

Cambridge University Press

0521095298 - The Dark Comedy: The Development of Modern Comic
Tragedy, Second Edition

J. L. Styan

Frontmatter

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J. L. STYAN

THE DARK COMEDY

THE DEVELOPMENT OF
MODERN COMIC TRAGEDY

Second edition



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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

In the short time since this book was written, the sense that we are witnessing something of a dramatic renaissance has been confirmed. Labels like ‘the theatre of the absurd’ and ‘the theatre of cruelty’ have been selected and partly discarded as too limiting. Drama of importance has been written by new playwrights like Edward Albee, John Arden, Saul Bellow, Harold Pinter and Peter Weiss. Older playwrights like Jean Anouilh, Samuel Beckett, Jean Genêt, Eugène Ionesco and Tennessee Williams have continued to write major works. Earlier playwrights like Chekhov, Shaw, Pirandello, O’Casey and Brecht are being increasingly recognized for their contribution to the resurgence of tragicomedy and the direction it has taken. The theatre has become, more than it ever was, an international market-place.

I have therefore taken the opportunity offered by a new edition to bring the book up to date and to expand the reading list, to modify or reinforce earlier judgments, and to include extended illustrative analysis (of the kind which was found helpful in the first edition) from *Mother Courage* and *Waiting for Godot*, two plays of seminal influence in the 1960s and, no doubt, for the future.

J. L. S.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
April 1967

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

I hope that the title chosen for this book, *The Dark Comedy*, will not mislead readers into thinking that the drama of the twentieth century is dull, or necessarily gloomy: it is anything but this for the spectator. When it is stimulating, it is because it refuses to allow us to respond with preconceived notions of the tragic or the comic. I have therefore been at pains to lose in my title the associations belonging to the spurious term ‘tragicomedy’, which invites us to measure a play by two widely different yardsticks simultaneously, regardless of their possible irrelevance.

Once again I owe my very sincere thanks to Professor G. E. T. Mayfield, Mrs Pat Roberts and my wife for their most valuable suggestions and assistance. Grateful acknowledgment is also made to the owners of copyright material quoted in this book.

J. L. S.

UNIVERSITY OF HULL

June 1961

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*I cannot immediately determine whether or no I am
dignified by the Title you have graciously conferred on
me. You cannot but recollect the difficulties that have
unceasingly arisen to prevent my discerning whether your
Angels are black, white, or grey.*

THOMAS BUTTS *to* WILLIAM BLAKE