A PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTER STUDY OF ABNORMAL ESCAPISTS AS DEPICTED BY CERTAIN AUTHORS

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A PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTER STUDY OF ABNORMAL
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AUTHORS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this thesis is to make a psychological character study of abnormal escapists as depicted by certain authors.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to obtain an understanding of the abnormal ways out of emotional conflict participated in by certain characters in the drama and novel. An effort has been made to set forth opposing forces that seem to cause a person to seek escapism and to offer some suggestions for solving the problem, so that the situation will not lead to an abnormal escape.

One of the most characteristic phenomenon of the present time is the keen interest of laymen in psychology. Mental problems are being studied and discussed by scientists and students in many widely different fields. History and biography are being rapidly re-written and re-interpreted in the light of the present knowledge of mind, body, and emotions. In the churches and synagogues, ministers, rabbis, and priests are attempting to understand and to interpret the psychology of religious experience. Educators are rapidly transferring their attention and efforts from subject mat-
ter, techniques, and drill to methods and to the release, development, and guidance of personalities. In the business world, executives are engaged in applying psychology to salesmanship, advertising, and personnel management.

Articles on mental hygiene and mental problems occupy much space in daily and periodical publications and on the programs of lecture platforms. Much of the literature which has been produced within the last decade has been based on escapism, man's conflict and his escape.

One reason perhaps for this trend in psychological problems is that the comparative freedom and leisure, which modern civilization has supplied, have resulted in freeing many individuals from the dreary treadmill of an incessant struggle for bare existence; they have been permitted time for introspection and self-analysis. The great prevalence of serious mental and nervous disorders, accentuated by the intolerable strain of the depression, has impressed people with the necessity for giving thought to matters of mental hygiene and mental problems. Laymen have come to realize that the individualized mind and personality are very fragile, and that they peculiarly susceptible to maladjustments, derangements, and deterioration under the complex conditions of today's civilization. Whatever reason may be assigned for this newly-awakened interest, it is an accepted fact that a great number of people are eager to know more about themselves and their associates; for this knowledge they
have turned to the field of mental hygiene.

In this research, the essential principles of psychology are presented in a practical, non-technical manner. It is hoped that an analysis of emotional conflicts and the discussion that follows will help the reader to understand the mental conflicts of individuals with whom he may be associated.

Limitations of the Problem

Because of the great number of writers depicting escapists, it is impossible to cover all of the material which has been written. This study is confined to some of the works of three representative dramatists and novelists: Henrich Ibsen, Eugene O'Neill, and Thomas Hardy.

Source of Data

Works of the authors to be considered have been read, and characters representing escapists are qualified, described, and discussed in the chapters that follow.

Criteria

The psychological characteristics of escapists were determined by definitions from outstanding psychologists and psycho-analysts.

Treatment of Data

After the works of the authors to be considered were read and the escapists determined, they are discussed under
three headings: escapists by suicide, escapists by hysteria and escapists by insanity. Each of these three methods of escape has several subheadings which are discussed. The following order is followed:

1. Escapists by insanity: These case-studies are depicted in the following dramas and novel:
   "Great God Brown," "Beyond the Horizon," "Emperor Jones," "Dynamo," Far From the Madding Crowd,
   "All of God's Chillun's Got Wings," "When We Dead Awaken," and "Anna Christie."

2. Escapists by hysteria: Characters are chosen from the following dramas: "The Lady from the Sea,"
   "Beyond the Horizon," and "All of God's Chillun's Got Wings."

3. Escapists by suicide: Cases are found in the following dramas: "Emperor Jones," "Diff'rent,"
   "Dynamo," "Hedda Gabler," and Mourning Becomes Electra."

Discussion of Definitions

Pressey uses the following interpretations of psychological terms in discussing mental abnormalities:

1. Escapists are characters who have conflicts in their lives which cause them to find a way of evading the issue.

2. An emotional conflict is a state of mind resulting from the thwarting of a powerful drive or
from overcoming some strong resistance.

3. Three abnormal methods of escape are insanity, hysteria or emotional illness, and suicide.

4. Hallucinations are false sense impressions.

5. A delusion is a false belief; the most frequent types are those of grandeur, persecution, and self-accusation.

6. Negativism is a type of forgetting or a general negation of all things. The patient finds that life is too hard, and he escapes from reality by denying that he is alive.

7. Obsessions are ideas that are constantly in the mind; they are often accompanied by anxiety.

8. Apathy is indifference to what is happening.

9. Melancholia is a state of morbid depression.

10. Regression is returning to infancy, mentally.

11. Hysteria is imaginary illness. Its physical forms are fainting, hysterical convulsions, paralysis, crying, laughing, wringing hands, and screaming.

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1 S. L. Pressy and L. C. Pressy, Mental Abnormality and Deficiency, pp. 333-348.
A General Discussion of Abnormal Escapism

Since the purpose of this study is to seek an understanding of abnormal escapists, it is necessary to know something about abnormal ways of escape.

Psychology teaches that when an emotion is constantly thwarted, abnormality often results. This is particularly true in people who have little stability, or who have weak nervous systems caused by some organic disease.

Most people believe that there are many methods of escaping conflicts which are not normal procedures. The following types of escapism are found in characters of the dramas and the novel under consideration who used abnormal methods of evading issues:

1. The conquering hero
2. The suffering hero
3. Regression
4. Amnesia
5. Negativism
6. Alcoholic insanity
7. Dementia praecox

The characters in the drama are representative of characters in everyday life who seek an avenue of escape. The type characterized by negativism is the person who refuses to believe anything that is unpleasant, while the conquering

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hero type tries to escape reality by delusions of grandeur. He wants so many things, but he gets so few of them that his emotions are thwarted to such a degree that he relieves them by pretending to be a great person.

The suffering hero type of escapism is found in the individual who feels that he deserves sympathy because he has sought to attain so many things, but has failed to acquire them.

The regressive type of escapism is found in people who find the present unpleasant and sometimes unbearable; they regress to some earlier time in life when they were happy. Sometimes patients build up toward forgetfulness, which is called amnesia, another type of escapism.

The second type of abnormal escapism is called hysteria. The patient often becomes ill and shows symptoms of an organic illness, which in reality has no organic basis.

The last abnormal way out of emotional conflicts to be discussed in this thesis is suicide. Some people consider it the one sure way out.

Reasons for Using Case-Study Characters from Literature

In order to make a thorough study of abnormal escapist, it is necessary to make a study of some person or character who has used abnormal means of escaping emotional conflicts. Instead of real persons, fictitious characters are used in this study; they are chosen from plays and novels that in
themselves are case studies.

The privilege of the drama is to represent the mental activities that form the little peculiarities of life or its greater disturbances. The tragedies of mental disease are given no less actuality or profundity of meaning because they are represented and softened by the touch of an imaginative setting and an artistic treatment. Each drama in this study has a particular value in its content and structure as a whole. The author conceives a certain situation or continuity of events which is utilized to develop the psychological thought for which the drama internally stands; in so doing he makes a cross section of human life.

Henrich Ibsen’s Dramas

Ibsen’s characters are universal, and his plays are based on psychological facts. He writes primarily for the more intelligent people or students. Chandler says:

He wishes to do more than stir the feelings or the aesthetic approval. He is interested in certain truths by which he believes men and women should be guided in their conduct. Having conceived such a truth, he develops a plot and characters to render it explicit.

Because he is an artist, as well as a thinker, Ibsen creates no mere mechanics of abstraction but a world of human beings whose feelings, thoughts, and deeds are of intrinsic interest. His personages are so natural and circumstances are set forth so sympathetically that we thrill before the spectacle of life, and only on reflection perceive that we have been called up-
on to witness a laboratory experiment.

Scattered throughout the entire group of his plays are characters who are escapists.

Eugene O'Neill

In many of his dramas, O'Neill deals with a maladjusted individual, probably because such a character is more interesting and more dramatic; probably because the author's own experiences have increased his understanding of abnormalities. He digs down into the sub-soil of humanity. When he scratches through the veneer of an individual, he does not find the characteristics of normal people but of barbarians and escapists.

O'Neill expresses pity very often, but it is generally bound about with irony. The passions of common man are objectified in drink and in women. The author seems to be interested in blundering men and in their unfitness. His interest is centered on the minds of people who are crowded and stunted by natural forces; his most interesting men and women characters are escapists.

Thomas Hardy

There has been much discussion in recent years concerning the novels of Thomas Hardy. It is generally conceded that this writer shows that fantastic tendencies are results of the mental attitudes of men and women who have been de-
feated in their struggle. By his careful delineation of human nature and by his superb power of describing the scenes in Wessex, Hardy portrays escapist without becoming either weird or fantastic.
CHAPTER II

ESCAPISTS BY INSANITY

The term insanity had its origin at the time when patients with mental diseases were considered to be possessed by evil spirits. Any disorder of conduct that was considered intolerable in an immediate community was designated as insanity.

Today, the popular conception of insanity is that it is conduct that departs from customary form, indicating a severe maladjustment to environment.

Contrary to current popular opinions, insanity develops over a long period of time. The sudden happenings that cause attention to be focused on the patient are the outbursts of long-standing insidiously festering circumstances.

Case Studies

"When We Dead Awaken." --To illustrate how certain characters become escapist, it is necessary to study specific cases. The first play chosen in which escapist is paramount is "When We Dead Awaken," by Ibsen. To give the reader some idea of the case, it seems necessary to tell the story of the play.

The leading character, Irene, was a victim of negativism. She refused to face life and pretended that she was dead. Psychologically, she had an emotional conflict in her life that was so intense that she had to find a way of escape, and she chose an abnormal way out. She was young and beautiful and fell in love with a great sculptor. She acted as his model, but when he had finished the study, he no longer cared for her. She had renounced her home and family; when he cast her away, her life was empty; her former interests and friends were gone, and life was unendurable; she longed to die in order to escape. The result of this emotional conflict was that she acquired delusions and thought of herself as dead; by insanity she became an escapist and found a way out.

For the case of Irene to be of real value, it is necessary for it to be analyzed. The history of the family indicates that they were average, middle-class people, with no known psychoses in the family. It is interesting to note that they opposed Irene's entering certain types of work; the parents chose to provide her with the necessities of life and its comforts rather than to have her model.

An analysis of the history of Irene shows that she seemed normal when she began modeling for Rubek. At that time, she was very patient, very energetic, and almost over-enthusiastic about her work. When he dismissed her, she experienced a nervous shock which continued to grow worse.
After this shock, she suffered many delusions and believed herself dead. The delusions became more fantastic and she was watched closely by her nurse. She refused to eat and drank only milk; her face was pale, and its lines were stiffened; her eyelids were drooped, and her eyes seemed to see nothing. She kept her arms crossed upon her breast and carried her body rigidly; her steps were stiff and measured; the expression in her eyes became more tragic, and her voice was toneless; if she talked at all, she whispered, and her voice often quivered.

As her delusions became more intense, she thought the statue which Rubek had carved was their child. Then she believed that she had killed her second husband; she contended that she had many children and that she had killed them all. These actions and ideas show that Irene was an escapist, and that she made her escape by insanity.

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"Dynamo".—In this drama by Eugene O'Neill, Reuben is another example of an escapist by insanity. He was tortured by the thought that he was living in sin. This idea was forced upon him because he was brought up in a strictly religious atmosphere in which his father's religion was one of fear. His mental processes were so confused that he eventually became insane. In his final attempt to escape, he shot Ada, his fiance, and cast himself on the dynamo by which he was electrocuted.

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Eugene O'Neill, Dynamo.
Far From the Madding Crowd. --Another example of an escapist by insane delusions is found in Thomas Hardy's novel Far From the Madding Crowd. In this story, Farmer Boldwood is a pathological case; life for him had been one continuous struggle. When we were first introduced to him he was about forty-two years of age, moody, morose, and with a peculiar aversion to women. He ignored Bathsheba, but he was very much interested by her valentine, which she sent as a practical joke. After her marriage to Troy, Boldwood's mental state seemed to have approximated insanity. He neglected his farm, which rapidly deteriorated, and he lived in a state of gloom and sorrow. When Troy died, Boldwood took heart again, and after he received a meager bit of encouragement from Bathsheba, he was almost happy and normal. He lived in a world of imagined participation; he purchased expensive jewelry and women's clothes; he labeled them all "Bathsheba Boldwood", then stored them away. When the apparel and jewelry were found after he had been arrested on a murder charge, they helped to establish his insanity and thus saved him from execution. All of these things prove that Boldwood was an escapist.

"Beyond the Horizon". --A type of delusion, called daydreaming, is found in "Beyond the Horizon". In this play,

3
Thomas Hardy, Far From the Madding Crowd.

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Robert's feeling of inadequacy and inferiority began in his early childhood when he was ill. He could not play with other children; he sat in his invalid chair and dreamed. This seemed to be his only pleasure, and it carried him away from his illness, out beyond the horizon into a new country of make-believe and phantasy. It furnished him an escape from unpleasant reality. This escape became a habit, and Robert never did learn to face reality. All of his life he was an escapist by delusion.

In the last part of the drama, Robert was overwhelmed with illness and despair. He lost his mother, who had always meant so much to him and he was unable to bear the grief. He took no interest in the farm after her death. The last spark of initiative faded when his small daughter died. This sorrow overwhelmed him, and he seemed to welcome his own death which came a few months later. To him it was a realization of his dreams to go far away beyond the hills that fenced in his spirit. He dreamed his way through life; he learned the pleasures of phantasy when he was a child, and nothing which he ever experienced in reality exceeded those pleasures, and he participated in them as a means of escape.

"The Great God Brown"—The conquering-hero type of insanity is represented by Billy Brown in the drama "The Great God Brown" by O'Neill. A feeling of inferiority and inadequacy caused Billy Brown to develop a dominant personality;

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his friend Dion called him "The Great God Brown."

"All God's Chillun's Got Wings" -- an example of regression as a form of insanity participated in by certain escapists is found in the play "All God's Chillun's Got Wings" by O'Neill. The scene of this drama is laid in the tenement district of lower New York. The blacks and the whites lived on the same street, probably on opposite sides, and the children played together in their common playground -- the middle of the street.

Ella, a beautiful white girl, and Jim a mulatto, began a deep and lasting friendship when they were very small children. They were teased and tormented by other children because one of them was black and the other was white, and yet their love for each other grew.

The years passed swiftly and Ella was a senior in high school. She had become a favorite and at that particular time received marked attention from Mickey, one of her childhood playmates. At graduation time, Ella and Mickey walked down the street on their way to commencement exercises. They met Jim, who attempted to be friendly with Ella and to revive old memories of their childhood sweetheart days. Jim insisted on her telling him that they were still friends; he very plainly showed that he still loved her and that she was his inspi-

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5 Eugene O'Neill, All Gods Chillun's Got Wings and Other Plays, p. 75.
ration and ideal. Ella seemed to be amazed and became very haughty. She remained indifferent and said that she did not want him to bother her.

Pretending to protect Ella, Mickey lunged toward Jim, threatened him and told him to stay in his place, that he was just a "Nigger" and that Ella was not interested in him. Jim staggered under this blow and pleaded with Ella to deny the unkind things which Mickey had said, but she refused. She and Mickey passed on, leaving Jim with a crushed spirit and a knowledge of unrequited love.

Some time later, Ella was betrayed by Mickey; he deserted her when she was about to become a mother. Her parents and her friends shunned her—everyone except Jim. He begged her to let him do something to help. Ella found in his love a haven of rest from the buffets and bruises of the world. He insisted on an immediate marriage and she apparently mistook her deep gratitude for love.

Soon after their marriage, they sailed for France. For a time, everything went well and they seemed to be happy; suddenly they desired to return to their native land. Jim's family was angered and hurt when he married Ella, and his sister was openly hostile. However, when they arrived home, Jim's mother gave them a furnished house, and she and her daughter left them to solve their own problems. Jim continued his law studies, because it was his life's ambition to pass the bar examination.
Ella's mistaken love grew colder day by day until she was unbearably unhappy. She determined to do all she could to prevent Jim from passing the bar because she felt that his success would contribute to her feeling of inferiority. About this time, she manifested many symptoms of insanity, ranging from slight illness to violent maniac attacks. She was a victim of an emotional conflict and was seeking some way of escape. She eventually found release from the unpleasant situation by regressing to childhood.

"Emperor Jones"—Another form of abnormality known as hallucinations is portrayed by O'Neill in one of his best plays "Emperor Jones". The scene of this drama is an island of the West Indies. The Emperor, Brutus Jones, had been dominated by his fears throughout his life. In his earlier days, he resented being sold as a slave and ran away. He sneaked ashore on one of the West Indies Islands, and because of his wit and humor, he eventually became the ruler of a savage tribe.

For a short while, he was happy as an emperor, because that was the greatest title that he could imagine. Soon he was warned that the natives were revolting because he had become so cruel. He contended that he was not afraid, but he admitted that he was prepared to escape if a riot should occur.

He left his pretentious throne and journeyed toward the jungle forest as the dissention grew worse. When he arrived, he became fearful because he failed to find the food which he had previously hidden in case of this emergency. Hallucina-
tions beset his mind as he continued his flight; he had delusions; he saw visions of a man he had killed, of a chain-gang at work, of slaves on the auction block, and finally of himself as he was offered as a sacrifice. The incessant rhythm of a distant tom-tom and the weird sounds of the forest preyed upon his nerves until he was transformed into a native, superstitious, terrorized darky of the plantation. Each of his frightful visions was banished by one of the precious bullets in his pistol, until finally in a hysterical spasm, he used the last one to end his own life.
CHAPTER III

ESCAPISTS BY HYSTERIA

Characteristics of Hysteria

Hysteria, or imaginary illness, is one of the oldest of the known mental abnormalities. Today the term is used to cover the wide range of phenomena from the hysterical fits of laughing and crying to the disorders of multiple personality.

It often happens that when a person is confronted with a problem which seems to have no solution, he escapes by feigning illness. All attempts to show an organic basis for this disorder have failed, and consequently, many hypotheses concerning the nature of the disease have been advanced.

The symptoms and forms of hysteria are almost numberless, and no attempt to describe or discuss them all will be made in this study. However, some of the most common forms are necessary. Among them are motor symptoms, which include paralysis, tics, tremors, and contractures. The tremors occur especially when the patient's attention is drawn to them.

Sensory disturbances are also common among hysterical people. Disorders occur in all the senses but are generally

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1 R. M. Dorcus and Shaffer, Textbook of Abnormal Psychology, p. 278.
2 Ibid, p. 279.
greater in vision and hearing.

The visceral symptoms include primary and secondary mental anorexia. Simple anorexia begins as a voluntary restriction of a diet, and is found almost entirely in women. The refusal of food has been shown to have an emotional basis in many cases, but the individuals often carry their starvation to such extremes that serious physical disorders develop. The refusal of food at first is voluntary, but soon the appetite is lost and the patient really has no desire to eat. Secondary mental anorexia results in the restriction of the diet, due to the patient's false belief that he has a stomach disorder. Both sexes are subject to this strange malady. The patient seems to have a fear of some gastric disease and becomes more and more concerned about his food until finally he feels that eating disturbs his stomach.

According to Morgan, the symptoms of hysteria fall under the following heads: somnambulism, fugues, multiple personality, convulsive attacks, motor disturbances, anesthesias, visual and auditory disorders, visceral troubles, and respiratory disturbances.

Case Studies

A theoretical discussion of hysteria is inadequate. Case

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3 Ibid., p. 279.

4 Ibid., p. 280.

5 Ibid., p. 280.

6 J. J. B. Morgan, Psychology of Abnormal People, pp. 490-94.
studies are presented in the paragraphs that follow in order that a concrete understanding of the problem may be presented.

"The Lady from the Sea".--This drama by Ibsen has been chosen, because the character Ellida represents an example of hysteria. She was reared on an island and had no opportunity to make normal contacts. Her father was a light-house keeper; her mother died from insanity, and Ellida lead a lonely life.

When she was quite young, a vessel was wrecked near the island, and a young sailor came ashore. This stranger held a great fascination for her, even though he had killed the captain of the ship and was fleeing. Before he left the island, they became engaged. In a mad moment they held a ceremony, whereby she considered herself married to him and to the sea. Soon after this, he left but she continued to believe that she was bound to him; she could not rid herself of the memory of this first love. Later she married Wangel for security. He had been married before and had two daughters. They were not very congenial with their step-mother, and Ellida continued to grow more lonely. Her only child died when he was quite young; she imagined that he was not mentally sound. Wangel was much disturbed over her increasing morbidness and continued illness. At times he believed that she was insane. She complained of the atmosphere stifling her; she found getting into the sea her only recreation. She cultivated few friends,

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and her association with them was very strange and peculiar. Her relationship with her husband was strained, and life with her step-daughters continued to grow more unsatisfactory. The story ends when her emotional conflict ceased, due to the sailor’s return. She learned to live a normal life with her husband, and forgot her fascination for the sailor and the sea.

"Beyond The Horizon".—In this drama by O’Neill, case studies of imaginary illness are found. Ruth’s mother was an invalid and made use of her illness to appeal to the sympathy of her daughter and friends. She had an inferiority complex and nagged everyone with whom she associated.

In the early part of the drama, the mother’s illness inhibited Ruth’s activity. Ruth’s reaction was to inhibit the actions of others. She persuaded Robert not to go with his uncle on a trip he wanted to take. She refused to make the journey because she was afraid to leave her familiar surroundings. A plan was finally worked out, whereby Andy went on the trip with his uncle, and Robert remained at home and married Ruth.

Robert proved to be a poor farmer, and after his father’s death, the farm began to be neglected. Ruth became more restless and unhappy, constantly nagging her husband and little girl. Eventually, Robert’s mother and his little daughter died. He was crushed by the sorrow and lost the last spark of the am-

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bition which he once had.

Andy returned and Ruth hoped that he would stay and manage the farm. She still had an idea that maybe she loved him instead of Robert. She hoped that he might return her love and take her away from her sordid existence. He upset her plans by denying any affection; then she became more lonely and embittered. Five years later, Robert became very ill of tuberculosis. A specialist was summoned from New York, but he was too late. Robert seemed happy to die, because he believed he could realize his long dream of going out "beyond the horizon", a mysterious far place which beckoned alluringly to him.

"All God's Chillun's Got Wings". Another example of escapism by hysteria is found in O'Neill's "All God's Chillun's Got Wings". The story of this drama is included in Chapter II of this study. Throughout the play Ella manifested many hysterical symptoms, ranging from slight illness to violent maniac attacks, all of which indicated hysteria. She seemed to be the victim of an inner conflict between her conscious and unconscious mind; she sought a way of escape because she could not find a solution to her problem. In her unconscious mind, she felt a bitter hatred toward her husband, yet she tried to make herself believe that she could become adjusted. Soon they both realized that she had failed, and that the age-old, ever-present problem of race prejudice could not be settled.

9 Eugene O'Neill, All God's Chillun's Got Wings, And Other Plays, 121.
In this final hysterical state, she found relief by returning to those childhood days when she and Jim experienced pleasant associations. The drama ended, leaving her living in regression and hysteria.
CHAPTER IV

ESCAPISTS BY SUICIDE

Causes of Suicide

Suicide is usually considered either a criminal or a sociological problem; because of this fact, the material written about it is ordinarily based on an economic viewpoint; it is usually comparative and statistical, yet much of it contains psychological implications which contribute toward an understanding of suicide as a means of escape. For most people existence has always been more or less complicated; it has never been free from despair. Situations have always arisen that have caused people to weigh the value of life against the peace that comes with death, but in spite of hardships and struggles, people rarely lose their desire to live; the healthy individual finds some normal way of escape. Of course, it would be false to say that all suicides are insane, because a great number seem normal, efficient, and intelligent, yet we must believe that mental capacity has a great deal to do with this abnormality.

It is a prevalent belief that economic conditions, religion, and other factors of life exert a great influence on the frequency and method of suicide. However, psychologists emphasize the fact that taking one's own life is due to an internal conflict, escaping an emotional problem for which no solution has been found.
"Hedda Gabler". In order to show how suicide is the result of emotional disturbance and of certain drives and inhibitions, a drama entitled "Hedda Gabler" is analyzed, and Hedda herself is used as a case-study. Her suicide is perhaps one of the most interesting in all dramas from the psychologist's point of view. A summary of the plot reveals the implication of escapism.

Hedda Gabler was the daughter of a general in the army. Her father married late in life after having previously lived a very sensuous life. Her mother died when she was young, and Hedda was left with little guidance. She was not subjected to any discipline or any moral code; about the only things that she learned well were shooting and riding. She was very beautiful and had a great number of admirers. Her father's social position allowed them to participate in society, even though his financial status did not correspond with their social position.

Hedda soon decided that marriage would be the quickest and easiest way out of the life she was living. As a result, she married George Tesman who was socially, morally, and intellectually inferior to her. Many conditions arose which made life more miserable and unendurable for her.

At this time, Judge Brack, who was an old friend of her earlier girlhood, offered himself as a means for her to es-

escape the unhappy life which she was living with Tesman. She knew from the beginning that his policy was not altogether honorable and upright. Even at that, she seemed willing to accept anything in order to escape. She was growing more lonely, and in addition, she was going to have a child, which she did not want.

Hedda was always ambitious to influence the lives of other people, and she found an opportunity in the person of Mrs. Elvsted, who had married the sheriff, because he found it more expensive to have her as a housekeeper than a wife. Soon children came into their home; Hedda's former friend, Lovborg, was employed as tutor for them, and Mrs. Elvsted fell in love with him. Because of her influence, he reformed, quit his wild life, and continued his writing. He soon had a book published and was counted a great success. Mrs. Elvsted was afraid that this fame might cause him to return to his old ways, so she asked Hedda to befriend him if she had a chance. Hedda appreciated the opportunity, and was glad of the opportunity to see Lovborg again. They attended a party and became violently drunk. He spent the late part of the evening in a disreputable house and in the confusion and drunkenness, he lost the manuscript to his second book. To make matters worse, Hedda's husband found it and brought it to her. After Lovborg regained consciousness and became sober, he came to Hedda. In a sarcastic way, she suggested that suicide would be an admirable way for him to end his
life and presented him with a gun with the admonition that he use it. He left in a fit of anger, and she immediately burned the manuscript.

Lovborg went back to the disreputable house, in which he had spent the evening, and in a stupor he shot himself. Heida received the tragic news from Judge Brack, who gained a great deal of joy and satisfaction in relating the horrible details of the tragedy. He had an unkind feeling toward Lovborg, because he was his rival; he also knew that at last he had found a weapon with which he could influence Hedda. He was aware of the fact that she feared scandal more than anything in the world, and that she valued her individual freedom above everything else. When he discovered that the gun which killed Lovborg was Hedda's, he felt secure. He knew if he revealed the identity of the weapon that she would have to face a terrible scandal. If he did not reveal the truth, she would be under obligation to be his mistress and slave. To Hedda, the choice was between two evils, and in order to escape, she chose death.

"Diff'rent".—Another escapist by suicide is pictured very vividly in the character of Caleb, the hero of O'Neill's drama "Diff'rent". The scene of this play is centered around the Crosby home on a side street of a New England seaport village. Emma Crosby, a slender girl of twenty, with exceptionally plain features, was planning to marry Caleb Williams, a tall athletic, powerfully built man about thirty years of age.

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Because of his high moral standard, Emma felt that Caleb was different from other men. She was very happy in this newfound love until her brother teased her by saying that Caleb had been entangled in a love affair with a native island girl on one of his voyages. Emma was very disappointed and heartbroken, and resolved never to marry. Caleb tried to explain that the incident was not his fault; that he purposefully remained on the ship, and that the native girl swam out to him. He told her how deeply he regretted his weakness, but Emma could not be consoled. She sent him away without hope of marriage, but with a promise of friendship. He vowed that he would remain single and wait for her even if it took thirty years for her to change her mind.

Many things happened during the thirty years which intervened between the first and second part of the play. When the curtain came up for the last scene, Emma was a withered, scrawny woman of fifty years of age. There was something revoltingly and pitifully incongruous about her; her dress was too frilly and youthful for a woman of her age; she wore high-heeled pumps; her cheeks were heavily rouged, and the pencil-shadowed eyes and her dyed black hair all told a tragic story.

Caleb had grown old more gracefully, and he continued to call on Emma when the ship was in. He hoped that she would reconsider and become his wife, but she had become intensely interested in his nephew, Benny. This young man was about twenty-three years of age, rather coarse, hard, and cocksure. He pre-
tended to be in love with Emma, because she let him have money when he needed it and allowed him to take possession of her newly-decorated home. Regardless of the objections of Caleb and other friends, she continued to be pleased and flattered with Benny's attention. She refused to believe that he was having love affairs with many other women and she was overjoyed when he proposed marriage.

Caleb tried to convince her of Benny's hypocrisy and unworthiness, but she would not listen. When Caleb left and Benny returned, he and Emma discussed their marriage plans. He suggested the possibility of getting money from Uncle Caleb if he and Emma did not marry. Then she remembered what Caleb had told her. Finally, after it was too late, she came to the realization of the failure of her attempted substitution of Benny for Caleb. All that she had done had not compensated for her loss of a normal love and the happy marriage she had anticipated when she was young. She became hysterical; just at this point in the story, Benny's mother entered. She said that she heard a strange noise in the barn and Benny went to investigate; he returned soon and announced that Caleb had hanged himself. It seemed that he could not accept Emma's repeated refusal of marriage; when he discovered that she had forsaken her former ideals, he could not bear it; he chose suicide as a means of escape from an intolerable situation.
"Mourning Becomes Electra".—The scene of this story was laid in and near the old Mannon mansion in a New England town; the time was 1865. When the play began, the Mannon family represented the town's wealthiest and best people, ship-builders and owners. Ezra Mannon, who was the mayor before the war, was now a Brigadier-General in Grant's Army, and he was a leading citizen of the town. He disliked his son because of his wife's fixation for him; the daughter, Lavinia, hated her mother and was reciprocally hated by her mother. Because of this unkind feeling, Lavinia turned to her father more and more for affection and love which her mother had denied her. This gulf between mother and daughter became wider and wider through the years.

Lavinia discovered that her mother had been having a love affair with Captain Adam Brant while Ezra was in the army. She dispatched this information to her father, but he apparently, discredited the report. However, when he returned home, he felt that his wife had changed. He questioned her, and she finally admitted her hatred for him and her love for Brant. He tried to forget about the domestic upheaval and turned his attention to his profession. He substituted the love of Lavinia for the affection of his wife, but such substitution did not suffice. He was soon seized with a heart

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attack, brought on by becoming infuriated by his wife's affair. He called for medicine and she gave him a poison tablet, which insured his death.

Lavinia's suspicion evolved into a dreadful certainty; she knew that her mother had poisoned her father. All of the hatred that she had felt was now directed in an effort to avenge her father's murder. She alienated Orin's affection from his mother and secured him as an accomplice in planning the death of Brant. Orin was driven to the verge of insanity; he was overwhelmed by the knowledge of his mother's infidelity and by his sister's insistence upon the avenging of his father's death. He brooded constantly over these conditions and renounced his love for his fiancé, Hazel. Finally, he was so overwhelmed that while cleaning his gun one day, he took his own life.

The mother was bereft of both her son's love and her lover's devotion. Life now seemed to her unbearable, and she committed suicide as a means of escape.

Only Lavinia remained, an object of thwarted love, vengeance, and murder. All hope of life, love, and happiness was torn from her fiercely-reaching hands when she and Orin murdered Captain Adam Brant. The drama ended as she developed anxiety-neuroses and committed herself to solitary confinement in the mansion of the Hannons.

"Emperor Jones".—In another of O'Neill's dramas, "Emperor Jones", a summary of which may be found in Chapter II

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of this study, the leading character escaped an emotional conflict in his life by committing suicide. In the last part of the play, after Brutus Jones sneaked ashore on one of the West Indies Islands and had become ruler of one of the savage tribes, his followers revolted against him. He had no way of controlling the people but by his bluffing personality. When they no longer respected and feared this weapon, he knew of no place of escape except the jungle forest. He sought this refuge and became lost in the tangled trees. After many hours of wandering, he was terrorized by the frantic fears that surged in his mind. When he realized that the savages were close at hand, he remembered his last faithful bullet, and with it, he took his own life.

"Dynamo." —Reuben Light, the hero of "Dynamo", which has already been analyzed in Chapter II, portrays the character of a person who escaped a conflict in life by the tragic method of suicide.

Reuben was reared in a very religious home, but his father's religion was one of fear rather than one of love. Reuben imitated his father's reaction and bluffed his way along most of the time. The fact that his mother had always taken his part when there was any trouble with the father, made him exceedingly dependent. One day she refused to champion his cause in his love affair, and he was shocked, hurt,

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Eugene O'Neill, "Dynamo", op. cit.
and bewildered. He began to feel that he had been foolish in depending on his mother and that both his parents had failed him. In a fit of anger and despondency, he left them and denounced everything and everybody associated with them. He was at an age of emotional instability, and his mental processes became so upset and confused that he became obsessed with illusions and eventually became insane; he ended his life on the dynamo in a hydro-electric plant.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The preceding chapters have contained examples of abnormal escapism participated in by fictitious characters of literature. These characters have been depicted by novelists and playwrights who were interested in the analysis of personality struggling with its inner desires, conflicts, and disorders; with its behavior relationship to other equally complex personalities; and finally with its adjustment to thwarting elements in the environment. The authors chosen for this study are representative of a school of writers of escapism and include the dramatists Ibsen and O'Neill, and the novelist, Thomas Hardy.

Types of abnormal escapism participated in by the fictitious characters were classified under three general headings: escapists by insanity, escapists by hysteria, and escapists by suicide. Each of these classifications has several sub-headings which were discussed and qualified and each disorder was interpreted by a case-study from the works of the previously-mentioned authors.

Conclusions

The value of this study lies in the fact that the characters used as case-studies are representative of an army of
300,000 individuals in institutions for the insane, the epileptic, and the feeble-minded in this country.

The number of cases in institutions is truly great; however all mental deviates are not in institutions. It is impossible to estimate the number who are not cared for by the state or private institutions as certified mental problems.

Such facts emphasize that the problems of abnormalities are not incidental problems or problems remote from the average individual; they are not problems that can be avoided, if they can not be solved, by putting the unfortunates in institutions away from relatives, friends, and the public eye. These problems are personal ones to a great many individuals; they are problems which no intelligent citizen can afford to ignore.

As investigations have indicated the magnanimity of the problems of mental abnormality culminating in abnormal escapism, the next step is to seek a solution. Psychologists, doctors, and psycho-analysts have made a unified effort to work out such a solution and, as a result, mental hygiene has come into existence. This movement began as a humanitarian program. It was formulated and designed to make life more tolerable for

1 J.J.B. Morgan, *Psychology of Abnormal People*, p. 70.

2 Ibid., p. 256.
those who had succumbed to mental disorders. The initial procedure took the form of providing better housing and more comforts for the unfortunates, more kindly treatment for them, and the development of a more tolerant viewpoint on the part of the public in general. However, it soon became apparent that more pleasant living conditions and comforts and more kindly treatment are secondary to the development of greater skill in treating the mental diseases of the individuals. For this reason, the next endeavors of the mental hygiene movement lead to the alleviation of functional mental disorders.

The recognition that a person may develop attitudes toward himself, toward others, and toward social conditions, which may lead to disintegration and mental deterioration, has opened a vast new field for the operation of a new preventative technique. It is now conceded that mental readjustment for the individual who has failed to adjust himself on the higher levels involves a re-educational program that will substitute more desirable habits of thought and conduct for the faulty ones. It is believed that for the individual who is just beginning to show a lack of proper integration, mental hygiene means educational guidance of a type that will prevent a complete breakdown.

A complete mental hygiene program includes and endeavors to control all the agencies which have a bearing on an individual’s adjustment. Since there is no part of his person-
ality which does not have some effect upon such adjustment, all phases of his life must be considered. Broadly viewed, these may be divided into the following large groups: physical, social, and mental health.

Physical Health. — Since mental and social adjustments are often influenced by an individual's physical condition, this phase of his well-being should be considered first because it offers the most easily recognized and most tangible approach. If the maladjustment under consideration continues, to remain after every possible physical condition has been corrected, it is to be ascertained that something else is wrong and that steps should be taken to find the nature of that trouble.

The influence that physical health exerts on life activities is readily seen in the drama "Beyond the Horizon". The hero Robert was ill in early childhood; he was forced to sit in an invalid's chair, and was not permitted to play with other children. His only pleasure was day-dreaming—projecting his fancy beyond the horizon. As a result of his physical disability, he developed a feeling of inadequacy and inferiority that culminated in his becoming an escapist by delusion.

Social Health. — Social factors largely determine a person's philosophy of life, his ideals, and his conduct. In

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3 Eugene O'Neill, "Beyond the Horizon" from Burns Mantle, Best Plays of 1919-20, p. 30.
4 J. J. B. Morgan, op. cit., p. 162.
pursuing mental hygienic methods of dealing with abnormalities, a complete understanding of an individual necessitates a detailed analysis of the social relationships he has encountered, as well as the effects that they have had upon the development of his attitudes toward life.

O'Neill emphasized the influence of social contact and associations when he portrays Reuben in "Dynamo." This versatile young man was brought up in a very religious atmosphere; he was ruled by a fearfully religious father, and was pampered by a strictly religious mother. His emotional life was not nurtured or developed normally because he was constantly tortured by the thoughts of sin. As a result of his restricted and one-sided social contacts and associations, he shot his fiance and then committed suicide.

**Mental Health.**—A person who is mentally healthful is one who is balanced and integrated in all phases of his personality. This balance implies continual adjustment and varied reactions. Since every person must learn specific ways of meeting every new problem which he encounters, and since every situation is different, the most perfectly adjusted individual uses different types of defenses with different problems. Balance also implies an enthusiastic outlook; the desirable per-

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5 Eugene O'Neill, *Dynamo*

sonality tries to live as fully and richly as possible; he does not avoid difficulties by inactivity. The character 7 Robert in "Beyond the Horizon," was the victim of physical ill health which led to social and mental deterioration. The conditions under which he lived made him so dependent on his mother, and his life experiences were so limited and so unsatisfying that he lived a passive, colorless life, listlessly dreaming away the hours until his loved ones died, and he soon followed them to the grave.

Another example of the tragedy of mental ill-health is found in Ibsen's drama "When We Dead Awaken." The leading character Irene experienced an emotional upheaval in her life when she fell in love with a sculptor who was not reciprocal in affection. She had broken the ties of her home and her former friends when she became his model. When he refused to return her love, her life seemed empty; she wished that she were dead. She brooded and grieved over the tragedy until she became mentally ill and found escape from the torture through insanity.

The five social institutions which afford the most profound and far-reaching influence on an individual personality are the home, school, church, recreation, and industry. In childhood, the home and the school generally condition the development and expressions of the child. In adult life, the

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8 Henrich Ibsen, op. cit., XI, 327-456.
9 C. Bassett, Mental Hygiene in the Community, p. 599.
home, church, recreation, and industry seem to be the dominant forces which absorb and mold personality.

For adults, perhaps no other conditions are of such great importance to the physical, mental, and social welfare of the individual as those which surround him during the eight or more hours spent each day in carrying on the industries of the world. If the individual is fortunate enough to be employed under healthful conditions, at an occupation for which he is fitted and at which he is successful and happy, he will usually have strength enough to withstand most of the stresses and strains of even the most trying problems which may assail him. This dominating role which the day's work plays in the destiny of workers makes it of the utmost importance that physical and mental health values be given appropriate consideration by industrial and other leaders.

When the importance of the home is considered, one of the strangest phenomenon of life is that, while it is recognized that study and training are essential in almost every activity, it is widely believed and practiced that anyone, whether trained or untrained, can successfully make a home and rear a child. The situation is even more striking when it is considered that some business groups have only part time responsibility, with more or less fleeting contacts, while the contacts of parents are, or should be, continuous over years of time, and are fundamentally decisive in molding the physical and mental development of children.
Some knowledge of physical and mental hygiene is essential to the development and intelligent direction of the individual's own personality. If this knowledge is acquired early, it may greatly aid the individual in understanding and more desirably controlling his physical equipment and emotional drives, his personal attitudes and behavior reactions, and will probably help to dissipate the dense ignorance, the hideous and cheap vulgarity and the weird superstitions which often cluster around the instincts and relationships which are fundamental to human life.\(^{10}\)

The trained individual will approach marriage with a healthier, better disciplined mind and body, with a greater understanding of the physical, mental, and moral relationships involved and with a keen appreciation of the responsibility accepted. With the differentiation of personality and experience and the enlarging complexity and strain of economic life, the difficulties which hinder and handicap the successful adjustment of two individuals in the intimate relation of married life prove very great. For this reason, some training for these relationships is becoming more and more important as the mental hygiene movement grows. Statistics relative to the divorce rate in this country give tragic emphasis to this need. The physical and mental maladjustment of married life often results not only in unhappiness and despair, but in a host of the most varied physical abnormalities and deficiencies, nervous and mental disorders, and vocational and social failures which spoil the joys of living.

\(^{10}\) Ibid.
In Ibsen's "The Lady From the Sea", Ellida grew up without an opportunity to gain any knowledge or to receive any training that would fit her for life. Isolated as she was from society, deprived of the care and love of her mother, and probably neglected and forgotten by her busy father, it is not strange that she drifted into the road she followed. It appears that a normal healthy environment would have made her a happy, useful, wife and mother instead of an abnormal escapist.

The maladjustment of husband and wife ended tragically for all the characters portrayed in "Mourning Becomes Electra." Probably everyone in the ill-fated family made an effort, at some time, to correct the unhappy conditions, and perhaps no one could really be blamed for the unkind feelings, ugly situations, and finally the tragic ending to the unusual family life. If the parents had been normal, adjusted, mentally healthy individuals, the children probably would have had an opportunity to become the same type of characters, and the entire family would have been able to occupy their rightful places in society.

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O'Neill's "All God's Chillun's Got Wings" portrays a character whose life was ruined because she did not have a desirable home-life; Ella lived in the tenement district of lower New York where the blacks and whites were not segregated. As a result, she fell in love with a negro boy and married him. They could not become adjusted because of racial differences and both their lives were ruined; Ella became a victim of regression; Jim the mulatto husband suffered the pangs of a broken heart and almost intolerable agony brought about by his insane wife.

Many years ago, it was the generally accepted belief that when a parent had provided shelter, food, clothing, and an education for his child, his duties were largely fulfilled.

These conceptions have been entirely reversed by recent studies and experiments which have shown that the most crucial years of a child's life are the early ones; during this period, physical, mental, and emotional habits are formed which have a more deep-seated and far-reaching effect upon the future of the child than any other period in life. When improper physical and mental training have been given during the years of babyhood, it has been found difficult to modify the resulting unhealthy emotional behavior patterns which may become obtrusively evident during the period

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13 Ibid.
of adolescence or in later life. Clinical studies of nervous, mental, and behavior difficulties of children have revealed that a large proportion of these problems have been caused by a conscious or unconscious perception of the strained, antagonistic, and unstable relation between parents. Often-times quarreling and incompatibilities of parents fill the child with feelings of insecurity, obsessing fears, and corroding conflicts. The case of Lavinia, in "Mourning Becomes Electra", is a good example of this condition.

Health education which is focused on the primary personal family and social interests, life activities, and habits of the child, and which will prepare him to control his present personal and future family life will most nearly meet the issues which today's children will have to face. It is the problem of the school, as well as the home, and other institutions influencing the child, to produce a generation of parents capable of health and habit training which will prevent the majority of physical and mental diseases.

Children with physical and mental handicaps have many serious problems to meet which are not faced by their normal companions. Statistics show that from two to three percent of the school population is suffering from mental defects which make it impossible for them to benefit by the

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educational methods and procedures used to develop children of normal intelligence. It is estimated that there are 450,000 elementary school children in the United States who need training for mental deficiencies and abnormalities. Such training is designed to prevent such cases as Robert's in "Beyond the Horizon", Ellida's in "The Lady from the Sea", and Lavinia in "Mourning Becomes Electra", as well as thousands of real cases in the society of the present time.

The increased concern of education over the personality problems of individual children is noteworthy. The mental hygiene approach to education in fact the whole trend of progressive education, emphasize the importance of the creative impulses of the child, as well as his great need for more desirable and more enriching educational methods. It is concluded that the increasing effort to integrate education with the life experiences of the child, to prepare him to live happily in the present, and to take his place in community life, presupposes an increasing knowledge on the part of the teacher and of parents regarding community organizations, relationships, resources, and community problems.

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., p. 216.
18 Henrich Ibsen, op. cit., XI, 327-456.
The final deduction is that education should equip all students with a practical knowledge of psychological and social sciences which is basically essential to intelligent and constructive personal, family, and community living. One of the greatest social forces for the promotion and preservation of physical, mental, and social health, is recreational agencies, which furnish numerous opportunities for participation in wholesome play activities. The value of such a program, if properly directed, is incalculably great. Perhaps no other program has grown so fast in popularity in the past few years as this one. Co-operation, comradeship, and competition are fostered, and such traits as shyness, fears, dislikes, and unrest, are diminished or eliminated.

All serious-minded educators hope, by concerted efforts, to educate the individual child so that he will never need to seek an escape in the manner of the fictitious characters presented in this study, but that he will form habits and attitudes that will enable him to make his adjustments in happy, normal, and useful ways.

A study like this, therefore offers itself to all who would understand more fully their own mental life or that of others, through a medium which clothes itself in a form that gives recreation, pleasure and delight,—the drama.
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