

The First and Second Attentions of Dramaturgy: A Phenomenological Analysis

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the structure of drama and proposes a theory of two phenomenological “attentions” in dramaturgy. The theory and analysis are based on the phenomenological theory of Martin Heidegger and others. Additionally, Sheila Rabillard’s “spatial” theory of drama is employed.

Drama has (or I may say, *can have*) two side-by-side structures, with different aims and outcomes. Ostensibly, drama is a “realistic” narrative art form, and can even come across as a slice of “real history” related to lived experience. In this way dramaturgy can be seen either as a public event, with characters “speaking” to audiences, and audiences having a measure of “interaction” with live figures on stage; or as less-fully realized (but no less real) action, with audience members “spying” on characters and action, secretly viewing the framed lives of others. Alongside this immediate, “first attention” structure, which corresponds with Heidegger’s “presence-at-hand,” drama also comprises an alternative framework of meaning and response. By way of a Husserlian “attentional transformation,” a “second attention” is effected, a focus that corresponds to Heidegger’s “readiness-to-hand,” and by way of which dramaturgic being and consciousness are fully instituted. The second attention takes place in a deeply-intuited *environmentality*, wherein new conceptions of spatial relations are discovered. This “pure space” can further be

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analyzed through Sheila Rabillard's theory that drama is less a coherent narrative than a free-standing "local order" comprised of repetitions, sequences, variations and combinations. This "flattened" second-attention structure creates an artificiality in drama that is almost the exact opposite of first-attention "realistic" narrative. Seen in these ways drama comprises two aspects of consciousness functioning in parallel: a first-attention experience of belief-laden historical understanding, and a shadowy, second-attention "re-realizing," a bracketed, secondary cognizance and awareness. I specifically analyze and apply this theory to Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and Caryl Churchill's *Heart's Desire*.

Keywords: drama, dramaturgy, phenomenology, audience, attention, Martin Heidegger, Sheila Rabillard, Arthur Miller, Caryl Churchill

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摘 要

本篇論文分析戲劇結構並且提出「兩層專注」之劇作理論 (dramaturgy)。論文理論與分析出自海德格 (Martin Heidegger) 等人之現象學理論。同時亦運用 Shelia Rabillard 之「空間」戲劇理論。

戲劇具有 (或可有) 兩種並存結構, 各具不同目標與結果。表面而言, 戲劇是一種「寫實的」敘事藝術形式, 而且可以是與實際生活經驗有關的「真實歷史」片段。在這脈絡下, 戲劇書寫應可視為是一種公共事件, 角色向著觀眾「說話」, 而觀眾有一定程度的與在舞台上的活生生演員得以「互動」; 或是, 可視為, 不盡完全實現 (但不減其真實性) 的行動, 觀眾得以「窺視」到角色與其行動, 秘密地觀看他人在戲框內的生活。在此一立即, 「第一專注」結構, 與海德格的「現成之物」 (presence-at-hand) 相符, 之外, 戲劇同時擁有一另類的意義與回應之框架。藉由胡賽爾的「專注轉化」, 一種「第二專注」得以實現, 一個合於海德格的「上手之物」 (readiness-at-hand), 藉由此劇作之存有與意識得以充分直覺到。第二專注發生於深度直覺到的環境性 (enviromentality), 此中新空間關係被發掘。此「純粹空間」可進一步由 Sheila Rabillard 的理論加以分析, 亦即, 戲劇與其說是井然有序之敘事, 不如說是獨立之「在地秩序」, 由重覆, 序列, 變調以及結合體所構成。此一「壓縮的」第二專注結構在劇中創造出一種人工性, 其與第一專注的寫實敘事幾乎是對反面。以

這種方式看待，戲劇是由兩兩平行運作之意識的兩個面向所組成：一是富含信念內容的歷史性理解，第一專注式的經驗，以及，一種隱晦，第二專注式，再一實現（re-realizing），一種放入括弧，二度的理解與覺查。我特別將分析以及運用上述理論於亞瑟·米勒（*The Crucible*）與卡瑞·邱琪兒（*Heart's Desire*）。

關鍵字：戲劇、劇作學、現象學、觀眾、海德格、Shelia Rabillard、亞瑟·米勒、卡瑞·邱琪兒

A Note on the Historical Accuracy
of this Play

This play is not history in the sense in which the word is used by the academic historian. Dramatic purposes have sometimes required many characters to be fused into one However, I believe that the reader will discover here the essential nature of one of the strangest and most awful chapters in human history. The fate of each character is exactly that of his historical model, and there is no one in the drama who did not play a similar—and in some cases exactly the same—role in history.

The Crucible, Arthur Miller

BRIAN: She's taking her time.

ALICE: Not really.

They all stop, BRIAN goes out. Others reset to beginning and do exactly what they did before as BRIAN enters putting on a tweed jacket.

BRIAN: She's taking her time.

ALICE: Not really.

They all stop, BRIAN goes out, others reset and BRIAN enters putting on an old cardigan.

BRIAN: She's taking her time.

ALICE: Not really.

Heart's Desire, Caryl Churchill

Introduction

The above examples illustrate two potential structures, at once antipodal and complementary in dramaturgy, which can vie for author and audience attention. In *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller (1915-2005), we see a realistic structure that presents drama as a kind of slice of belief-laden history, a straightforward look into the flesh-and-blood lives of characters that we accept as real(istic).¹ Alternatively, in Caryl Churchill's *Heart's Desire* we see a structure that is far from realistic, and appears, rather, a boxy concatenation, a distinctly artificial construction that borders on becoming a sequence of bloodless "repetitions, series, permutations, and combinations."² Such seemingly divergent approaches are usually interpreted simply as "realistic," "conservative," "staid" on the one hand, and "alternative," "radical," "postmodern" on the other—and n'er the twain shall meet, thank you. Such an analysis, however, fails to apprehend that these two approaches in fact elucidate two aspects of richly experienced dramatic existence and consciousness—reverse, sometimes conflicting facets to be sure, but ultimately two sides of the same coin in a holistic dramaturgic framework.

My position in this paper will be that these two dramaturgic phases or frameworks function in parallel, providing glimpses into consciousness and experience that can best be understood in a phenomenological light. Immedi-

¹ Note that my example is one of Miller's prose explanations in his play, this one presented before the action of the play itself. Miller's explications within the playscript have been criticized as too prosaic, distracting from the play, proper. It is my position, however, that although such explanations are somewhat "external" to the play itself, they are in no way "unrelated" to the overall dialogic/operative structure of the drama. They are, in effect, essential to the structure of the play itself—something like stage directions in the text of a play (which no one says are superfluous to drama)—and cannot be detached from the overall understanding of the play.

² Sheila Rabillard, "Destabilizing Plot, Displacing the Status of Narrative: Local Order in the Plays of Pinter and Shepard," *Theatre Journal* 43 (1991): 41 (Hereafter shortened to "Destabilizing Plot").

ate, realistic structures such as Miller's draw what I will call the audience's "first attention," a consideration which corresponds to Martin Heidegger's (1889-1976) "presence-at-hand"—that awareness whereby entities "show themselves in this and for it, and which are understood as entities in the most authentic sense, [and] thus get interpreted with regard to the Present."³ We might simply translate this as "ordinary awareness" although we must keep in mind that such awareness is always gravid with opportunity for discernment/retention/treatment/indulgence/appreciation/arbitration/etc. in an opulently figured and deeply-intuited *environmentality*, a veritable "aroundness" that situates the elements of intersubjective, intentional "Being-in-the-world."⁴ With this spatial awareness first in mind, we then find that during the consumption of drama, by way of a given *solicitude* on the part of the audience (the term is Heidegger's),⁵ a Husserlian "attentional transformation" is effected, whereby we move our attention across noetic (the experiencing intentional consciousness) and noematic (that which is experienced/perceived as such) fields, in order to access a range of potential, indeterminate, implicit, expectant and attendant meanings.⁶

With this transformation, a "second attention" is brought about, and we find that this corresponds to Heidegger's "readiness-to-hand"—that func-

³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Malden, Mass., Oxford, Melbourne: Blackwell Publishing, 1962), 48.

⁴ See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 87-90 and 134-148. Note that Heidegger links presence-at-hand to "existence" and Dasein but is careful to add that although it is an accompaniment to existence/being/lived life, is not the same thing (see 67).

⁵ Heidegger in *Being and Time* similarly uses the terms "concern" as "the Being of a possible way of Being-in-the-world" (83), and "care," which is virtually "The totality of Being-in-the-world" (274).

⁶ Quote from Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W.R. Boyce Gibson (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1931), 267 (Hereafter shortened to *Ideas*). It is of course important to note that the referred to *intentionality* is the Husserlian intentionality—the "aboutness" of directed conscious experience—and not the simple definition of intentional as "done on purpose; deliberate."

tioning whereby we “encounter in concern” and then employ the “equipment” of life, those paraphernalia and entities with an “in-order-to” and “towards-which” structure⁷ in which the intentionality of lived experience is manifested and manipulated, and by way of which being and consciousness are fully instituted. Take care, however, not to interpret readiness-to-hand in an overly-functional way. Readiness-to-hand, though it does form a strong bond with seemingly pragmatic “reference or assignment,”⁸ is also, more provocatively, “previously discovered”⁹ and we find that it must “withdraw”¹⁰ into a “disclosive potentiality-for-Being.”¹¹ These ideas thicken the conception of readiness-to-hand, and can be linked to Heidegger’s sundry temporality-within-lived-experience, to be examined below.

In these ways we see that the effected second attention provides a necessary “insight” into lived experience (in our examination, dramatic experience) that reaches beneath the surface. In life, as many a philosopher has noted, a great unperceived totality of awareness and experience is indeed “ready to hand,” but is all-too-often overlooked or ignored by humanity. The human endeavor can be seen largely as an effort to bridge this ontological and experiential gap, to enlighten a now-darkened constellation of experience:

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Corinthians: 17-18)¹²

To continue this line of thought, Heidegger writes that “That which is ontologically closest and well known, is ontologically the farthest and *not known*

⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 97-99.

⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 114.

⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 114.

¹⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 99.

¹¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 183.

¹² C.I. Scofield ed., *New Scofield Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

at all; and its ontological signification is constantly overlooked.”¹³ In one sense, Dasein—our being, our principal ontology, our percipience and experience in phenomenological, intentional, intersubjective surroundings—is “Being-outside alongside the object” (in our study, the environment of the “first attention”), but it is simultaneously “inside” and “held back” until a consummating “disclosure” is made.¹⁴ In a word, “*The most primordial phenomenon of truth is first shown by the existential-ontological foundations of uncovering.*”¹⁵ This uncovering, this disclosedness, is linked by Heidegger to the Greek for “discourse,” and we find that “Dasein, man’s Being . . . is essentially determined by the potentiality for discourse.”¹⁶ Discourse—the very essence of drama, and with it we find that we have another handle on which to grasp the meaning of this art form in richly suggestive phenomenological ways (note that “discourse” will enter into our discussion in more detail later in this paper).

The second attention casts its glance about the above-noted environmentality, wherein “the pure possibilities of spatial relations are discovered.”¹⁷ This “pure space” is something like Dasein’s “home,” the “circumspectively oriented totality in which we find equipment ready-to-hand.”¹⁸ I will focus this Heideggerian understanding through Sheila Rabillard’s theory that drama is less a coherent narrative than a “dramatic organization independent of plot,”¹⁹ a free-standing “local order.”²⁰ Heidegger, in terms of the “spatiality of what we proximally encounter in circumspection,” a spatiality to be “intuited for-

¹³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 69.

¹⁴ By way of the second attention; see Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 88-89, 105, and elsewhere.

¹⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 263, italics in original.

¹⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 47, italics in original.

¹⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 146-147.

¹⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 147.

¹⁹ Rabillard, “Destabilizing Plot,” 41.

²⁰ Rabillard, “Destabilizing Plot,” 43.

mally,” refers to “environmental regions ... neutralized to pure dimensions.”²¹ This sounds quite like Rabillard’s “repetitions, series, permutations, and combinations,” referred to above. Perhaps needless to say this “space” appears to be something of a paradox, in that it is at once a richly-delineated, densely-populated circumambiency that is the very essence of being and experience, but also an essentially vacant geometric field (you can’t see “pure dimensions,” “permutations,” etc.). This bright-white space of the second attention is almost (but definitely not quite) the exact opposite of first-attention-focused “realistic” narrative, with its colors, shadings and ever-present “Being alongside,” “Being-there,” “Being-something,” etc. We will find these environments, interstices and geometries prominently figuring in the work of Caryl Churchill, and they will introduce an intriguing complexity (very nearly a paradox) surrounding “readiness-to-hand”—but more on this later.

To sum up thus far, drama comprises two aspects of consciousness functioning in parallel: a first-attention, “real life” dramatic experience of senso-chrono-historico understanding (pardon the somewhat unwieldy construction); and a shadowy, secondarily-attended “re-realizing,” a bracketed, derived cognizance and awareness. Husserl (1859-1938) seems to capture these two interacting phasings of the dramatic milieu when he writes that “the focal [the “mode of actual orientation”; the “being turned towards”] is girt about with a ‘zone’ of the marginal.”²² We will sometimes find these two approaches simultaneously at work in a play—something of the bright and dark sides of dramatic experience if you will. Alternatively, a playwright may focus on one or the other of the two attentions in a work—it’s probably easier that

²¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 146-147.

²² Husserl, *Ideas*, 118. I use the word “phasing” above to give to the noun “phase” a slightly more progressive suggestion, but it is important to recall that the word “phase” stems from the Greek *phainein*, which means “to show.” Such a definition fits nicely into our study of drama, very much an art of “showing.” Alternatively, although I will on occasion use words like “framework” to describe the “two attentions,” I don’t think they capture the animation, betokening or spectacle of drama in the way that “phasing” may.

way, but also particular life and aesthetic philosophies will determine approaches. Thus, conservative, *status quo* beliefs would lead to a first attention focus on diachronic development, realistic depiction and a more standard narrative order, while a more *mutatio* approach with a motley time consciousness would effect the second attention, focusing on a dramatic taxonomy bleached of genuinely realistic elements. In both cases, the “realistic” side of drama insists on pragmatic attention and outcomes, and standard narrative ordering, while the “shadow” side weakens this reading, opening new doors of perception outside the range of ordinary experience (but I remind the reader not to class the two attentions wholly separately, as if they are two different species of awareness). We may find, a bit more far-reachingly but nonetheless intriguingly, that the two sides of dramatic attention simultaneously evince a view of life and experience that is at once “now here” (the present first attention) and “nowhere” (the vacated second attention). If this sounds fanciful, recall that when Heidegger examines how Dasein is “brought before itself through its own Being” (by way of *anxiety*), this facing, this obverse is “that which threatens ... is so close [*now, here*] that it is oppressive and stifles one’s breath, and yet it is *nowhere*.”²³ Perhaps a bit more straightforwardly, and altering the terms slightly (now/here becomes “something” and nowhere becomes “nothing”), Heidegger adds that “the ‘nothing’ of readiness-to-hand is grounded in the most primordial ‘something’—in the *world*.”²⁴ Augustine

²³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 231.

²⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 232. And we are here presented with the complexity referred to above. For Heidegger, with the simple example of the use of a hammer, describes how an initial “nothing” of readiness-to-hand is transformed into a most-important “something” that will take on a critical role in lived experience. He writes that readiness-to-hand is a function “where something is put to use, [and] our concern subordinates itself to the ‘in-order-to’ which is constitutive for the equipment we are employing at the time; the less we just stare at the hammer-Thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is ...” (98). More on the value and usefulness of readiness-to-hand, and an expansion of the discussion of “nothings” and “somethings” in drama, below.

(354-430) provides given philosophical/theological insight on these phenomena when he writes:

For, things we know, not by sensation, but by the absence of sensation, are known—if the word says or means anything—by some kind of ‘unknowing,’ so that they are both known and not known at the same time.²⁵

Phenomenological Structures

Phenomenology is a philosophy that strives to penetrate beyond the surface of lived experience, while always keeping such experience firmly in view, with the understanding that it deeply conditions any philosophical and epistemological understanding. In this way, phenomenology essentially starts from the conception of human *attention*, perception, the intentional glance directed at the world at large, from subject to object if you will. This first attention (I am re-using my term in a slightly different way here) is a primary organizing principle or contrivance of human lived experience. With this apparatus ready-to-hand, humans harness a world of perception that is nothing short of stupendous—“I am aware of a world, spread out in space endlessly, and in time becoming and become, without end” writes Husserl,²⁶ or, if I may again turn to the Bible:

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end (*Ecclesiastes* 3:11).

²⁵ St. Augustine. *The City of God*. An abridged version from the translation by Gerald G. Walsh, S.J., Demetrius B. Zema, S.J., Grace Monahan, O.S.U., and Daniel J. Honan. With a condensation of the original foreword by Etienne Gilson. Edited by Vernon J. Bourke (New York: Image Books, 1958), 254.

²⁶ *Ideas*, 101.

In drama we re-encounter this vast world, if in a highly altered form. In any case the art form is a truly “live” activity, a segment of “real experience” on stage.²⁷ Drama can be seen as a truly public event, with, in one view, characters and audiences having a measure of “interaction,” or in another view, as less-fully-public/realized (but no less real) action, with audience members “spying” on characters and action, looking out a rear window as it were, and secretly viewing the framed lives of others. In both of these ways, drama is impressively *phenomenal*.²⁸ To continue, Heidegger writes that the root of the word “phenomenon” derives from the Greek meaning “to show itself,” and this in turn is connected to the meaning of “semblance,” that is, something

²⁷ I am inclined to relate these conceptions to Heidegger’s *projection*, wherewith we can view the staged action and characterization as at once a projection (we might continue and link an understanding of *representation* to that which is *projected*) of possible or conjectured relations, interactions, outcomes, etc. Additionally, read/view this understanding through something like a *psychological projection* taking place from audience members to characters, and back again. Within this mental space we see an intricate interweaving, cross-pollination and ultimate transformation “into something else” (from Heidegger, immediately below) among dramatic characters, which can interchangeably or alternatively be understood as Others, Self or “Being-toward-oneself.” Herein, “there is thus a relationship [with and towards Others] of Being [Seinsverhältnis] from Dasein to Dasein The relationship-of-being which one has towards Others would then become a Projection of one’s own Being-toward-oneself ‘into something else’. The Other would be a duplicate of the Self” (162; bracketed English is taken from the quote cited here, slightly rearranged for clarity but not altering Heidegger’s meaning). Heidegger deepens this notion of projection significantly in his book, but I will not follow this idea further here.

²⁸ I am focusing on drama’s live formatting, but like any art form, drama can be consumed and interpreted in varied formats. This is to say that in addition to staged drama, the art form could also be read silently, and understood by a reader in this private sense, as dicta or a narrative series. Similarly, it could be read by a small group, not staged, but analyzed in this way. Drama can of course also make its way onto television and film, which might condition its messages in other ways. These varied formats could potentially open the analysis in this paper onto other interpretations, but I will solely refer back to drama as an activity staged by living characters in front of live audiences.

that exhibits itself “as something which in itself it is *not*.”²⁹ Overall, I feel that a neater definition of drama itself could hardly be effected!

As noted above, Heidegger introduces into his analysis the importance of discourse in the phenomenological understanding: “In both ordinary and philosophical usage, Dasein, man’s Being is ‘defined’ as the [rational animal]—as that living thing whose Being is essentially determined by the potentiality of discourse.”³⁰ Heidegger goes on to explain that such discourse is largely an act of “letting something be seen,” of “making manifest”—a conception that, as noted above, he explicitly states “has its roots in the existential constitution of Dasein’s disclosedness.”³¹ In terms of drama, perhaps this all seems clear enough, with the dramatic act most assuredly and immediately making ideas and experiences visible to audiences by way of discourse. I would like to deepen this understanding, however, by turning again to Sheila Rabillard, who writes that her non-narrative, pattern-centric description of drama as local order is “focused perhaps ... on theatrical discourse.”³² Rabillard’s meaning is such that the picketed structure of much drama³³ *by definition* channels audience attention to the discursive aspects and structures of dramaturgy (there is *little else left* for audiences to attend to, as it were). Note however that such discourse in drama may not be simply a function of a series of connected statements, propositions, calls-and-responses, assertions, etc. We find instead, in one view, that dramatic discourse, rather than straight-

²⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 51.

³⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 47. The bracketed text is a Greek phrase in *Being and Time*, which is traditionally translated as “rational animal,” as I have used it; however, translators Macquarrie and Robinson explain that Heidegger recognizes and exploits the fact that one of the verbs in the phrase is derived from the same verb that means “to talk,” “to hold discourse,” and is even related to the Greek word for “dialectical.”

³¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 223.

³² Rabillard, “Destabilizing Plot,” 55.

³³ Again, her “mathematical or perhaps syntactical and rhetorical repetitions, series, permutations, and combinations” (41).

forwardly declarative, informative, narrative, descriptive, etc., is essentially *conative*—that is, “an inclination (as an instinct, a drive, a wish, or a craving) to act purposefully”³⁴ (note how we are led back into Husserlian phenomenology in that “conative” can be linked to the conception of intentionality). Such a view displaces theatrical discourse from the straightforward “utterance” proper, and places the discourse in a zone governed by “the conditions of utterance.”³⁵ Rabillard links this conception upward to her proposed “series and permutations, patterns of rhetoric and syntax”³⁶ to be found in dramaturgy. In my view this structure stems in good measure from drama’s gapped, “incomplete” overall ordering, seen in the art form’s essentially episodic organization and “moment-by-moment occurrence.”³⁷ In almost any given drama one can always detect fissures in the presentation and progression of portrayed events, leaps in logic and development, and condensations of characterization, all couched in an overall dramatic milieu that leaves to audiences the task of filling in the gaps, and completing the meaning of a drama (recall how Richard Foreman has said that he is most fascinated by the first ten minutes of a film, wherein “nothing is clear. [One] doesn’t know who’s who, where the characters are, or how they are tangled up in each other’s lives. The characters don’t have a visible past, and their future is as yet unknown;”³⁸ Foreman’s view uniquely captures the gapped quality of dramaturgy I have tried to describe). This technique can be called a sort of *compression*, which is considered unethical in some fields (such as journalism), but which is virtually *de rigueur* in

³⁴ The term “conative” is from Anne Ubersfeld, cited in Rabillard, 56. The definition is from *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 1993).

³⁵ Ubersfeld in Rabillard, 56. Note the possible relationship between these “conditions” and the environmentality discussed in this paper.

³⁶ Rabillard, “Destabilizing Plot,” 57.

³⁷ Rabillard, “Destabilizing Plot,” 55.

³⁸ Marc Robinson, introduction to *My Head Was a Sledgehammer*, by Richard Foreman (Woodstock, New York: The Overlook Press, 1995), ii.

drama, except for the handful of plays that are presented in “real time.” The above said, this crenellated structure in a sense transforms audience attention, shifting it from the first to the second, taking in a larger and more capacious spatiality, as opposed to a more confined, systematic, ranked, “realistic” presentation. In the end, rather than a loss of meaning, structures like these allow audiences to “experience a rare degree of engagement with the stage”³⁹ and, even more deliberately/deliberatively, pilot them “to concentrate on the essence of theater: being.”⁴⁰ Seen this way, audiences *must* depend on the deep logic and apperceptive pith of discourse during drama, for they may not be given more apparent clues to build interpretation on. At first glance this discussion may seem most applicable to “second attention” dramas, with their chalkier, roomier environmentality. However, we may and probably must find that these descriptions of discourse and dramatic structure apply equally to the first attention. The “incomplete” nature of drama described above is, I posit, found in virtually any play, and from this, largely, emerges the necessary focus (attentions, both first and second) in dramaturgic discourse.

A final step toward a complete phenomenological understanding is to interpret these attentions as examples of Husserlian “bracketing,” the *epoche* by which humans “transvalue” experience. Why do we bracket experience? Simply put, in order to remove it from subjective complications, and allow it to claim its own untainted being within our consciousness and, ultimately, to effectively implement Cartesian doubt, to attain a “perfect freedom” wherein we can “see the world as it is.”⁴¹ I am here perhaps (over)emphasizing drama’s audience, the subjects that “do” the bracketing in order to better understand portrayed dramatic action. This is in part true, but, further, and as I have noted, by inserting their own views into their works authors can “direct” the two at-

³⁹ Robinson, i.

⁴⁰ Robinson, iii.

⁴¹ Referring to the above quotes and ideas, see Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 18, and *Ideas*, 31 and elsewhere; the last quoted text in this sentence is mine, not Husserl’s.

tentions. As I have already noted, different authors may choose to emphasize one or the other of the two attentions. Ultimately we may find that at times these two subjectivities clash in the consumption of drama, with audience expectations and performance confronting the author's, and with the performance of the drama itself further complicating this picture.

Dramatic Phenomenology, Phasings, Environmentality and the Two Attentions

In the above I have posited “two attentions” being focused during the consumption of drama, and I trust that I have established the meaning and applicability of these conceptions. To continue, and as noted above, the world we experience, even in the most everyday sense, is fantastic, richly varied, challenging, illuminating, endlessly fascinating. It is, in a word, an intersubjective world, a world of “diverse acts and states of sentiment and will: approval and disapproval, joy and sorrow, desire and aversion, hope and fear, decision and action.”⁴² For many people, it doesn't get much better than this—and turning up the first attention full bore is the way to best access these experiences. *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller seems in position to best illustrate this dramatic approach, and so with this play we shall begin.

Throughout *The Crucible*, Miller goes to great lengths to present a realistic picture of the action “as it happened.” Understandably this is the most common interpretation of the action of *The Crucible*, and without question Miller has the dramatic first attention firmly in mind, to most effectively present a compelling depiction of the events in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692, while paralleling the heated experience in Washington during the McCarthy era in the early 1950s. Linguistic elements are one way that Miller introduces realism into the play, such as the archaic verb usage like “she have never lied,”⁴³ or “It were a fearsome man, Giles Corey;”⁴⁴ the double negatives spo-

⁴² Husserl, *Ideas*, 103.

⁴³ Arthur Miller, *Arthur Miller's Collected Plays*, Vol. 1 (New York: The Viking Press, 1981), 305.

ken by the semi-educated personages in the play, including Susanna when she tells Parris that the doctor “cannot discover no medicine” for Betty,⁴⁵ or when Proctor tells Danforth “they’ve ... never saw no sign they had dealings with the Devil,”⁴⁶ or formalistic English constructions such as “there be no,” “I know not,” “pray you,” “let you write,” “did you not,” “I bid you now,” etc. Miller’s attention to historical detail in *The Crucible* reinforces the audience’s first attention on realistic presence and characterization in the play (we may assume that the play’s settings and costumes are almost always realistic/historical as well). Such examples as these seem almost obvious, and relatively easy for audiences to interpret. Here is the vital first-attention “presence-at-hand”—that awareness and encounter that comprises the essence of phenomenological intentionality “with regard to the Present.”⁴⁷ But I reiterate that we can discern additional complexity in the midst of this straight-ahead “realism.” Note again how the “presence-at-hand” of *The Crucible*’s depiction is at once the “Present” of 1692 Massachusetts, as well as the “Present” of 1950s United States. No one would doubt that Miller’s aims were twofold this way, to draw audience attention to two Presents, with overlapping meaning applicable in manifold ways across time and space. In a word, although we are constantly compelled both forward and backward in *The Crucible*, one could argue that there is no particular relevance or applicability of the experiences of a remote, largely backward, village in 17th-century Massachusetts to post-WW II/incipient Cold War Washington political conflicts of the 1950s, and this alone points toward an interpretation that strays far from the coolly pragmatic or realistic. In terms of our study, such dual interpretative possibilities can be understood as prompting a shift from the “presence-at-hand” first attention into the realm of the “readiness-to-hand” second attention, for not only does this lamellar structure hearken to the above-analyzed dra-

⁴⁴ Arthur Miller, 322.

⁴⁵ Arthur Miller, 230.

⁴⁶ Arthur Miller, 292.

⁴⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 48.

matic composites and intervals, but also it is here that Miller wants his drama to be genuinely “used” or “employed” as “equipment,” as a tool for understanding that can be applied into the audience’s present life and conditions by way of the duality and reciprocity of the two simultaneous “Presents” across time.

In spite of the generous dollop of straightforward realism of *The Crucible*, Miller treads the path toward a more open-ended second-attention dramatic environment in other ways as well. He does this in one sense by way of his prose descriptions, which, as noted, many people don’t really consider part of the play at all (in fact those viewing the play rarely if ever even encounter this information), and which thus instead “float above” the dramaturgic surface, creating a secondary and simultaneous dialogic (in a word, a *heteroglossia*), a platform for additional interpretive contours, and “points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words ... each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values.”⁴⁸ Indeed, I would venture that the value of Miller’s dual dialog of playscript/attached prose has been overlooked as seen in this light. Yet further, the second attention is effected, simply, by way of dramatic interstices and gaps, as well as compression of action and characterization, as analyzed above. Miller (as almost all dramatists) fast-forwards the action in leaps and bounds, jumping past what one would think is necessary contextual information. Thus when Abigail says to Parris, only a few lines into the play’s action, “Uncle, the rumor of witchcraft is about,”⁴⁹ we are thrust into the gist of the play with almost no preparation and context (except that Miller has introduced certain background in one of his historical descriptions). Also in the first act, Tituba and the other girl’s confessions come somewhat too quickly, without sufficient context and support, when she is confronted by Hale (the whole first act—which is intriguingly called an

⁴⁸ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, “Discourse and the Novel,” *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 291-292.

⁴⁹ Miller, *Collected Plays*, 230.

“overture,” indicating that it may not be part of the [act-based] dramatic action, proper—seems a fast-forwarding of all that has taken place and led up to the “crying out”). Additionally, much of the basic character of John Proctor (and for that matter, other characters) cannot be fully apprehended from the dramaturgy, proper, and has to be gleaned from Miller’s prose insertions. Subtle are these changes and developmental techniques, directing (in the midst of the ostensibly historical, realistic structure of the play) the audience’s proactive second attention toward, importantly, what is *not seen or portrayed* (again, those dramatic fissures). Here we are led toward another phenomenological (some will say “postmodern”) conception as we are drawn into to a given “lack” and “absence” of environmental substantiality surrounding the characters—an existential phenomenology if you will. Heidegger, after all, writes that “[Dasein’s] own specific state of Being ... remains concealed from it”⁵⁰ and “if [Dasein’s being] is constituted in part by potentiality-for-being, then, as long as Dasein exists, it must in each case, as such a potentiality, *not yet be something*.”⁵¹ To deepen Heidegger’s conception I turn to Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), who wrote in *Phenomenology of Perception*:

To ‘live’ with a thing is not to coincide with it, nor fully to embrace it in thought.... What makes the ‘reality’ of the thing is therefore precisely what snatches it from our grasp. The [independent existence] of the thing, its unchallengeable presence and *perpetual absence* into which it withdraws, are two separate aspects of transcendence.⁵²

Let’s now turn to even more challenging and discontinuous conceptions, and delve deeper into the penumbral second-attention—that highly-elaborated circumspection whereby we find a given “ready-to-hand” equipage. Interestingly, and as noted above, we will find that “readiness-to-hand” often does not seem

⁵⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 37.

⁵¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 276.

⁵² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 325, 233, emphasis added.

particularly “ready” at all, and can be instead an evasive moving target, fragmentary to the point of fractured, literally topsy-turvy. But this is not to say that virtually all plays, even the most alternative, postmodern, or surrealistic, are not to be taken *essentially* as “real” experience. The connection to and from, across and between, within and without the coolly pragmatic and the riotously fantastic in drama are never, in this writer’s view, the missing links that some people think they are. As noted in some detail above, the audience’s job—a job they for the most part perform seamlessly and intuitively—is to simultaneously “read ahead” and recall, linking prior experience to action that takes place or is anticipated, and assembling all into a necessary whole. In some senses this is the whole purpose of the dramatic second attention, to “fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen” (as written in 2 Corinthians). This whole engagement, in essence, accesses the very foundation and structure of experience and consciousness. (Though apparently far from the initial first attention, in some senses the second attention leads audiences in a roundabout way back to a first attention realization of what is “really going on” in drama, toward a finalized, tempered understanding of dramatic and character interaction, intention, ambition, objective, etc.) Heidegger’s view of lived temporal experience is useful here, and we can apply it in a look across dramatic temporality and its own complexity for audiences.⁵³ Heidegger writes “the futural Dasein can *be* its ownmost ‘as-it-already-was’—that is to say, its ‘been’ [sein “Gewesen”]. Only in so far as Dasein *is* as an “I-am-as-having-been”, can Dasein come towards itself futurally in such a way that it comes *back*.”⁵⁴ If I may take a step to the side and cite a somewhat less oblique theorist—and she specifically a theorist of drama—in relation this idea, Susanne Langer (1895-1985) writes that a key element of drama is its creation of a “virtual history” that is transparent to an audience, and which can be indirectly,

⁵³ Heidegger’s Dasein is of course normally translated as “Being-there,” but for comparison note that in Husserl, Boyce translates the term (which Husserl had used before Heidegger) as “spatio-temporal existence” (111).

⁵⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 373.

yet wholly, apprehended in each moment of action—“we can view each smallest act in its context, as a symptom of character and condition.”⁵⁵ By way of the conditions I have described, dramatic action can be viewed this way, with a “latent form” that is suggested or developed in a play, which comes fully into view only at the end when it is understood as the fulfillment of “Destiny.” In short, temporally speaking, drama is a process of “history becoming” rather than “history in retrospect.”⁵⁶

I turn now to Caryl Churchill’s *Heart’s Desire*, which, as we can see even in the brief excerpt cited in the outset of this paper, turns any essentialist conceptions of dramatic experience in a predictable temporal/spatial framework on their head (and those who have read the play know that the action only gets steadily more splintered as the play continues). The play contains no less than 28 “resets” that cast the action back to various earlier points in the play (often to the very beginning), which then proceeds bumpily along, inserting new dialog, action and inexplicable characters (two gunmen enter at one point and slaughter all of the characters in the play, while at another juncture a ten-foot-tall bird enters—well, let’s just try and figure *this* out ...) ultimately creating a funhouse-mirror world of distortions and disfigurements. Early in the

⁵⁵ Langer Susanne, *Feeling and Form* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953), 310.

⁵⁶ See Langer, *Feeling and Form*, chapter seventeen, “The Dramatic Illusion,” for varied discussions of the concepts and vocabulary referred to here. One reader of this paper has suggested that Deleuze’s conception of the time-image—its “deconstruction” of temporality, its disarticulation from (or subversion of) sensory-motor schemata, and its associated loosening of reliable perception of truth in imagery/representation and ontological/metaphysical integrity—might be applicable within the temporal framework I have presented. I do not fully agree with this view. This may be because Deleuze’s analysis (principally its focus on film) does not seem to me to be applicable to the three-dimensional, interactive, dramaturgic corporeality essential to my analysis. Further, I sense that Deleuze’s argument in large part emerges out of a critique of the relationship of aesthetics and modern technology. Such a view does not square with my analysis, which is more an (aesthetic) investigation of human consciousness, audience ethos, and phenomenological apprehension. However, I leave this possible exchange open for readers to consider.

play the character Maisie conveys her peculiar, somewhat absurd thoughts, which at first we might think are pure disjunction and farce—but which in fact almost seem to point toward the reversals and mutations that are to come (keep in mind that ten-foot-tall bird as you read this):

Imagine going to feed the ducks and there is something that is not a duck and nor is it a waterrat or a mole, it's the paws make me think of a mole, but imagine this furry creature with its ducky face, it makes you think what else could have existed, tigers with trunks ...⁵⁷

In fact, Maisie inserts other *non sequiturs* that seem to replicate the crazy pith of the play's meaning, such as when she is asked if she has injured herself after falling and she replies “No. Yes. Maybe,” or later in the play when the importance of another of her musings can be seen in light of key elements of the drama's existential-nightmare mentality. This monologue (as the first, quoted above), appears abruptly within the play with virtually no connection to the surrounding action and dialog. And so note how the fact that a *secondary* character voices these two important monologues, which point toward an understanding that will require the *second attention* to apprehend. Maisie cogitates late in the play:

Do you ever wake up in the night and be frightened of dying? I'm not at all bothered in the daytime. We've all got to do it after all. Think what a lot of people have done it already. Even the young will have to, even the ones who haven't been born yet will have to, it's not a problem theoretically is it, it's the condition of life.⁵⁸

Words like these, as well as the play's other disjointed action, fractured syntax, and reset mechanisms, largely disrupt the entire dramatic structure—but as I have noted audiences can nevertheless see through the dizzying action and

⁵⁷ Caryl Churchill, *Blue Heart* (Caryl Churchill, and New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1997), 6.

⁵⁸ Caryl Churchill, *Blue Heart*, 32.

characterization and not only observe elements of gradually coalescing meaning, but also a thread of understandable conflict, loss and heartbreak linking the main characters.⁵⁹ In short, it is these very rifts that free the grip of the first-attention and effect the second attention, or, to quote Marc Robinson, writing of Richard Foreman's dramaturgy—which no doubt can be seen as similar to work such as *Heart's Desire*, and which I could no doubt have analyzed in light of the theory proposed in this paper—force us to “refocus our attention and revise our interpretations with each disruption.”⁶⁰

The resets in *Heart's Desire* are the play's principal *dramatis ars*, and ostensibly reflect (or perhaps more concretely, *erect*) the character's ruptured lives and relationships. Let's shed more light on these “repeats” by way of Heidegger's phenomenological temporality. Herein, on the one hand, “authentic resoluteness keeps *reiterating itself* in the face of a constant awareness that it may have to be *retracted or taken back* at any time,”⁶¹ and, on the other, “In anticipating, Dasein *brings itself again forth* into its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. If *Being-as-having-been* is authentic, we call it ‘repetition.’”⁶² My intent here is to link the resets/repetitions in Churchill's drama back to Heidegger's “having been.” This conception (briefly referred to in my earlier discussion of Heidegger's temporality) is dense with supplementary meaning in Heidegger—but I will not explore it further here.

To conclude my examination of Churchill's *Heart's Desire*, it is my argument that *the audience apprehends and is anything but confused by the*

⁵⁹ Admittedly, some elements remain incomprehensible. What we might initially see as congealing meaning on page 12, when the broken fragments of conversation between Brian, Alice and Maisie begin to be shaped into something like continuity, is blown apart later, on pages 18-19 and 25-26. Additionally, we encounter not only the murderers and that lofty bird, but a mysterious dead body that had recently been found in Alice and Brian's garden, and the worrisome possibility of a train accident that may have injured or killed their daughter.

⁶⁰ Robinson, *My Head Was a Sledgehammer*, ii.

⁶¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 355, emphasis added.

⁶² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 388.

play's furious disjunctions and feedback-looping temporality, and ultimately erects completion and culmination by way of the second attention. In short, I think most would agree that we *do* apprehend something like concluding, coherent apperception in the play, even if such apperception requires a good bit of “feedback-looping” evaluation and apprehension. In *Heart's Desire*, however, the first attention contributes little to this outcome. After all, a surface-level first attention to matter-of-fact detail and lived experience is at best of minimal use during dialog and interaction like this:

ALICE: Not
BRIAN: We should have
ALICE: We should not
BRIAN: She'll be
ALICE: She's a woman
BRIAN: How can you speak
ALICE: She's a
BRIAN: You're so
ALICE: She can travel
BRIAN: It's so delightful
ALICE: She didn't have⁶³
...

Conclusion

I have posited two autonomous but overlapping “attentions” that are realized during audience consumption of drama. We find that a one-dimensional mindfulness during the intricacies and multi-dimensional phenomenology of dramaturgy—a milieu wherein Husserlian intentionality is taken to a different level; where environmentality takes on enhanced importance; where layered incident and actuality challenge ordinary awareness; where discourse is elevated to a new plane of significance within the uniquely

⁶³ Churchill, *Blue Heart*, 18.

stratified and exuberant intersubjectivity of drama—is simply not enough. All that is unseen in drama, any drama, actuates added conduits of awareness in order to bring action and character into more fully revealing light and “reality.”

The facets of consciousness and awareness described in this paper are perhaps not wholly new—Husserlian intentionality itself posits an expansive conception clearly related to these ideas, and this is to say nothing of all those other philosophers in years and ages past who have recognized that there is “something more” on the margins of human awareness, a given not fully perceived, though not unperceivable. Wrote Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895):

The known is finite, the unknown infinite; intellectually we stand on an islet in the midst of an illimitable ocean of inexplicability. Our business in every generation is to reclaim a little more land, to add something to the extent and solidity of our possessions.⁶⁴

The two attentions of drama I have posited allow us, if in small, aesthetically-inclined ways, to “reclaim a little more land” of experience, truly allowing us “to add something to the extent and solidity of our possessions.” Still, some may say I have abridged thoughts like Huxley’s, boxing them into the smaller world of staged experience. Hardly the real world at all, some would say—in fact much less, and thus not really in need of any more capacious awareness. But then again no.... For theorists and thinkers since time immemorial have conjectured the world of drama as a veritable...world.... Francis Bacon, who divided “poesy” into three categories including Dramatic Poesy, wrote that “Representative [poesy] is as a visible history; and is an image of things as if

⁶⁴ The quote is from “Origin of Species” (1887), and is taken from Daniel Boorstin, *The Discoverers: A History of Man’s Search to Know His World and Himself* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 625.

they were present, as history is of action in nature as they are ...,”⁶⁵ and “because the acts or events of *true history* have not that magnitude which satisfieth the mind of man, *poesy* feigneth acts and events greater and more heroical.”⁶⁶ These miniature dramatic “histories” and worlds of staged “acts and events greater and more heroical” have had anything but a miniature impact on human existence, and it would seem even to the casual observer that “something more” is going on, something that requires us, eyes wide open, to take in and apprehend this “illimitable ocean.” Does this seem too expansive? I think not, for—

All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. (*As You Like It*, act II, scene 7)

⁶⁵ Bacon’s words remind of us Arthur Miller’s prefatory note to *The Crucible*, quoted above. Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, ed. G.W. Kitchin (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd.; New York: E.P. Dutton and Co. Inc., 1915, 1958), 83.

⁶⁶ Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, 82. Bacon’s thoughts seem to distantly echo Plato’s, though Bacon is approving, and Plato was denunciatory. Let’s set Plato aside throughout the argument I have posited.

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The First and Second Attentions of Dramaturgy: A Phenomenological Analysis

St. Augustine. *The City of God*. An abridged version from the translation by Gerald G. Walsh, S.J., Demetrius B. Zema, S.J., Grace Monahan, O.S.U., and Daniel J. Honan. With a condensation of the original foreword by Etienne Gilson. Edited by Vernon J. Bourke. New York: Image Books, 1958.

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