

THE USE OF DIALOGUE IN THE
DRAMAS OF MAX FRISCH

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by

DEIRDRE WINIFRED JOY BELL, B.A.

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AUTHOR: Deirdre Winifred Joy Bell, B.A. (Dublin)

SUPERVISOR: Mr. H. H. Schulte

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: The gradual change in attitude to modern theatrical dialogue is outlined and an investigation of Frisch's dialogue is carried out. It is established that the lack of communication manifest in the dialogue between characters on stage has as its counterpart a high level of communication between stage and audience. The means whereby this is achieved lies in the manipulation of dialogue in- and cross-stage.

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INTRODUCTION

"Wir haben ein Drama vor uns, wenn auf einem besonderen Raum von Rollenträgern ein Geschehen agiert wird."¹

While ostensibly a satisfactory basic definition of the drama, it seems surprising that Kayser should omit mention of the one constant which is an essential factor of all drama - the spoken word. On closer examination of the above, it would appear that if such a definition is to be considered valid, then it follows that the author holds either that it is impossible for characters to convey a completed action without words, or that 'charade' and 'drama' can be equated - an equation whose validity is surely questionable. In the charade the characters ("Rollenträger") present some action or happening ("Geschehen") in some place of focal interest ("besonderer Raum") in an attempt to convey to the audience by mime a preselected word or phrase, the characters and their roles being of significance only in so far as they help to convey the words. By contrast, in the drama an attempt is made to present through words the characters and their roles, and it is precisely this use of the spoken word which lends to the drama that simultaneity of visual and auditory, physical and mental, which no other literary form can project. One should add, therefore, to the basic conditions for the drama as set forth by Kayser - "besonderer Raum",

¹W. Kayser, Das sprachliche Kunstwerk (5. Auflage; Bern, 1959) p. 366.

"Rollenträger", "Geschehen", "agieren" - a fifth: "das gesprochene Wort".

In accepting this addition and the five-fold combination thus established, one passes from the broad concept of speech itself to that of dialogue, the basic vehicle of dramatic expression. (Given characters acting and speaking within a specifically delineated area, it is logical that their speech will be addressed to one another).

In the traditional theatre no awkward questions were posed by the dialogue, which was used almost as a fourth, unwritten unity to bear the other three. Thus what was seen with the eye was also heard with the ear, and though the latter could transcend the limitations of the visual by delving into factual past or probable future, it only did so in order to explain or verify the happening which was unfolding on stage. Each individual character was subservient to that complete action which the sum of the characters composed.

That the theatre largely reflects the era of the playwright and audience may be a commonplace, yet if this is accepted, then why the wonderment at the so-called 'theatrical crisis' we have experienced in the twentieth century? With the gradual breakdown of all absolute values and of all beliefs whose roots lie anywhere other than in the factual, rational and wholly explicable, it follows inevitably that everything should be called into question, including the meaning and identity of the questioner, and also the terms themselves in which the questions are posed. In this way language itself becomes suspect. The individual is isolated and within his isolation

the words he uses, deriving their particular meaning from his particular psyche, lie beyond the reach of others. To group these individuals together in drama is no longer synonymous with forming an obviously cohesive whole, which means that the theatrical message comes to depend more largely on the observer's power of synthesis and is not now presented with this synthesis already complete. As it is the intention of this thesis to examine in detail the dialogue of Max Frisch, a twentieth-century dramatist, it seems wise to look briefly at changes of thought and practice which have taken place in the development of the modern dramatic dialogue.

"Thus far the science of man has been little cultivated by authors who with scanty knowledge in psychology have tried to sketch the soul-life which is practically hidden. One knows only one life, his own."² As we can see from these words, Strindberg was already beginning to display an interest in greater psychological depth in the drama in 1886. He was to play a great part in influencing the dramatic trends of the twentieth century. As Szondi expresses it: "Mit Strindberg hebt an, was später den Namen 'Ich-Dramatik' trägt und das Bild der dramatischen Literatur Jahrzehnte hindurch bestimmt."³ The character in Strindberg's plays become the real key to the action, their revelation of themselves being of prime importance. Thus in his plays the dialogue is used to bring to light inner movement

²As quoted by C.E. Dahlstrom, Strindberg's Dramatic Expressionism (New York, 1965) p. 99.

³Szondi, P. Theorie des modernen Dramas (Frankfurt/Main, 1956) p. 40.

whose outer reflection may not find a physical form on stage. But for the character to reveal himself most fully he must at times be granted the opportunity to display something more than purely subjective clarity. He is given free access to the disordered realm of mental association whose limits no rules could hope to establish. The accepted formal structure breaks down as the 'improbable' becomes less easily defined, and no one scene any longer needs automatically to beget the next, as the presence of recurring characters affords in itself a ready unity of association for the observer. ("Stationendrama"). The dialogue is being given a new freedom through this new attitude to the characters.

From the increased interest in psychology there develops an increased interest in speech, the audible manifestation of the mind. In the dramas of Pirandello there is a sense of indignation at being confronted with the impossibility of capturing and transmitting ideas by means of words, by the impossibility of reconciling life and form. In this context he speaks of "the deceit of mutual understanding irremediably founded on the empty abstraction of the words, the multiple personality of everyone corresponding to the possibilities of being to be found in each of us, and finally the inherent tragic conflict between life (which is always moving and changing) and form (which fixes it, immutable)."⁴

⁴L. Pirandello, Preface to "Six Characters in Search of an Author". In Naked Masks, ed. Eric Bentley (New York, 1958) p. 367.

In Henry IV (1922), as in Six Characters in Search of an Author (1921), words mean little, and as a means of communication they are largely ineffective. This seems to be a logical development of Strindberg's "One knows only one life, his own."⁵ For example:

The Manager: I don't understand this at all.

The Father: Naturally enough. I would ask you, sir, to exercise your authority a little here, and let me speak before you believe all she is trying to blame me with. Let me explain.

The Step-daughter: Ah yes, explain it in your own way.

The Father: But don't you see that the whole trouble lies here. In words, words. Each one of us has within him a whole world of things, each man of us his own special world. And how can we ever come to an understanding if I put in the words I utter the sense and value of things as I see them; while you who listen to me must inevitably translate them according to the conception of things each one of you has within himself. We think we understand each other, but we never really do.⁶

The dramatic character has here subjected his own means of expression to an objective, critical examination as a result of increased psychological probing, therefore it is scarcely surprising to find that in later drama he is divided on stage between what he thinks as an individual and what he says as the member of a certain group of individuals. From the breach between life and form expressed by Pirandello we have passed to the breach between one individual and another, between the demands made on him by his personality and instincts and those made on him by the group in which his life unfolds. Both implicit and explicit expression of this breach is

⁵See note 2.

⁶L. Pirandello, trans. Edward Storer. In Drama in the Modern World, ed. S. A. Weiss (Boston, 1964) p. 220.

given in the dialogue of O'Neill, particularly in his play Strange Interlude (1927), where each character speaks half his lines as asides, revealing his true feelings as an individual to the audience, but not to his own 'group'. Only Nina, the central figure, actually puts into words that helplessness and frustration common to them all, whether consciously or unconsciously: (To Marsden, the novelist - D. B.)

Do I seem queer? It's because I've suddenly seen the lies in the sounds called words. You know - grief, sorrow, love, father - those sounds our lips make and our hands write. You ought to know what I mean. You work with them. Have you written another novel lately? But, stop to think, you're just the one who couldn't know what I mean. With you lies have become the only truthful things. And I suppose that's the logical conclusion to the whole evasive mess, isn't it? Do you understand me, Charlie? Say lie -

(She says it, drawing it out)

L-i-i-e! Now say life. L-i-i-f-e! You see! life is just a long drawn out lie with a sniffing sigh at the end!⁷

In O'Neill's drama the individual in his privacy repeatedly departs from the image he presents as a social being. Having realized the mutual lack of understanding and its inevitability, the characters are thrown back entirely on their own mental resources, and thus the dialogue becomes more complex. Two people become as four, with each revealing a self, only two of which come into verbal contact. This seems to be an extension of Pirandello's "We think we understand each other, but we never really do". Whereas in Six Characters in

⁷E. O'Neill, The Plays of Eugene O'Neill (New York, 1934), I, p. 63.

Search of an Author an attempt is made by each character to explain himself to the others and to the outside theatrical troupe, in Strange Interlude each character plays a part within a part, as if acknowledging that one cannot be understood and must instead play that role which fits the misunderstanding of one's fellow-beings. Through this awareness of duality the dialogue has gained a new dimension: where before it was the vehicle for commentary and explanation of one particular aspect of action or character, it has gradually become, by means of its use as a tool for psychological probing, the bearer of many aspects. In the case of O'Neill, one aspect only is developed for the world outside, the others are developed for the individual within himself. Thus the audience is presented with a much more complex dialogue than before.

From here we pass through Brecht and his efforts to strip the audience of its penchant for self-identification with the on-stage happenings/utterances to the new expression of the dual dialogue to be found in Thornton Wilder.⁸ In Our Town (1938) commentary is provided on the characters by the stage-manager, which leaves them free to enact chosen excerpts without asides - excerpts chosen by the stage-manager, who assumes the role of story-teller and supreme unifier of the play. An almost conspir-

⁸Our brief survey demands that Brecht be treated only in passing, as for him the dialogue itself never becomes problematic. His problems are not of a psychological, but of a practical, sociological and humanitarian nature, finding their expression in a very progressive, closely-knit dialogue which seems to say: "Look at us in this jam, look at our tremendous difficulties. This is how we behave. What would you do in this situation?"

atorial relationship is established between this character and the audience, similar to that between the omniscient narrator and the reader in a character-novel. The Skin of our Teeth (1942) also establishes such a relationship, but between the audience and various characters from the internal action of the play itself. For example, Sabina, the maid:

Mr. Antrobus: Sabina, I want you to go into the kitchen and make a lot of coffee. Make a whole pail full.

Sabina: Pail full!!

Antrobus: (with gesture)

And sandwiches ... piles of them ...

like this.

Sabina: Mr. An ...

(Suddenly she drops the play, and says in her own person as MISS SOMERSET, with surprise)

Oh, I see what this part of the play means now! This means refugees.

(She starts to cross to the proscenium)

Oh, I don't like it. I don't like it.

(She leans against the proscenium and bursts into tears)

Antrobus: Miss Somerset!

(Voice of the STAGE MANAGER)

Miss Somerset!

Sabina: (Energetically to the audience)

Ladies and gentlemen! Don't take this play serious. The world's not coming to an end. You know it's not. People exaggerate! Most people really have enough to eat and a roof over their heads. Nobody actually starves - you can always eat grass or something. That ice-business - why, it was a long, long time ago. Besides they were only savages. Savages don't love their families - not like we do.

Antrobus and Stage Manager: Miss Somerset!!

(There is renewed knocking at the door)

Sabina: All right. I'll say the lines, but I won't think about the play.

(Enter Mr. Antrobus)

Sabina: (Parting thrust at audience)

And I advise you not to think about the play either.⁹

⁹T. Wilder, Three Plays (New York, 1957) p. 117.

Despite the implications of this exhortation not to think, nevertheless it is obvious that the audience is actually being called into league with a character in the play. Participation has been re-established on an objective basis, where it was wilfully destroyed in Brecht, and while this is now a mute participation, the extension of the function of speech on stage is obvious. Exchanges between the characters may not mean a real coming together, but this is of less significance than in O'Neill, as the private individual now has conscious recourse to a listening public and there puts forward his point of view. Complete honesty is assumed in the relationship between on-stage characters and the audience.

Whereas in Wilder a sense of non-communication other than on the superficial level is often explicit, if we turn to Ionesco we find that it is wholly implicit, the characters no longer bothering about identity or communication, but simply rhyming off absurd phrases. There is no evident breach between the actor and his role, between what is said and what is understood - in fact, everything is reduced to absurdity, an absurdity often both visual and verbal. Of the many examples of this absurdity to be found in Ionesco I cite only one:

Mrs. Martin: I can buy a pocket-knife for my brother, but you could not buy Ireland for your grandfather.

Mr. Smith: One walks on one's feet, but one keeps warm with the aid of coal and electricity.

Mr. Martin: Sell a pig today, eat an egg tomorrow.

Mrs. Smith: In life you've got to look out of the window.

Mrs. Martin: You may sit down on the chair when the chair hasn't any.

Mr. Smith: One can always be in two places at once.¹⁰

Ionesco in his writings on the theatre¹¹ sums up, apparently in the only terms now possible, what the drama now is:-
 "Une pièce de théâtre ne peut être ni plus ni moins, exactement, que ce que ne sont pas toutes les choses qui ne sont pas des pièces de théâtre." (160) Within this drama which is everything all non-dramas are not, the characters have no identity, no set ideology can be laid forth (203) and dialogue is reduced to the level of clichés. As Ionesco himself says: "Le plus souvent mes personnages disent des choses très plates parce que la banalité est le symptôme de la non-communication. Derrière les clichés l'homme se cache." (204)

Thus the dialogue has undergone a great change in approach. The characters have passed from a mutual confidence in understanding through an awareness of the frustrating impossibility of verbal communication, from there to a stage where the effort to understand and be understood is considered futile, and thence to an unconscious state of apathy. From being the direct expression of a character's idea and the means by which this idea is communicated, the dialogue has become the cloak behind which all true identity and meaning is hidden or forgotten. Thus the original concept of dialogue -

¹⁰E. Ionesco, "The Bald Prima Donna", in Plays, trans. Donald Watson (London, 1958), I. p. 115.

¹¹E. Ionesco, Notes et Contre-Notes (Paris, 1962)

dia-logos - has been rendered meaningless.

"Wenn ich Diktator wäre, würde ich nur Ionesco spielen lassen."¹² This is Max Frisch in an interview with Horst Bienek, boldly asserting his great admiration for this playwright of the Absurd. He goes on to explain that Ionesco's plays, in highlighting Man's modern dilemma, amuse and reassure the audience, which does not feel itself attacked, and thus the latter can carry on their complacent little lives. Frisch, for his part, aims to disquiet this audience by means of burning but unresolved questions,¹³ which aim cannot be adequately served by the Absurd. Frisch's dramatic characters are too intensely self-oriented to resemble those of Ionesco in their interchangeability,¹⁴ his dialogue too much the implement of his characters to be a mere collection of words and sounds. Despite his admiration for Ionesco, Frisch himself stops short of parody as he feels that there is still something to be said, that the old words need not inevitably form meaningless clichés - an outdated traditionalist, therefore? Not necessarily. While Ionesco uses the spoken cliché to indicate a cliché-ridden thinking in general he never shows exactly what form these mental clichés take. Frisch's dialogue is more concerned with illustrating the mental than the spoken cliché, as an examination of his dialogue will show.

¹²H. Bienek, Werkstattgespräche mit Schriftstellern (München, 1962) p. 30.

¹³M. Frisch, Tagebuch 1946-1949 (Zürich, 1965) p. 108.

¹⁴E. Ionesco, Notes et Contre-Notes, p. 160.

CHAPTER I
THE NON-COMMUNICATIVE DIALOGUE

The majority of Frisch's plays are set within a fairly intimate circle, at whose centre are two people who have lived in close proximity to one another for some time, and who have come to 'know' each other to some extent. The intimacy of these settings appears to play a part in highlighting the treachery of laziness in thought and speech seen by Frisch in the tendency towards categorization, for it is in the apparently most intimate relationships that the problem is at its most acute. Such a relationship is that of husband and wife, parent and child, or lover and beloved, therefore I propose, in the first instance, to consider the dialogue in these relationships.

1. Husband and Wife.

Turning at random to one of the dramas in which the main characters are husband and wife, we find the following in

Die grosse Wut des Philipp Hotz:

Dorli: Philipp - ?
(Hotz tritt in die Szene)

Hotz: Ich geh jetzt.
(Er nimmt das Kofferchen zur Hand)
Lebwohl.
(Sie blickt ihn an)

Dorli: Ich bin dir nicht böse.

Hotz: Dorli -

Dorli: Warum ziehst du eigentlich deinen Mantel nicht aus, Philipp, seit heute Vormittag?

(Dorli ißt)

Hotz: Du - ich geh jetzt!

(Er blickt auf seine Armbanduhr)

Hast du genaue Zeit?

Dorli: 16.48.

(Hotz zieht seine Armbanduhr auf)

Hotz: Das ist keine Art, Dorli, eine Ehe zu führen du machst mit mir, was du willst, bloß weil du die Schwächere bist.

Dorli: Was mach ich denn?

Hotz: Ich habe einen Zug nach Genf: 17.23. Anschluß nach Marseille: 22.07. Wenn es dich heute noch reuen sollte, Dorli, daß du jetzt schweigst:- Poste de la Gare, Marseille, poste restante.

Dorli: Ich schweige ja gar nicht.

Hotz: Aber ich muß jetzt gehen ...

Dorli: Wohin?

Hotz: Lebwohl.¹

At this point the play is almost at an end, yet these lines contain the first direct exchanges between Hotz and his wife, Dorli. He has spent time, money and energy in proving to her that he really is about to leave for the Foreign Legion, as their marriage is obviously impossible, yet she simply says "Warum ziehst du eigentlich deinen Mantel nicht aus, Philipp, seit heute Vormittag?" The same situation has apparently been recurring constantly throughout the seven years of their married life, with each partner having long since established a certain pattern of behaviour - Hotz threatening to leave, but not doing so, Dorli ignoring the threat. In the passage quoted here each one is obviously adopting a pose, Hotz with his repeated "Ich geh jetzt" and his very transparent efforts at time-wasting, Dorli with her semi-indulgent "Ich bin dir nicht böse"

¹M. Frisch, Stücke (Frankfurt/Main, 1962), Band 2, p. 187.

and her assumed naivety - "Was mach ich denn?" ... "Ich schweige ja gar nicht" ... "Wohin?" Nowhere in the play do they come together in any kind of discussion or even argument. The nearest to the latter is presented in the form of speech and commentary, with Dorli in the scene and Hotz in front, addressing the audience. (Stücke, 2, 176-181) Again each only puts his own particular side of the situation, and although amusing, it is clear that husband and wife are both so caught up in their respective theories of the rules for the married state that no headway between them is possible.

Given the situation of Die Große Wut des Philipp Hotz it might appear that under these special circumstances the dialogue between husband and wife would necessarily show a lack of progression, but if we look at the dialogue of the other married couples in Frisch's dramas where the situation is not so exceptional, this same lack is obvious. In Graf Öderland, for example, the Staatsanwalt (later Öderland) and his wife, Elsa, are first seen talking together in the middle of the night. He has got up and dressed; she comes to look for him:

Elsa: Ich suche dich im ganzen Haus, wieso gibst du keine Antwort? Ich dachte schon, du bist ausgegangen -

Staatsanwalt: Wohin?

Elsa: Was ist los?

Staatsanwalt: Ich habe mich nur angezogen.

Elsa: Mitten in der Nacht?

Staatsanwalt: Es scheint so.

Elsa: Wieso schläfst du nicht?

Staatsanwalt: Wieso schläfst du nicht?

.....

Staatsanwalt: Ich kann nicht schlafen.

Elsa: Du rauchst zuviel.

Staatsanwalt: Möglich ...

Elsa: Du arbeitest zuviel.

Staatsanwalt: Sicher ... das tun wir ja alle hierzulande. Bis es einmal reißt. Und dann wundern sie sich, unsere braven Geschworenen, wenn einer zur Axt greift.

.....

Elsa: Du sollst nicht immer an deine Akten denken, Martin, du machst dich krank. Jede Nacht arbeiten, das verträgt kein Mensch.

Staatsanwalt: Nimmt einfach die Axt ...

Elsa: Hörst du nicht, was ich sage?

(Der Staatsanwalt raucht und schweigt)

Ich sage, es ist zwei Uhr vorbei.

Staatsanwalt: Es gibt Stunden, wo ich ihn begreife ...

Elsa: Wenn du nicht schlafen kannst, warum nimmst du kein Pulver? Nun gehst du wieder die ganze Nacht hin und her. Was hat das für einen Sinn! Wie ein Gefangener. Was kommt dabei heraus? Am andern Morgen bist du wieder wie gerädert, du bist nicht mehr jung, Martin -

Staatsanwalt: Ich bin es nie gewesen.

(Er nimmt ein Foto vom Schreibtisch)²

So sieht er aus!

Elsa: Ich verstehe dich nicht, Martin.

Staatsanwalt: Ich weiß. (Stücke, 1, 303-305)

Obviously there is some basic lack of understanding here, in fact, Elsa even admits within this passage that she does not know what her husband means. However, even without this admission it would be apparent from the dialogue that the two people are not communicating mentally. Elsa asks a question, listens for the reply she wants - "Ich kann nicht schlafen" - and then proceeds to unload

²It is a photograph of himself.

one after another her patent cures - "Du rauchst zuviel", "Du arbeitest zuviel", "Warum nimmst du kein Pulver?" Her husband in turn, is just as obviously unconcerned with her understanding or lack of it. As he says, he knows that she understands nothing, knows that she will suggest hackneyed remedies for his sleeplessness, which in reality springs from a deep psychological conflict within himself. Thrown back completely on himself, he must sort out alone his own mental turmoil. Hence the interest in his own train of thought, as seen in "Nimmt einfach die Axt", "Es gibt Stunden, wo ich ihn begreife". Here it is not a question of adopting a conscious pose, as in Die Große Wut des Philipp Hotz, which causes husband and wife to by-pass all possibility of mental contact, but simply the two-sided adherence to oneself. This, of course, underlies the problem in the other play, as the fixed ideas of Hotz and Dorli are merely the expression of the self as it thinks it would like to be. Whereas in the case of Hotz the lack of communication had as its source a pretence, here it is the very absence of pretence which clearly shows how incapable this couple is of mental communication. Elsa has her ideas about sleeplessness, the prosecutor has his - deadlock.

In Als der Krieg zu Ende war husband and wife again occupy a central position, although the lack of progression in thought between them does not become immediately apparent in the play. The opening dialogue between Agnes and Horst seems quite straightforward.

Here, for example, they are talking about the enemy, the Russians:

Horst: Ich weiß wirklich nicht, was du noch immer
übrig hast für dieses Volk!

Agnes: Ich?

Horst: Ja.

Agnes: Ich kenne sie ja nicht. Nur aus deinen
Erzählungen. Damals im Urlaub. Aus deinen Briefen.
Weihnachten bei russischen Bauern! Damals hast du
immer so rührende Geschichten erlebt -

Horst: Damals.

Agnes: Wunderbare Menschen! Geschwärmt hast du ja -

Horst: Kann sein. Im ersten Jahr.

Agnes: Solange es vorwärts ging.

Horst: Was willst du damit sagen?

(Agnes wendet sich ihrer Arbeit zu)

.....

Agnes: Russenschweine, weißt du, das erinnert
mich so an Judenschweine und all das andere, was
unsere eigenen Schweine gesagt haben - und getan.

Horst: Was willst du damit sagen?

Agnes: Wir haben uns lange nicht gesehen, Horst,
mehr als zwei Jahre - (Agnes tritt zu ihm:)

Du?

(Horst rührt sich nicht)

Zwei Jahre sind eine lange Zeit ... Aber
wir haben uns nicht verändert, Horst, wir werden uns
wieder verstehen! Gelt? (Stücke, I, 254-255)

An everyday argument between two people, one of whom shows
prejudice, the other who points this out.² Perhaps, but this
excerpt also contains a hint of the real difficulty in "Zwei Jahre
sind eine lange Zeit ... aber wir haben uns nicht verändert, Horst,
wir werden uns wieder verstehen! Gelt?" Agnes already knows that
there is no possibility of their finding a way to each other again,
but is refusing to accept the truth of her own awareness. As the
play progresses, the subsequent dialogue between husband and wife
shows that theirs is a thorough-going misunderstanding. They too
cannot communicate mentally, as Agnes' later dishonesty clearly shows.

Both of them are in fact, caught up in falsehood:

Horst: Es ist nicht leicht gewesen, dir zu glauben, aber jetzt - Warum zitterst du denn? ... Wenn bis jetzt nichts geschehen ist, Agnes, jetzt mußt du wirklich keine Angst mehr haben; von einer Frau, die man liebt - kein Mann wird erzwingen, was sie versagt - das weißt du genau.

Agnes: Erschieße mich!

(Agnes nimmt die Waffe aus dem Pelz)

Tu es! Jetzt! Tu es!

(Horst nimmt ihr die Waffe aus der Hand)

Glaube an mich, oder erschieße mich!

(Agnes bricht auf die Knie)

Horst: Was soll das, Agnes ... Komm ... Steh auf, komm ... Laß uns vernünftig sein ... Wenn du jetzt nicht gehst - Daß ich dir glaube, Agnes, das ist doch klar - sonst sind wir verloren, beide ... Hörst du?

(Agnes auf den Knien, die Hände for den Augen)

Agnes: 'Wenn du jetzt nicht gehst. Daß ich dir glaube, Agnes, das ist doch klar. Sonst sind wir verloren, beide.' (Stücke, 1, 286)

Here it is conscious dishonesty which has come between the couple, as Agnes has fallen in love with the Russian commandant, and persists in keeping up a front for the sake of her husband. Agnes is committed to living a lie, Horst to believing it. She never actually voices this lie, but by questions such as "Glaubst du eigentlich, ich bin eine Hure?" (Stücke 1, 286) actually helps Horst into thinking what he wants to think, which is the opposite of what she says. They are both fighting the same truth - the truth of Agnes' infidelity.

In all these intimate relationships it is clear that mental intimacy and understanding are totally lacking. The dialogue between husband and wife is curiously static, almost as if each

person were involved in a dialogue with his inner self instead of with the other person. Neither really listens or tries seriously to make himself understood, but pursues obstinately the train of thought which he feels sums up the current situation, not stopping to consider the possibility of this being totally inapplicable for anyone other than himself.

2. Parent and Child.

A relationship between members of two different generations might be expected to show friction and variance of ideas, yet it is not the inevitable clash between youth and age which causes the mental barrier in these relationships as seen in Frisch's drama. In Nun singen sie wieder it is the son's absolute idealism and sense of moral responsibility which makes him attack the past compromises of his father, which were based on self-preservation. Rather similar is the situation between Andri and his father in Andorra. Notice how both fathers are cast in the role of teacher and how both have been living a lie: the first (Nun singen sie wieder) teaches freedom of thought and yet later obeys all the orders which directly curb such freedom, the second (Andorra) bravely defies authority and then privately builds a lie around his son in order to protect his own image. From the dialogue between each pair we can see how an unbridgeable gap has opened

between father and son. For example, in Als der Krieg zu Ende war:

Karl: Hast du schon einmal auf Frauen und Kinder geschossen?

Oberlehrer: Ich sage dir: du hast es auf Befehl getan!

Karl: Und wer hat es befohlen?

Oberlehrer: Es ist nicht deine Schuld, Karl, was alles an Befehlen wird, es ist nicht unsere Schuld -

Karl: Das ist es ja!

Oberlehrer: Du lachst?...

Karl: Jedes Wort, das du sagst, es klagt uns an.- Es gibt das nicht, es gibt keine Ausflucht in den Gehorsam. Man kann die Last der persönlichen Freiheit nicht abtreten - und eben das haben wir versucht, und eben das ist unsere Schuld.

.
Oberlehrer: Melde dich zurück... Jeden Augenblick kommen die Leute in den Keller ... auch Maria soll dich nicht sehen, Maria, die dich nicht lassen wird, bis wir verloren sind. (Stücke, 1, 113)

Karl first asks a question, to which his father replies only with an excuse for his question, then comes another question, another excuse. That no headway is made is obvious - the father's "Melde dich zurück" shows the complete refusal to absorb what Karl has been trying to tell him. Just as the prosecutor and Elsa in Graf Öderland were talking at cross purpose about the reasons for sleeplessness, so are Karl and his father talking about responsibility and guilt; just as Elsa saw the solution in holidays and sleeping-draughts, so does the Oberlehrer see responsibility in terms of self-preservation. Both of them have in common a re-

fusal to think, a refusal to see, and a refusal to listen.

Turning to Andorra and the dialogue between Andri and his father we find that even before the latter refuses permission for Andri to marry Barblin, Andri does not show a natural freedom of expression or behaviour towards his father:

Lehrer: Ich kann's nicht leiden, wenn du dastehst wie ein Meßknabe, der gestohlen hat oder was weiß ich, so artig, weil du mich fürchtest.
(Stücke 2, 234)

However, this is soon reversed when Andri thinks he discovers that his foster-father is anti-Semitic like the rest of Andorra. Then his deference changes to contempt, his verbal restraint to hostile volubility. Having been forced into acceptance of the lie his father built around his origin of birth, Andri has now become mentally incapable of considering any other possibility. The truth now becomes for him a falsehood, and this is the mental standpoint he sustains throughout the play:

(Auftritt der Lehrer)

Lehrer: Mein Sohn!

Andri: Ich bin nicht dein Sohn.

Lehrer: Ich bin gekommen, Andri, um dir die Wahrheit zu sagen, bevor es wieder Morgen ist . . .

Andri: Du hast getrunken.

Lehrer: Deinetwegen, Andri, deinetwegen.

(Andri lacht)

Mein Sohn -

Andri: Laß das!

Lehrer: Hörst du mich an?

Andri: Halt dich an einem Laternenpfahl, aber nicht an mir, ich rieche dich. (Stücke 2, 243)

.

Lehrer: Komm nach Haus!

Andri: Es hat keinen Zweck, Vater, daß du es nochmals erzählst. Dein Schicksal ist nicht mein Schicksal, Vater, und mein Schicksal nicht dein Schicksal.

Lehrer: Mein einziger Zeuge ist tot.
Andri: Sprich nicht von ihr!
Lehrer: Du trägst ihren Ring.
Andri: Was du getan hast, tut kein Vater.
Lehrer: Woher weißt du das? (Stücke 2, 280)

Andri, now the victim of an 'idée fixe', cannot acknowledge the possibility of his being wrong. Having once accepted the so-called truth about himself, however unwillingly, he is then wholly consistent, thus an insuperable barrier is erected between father and son.

The difference between the husband/wife and the parent/child situations lies in the father's realization that the accusations levelled at him are well-founded. Such a realization does not find expression in the dialogue, however, where only mental stalemate is apparent. Both acknowledge their guilt by giving up their lives, having tried in vain to justify their past falsehoods to themselves and to their children. Where husband and wife are concerned, it is as if their main desire is to keep to the mental pattern they each have established, to follow their own train of thought with no interference from those around them, and this they do both in speech and action. In every case no communication is made in the dialogue because each character is wholly self-absorbed.

3. Lovers.

Having seen how husband and wife, father and son do not

communicate mentally, one could expect either of two possibilities from the dialogue between people in a less well-defined relationship - either that the comparative freedom of these relationships would help towards mental contact, or that the communication-problem would be even more severe. Neither is true in Frisch's drama. Let us look at the dialogue between lovers, for example, as seen in Die große Wut des Philipp Hotz, Graf Öderland, and Als der Krieg zu Ende war.

In the first two of these three plays it is strange how the respective wives of Hotz and Öderland seem to use their lovers, Wilfrid and Doktor Hahn, merely as a launching-pad for the expression of their own ideas. Once again the dialogue furnishes us with evidence of a mental standstill because of preoccupation:-

Dorli: Morgen ist es genau ein Jahr, seit ich's ihm gesagt habe. Wegen uns. Und heute endlich zeigt er seine Wut. So introvertiert ist er! Heute endlich -

(Der junge Dienstmann schüttelt einen Korb voll Scherben aus)

Schau ihn dir an!

Wilfrid: Scherben -

Dorli: Bloß weil ich meine Scheidungsklage zurückziehe. Schau ihn dir an! Bloß weil ich gesagt habe: Das wirst du nicht tun, Philipp, ich kenne dich!

(Der alte Dienstmann schüttelt einen Korb voll Scherben aus)

Wilfrid: Was soll das?

Dorli: Bloß damit ich ihn ernstnehme, wenn er ein nächstes Mal wütend ist und wieder behauptet, daß unsere Ehe nicht gehe -

(Dorli schüttelt den Kopf)

Und die Vorhänge! die Möbel! die Bilder! Hat man schon so etwas gesehen!- bloß weil der Friedensrichter ihm sagte, er sei ein gebildeter Mensch.

(Dorli nimmt sich eine Zigarette)³

Hotz: Sie beginnt sich zu wundern.³

(Hotz steigt in die Szene, um ihr sein Feuerzeug zu bieten)

Wilfrid: Du- sogar die schönen Gläser, die ich euch geschenkt habe, sind dabei! (Stücke, 2, 178)

Wilfrid is obviously concerned only with what is going on around him, that is, the systematic destruction of the furniture and fittings, while Dorli is so caught up in explanations and self-justification that she utterly ignores Wilfrid's growing bewilderment and anger at the chaos becoming evident around him. Here the preoccupation of each individual is used as a device by means of which the comedy is heightened, providing a near-parody of the lack of mental communication between two people. Elsa and her lover, Doktor Hahn, in Graf Öderland, clearly show the same concern for self, but their dialogue has none of the comic elements seen in the exchanges between Dorli and Wilfrid. For example:

Doktor Hahn: Und was hat er denn zu dir gesagt in dieser Nacht? Ihr habt noch gesprochen, sagst du.

Elsa: Nichts Besonderes.

Doktor Hahn: Aber was denn?

Elsa: Ich habe nicht zugehört. Er soll zum Arzt gehen, habe ich gesagt, er soll Ferien machen, er soll ein Pulver nehmen. Daß er sich ankleidet mitten in der Nacht, das bin ich gewohnt. Das tut er oft, wenn er viel Arbeit hat. Plötzlich erwacht er und meint, er habe etwas vergessen. Das meint er, seit wir uns kennen.

Doktor Hahn: Was meint er?

Elsa: Er habe etwas versäumt . . .

(Pause)

Doktor Hahn: Vielleicht hat er bloß eine Geliebte?

³At this point Hotz is not in the scene, but in front of it, commenting on what is happening.

(Elsa erhebt sich wieder)

Glaubst du, er hat etwas gemerkt?

Elsa: Wegen uns?

Doktor Hahn: Es wäre mir peinlich.

(Es klopft)

Elsa: Du glaubst, er hat es gemerkt?

Doktor Hahn: Ich glaube, es hat geklopft.

(Stücke, I, 332)

This passage begins with a straightforward question to which Elsa eventually replies with quite the wrong answer. She was asked not what she had said, but what had been said by her husband. However, "Ich habe nicht zugehört" quickly covers all that and she goes on to outline her own conversation, her own ideas. Hahn seems to follow her up to the point of "er habe etwas versäumt", but then pursues his line of thought - "Geliebte" "Glaubst du, er hat etwas gemerkt?" . . . "Es wäre mir peinlich" ... "Ich glaube, es hat geklopft". Now if Elsa had paid any attention at all to her husband earlier (Stücke, I, 306) she would have been in no doubt as to his familiarity with the situation between herself and Hahn, but, preferring to disregard or forget this completely, she looks for reassurance from Hahn. The latter, however, is too concerned with his own thoughts to listen to Elsa. This passage not only shows up the lack of co-operative thinking between the lovers, but also the real mental gulf between Elsa and her husband.

In Als der Krieg zu Ende war the entire relationship between the lovers is significantly altered, as there is no possibility of a linguistic link between them. The two relevant

characters cannot speak to one another through the medium of words as they do not share a common language. Despite this lack of verbal contact, however, an obviously high level of communication exists between the two, Agnes Anders and Stepan Iwanow. In contrast to the characters we have already considered, these two really do listen to each other, really do understand each other's feelings. Words are obviously not the means by which one person must necessarily reveal himself to another. As Agnes says to Stepan: "Du! vielleicht ist es nie anders, wenn Mann und Frau zusammen sprechen, und alles, was man noch mit Worten sagen kann, ist gleichgültig ..." (Stücke, 1, 292)

Agnes and Stepan are free to love each other since neither can feel trapped or mentally stifled in this relationship where verbal understanding is impossible. Because they are not trapped they can develop a mental understanding from which love can grow, allowing them to communicate with each other, instead of merely communicating words to each other. It is not simply that their strength of feeling overcomes the lack of words, but that in addition the latter actually helps to stimulate the former. In relation to this particular play Frisch expresses his main idea thus - "Sprache als Gefäß der Vorurteils! [sic] Sie, die uns verbinden könnte, ist zum Gegenteil geworden, zur tödlichen Trennung durch Vorurteil. Sprache und Lüge! Das ungeheuerere Paradoxon, daß man sich

ohne Sprache näherkommt."⁴ From the dialogue we have considered so far it would seem that this philosophical idea has general validity throughout Frisch's dramas - surely a strange idea for one whose means of dramatic expression must be the dialogue?

While an investigation of the dialogue between characters bound by some social or emotional tie may show no mutual understanding or mental progression, one cannot say that all communication through dialogue is thus proved impossible in Frisch's dramas. Perhaps strangers who are in no way bound to one another can achieve understanding? Achieve. This is surely the key to the obvious mental stalemate. No one tries to achieve anything which will take him outside himself, indeed, it is the desire to establish or preserve the 'self' which makes the characters resist with passion the ideas and the categorization of others. Friends, acquaintances and strangers all seem to meet with or to erect equally insurmountable barriers to any real mental contact or understanding. One brief example from each category should illustrate why this is so:-

i) Friends.

Don Juan: Ich ertrage keine Freunde, die meiner sicher sind. Woher denn weißt du, daß ich nicht von deiner Inez komme?

Don Roderigo: Laß diesen Scherz!

Don Juan: Woher weißt du, daß es ein Scherz ist?

Don Roderigo: Ich kenne meine Inez.

Don Juan: Ich auch.

Don Roderigo: Woher?

⁴Tagebuch, p. 165.

Don Juan: Ich sag es ja: Ich war bei ihr.

Don Roderigo: Das ist nicht wahr! (Stücke, 2, 47)⁵

ii) Less than friends but not strangers to one another are Dorli

and Clarissa of Die große Wut des Philipp Hotz:-

Clarissa: Kurz und gut, du glaubst mir nicht.

(Dorli nimmt sich einen neuen Apfel)

Simone!

(Clarissa zieht ihre Handschuhe an)

Nichts ist geschehen! Ich schwöre es dir!

Rein gar nichts!

(Dorli beißt in ihren Apfel)

Dorli: Ich will keine Details. (Stücke, 2, 191-192)⁶

iii) Strangers.

Napoleon: Ich frage, was geschehen ist. Was machen die Franzosen? Und die Briten, die Russen? Darf ich hören, daß sie geschlagen sind?

Der Heutige: Exzellenz-

Napoleon: Rußland muß geschlagen werden!

Der Heutige: Exzellenz-

Napoleon: Europa ist die Welt-

Der Heutige: Nicht mehr, Exzellenz, nicht mehr!

Napoleon: -wer ist Herr von Europa?

Der Heutige: Exzellenz! ...

Napoleon: Warum spricht Ihr nicht, Bürger?

Der Heutige: Exzellenz - das Atom ist teilbar.

Napoleon: Was heißt das? (Stücke, 1, 160)⁷

In each case one of the speakers is quite obstinately refusing to listen to what the other is saying, being caught up in his own particular train of thought. Don Roderigo, Dorli and Napoleon are all firmly convinced that they are unmistakeably

⁵See also Stücke, 1, p. 87-90; 92-3; 100-108.

⁶See also Stücke, 1, p. 311-7; 2, p. 29.

⁷See also p. 9-10; p. 93; p. 168-9; 2, 120-124.

right, Now these characters are not bound up either outwardly or inwardly in any set relationship, yet they too are apparently incapable of advancement and understanding. They neither advance in their own thoughts nor do they understand their dialogue-partner. This seems to show that Frisch is not pessimistically pointing out the impossibility of mental intimacy in a relationship which society considers intimate, such as marriage or the family, but that he is indicating through the dialogue the total impossibility of his characters coming together on a mental level. It is the alacrity of one character in thinking he recognizes and 'knows' the other, without considering the possibility of his own capacity for error which cuts him off within his own closed mind. Even when disguises are actually used, this claim to know obstructs all development, as in Don Juan. (Stücke, 2, 15) Here Miranda distorts within her own mind the reality of the past, which in turn colours her view of the present. With or without disguises, all Frisch's characters are guilty of distorting the truth by seeking to cram the present into the framework of the past, by refusing to acknowledge the need for constant open-mindedness, and by accepting verbal formulae invented in the past as valid criteria for the moving, changing present. Armed with obsolete conclusions or impressions one can attack and subjugate the "Now", but to do this is to live in cowardly and unjustifiable dishonesty. "Sprache als

Gefäß des Vorurteils"⁸ says Frisch, yet while language may in itself be a barrier, the linguistic barrier is not the true source to the lack of mental contact and communication seen throughout the dialogue.

⁸See note 17, page 29.

CHAPTER II

THE "BILDNIS"

The fundamental source of non-progression and non-communication is to be found in the self-absorption of the dialogue-partners in the form of their adherence to the "Bildnis", that image which Frisch condemns. "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen"¹ he quotes, reasoning that the acceptance of this image means imposing limitations on ourselves and others which do not necessarily exist. In conjunction with the findings made so far from an examination of Frisch's dramatic dialogue it is interesting to note the following short excerpts from his Tagebuch:-

Warum reisen wir?

Auch dies, damit wir Menschen begegnen, die nicht meinen, daß sie uns kennen ein für allemal; damit wir noch einmal erfahren, was uns in diesem Leben möglich sei -

Es ist ohnehin schon wenig genug. (26)

'Du bist nicht', sagt der Enttäuschte oder die Enttäuschte: 'wofür ich dich gehalten habe.'

Und wofür hat man sich denn gehalten?

Für ein Geheimnis, das der Mensch ja immerhin ist, ein erregendes Rätsel, das auszuhalten wir müde geworden sind. Man macht sich ein Bildnis. Das ist das Liebloose, der Verrat. (27)

Both of these passages have in common a dislike of the static, a dislike of tucking away or of being tucked away into

¹Tagebuch, p. 26.

a specific mental framework. Frisch criticizes the closed mind which claims to have recognized and registered all the possibilities of any one character, saying that such a claim is indicative only of having given up the effort to solve the unsolvable puzzle.

Now it is not merely a question of laziness or of boredom which causes the individual to fit those around him into a certain category. This love of pigeon-holing is also part of an adherence to the image one sets up of oneself. By pushing the actions and ideas of the other into neatly-labelled mental compartments one can all the more easily preserve one's self-image, thus causing the least possible conflict with oneself. However, in avoiding this conflict, not only does one falsely categorize others by depriving them of the right to change, but one also fortifies oneself in the adherence to the original "Bildnis" which again has 'proved' to be true. The falsity of every fixed idea lies in its immovability, in its refusal to allow room for any kind of development or change. Frisch himself, speaking on this very subject in an interview with Horst Bienek in 1962, has the following to say:-

"Das ist unheimlich. Wer es weiß, hat Mühe zu leben. Wer es nicht weiß, und zum Glück wissen es die wenigsten, hat keine Wahl, da er seine Erfindung von sich selbst als solche durchschaut, und seine ganze Kraft dient dazu, Vorkommnisse herbeizuführen, die seine Erfindung bestätigen - beispielsweise seine

Erfindung, ein Pechvogel zu sein, ein schlichter und von keinem Glück begünstigter Mann. Stellen Sie sich vor, ein solcher Pechvogel gewinnt plötzlich das große Los. Was ändert das! Er zweifelt nicht an seiner Erfindung, ein Pechvogel zu sein, sondern er zweifelt an der Lotterie, an der Welt, am Schicksal.²

Returning to the dramas and to what we have discovered about the lack of movement and progression within the dialogue, we find that in many of the plays it is precisely a refusal to accept the suffocation by that fixed idea, that false understanding, which provokes the psychological crisis from which the action, and with it the dialogue, springs. The "Rittmeister" in Santa Cruz who continually dreams of Hawaii is pushed into rebellion against the stifling, paralysing life in the castle by the arrival of the guitar-playing gipsy, Karl in Nun singen sie wieder is forced up against the realization of what personal responsibility really means by the hostages who sing in the face of their own execution, and Agnes in Als der Krieg zu Ende war finds freedom to love only there where any "Bildnis" is impossible. The prosecutor in Graf Öderland comes to realize by means of an unmotivated murder the suffocation of society's given rules, and Don Juan in the play of the same name, is forced into open revolt against that society which wants to tie him down to its pre-conceived idea of what he is.

²H. Bienek, Werkstattgespräche mit Schriftstellern (München, 1962) p. 26.

In each case an experience or vision of freedom offers a contrast to the limited and narrow life the character leads- a contrast which makes him aware of his discontentment with present imprisonment. That the discontentment is founded in the reality of the characters' lives is clearly reflected in the dialogue, where one "Bildnis" constantly fights another in a battle of words, each denying the other the right to exist, and desperately attempting to assert its own monopoly to this right.

A similar battle goes on in the remainder of the plays, where it is the desire, not to escape from an 'image' made by others, but to live up to a self-established "Bildnis" which precipitates the crisis. In Biedermann and in Andorra the chief character is actively helped or forced by those around him into living a self-established or a self-imposed "Bildnis".³

Throughout the plays each individual allots to others mentally, hence verbally, that role which allows him to remain or to become what he thinks he really is. All the characters are wholly self-absorbed and the "Bildnis" is inescapable. Thus the characters are mentally trapped and immovable, incapable of

³Although Andri's "Bildnis" is imposed initially by others, he concludes that his father is just as strongly anti-Semitic as the rest of Andorra when he sees his reaction to the proposed marriage with Barblin. From this point on, Andri actually imposes on himself the so-called 'fact' of his being a Jew. That the society then helps him further into error adds only to their total guilt. Andri, in imposing their "Bildnis" on himself then in turn actually imposes it again on this society.

responding to any current sequence of thought around them. At the root of the non-communication seen in the dialogue lies this fixity which is the ultimate falsehood and thus the fundamental obstacle between minds.

Looking back at the examples of dialogue examined in the previous chapter we find that in each case the verbally adopted and mentally adapted commandment of Frisch - "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen" - has been broken. The characters have all formed and confirmed their opinions of themselves and others, opinions which are now unshakeable. Apparently a common foundation for life has been lost and each individual has to find his own private solution to the problem of existence. Either he accepts the stifling 'status quo' and clings to a kind of death in life, or he becomes a mental, if not physical iconoclast who "takes arms against a sea of troubles". That the two breeds should not communicate is scarcely surprising! Each represents death for the other, and as such they evoke mutual apprehension, even panic - hence the very positive need for categorization as a kind of self-defence.

If Frisch meant only to illustrate the inadequacy of language and the largely unconscious dishonesty of each of his characters, however, might his dramas not differ less from those of Ionesco, for example, whom he admires so much? Does his

dialogue not somehow tell us more than that mental communication is impossible? Leaving aside all hope of discovering the latter, perhaps we can find what Frisch's dialogue does have to offer apart from the very negative implications on mental contact and progression.

CHAPTER III

THE INFORMATIVE DIALOGUE

Despite the total absorption with themselves and their own respective concepts, Frisch's characters can and do communicate at a superficial level - they communicate information to one another, and thus, of course, to the audience. Frisch undoubtedly has a story to tell, therefore information to convey within both dramatic and theatrical bounds - 'dramatic' in this context meaning within the limits of the in-stage relationships, 'theatrical' meaning within the limits of the cross-stage relationship, play to audience. Now the vehicle for conveying information being the dialogue, and the dialogue having shown itself to be simultaneously creator and expression of a mental barrier between the speakers, it becomes obvious that informative exchanges can display only a one-way flow of ideas: the informer releases his information, the listener registers the information and interprets it in accordance with his own particular ideas, his own particular interests. This is true both of the 'dramatic' and the 'theatrical' dialogue. Quite obviously the two overlap, as even the 'dramatic' serves the 'theatrical' purpose, yet in order to facilitate an examination of this story-telling dialogue it seems convenient to consider each in turn.

In Frisch's 'dramatic' dialogue, exchanges whose aim it is to pass information between the dramatic characters seem mainly to result from a question or series of questions. Normally such exchanges could present two possibilities: either they serve as an introduction to a genuine mental progression between the speakers or they remain a purely one-sided communication - communication at a purely informative level. The dramas of Frisch, however, realize only the latter possibility. Questions are asked, facts conveyed in reply. In the following excerpt, for example, Graf Öderland (Staatsanwalt) is concerned with the continuing success of his flagging rebel campaign and inquires of a follower what the current position is:-

Sträfling: Es gibt zwei Punkte, wo es möglich ist.

Staatsanwalt: Nämlich?

Sträfling: Zwischen Schmetterling und Löwenzahn.

Staatsanwalt: Unter dem Dom?

Sträfling: Unter dem Kloster.

Staatsanwalt: Und sonst?

Sträfling: Zwischen Forelle und Vergissmeinnicht.

Staatsanwalt: Wo ist den das?

Sträfling: Beim Friedhof draussen. (Stücke, 1, 365)

In the above passage where there is no subjective slant or psychological probing, where in fact the characters are not concerned with themselves but with something external, the dialogue is terse and straightforward. In exchanges such as these, information regarding the outer action is passed directly from one character to another, and thus to the audience. Apparently there are two charact-

er-patterns used repeatedly by Frisch for this superficial and factual communication - characters somehow linked together for or against a common external interest or threat, and characters in a form of master-servant relationship. Basically, however, the latter merely a variation of the former. Within this pattern it is clear that only a superficial communication is possible, as the spoken exchanges take the form of static question and answer, command and compliance, with only minor variations in the formula. The external interest binding the speakers may be a revolution, (Stücke, 1, 363-367) a desire to please, (Stücke 2, 126) arson, (Stücke, 2, 139) or the marriage of one's child (Stücke, 2, 10-11) - almost anything which will demand action rather than genuine reflection - and the resulting conversation will be superficially communicative. This is perhaps best illustrated by the early dialogue between the respective fathers of the young couple about to be married in

Don Juan oder die Liebe zur Geometrie:

Don Gonzalo: Ich rief ihn in mein Zelt. Wozu, fragte ich unter vier Augen, wozu führen wir diesen Kreuzzug? Und wie er bloss lächelte, forschte ich weiter: Warum hassen wir die Heiden?

Tenorio: Was antwortete er?

Don Gonzalo: Er hasse die Heiden nicht.

Tenorio: Junge, Junge!

Don Gonzalo: Im Gegenteil, sagte er, wir könnten viel von den Heiden lernen, und wie ich ihn das nächste Mal traf, lag er unter einer Korkeiche und las ein Buch. Ein arabisches.

Tenorio: Geometrie, ich weiss, der Teufel hole die Geometrie.

Don Gonzalo: Ich fragte, wozu er das lese.

Tenorio: Was, um Gotteswillen, antwortete er?

Don Gonzalo: Er l'ichelte bloss.

Tenorio: Junge, Junge! (Stücke, 2, 10-11)

The information imparted here has to do with the central figure, Don Juan, and because of this preview of character he can be observed the more clearly when he first appears on stage. In fact, all information conveyed in this way fulfils the same function: it sets the stage for the development of a new or changed situation. Thus the 'informative dialogue' makes the dialogue of non-communication theatrically possible.

As this is true of the dialogue between accomplices of one kind or another, so it is true of the dialogue between characters in a master-servant relationship. Here the dominance of one character over another which is apparent between accomplices is even more evident. Ideas and suggestions can be seen to flow in only one direction - the servant informs and obeys.¹

Similar to this one-way flow of ideas within the play is the one-way flow across the bounds of the stage to the audience by means of the 'theatrical' dialogue.² In the latter the aim appears to be the imparting of information, both objective and subjective, to the audience, without regard for the other characters on stage. That is, one character conveys the information while those to whom

¹Stücke, 1, p. 28-29. Elvira/Diener; p. 47. Rittmeister/Diener. Stücke, 2, p. 167. Hotz/Der Alte; p. 94. Biedermann/Schmitz/ Anna; p. 136-138. Biedermann/ Anna.

²See page 39 above.

he ostensibly addresses himself participate neither mentally nor verbally. This chief speaker in a sequence of this 'theatrical' dialogue largely ignores or overlooks any slight rejoinder made to him by the others - not so very different from the dialogue which showed a lack of inter-character communication? Perhaps not, but the means and the end of this theatrical dialogue are different. The end is, of course, to pass to the audience various kinds of information and insight which the non-communicative and the straightforward 'dramatic' dialogue does not supply, but it is the means whereby this end is achieved which is of the greater interest. Characters from within the play slip periodically from their role to comment on what is happening, subjectively, objectively, in particular or in general. It is surprising to note the numerous occasions upon which Frisch introduces such characters, and to observe the effect which their introduction has on the dialogue. In using them he achieves two things - firstly, of course, the audience is given helpful information, and secondly, the perspective is abruptly altered. From being mere spectators the audience periodically becomes involved with the happenings on stage from the point of the character who addresses them.

Depending on how subjective a slant is given to the information transmitted, the audience will absorb it either as fact or as a greater or lesser flash of psychological insight into a

character and thence into the unfolding situation. In order to explain this it is best to return to the texts, where the following examples will illustrate i) the conveyance of factual information, and ii) the offering of a psychological insight:-

- i) Pedro: Vor siebzehn Jahren, sage ich, und auf diesem Schiffe hat er sie entführt, Elvira hat sie geheissen, ein Fräulein, sage ich euch, ein Fräulein, und dort in die Kajüte hat er sie getragen, ob ihr es glauben wollt oder nicht, dort ist es geschehen -
- Zweiter: Was?
- Pedro: Vor siebzehn Jahren....
- Dritter: Alles erlogen, erfunden und erlogen!
- Pedro: Heute ist sie die Frau eines Rittmeisters, sie wohnt in einem Schloss, ferne von hier, auf der anderen Seite der Welt, dort wo es jetzt Winter ist. Wir können nicht schlafen vor Hitze, und dort, so müsst ihr euch denken, dort sitzen sie vor dem Kamin, der Rittmeister und die Rittmeisterin. Sie wissen nicht, wovon sie reden sollen, so lange schon sind sie verheiratet. Ein Diener tritt herein. Was ist geschehen? fragt der Rittmeister. Ein Vagant ist im Hause. (Stücke, I, 36-37)

In this passage Pedro, the poet continually rejected and scorned by his fellow-sailors who fear all truth, explains the entire background to the on-stage action which has gone before. The audience absorbs this explanation as the key to an external interpretation of the situation. Where the character does not have the role of a constant 'outsider', and is thus less objective, as for example, Hotz in Die gross Wut des Philipp Hotz, then subjective ideas are presented to and assimilated by the audience as aids to an internal interpretation of the unfolding situation:

ii) Hotz: Ich bin, meine Damen, kein Eskimo, der die Frau als sein Eigentum betrachtet. Es gibt (für mich) keinen Besitz in der Liebe. Ich kann nicht eifersüchtig sein, meine Damen, grundsätzlich nicht-

(Die Handsäge in seiner Hand zittert mehr und mehr)

... Aber: Wenn eine Frau, kaum sitzt man vor Gericht, einfach die vereinbarte Scheidungsklage zurückzieht- meine Damen! was heisst da noch Vereinbarung? Treue in jeder Lebenslage? Vertrauen? Kameradschaft zwischen Mann und Weib? Ich frage Sie: Was zum Teufel heisst da noch - Ehe? (Stücke, 2, 163)³

In both cases the 'informing' character escapes the limitations of the dialogue proper, Pedro by telling his story despite all incantations of disbelief and by disregarding the reactions of those around him, Hotz by stepping right out of the play to the space between it and the audience, where the rules for dialogue are different. Where the character directly addresses the audience the latter is assigned the role of a tacit sympathizer, which allows this character to carry on the dialogue by himself, imagining the response which will allow him most room for the development of his own standpoint. The audience's help and contribution will be more closely examined in the chapter which follows. Already it is clear that the apparent dialogue of characters in the role of subjective or objective commentator is neither true dialogue nor true monologue, but rather a clever combination of the two. Examples of this abound throughout Frisch's

³See also: p.159-160; 168; 176-181; 182-183; 186; 188; 190-191; 192; 193; 194; 195; 196.

plays.⁴

The essential difference between these passages of apparent dialogue and those of the static dialogue seen in previous chapters lies in the character-groups between whom they are spoken. In the dialogue where mental progression was blocked in both characters, the latter were largely on an equal footing (husband/wife, father/son), but here one character predominates to such an extent that the result is a kind of monologue within the dialogue, as this 'controlling' figure expounds at length on his own attitude or on the situation as he sees it. Chief of these figures are the captain (Nun singen sie wieder),⁵ Agnes (Als der Krieg zu Ende war),⁶ Don Juan,⁷ and Der Heutige (Die chinesische Mauer).⁸ In each case each of these characters embarks on long explanatory speeches which invariably contain the directional impulses of the play. One of the best examples of this quasi-monologue is to be found in Die chinesische Mauer where "Der Heutige" comes forward, ostensibly to address the other characters around him, but in reality to force home his point to the non-acting audience. This is a long passage beginning:-

⁴Stücke, 1, pp. 151-152; 156; 161-162. Stücke 2, pp. 89-90; 102-120; 134; 155-156; 216; 221; 228; 247; 254.

⁵Stücke 1, pp. 104; 129-130.

⁶Ibid., pp. 249-250; 258; 269-271; 272-274; 278; 285.

⁷Stücke, 2, pp. 45-47; 48; 49; 63-65; 80; 81.

⁸Stücke, 1, pp. 160-161; 179-180; 230; 231-233; 234.

Das Volk, meine Herrschaften, ist unberechenbar.
 Wer ist das Volk? Wir alle: wir stehen hinter dem
 Vorhang, wenn der Nachbar verhaftet wird und abge-
 führt. Und man wird vorsichtig im Umgang mit Nach-
 barn.

and continuing for some time with only very minor interruptions,
 as far as - "Wobei ich Sie aufmerksam machen darf, meine Herr-
 schaften: Es gibt keine Arche gegen Radioaktivität." (Stücke,
 1, 230-233)

Many only slightly differentiated methods are used to
 present these various commentating characters which are to be
 found in every one of Frisch's plays. In one case the character
 tells a story within the framework of the play (Pedro, the captain),
 in another he steps in and out of the action to address the audience
 (Hotz, Der Heutige, various characters in Andorra),⁹ in another
 he is constantly external to the action (the chorus in Biedermann),
 and fulfilling a similar function, though apparently strictly with-
 in the confines of play and dialogue are the characters who present
 their quasi-monologues.

The very fact that these commentating characters appear
 so often seems both to admit to a certain suffocation of ideas
 or personalities within the stage-bound dialogue and also to change
 this dialogue, for at that point where the characters 'inform' the

⁹Stücke, 2, pp. 216; 221; 228; 247; 254.

dialogue ceases, in fact, to be 'dialogue'. If we take any one of the examples shown under notes 5-8 we will see how the characters present but not actually delivering the quasi-monologue do not really say anything. For example:

Don Juan: Was mach ich für einen Eindruck auf unsere Jugend? Die Jugend nimmt mich zum Vorbild, ich sehe es kommen, ein ganzes Zeitalter sehe ich kommen, das in die Leere rennt wie ich, aber kühn nur, weil sie geschen haben, es givt kein Gericht, ein ganzes Geschlecht von Spöttern, die sich für meinesgleichen halten, eitel in einem Hohn, der billig wird, modisch, ordinär, dumm zum Verzeifeln- ich sehe das kommen!

Bischof: Hm.

Don Juan: Sie nicht?

(Der Bischof nimmt die Karaffe und füllt sich ein Glas)

Verstehen Sie mich richtig, Bischof von Cordoba, nicht bloss der Damen bin ich müde, ich meine es geistig, ich bin des Frevels müde. Zwölf Jahre eines unwiederholbaren Lebens: vertan in dieser kindischen Herausforderung der blauen Luft, die man Himmel nennt! Ich bin vor nichts zurückgeschreckt, aber Sie sehen ja selbst, Eminenz, meine Frevel haben mich bloss berühmt gemacht. (Der Bischof trinkt) Ich bin verzweifelt. (Der Bischof trinkt) Dreiunddreissig Jahre teile ich das Geschick so vieler berühmter Männer: alle Welt kennt unsere Taten, fast niemand ihren Sinn. Mich schaudert's wenn ich die Leute reden höre über mich. Als wäre es mir je um die Damen gegangen!

Bischof: Immerhin-

Don Juan: Im Anfang, ich bekenne es, macht es Spass. Meine Hände, höre ich, sind wie Wüschelruten; sie finden, was der Gatte zehn Jahre lang nie gefunden hat an Quellen der Lust.

Bischof: Sie denken an den braven Lopez?

Don Juan: Ich möchte hier keine Namen nennen, Eminenz.

Bischof: Don Balthazar Lopez.

Don Juan: Auf alles war ich gefasst, Eminenz, aber nicht auf Langeweile. Ihre verzückten Mäuler, ihre Augen dazu, ihre wässerigen Augen (Stücke, 2, 63-64)

As we can see from the above, Don Juan's speeches, despite his constantly addressing the bishop by name, really take no account

of any interruption, nor does the bishop really give any evidence of his close attention. At this point Don Juan is in the role of objective-subjective commentator, supposedly intent on explaining to the bishop his much misunderstood viewpoint, but in reality he fulfils the function of penetrating the consciousness of the audience rather than of the other on-stage character. His function, and that of all the commentating characters being primarily to reach across mentally to the audience, their speeches tend to be informative and self-contained,¹⁰ which means that the basic concept of dialogue - dia-logos - at these points breaks down. Frisch cleverly manages to give a semblance of conversation when, in fact, no conversation is taking place. How and why this succeeds must now be considered.

¹⁰cf. Thornton Wilder, Our Town. The part of the stage-manager. Also Eugene O'Neill, Strange Interlude. The asides of the various characters.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

Up to this point the examination of Frisch's dialogue seems to have produced only negative findings - that there is no communication or mental progression, that only by the use of informative characters do the dramas escape seeming altogether static, and that dialogue is not true dialogue in the sense of 'dia-logos'. From these findings one might logically conclude that Frisch's dramas are wholly non-dramatic, for if the characters progress neither mentally nor verbally, then the result must be stagnation in plays where gesture and outer action have no large part. However, such a conclusion would be unjust, as these negative aspects have emerged from an examination of the dramas in themselves and not as presentations to an audience, which is for Frisch as dramatist the vital factor of live theatre.¹ If we consider the dialogue now with a view to establishing the effect which it produces on the audience, rather than with a view to finding inherent and self-sufficient qualities which would in themselves produce drama, then we see that the results are positive and not negative.

¹H. Bienek, Werkstattgespräche mit Schriftstellern, p. 31.

In Frisch's plays the emphasis on the solution of each particular problem lies not within the play itself, but at that point where audience and play meet, which means that Frisch's audience is encouraged to be more than a sympathetic observer - in fact, it is called upon as a mental participant. Participation is demanded by the very nature of the on-stage dialogue, which in itself is quite obviously static. Perhaps it is best at this point to reconsider some of the examples which have already been examined.

In the relationship-framework outlined in chapter one, the dialogue was examined for evidence of mental contact between two characters in various stages of mutual 'knowledge' and intimacy. Such contact was non-existent. One of the two characters stood out in each case as the more forceful, the more articulate, but what of the impact on the audience of the lesser character whose replies indicated an incomprehension, a preoccupation? Also, what effect does the grouping of these two characters together produce for and in the audience? In each case this 'lesser' character (- for example, Elvira, Elsa, Babette, Oberlehrer, Lehrer, Don Roderigo, Clarissa, Napoleon -) represents the average, everyday point of view and is consciously made to look ridiculous, pitifully limited - at all events inferior. Looking back to an example from each of the six categories - (i) husband and wife, (ii) parent and child, (iii) lovers, (iv) friends, (v) acquaintances and (vi) strangers - we

see that this is so:

(i)

Elsa: Ich suche dich im ganzen Haus, wieso gibst du keine Antwort? Ich dachte schon, du bist ausgegangen.

Staatsanwalt: Wohin?

Elsa: Was ist los?

Staatsanwalt: Ich habe mich nur angezogen.

Elsa: Mitten in der Nacht?

Staatsanwalt: Es scheint so.

Elsa: Wieso schläfst du nicht?

Staatsanwalt: Wieso schläfst du nicht? (Stücke, 1, 303)

Elsa's questions, while quite probable and natural, immediately show her in rather a poor light by seeming silly. Her husband's comments are designed to thwart all attempt at discussion simply by his wilfully adopting a very literal attitude to everything she says. He, of course, is at a natural advantage as far as the audience is concerned, in that his presence and actions on stage - he hears her calling and then proceeds to put out the light, for example, in order to hinder her - are unexplained when his wife comes in. The interest he thus arouses is further stimulated by his mental superiority throughout the exchanges with his wife, which leads the audience to reject Elsa in favour of her husband. In doing so they reject her attitude of mind, which in everyday life might be considered 'normal', that attitude which they themselves might have adopted.

(ii)

Karl: Hast du schon einmal auf Frauen und Kinder geschossen?

Oberlehrer: Ich sage dir: du hast es auf Befehl getan!

Karl: Und wer hat es befohlen?

Oberlehrer: Es ist nicht deine Schuld, Karl,
was alles auch befohlen wird, es ist nicht unsere
Schuld-

Karl: Das ist es ja!

Oberlehrer: Du lachst?

Karl: Jedes Wort, das du sagst, es klagt uns an.-
Es gibt das nicht, es gibt keine Ausflucht in den Ge-
horsam. (Stücke, 1, 113)

Here it is quite clear that the father is side-
stepping the basic issue of responsibility. He persistently
attempts to take refuge in the comfortable thought -- "Was alles
auch befohlen wird, es ist nicht unsere Schuld" -- but Karl with
equal persistence challenges his right to such a refuge. Again,
each of the characters by this point in the play is likely to
make a certain impact on the audience. Karl, because of his
demonstrated consistency in conscientiously doubting the absolute
supremacy of an order, is likely to impress favourably, while his
father, because of the disparity between his ideals and practice
already shown, is at a disadvantage from the audience's point of
view. In a confrontation of the two characters the dialogue is
such that the audience is likely to support Karl, thereby condemning
the father, whose attitude is once again what might be considered
'normal' - an attitude sufficiently well thought out to support
a feeling of self-justification, but which is not entirely honest,
since the meditation stops at that point where the whole question
of collective responsibility enters in. By making the father reflect
poorly against Karl, Frisch is in fact encouraging, if not forcing

the audience to reject the ideas of the former.

Similarly, if we take one example of the dialogue between characters in each of the more loosely-constructed relationships, we see that the same achievement is made. For example, in the exchanges between Elsa and Hahn, (Stücke, 1, 332) Don Roderigo and Don Juan, (Stücke, 2, 47) Dorli and Clarissa, (Stücke, 2, 191-192) Napoleon and Der Heutige, (Stücke, 1, 160) one of the two characters puts forward a viewpoint which might normally find great sympathy in the audience, but which, because of the form the dialogue takes is automatically prepared for rejection by this audience. The individual's insistence on his own particular 'idée fixe' is exaggerated and highlighted by the response of his fellow-speaker, and thereby undergoes a mild form of parody, which leads the observer's sympathies away from the object of this parody and directs them towards the other character. It may be easiest to follow this process by taking a brief example:-

Napoleon: Ich frage, was geschehen ist. Was machen die Franzosen? Und die Briten, die Russen? Darf ich hören, dass sie geschlagen sind?

Der Heutige: Exzellenz-

Napoleon: Russland muss geschlagen werden!

Der Heutige: Exzellenz-

Napoleon: Europa ist die Welt-

Der Heutige: Nicht mehr, Exzellenz, nicht mehr!

Napoleon: -wer ist Herr von Europa?

Der Heutige: Exzellenz! . . . (Stücke, 1, 160)

Despite the explanatory introduction by *Der Heutige* which gives credibility to the presence of Napoleon, this very explanation places *Der Heutige* at an advantage. By saying that Napoleon belongs to those figures of the past who inhabit our thoughts he himself obviously becomes the more relevant figure for the audience. This being so, the latter participates more in *Der Heutige*'s attempts to interrupt than in the outdated thinking of Napoleon, who displays stagnation and a closed mind. By aligning itself with the opponent of fixity the audience is prepared for intellectual (and social) iconoclasm.

Minor characters are used throughout the dramas to verify by implication the main character's need for escape from a world of "Bildnisse". How they think, reflected in what they say, helps the audience to support the opposite point of view, which this very audience might have opposed strongly if it had been presented in a straightforward dialogue. To cite only some of these examples - Don Juan is surrounded by various characters whose mentalities and lives can only substantiate his arguments against love and marriage, yet they verbally refute all that he stands for;² Andri's honesty,

²In particular Don Gonzalo, Donna Elvira, Pater Diego, Don Roderigo.

Consistency and strength are highlighted by the opposite qualities in those around him;³ Biedermann's contemptible falsity is clearly ridiculed by the steady realism of Anna, the maid.

In using a dialogue to imply, if not directly to express stalemate, and in selecting minor characters sufficiently 'average' and familiar to invite the audience's consideration, yet sufficiently limited and transparent to call forth their disapproval, Frisch actually rids his audience of attitudes which they might conceivably call their own. He in fact cleverly destroys in his audience one "Bildnis" after another - always by so constructing his dialogue that this audience is constantly manipulated into accepting or rejecting certain ideas, attitudes, patterns of behaviour and reactions.

In the 'informative' dialogue considered in the previous chapter the audience is again asked to accept or reject in this way, but the methods used to achieve this end are varied slightly. In *Die grosse Wut des Philipp Hotz*, for example, Hotz in the "Conference" is a likeable, rational man with apparently sound ideas on marriage. He speaks to the audience, invites their confidence and understanding, returns to the scene where suddenly he is overshadowed by Dorli, who is the more sympathetic figure

³The pastor, the landlord, the carpenter, the doctor, the apprentice.

in the practical sphere. Thus the one character invites both approval and disapproval, understanding and mild contempt, a sense of identity and of objective clarity, from the audience. This, of course, adds to the comedy, but it is not in Frisch's comedy alone that the audience is directed from one way of thinking and feeling to another. In each of his plays a stimulus goes through the dialogue from stage to audience, is withdrawn subsequently in favour of a different or even contradictory stimulus, and so the process continues. It is the function of those characters who were considered in the previous chapter - those who narrate or comment by means of a quasi-monologue or an overt appeal to the audience - to direct this process of mental change.

That a great deal of flexibility and mental agility is required of Frisch's audience can be seen from a brief outline of any one of his plays. In *Andorra*, for example, through various snatches of conversation the audience hears Andri presented as 'different', 'difficult', learns that Barblin and Andri are to be married, that Andri is the adopted son of Barblin's father, that he is a Jew, and that he wishes to be accepted by the Andorrans as one of them. However, it soon becomes clear that he is not accepted, that he is not a Jew, that he has by now completely accepted being a Jew, that his adoptive father is his real father, that the so-called 'kindness' of the

past was nothing more than cruel cowardice and that Andri is the victim of blind prejudice around him! The pressure and demand for understanding and mental co-operation which would normally be found within the dialogue between characters on stage is now found in that dialogue which takes place between play and audience. The conclusions to which the audience comes are initially encouraged by the author, who then proceeds in the course of his drama to refute them. As a result of this refutation the audience questions its previous conclusions or forms new ones, which in turn are incorporated by the drama and again questioned. This is true of all of Frisch's plays, and can be illustrated by an examination of any one of them. In Andorra, for example, a scene by scene analysis shows the following: (Bracketed comments outline the spontaneous thoughts and reactions of the audience)-

1. Barblin is engaged. She feels contempt and dislike for the soldier.

A cheerful, unidentified kitchen-boy appears at work.

(Can this young man be Barblin's fiancé?)

The priest takes care to look after his flock. He tries to reassure everyone that there is no cause for alarm.

(Why should there be?)

Barblin's father has begun to drink a good deal recently.

(Why?) Andri is still safe. (Who is Andri? Why should he not be safe?)

Fear of "die Schwarzen da drüben". (Who are they?)

Barblin refuses to admit to the priest that she is engaged despite her having told this repeatedly to the soldier.

(Why? Is hse not really engaged?)

"Andorra ist ein schönes Land, aber ein armes Land. Ein friedliches Land, ein schwaches Land - ein frommes Land".

The kitchen-boy appears again. (Who is he?)

Barblin's fear of "die Schwarzen". The latter apparently kill Jews and shave their women's heads. (Why the fear? Is she a Jewess or is her fiance Jewish?)

Sense of foreboding.

Carpenter and another man discuss the apprenticeship of the latter's son. The carpenter does not wish to have him. (Why?) The other man seems strange and upset by a stake he sees. (Odd. Is this the man of whom the priest spoke? - Barblin's father?)

Carpenter's exorbitant demands.

Other man identifies himself. He is a teacher (- therefore Barblin's father?) He speaks of astounding and horrifying

everyone by telling the truth. (What truth?)

"Die Andorraner sind gemütliche Leut, aber wenn es ums Geld geht, . . . dann sind sie wie der Jud."

Innkeeper has employed the teacher's son, Andri, as his kitchen-boy. (Kitchen-boy now identified - teacher son, then not Barblin's fiancé, as she is teacher's daughter? The innkeeper is sympathetic, understanding and tolerant)

Teacher full of misgivings about the stake. (Odd!)

Innkeeper unconcerned and offhand. He offers to buy land from the teacher, who needs the money for Andri's apprenticeship. (An obvious opportunist. Revision of opinion about the innkeeper. Avaricious and hypocritical).

Barblin identified as the teacher's daughter.

Andri and Barblin. (Brother and sister?) Andri joyfully tells her that he is to be apprenticed to the carpenter.

They are to be married. (??!)

Drunk soldier looking for Barblin. Unsympathetic figure. Asks Andri where his sister Barblin is. Andri replies that he has no sister. (He has! Or can this be true?)

Soldier taunts Andrie with being a Jew. (Is he? Is the whole family Jewish?) The usual clichés are flung at Andri - the sycophantic behaviour of Jews, their greed for money.

(He did not seem particularly concerned with money when he was playing the juke-box earlier, but if he's a Jew....)

"Ein Andorraner ist nicht feig."

Soldier jeers at Andri for being cowardly on the grounds that all Jews are cowardly. (Anger at the soldier and a certain sympathy for Andri).

Andri says that Barblin is his fiancée. (How can this be? Did one of the parents marry twice?)

Speech by the innkeeper:

Background is provided to the story by a figure for whom the initial sympathy of the audience has been lost. He admits that everyone was wrong. (?) Everyone believed that Andri was the adopted son of the teacher, a Jewish child whom he had saved from "die Schwarzen da drüben". It now appears that he was the real son of the teacher. (Was he illegitimate?) The innkeeper disowns all guilt for what happened. (Was the boy killed? Why? He wasn't really a Jew? Did he fall into the hands of "die Schwarzen"?)

2. Andri and Barblin together. (Are they not brother and sister? No!/Yes?)

Andri: "Vielleicht haben sie recht. Vielleicht bin ich feig."
(But he's not a Jew, or is he?) He speaks of Barblin's father having rescued him as a child. (Surely the innkeeper said that Andri really was the teacher's son? Does he not know??)

He feels he is different from the others. Has a sense of Fate. (Dramatic Irony, surely, as he is to die?)

Frisch goes on to develop the fate of the 'different' Andri within a murderously self-righteous society by calling members of this society to the witness-box at times when they are likely to make the greatest impact. This is not carried out in Brechtian fashion, however, where interest is focussed on the case itself. Here Frisch's aim is a 'reductio ad absurdum' of those comfortable opinions held by the audience, and he achieves it by presenting a whole scala of everyday attitudes behind a thin and unbelievable cloak of alleged innocence. These attitudes are:

- a) "Too bad we were wrong, but I did my bit." (Innkeeper)
- b) "I knew he'd mean trouble. Nobody could've known he wasn't a Jew." (Carpenter)
- c) "Maybe it shouldn't've happened, but it was really his own fault." (Apprentice)
- d) "I couldn't stand him. Everyone said he was a Jew and I still think he was. I only did my duty." (Soldier)
- e) "I hardly knew him. Pity about what happened, but it's over now and we shouldn't dwell on the past." (Jemand)

f) "I merely carried out my task as doctor. What happened to the fellow is to be regretted, but he did have something of the Jew about him, even if he was an Andorran. I took no part in what happened, but I speak for everyone when I say it is regrettable." (Doctor)

In the middle of these comes the priest who alone blames himself along with the others for Andri's death:

"Auch ich habe mir ein Bildnis gemacht von ihm, auch ich habe ihn gefesselt, auch ich habe ihn an den Pfahl gebracht."

This confession is introduced at a time when the audience is inclined to expect a declaration of innocence because of the witnesses who have gone before. The priest's confession of having erected a "Bildnis" thus actually destroys a "Bildnis" (or synthesis) which the audience is in danger of making. From the beginning the audience sets up syntheses which are ironically questioned by the developments on stage. By virtue of knowing that Andri is not a Jew, the audience is very early forced into the role of moral adjudicator as the play unfolds. However, the question under adjudication soon becomes quite different from the one to which the various representatives of Andorran society plead 'Not Guilty'. The audience moves from a concern about whether or not Andri was a Jew to the realization that what happens to Andri is inhuman and totally unjustifiable, regardless

of his being or not being a Jew. Andri does in fact become "Jewish" without being a Jew, and insists on remaining like this - he does become "different", but in this character there was always a difference which only the audience can appreciate or even perceive in the course of the play. This difference is Andri's sincerity and integrity!

There is obviously a marked dialectic progression forced methodically from the audience by means of a quiz-zical dramaturgical irony, by the stifling frustration and blindness of the in-stage dialogue, and by the provocatively eccentric 'leading' characters. Frisch constantly contradicts his audience. He dramatically refutes and revises its comfortable syntheses, or, more precisely, he breaks its mental habit of making cheap and shallow judgments by means of his in- and cross-stage dialogue.

CHAPTER V

THE AUDIENCE, THE DIALOGUE AND THE THEATRICAL

"Der Stückeschreiber, um sich entzünden zu können, muss wissen, wer im Parkett sitzt. . . . Theater ist Auseinandersetzung mit einer Gesellschaft." (H. Bienek, 31)

According to Frisch a knowledge of his audience is of prime importance, as his aim is to unsettle and arouse them, to provoke in them the search for a personal answer to all the questions and problems raised by his dramas. Each play exists as a kind of 'agent provocateur':

Als Stückeschreiber hielte ich meine Aufgabe für durchaus erfüllt, wenn es einem Stück jemals gelänge, eine Frage dermassen zu stellen, dass die Zuschauer von dieser Stunde an ohne eine Antwort nicht mehr leben können. (Tagebuch, 108)

It is in order to fulfil this aim that his dialogue makes great demands of his audience, that his dramas set up a kind of dialectic process in which the audience is involved.

While this involvement exists between the audience and all the characters on stage, it is at its most intense between the audience and the central characters. These latter are, in fact, the dialogue-leaders - the Rittmeister and Elvira in Santa Cruz, Karl in Nun singen sie wieder, Agnes in Als der

Krieg zu Ende war, the prosecutor in Graf Öderland, Don Juan in Don Juan oder die Liebe zur Geometrie, Hotz in Die grosse Wut des Philipp Hotz and Andri in Andorra. They are all rather like the voluble and persuasive Opposition party around whom the Government seems shallow, unreflected and contemptible!

To dismiss these characters, however, by simply acknowledging their importance in the play/audience dialogue would be to do them a grave injustice. They are, in fact, the process of Change - change from cosy inertia, through a period of longing to a positive attempt to make this longing a concrete reality. The end result of the entire process is much less significant than the actual process itself. From the moment of awakening to the moment of final recognition these characters are truly alive and fighting to stay alive, aware of the possibility of death in life and with an overwhelming desire to escape this death, seen in those around them - death which is routine, unthinking acceptance of habit, the cowardice of avoiding uncomfortable truth and the treachery of categorization. It is these central characters, the dialogue-leaders, from whom the strongest theatrical stimuli come, they who provide most material for the audience's imagination, which Frisch considers one of the two important ingredients for the

existence of a 'theatrical' moment, as he defines it. As he himself says:

Spielplatz ist immer die menschliche Seele! Ihren Gesetzen ist alles unterworfen. Eines dieser Gesetze: Kompensation. Wenn ich einen Kerker wahrnehme, findet mich das Wort, das eine freie und heitere Landschaft schildert, besonders empfänglich; Der theatralische Bezug - das Widerspiel von Wahrnehmung - wird besonders zwingend sein, besonders ergiebig, besonders zuverlässig, wenn er den Bedürfnissen der menschlichen Seele folgt, wenn er beispielsweise aus einer Kompensation besteht. (Tagebuch, 195)

If we look at the individual dramas we will find that it is these central characters who echo the longing for "das Wort, das eine freie und heitere Landschaft schildert". Those around them form the prison from which they sense a need to escape, and in their efforts they encourage the audience to do likewise. Any one of the dramas would serve to show that this is so - the Rittmeister is being stifled in his castle and longs for freedom, the exotic, Karl is tormented by his own integrity which demands that he face up to the problem of responsibility and guilt while his fellows gladly hide behind the apparent absolution automatically dispensed with every order given. The freedom Karl chooses lies in death. Agnes, aware of the effort required to keep up the semblance of her marriage with Horst, finds release from this constant effort in the much closer relationship she has with Stepan. The prosecutor, faced with an

act he ought to condemn, realizes that this act is an expression of revolt, and instead of condemnation he finds it awakens in him a longing to break down the whole order which demands condemnation, not understanding, for the individual's despairing revolt. Don Juan, refusing the known boredom and suffocation of any relationship with a woman, longs for escape to geometry in which he sees purity and true constancy. Hotz denies any human the right to claim complete knowledge of any other and in protest sets out to thwart the predictions of his wife. Andri struggles for the freedom to exist on equal terms with his fellow-Andorrans, but when this freedom is denied him, he accepts their prison, thereby forcing them as jailors to pass and carry out the death-sentence. His freedom lies in his acceptance, which in turn converts the freedom of those around him to a prison. In each case the individual character is not only fleeing from a fatal confinement, but is also struggling desperately to find a new base upon which to stand, a base which he feels would allow his own inner 'self' to live and breathe. Whether or not his concept of this inner self is valid he never knows, but the most important self-appointed task for him is to search for conditions under which it can emerge. In the dialogue these characters provide the antithetical impulse to that suffocation which they themselves intuitively feel and the audience

objectively observes - "das Wort, das eine freie und heitere Landschaft schildert", metaphorically speaking.

Forceful and convincing as these characters may be, they are not figures from whom the audience is to take an example. It is their recognition of stagnation and their attempt to escape this which is intended to excite the closed or lazy mind, not their actual solution to the problem of suffocation. The audience, while encouraged, even bullied into thinking and re-thinking its attitudes, is never given the opportunity to identify with a whole person! -- Is the solution to the strictures of ordered society a sortie into the realm of anarchy (Graf Öderland), the answer to the human quest for perfection to be found in geometry ("Don Juan")? -- Yet unexemplary as they may be for the audience, these characters do possess in themselves, in their plight and its attempted resolution, what Frisch considers the elements of the Theatrical: "Musterbeispiel einer theatralischen Situation; die Aussage liegt gänzlich im Widerspiel von Wahrnehmung und Imagination. Hier spielt das Theater sich selbst." (Tagebuch, 194)

As with Frisch's dramatic aim, so too with his concept of the theatrical: the audience is a major consideration as they are put in the position of perceiving and imagining by virtue of being an audience, observing and absorbing what is seen and what is heard on stage. However, this concept holds good also for the

characters within the play itself. They too perceive the limitations of their present and long for release - which longing finds its expression in their quasi-monologues and their various attempts at finding words for their thoughts. These central characters both exemplify the "Widerspiel von Wahrnehmung und Imagination" in themselves and lead the audience into a participation in the theatrical process, as determined by Frisch. Thus, while their dialogue-partner (albeit a mute partner) may be the audience, their whole theatrical existence does not entirely depend on the latter.

In Frisch's plays the audience is always confronted with various possible manifestations of itself, be it in the most praiseworthy or the most contemptible form, therefore to say that the central characters (whose longing for space and life represents possibly the highest manifestation of humanity) illustrate in themselves the elements which Frisch contends constitute the Theatrical, means only that they display what lies within each of us. The audience perceives mental stagnation, longs for communication and progression, which it then seeks to establish with these central characters who represent its longing, and thus it becomes a ready, willing partner in the dialogue - a dialogue in which this audience is forsaken before any actual conclusion is reached.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Looking back at the examination of Frisch's dialogue carried out in previous chapters it now becomes evident that the negative findings are, in fact, positive. The lack of any true verbal progression, of any mental interreaction between the characters is to be perceived and rectified in the mind of the audience. Here the genuine dialogue lacking in the dramas is established, and the play, guided by its compelling central characters becomes a positive partner in this dialogue. Driven by a need for change and for self-seeking, in its most literal sense, these characters are for the most part angry, frustrated and disappointed, yet have a fervent belief in the possibility of establishing a new foundation for themselves, the 'true' selves which they have too long ignored or stifled. They are models for the audience in so far as they are seekers and not finders. That communication within the in-stage dialogue is impossible is evident from the inescapability of the "Bildnis" made by every character, both major and minor. The major characters, although providing an impetus to escape into Life, fail ultimately because of the disparity between the preconceived goals they establish for themselves ("Bildnisse") and the reality

of their realization. The 'informative' dialogue with its commentaries, quasi-monologues, and direct appellations to the audience thus becomes a necessity - only here is there room for the development of ideas and longings.

Might it be argued that Frisch seeks and achieves by means of his dialogue only that which is common to all playwrights - namely, a stimulation of his audience into some kind of mental activity? Do not all dramatists seek to achieve this end by various means? Where modern dramatists are concerned it seems that, knowing that an audience possesses the will to understand, they exploit this will in various ways. Beckett, for example, by portraying as inevitable man's imprisonment in futility, draws on the modern collective consciousness of Man's failure to find a reason for existence, thus involving his audience by portraying a problem in which they are already involved. Brecht, by systematically destroying the emotional involvement his audience may feel, stimulates the rational, for this audience expects to understand and if this is denied them wholly on an emotional level, then there is a likelihood that it will be the more readily established on a rational level. Similarly, Ionesco manages by his tantalizing use of apparently nonsensical dialogue

to provoke the audience to look behind the actual dramas themselves. Frisch too stimulates his audience mentally by choosing themes which will make an immediate impact - the question of guilt, prejudice, society, justice, the picture of Mr. Everyman - but with his particular use of the dialogue he does more than stimulate - he attacks their whole system of well-worn, well-known value-judgments, breaks down the comfortable "Bildnisse" to which their lives are geared, and forces them constantly to re-think, re-appraise and find an individual way of adjusting to their unsettling new mental freedom.

The dialogue of Frisch simultaneously expresses certain problems and implies certain others-- it intentionally leads and misleads, poses questions and scorns the answers given. It is his manipulation of the in-stage and cross-stage dialogue which makes the audience an integral part of his drama. While a desire for the audience's attention may be common to all playwrights, Frisch's method of subtly eliciting real involvement is innovation in the modern theatre.

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