's mediation between literary text and performance text in terms of content and form:



[A]ny time you [are]... working on form and content you [are]... constantly trying to re-explore and redefine their relationship to each other in a way that [will]... express them more perfectly, more appropriately, more beautifully, especially for the specific time or place in which you [are]... working. (qtd. in Bly 7)

As virtually all dramaturgs have attested, their practical, theatrical skills are of at least equal importance to their academic background. This will be most apparent when they serve the dual role of theatre critic and theatre artist—the "self-contained liaison" suggested in the previous chapter. In *Script Into Performance*, Richard Hornby argues for the mediation, by the dramaturg, between the critical and the practical: "[W]hy should a critic not learn from a production, just as a director can learn from a critic?... The similarity of their work suggests the possibility of a close and fruitful collaboration, which in turn points up the importance... of the position of *Dramaturg*" (62, 63). Ironically, Hornby describes the dramaturg as "simply a literary advisor to the director," yet simultaneously argues the benefits of a production dramaturg, who can record his research for, and contributions to the staging of a given play, so that everyone can "learn about a playscript from a production, and not just the performers involved and the audiences who saw them" (63). Hornby coins the term "dramaturgical criticism" to describe the process in which "the critic learns about a script from directing it himself, or from being closely involved with a production as Dramaturg, and reports his findings for the use of future producers of the script" (63, 199). John Lahr shares Hornby's enthusiasm for the merging of critical function and practical expertise:

I think it's very important that theaters have a dramaturg, preferably someone who can combine his critical intelligence with practical theater work. In this way, he can contribute creatively to the stage as well as intellectually to the practitioners. (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 22)

Oskar Eustis is also very concerned that the dramaturg not be relegated to the realm of the purely theoretical:

If you separate out the dramaturg as the sole intellectual voice, you're creating a kind of separation between the ideal function and the emotional function or the artistic function, and I think that is inappropriate and it's wrong. (qtd. in Bly 12)

The dramaturg also functions as a liaison between the past and the present while fulfilling his production role. According to Peter Hay, this distinguishes him from the director: "The dramaturg, inasmuch as he is concerned with the text, must have a more lasting perspective both backwards and forwards in time than the director who is in charge of the momentary performance and meaning" ("American Dramaturgy" 15). Stuart Hecht tries "to communicate what the play means today even if it was written yesterday" (qtd. in Jenkins and Pettingill 54). These statements by Hay and Hecht are reminiscent of Günter Skopnik's description of the German dramaturg as "a man who feels completely at ease both in the past and in the present for the whole of dramatic art" (234).

Finally, the North American dramaturg may be seen as a liaison between the artistic director of his theatre and both the audience and the production staff involved with that theatre. Jenkins and Pettingill describe the dramaturg's responsibility to "communicate audience response to the artistic directors, sometimes enabling changes in the performance during previews or a run" (51). Vancouver's Savannah Walling includes "written analysis for artistic directors analyzing [the] progress of production development" among the duties of the dramaturg. D. D. Kugler states the importance of the dramaturg's relationship to his artistic director most emphatically:

The precise role of any individual dramaturg, and its real effectiveness, depends more than anything else upon the dramaturg's highly personal and idiosyncratic relationship with an artistic director. Without that ear, that trust, the role is totally insignificant.

Some authors have described the mediating function of the production dramaturg in figurative terms. Peter Hay uses the metaphor of a "midwife: the dramaturg routinely assists at the birth of a play or production." Hay elaborates the conceit even further saying,

"Ideally there will be a dramaturg present at the birth of the theatre itself," as Lessing was present at the inauguration of the Hamburg National Theatre more than two centuries ago ("American Dramaturgy" 16). Literary manager Jerry Patch recalls the requisite qualities of cooperation and humility, discussed in the previous chapter, in his description of the mediating role of the dramaturg:

I see it as a service position.... You are in service to the artistic director, making his job easier by doing some of it for him; you are in service to your audiences, and you are in service to the playwrights, helping them to realize what they hope to do. (qtd. in Bennetts)

Patch's reference to the "service" of the "audiences" recalls Lessing's argument for a theatre relevant to its surroundings, and points to theatre dramaturgy as a final unifying characteristic of the North American dramaturgical profession.

## **THEATRE DRAMATURGY**

Richard Nelson, former literary manager at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, coins the term "theater dramaturgy" to describe the practice of a dramaturg "interested in helping to articulate the aesthetic of the whole theater as opposed to that of a particular production" (qtd. in Bly 39). This implies a sort of ultimate liaison between the entire theatre and the society in which it is situated. Theatre dramaturgy can exist independently of production dramaturgy, as it frequently does in the theatres of the United Kingdom. However, according to literary manager Andre Bishop, in North America most "producers and artistic directors *and* dramaturgs" are very involved in "defining the identity of their theaters" (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 17). Gitta Honegger asserts that dramaturgs in particular "can really shape a theater" (qtd. in Bly 36). John Lahr agrees, saying that the dramaturg "has more opportunity to know about the contemporary theatrical scene than the administrators" (12). Linda Walsh Jenkins and Richard Pettingill observe that North American dramaturgs frequently help to "formulate the theater's artistic vision" (51). Jonathan Alper, dramaturg

at the Manhattan Theater Club, includes the formulation of "artistic policy" in the province of the dramaturg (qtd. in Bennetts). Mark Lord considers "planning a season... [to be] a conceptualizing and not just 'scholarly' force" (61). Lord credits the dramaturg with the "responsibility for articulating and evaluating the aesthetic mission of his/her theater... the theater's definition of itself" (61). Joel Schechter adds to this list the dramaturg's responsibility of "insuring that the audience knows a theatre's esthetic or political line" ("American Dramaturgs" 89). And Dennis Powers, dramaturg at the American Conservatory Theatre, includes the media in his account of theatre dramaturgy—"the task of articulating or clarifying... policy, philosophy and artistic goals to the press and public at large" (qtd. in Kleb 31). Canadians Sally Han and Gyllian Raby concur with their American counterparts: Han stresses the dramaturg's assistance in helping his theatre form "a political/social/aesthetic point of view"; and Raby describes the dramaturg's responsibility for the "understanding and endorsement of... [the] mandate" of his theatre.

The relationship between theatre and audience is not merely one-way, however. Regardless of how well-intentioned a theatre's artistic vision and policy may be, its success will ultimately depend on its awareness of the public it serves. Martin Esslin describes the importance of the dramaturg in maintaining the relevance of his theatre to its audience: the dramaturg "has an idea of what the demands of the public in that particular place are and what they would like to have":

[H]e must function as an applied sociologist, who has to know the demographic, social, political and other conditions of his audience. For whom are you making theater? This is the crucial question you must ask yourself in selecting a play. When a play is in rehearsal, you have to ask, will this play be understandable at the educational or social level of the average audience member of this particular theater? (qtd. in Bly 22)

Literary advisor Bonnie Marranca suggests that, if we continue to include an emphasis on theatre dramaturgy in the role of the North American dramaturg, "we should see plays

coming better prepared to meet their audiences, and a more enlightened repertoire" (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 26). Peter Hay explains the need for such careful consideration of the audience:

There are as many different meanings as there are localities, and each company must find the connections between its activities and the community, between the text and the human condition. ("American Dramaturgy" 23)

Maja Ardal at Young People's Theatre in Toronto strives to maintain "a sense of the audiences who attend our theatre. Age-range... socio-economic range... [and the] cultural realities of the potential audience."

Temporal relevance is as important to theatre dramaturgy as an awareness of the audience. Oskar Eustis describes his attempt to define the immediacy of any play produced by his company: "From the moment we begin considering a script for production, I try to define as precisely as possible what it is about that particular work that makes it important for us at the Eureka Theater [this year]." But Eustis is also interested in affecting audiences beyond merely those that visit the Eureka: "Sometimes... we very consciously set out to create a project that will have an influence on the larger theater community" (qtd. in Bly 10-11). Mark Bly considers temporal relevance to be of equal importance to the staging of new and old works:

We must encourage new plays... and stage classics so they're not mere museum pieces, but have meaning and immediacy for our audiences here and now. As dramaturgs we must... uncover those innate contradictions, conflicts, and tensions in a script that have an immediacy, that still vibrate for our culture. To put it simply, our goal as dramaturgs must be to help create theaters... anchored in our culture and... attuned to the conflicts and tensions of our society.... (qtd. in Moore 50)

John Lahr also argues for the theatre's "relation to the culture" in which it performs (12); and Oskar Eustis expects a good dramaturg to "make the theater part of the current

living culture" (qtd. in Bly 12). Martin Esslin claims the theatre community benefits from such attention to the larger community in which it is situated, and that "there is a need for people... who have high artistic standards, who have a refined vision of the cultural and social situation of the country as a whole, to use their own little spheres of activity to improve the status of theater" (qtd. in Bly 24). Maja Ardal expects the Canadian dramaturg to employ "socio-political knowledgeability" and a good "comprehension of our cultural realities" in his production role.

In addition to possessing an understanding of the audience for which his company performs, the North American dramaturg helps to ensure that the audience possesses an understanding of his company's productions—and of theatre generally. Linda Walsh Jenkins and Richard Pettingill claim that dramaturgs "help audiences have a more informed base for perceiving theater intellectually and aesthetically" (51). Peter Hay adds that this understanding, vital to both performer and spectator, begins in the theatre:

[S]ome kind of consensus has to be reached first within a group of artists and then the larger tribe represented by the audience. The drama does not work, and it cannot be made to work, if the artists and audiences that are involved in it do not seek the meaning of their own work and of the work itself. ("American Dramaturgy" 14)

Jenkins and Pettingill cite the chairing of after-show discussions as a duty of the dramaturg, who "guides the audience... teaching them how to think about plays and development as well as listening to their responses" (51-52). Arthur Ballet, former director of the Office for Advanced Drama Research, claims that, in addition to understanding and enlightening their customary audiences, North American dramaturgs should help their theatres extend their influence into new territory:

We need to create an audience for new plays outside of the major city....  
Theaters must boldly take the lead; they cannot depend on anyone else to do that job for them. And they will do it only when they are convinced that...  
[an] untapped audience for new work can be and must be educated. (43)

Richard Pettingill expects to see the quality of North American theatre increase proportionally with the increased employment of dramaturgs in its playhouses. He considers "the process of educating not only the public but the theatrical community" to be one of the dramaturg's responsibilities (qtd. in Jenkins and Pettingill 54).

In helping to shape the artistic, political mandate of his theatre, the contemporary North American dramaturg best honours Richard Nelson's definition of "theater dramaturgy" as the articulation of "the aesthetic of the whole theater as opposed to that of a particular production" (qtd. in Bly 39). Mark Bly claims that "dramaturgs are in a position to influence the kind of social, political, and moral questions that are presented on our stages" (qtd. in Moore 50). Literary advisor Steve Lawson observes dramaturgs "influencing... basic artistic policy in the directions that seem... important or at least untouched" (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 23). And in her role as dramaturg in collaboration with Joseph Chaikin, Mira Rafalowicz asks of herself and of her theatre, "[W]hat has value for us to attempt to express, personally, theatrically, socially, politically?" (qtd. in "Dramaturgs in America" 27).

## CONCLUSION

As the contemporary North American dramaturg participates not only in Brecht's "production dramaturgy," but in Nelson's "theater dramaturgy" as well, he is simultaneously rediscovering Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's preoccupation with the position and function of his theatre in the broadest social context. Robert Brustein, artistic director of the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, summarizes the North American dramaturg's responsibilities both as a liaison and as a theatre dramaturg:

Insofar as you advise the leadership on the season's choices, you help to mold the esthetic of your institution. Insofar as you provide the audience and the company with dramaturgical material, you provide its intellectual

identity. Insofar as you continue to remind the theater of its original goals, you are its artistic conscience. (qtd. in Bennetts)

Peter Hay is similarly conscious of the dramaturg's responsibility to the integrity of his theatre's artistic mandate. Hay recommends the continual reinforcement of "the philosophical basis of what we are doing":

The main job of a dramaturg is to keep asking why. Why are we doing this play? Why this season? Why here? Why does our theatre exist? Why do we exist? Why has theatre worked elsewhere or in the past? Why do our audiences come? ("American Dramaturgy" 13)

As noted above, the practice of theatre dramaturgy may be seen as the ultimate extension of the function of "liaison" characterizing the North American dramaturg. In this instance the dramaturg mediates between his theatre and his society. But the production dramaturg's principal role of mediation during the rehearsal process itself occurs between drama and theatre; between dramatic literature and performed drama; between the literary text and the performance text. He forms the liaison between the printed word and the action on stage, connecting sometimes centuries of production history, theory and criticism with the immediacy of his company's current production. Margo Charlton, artistic director of the Popular Theatre Alliance of Manitoba, defines the contemporary dramaturg in terms of a liaison between text and performance—and between theatre and spectator. For Charlton the dramaturg is "[s]omeone who can keep the overall shape of the play in mind while also thinking of staging problems and how to best bring the ideas of the play to life for the audience."

Clearly the successful dramaturg must be competent both as a drama critic and as a theatre critic. Alexis Greene concludes that dramaturgs are "undertaking nothing less than the task of reformulating the ways in which plays are created and produced.... They are... reevaluating the purposes of... dramatic literature and the institutions which produce the literature" (57). To any remaining doubts concerning the validity and importance of the



professional dramaturg in contemporary North American theatre, Russell Vandenbroucke offers this response:

[W]hat's wrong with a little intelligence now and again? The theater has tried almost everything else. (qtd. in Bly 18)

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APPENDIX A  
LETTER SENT TO CANADIAN THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

18 December, 1991.

Re: Request for information pertaining to the duties of the dramaturg (or his/her equivalent) in your theatre.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Greetings! I am writing to you, and to a number of other Canadian theatres, to request information pertaining to the duties of a dramaturg, as practised by your company. I realize that, primarily for financial reasons, many theatres do not employ a dramaturg, so named, on a full-time basis—and that often the work is either assumed by an existing member of the company or shared among many. The description of your position within your company—given in *The Theatre Listing 91/92*—suggests to me that yours might be the role most closely aligned with that of "Dramaturg". If, however, there is someone in your theatre to whom you feel this letter would be more suitably addressed, please forward it to that person.

I am currently enrolled in a three year graduate program of Theatre Studies at the University of Calgary, working towards a masters degree in Fine Arts. In this, my final year of course work, much of my emphasis is on the study of the theory, history and practice of dramaturgy. Although a long standing tradition in the European theatre, the involvement of dramaturgs (and their equivalents) in North American playhouses appears to be a relatively recent development. I feel it is important that this aspect of theatre practice be better understood, within both the theoretical and the practical realm—within both the academic and the professional community. I intend to base my thesis on the subject of Canadian dramaturgy.

I have obtained as much literary information as possible, both from our own university's library and through inter-library loans. As you may well be aware, the body of written work on the subject of dramaturgy and the role and function of the dramaturg is scarce indeed! Nonetheless, I am attempting to write a research paper on this subject, and I am asking for your help in rounding out an otherwise purely theoretical essay with the benefit of your practical experience.

I would like to include your name and the name of your theatre in my list of sources consulted; but if you prefer that I refrain from doing so, please indicate this in your response and I will be happy to oblige. Neither this research paper nor the thesis I intend to base upon it is likely to be published. If such a possibility arises I will certainly contact you well in advance with a request for your permission to include information I have received from you. Please let me know if you would be interested in hearing back from me regarding the results of my project. I will gladly share with you what I have learned over the year, and will welcome the opportunity for further correspondence on the subject of dramaturgical function.

I realize there are only twenty-four hours in a day, that a life in the theatre rarely includes a free moment; and that this may seem like an onerous task at this festive season of the year . . . (but) . . . *please* take a few moments to respond to this request with your thoughts and experience pertaining to the critical processes of the dramaturg (or his/her equivalent) in your theatre.

The paper I am basing on these responses is to be submitted by the end of January, 1992. Kindly return your comments to me, as soon as possible, in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Thank you very much in advance.

Sincerely,

David Gowen

University of Calgary

**APPENDIX B**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEYING DRAMATURGICAL FUNCTION**

**DRAMATURGICAL FUNCTION**

*Please return these pages to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope.  
Please indicate below if your name or the name of your theatre is different from that which  
appears at the top of this page.*

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*Please feel free to write on the backs of these pages if I have provided insufficient space for  
your comments.*

*Thank you very much for your assistance!*

How would you define the **production role** of the dramaturg (or his/her equivalent) in  
your theatre?

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What **requisite skills** does the dramaturg (or his/her equivalent) in your theatre possess?

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What **areas of responsibility** are covered by the dramaturg (or his/her equivalent) in your theatre?

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What sort of **research techniques** does the dramaturg (or his/her equivalent) in your theatre employ?

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What is the **academic background** of the dramaturg (or his/her equivalent) in your theatre?

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What is the **practical background** of the dramaturg (or his/her equivalent) in your theatre?

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*Please feel free to include any additional comments you might wish to make. Every bit of information from the real theatre world will be most helpful!*

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*Thanks Again!*

**APPENDIX C**  
**LIST OF RESPONDENTS TO SURVEY**

Maja Ardal, Artistic Director: Young People's Theatre  
Toronto, Ontario

Blake Brooker, Artistic Director: One Yellow Rabbit Theatre Association  
Calgary, Alberta

Jan Carley, Associate Director: Arts Club Theatre  
Vancouver, British Columbia.

Margo Charlton, Artistic Director: Popular Theatre Alliance of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Micheline Chevrier, Associate Artistic Director: Theatre New Brunswick  
Fredericton, New Brunswick

Larry W. Desrochers, Associate Artistic Director: Manitoba Theatre Centre  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Michael Devine, Artistic and Executive Director: Playwrights' Workshop Montreal  
Montreal, Quebec

Sky Gilbert, Artistic Director: Buddies in Bad Times Theatre  
Toronto, Ontario

Sally Han, former Associate Director: Theatre Passe Muraille  
Toronto, Ontario

Elliott Hayes, Literary Manager: Stratford Shakespearean Festival Foundation of Canada  
Stratford, Ontario

Urjo Kareda, Artistic Director: Tarragon Theatre  
Toronto, Ontario

Annie Kidder, Associate Director: Factory Theatre  
Toronto, Ontario

D. D. Kugler, Freelance Dramaturg: Necessary Angel Theatre Company  
Toronto, Ontario

Duncan McIntosh, Artistic Director: Theatre Plus  
Toronto, Ontario

Christine Moynihan, General Director: Equity Showcase Theatre  
Toronto, Ontario

Ken Neufeld, General Manager: Richmond Gateway Theatre  
Richmond, B.C.

Christopher Newton, Artistic Director: Shaw Festival Theatre  
Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario

Martin H. Onrot, General Manager: O'Keefe Centre  
Toronto, Ontario

Maurice Podbrey, Artistic Director: Centaur Theatre Company  
Montreal, Quebec

Gyllian Raby, Artistic Director: Northern Light Theatre  
Edmonton, Alberta

Kim Selody, Artistic Director: New Play Centre  
Vancouver, B.C.

Charlie Tomlinson, Artistic Associate: The Grand Theatre  
London, Ontario

Savannah Walling, Artistic Director: Special Delivery Moving Theatre  
Vancouver, B.C.