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Midwest Modern Language Association Meeting

Modern Drama, Volume 6, Number 2, Summer 1963, p. 111 (Article)

Published by University of Toronto Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mdr.1963.0032>



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MIDWEST MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION MEETING

The Second Conference on Modern Drama held in conjunction with the Midwest Modern Language Association Convention met in the Arts and Science Building of the University of Missouri on the morning of April 19, 1963. Professor Walter J. Meserve of the University of Kansas, Chairman of the Conference, introduced the readers of the two papers and moderated the discussions which followed.

Mrs. Marilyn Gaddis Rose, Literature Department, Stephens College, Columbia, Missouri—"Sartre and the Ambiguous Thesis Play." Mrs. Rose, subjecting Sartre's nine thesis plays to generic criticism, finds their ambiguity not in their Existentialist ethos but in their dramatic structure. Thematically, the plays as a whole reveal a dialectical continuity. Structurally, each play alternates between the modes of the psychological problem play and the epic *Everyman* play. The characters, speaking both *before* and *at* the spectator, alternately attract and repel him. This fluctuation permits him to introduce his own common-sense criteria into the special dramatic situation. When he does, the action becomes gratuitous and the effect becomes confused. Even *Huis clos*, Sartre's best play, leaves the spectator wondering whether to acclimate or execrate the evasions (or decisions) of the characters.

Professor Michael J. Mendelsohn, Department of English, United States Air Force Academy—"Clifford Odets: The Artist's Commitment." Clifford Odets, Professor Mendelsohn stated, has never lost his social awareness. Odets quickly abandoned the emotionalism and the doctrinaire speeches that marked his early plays. What he did not abandon, however, was his vital concern with human dignity. By an examination of several Odets plays, particularly *Waiting for Lefty* and *Golden Boy*, Professor Mendelsohn sought to demonstrate Odets' continuing commitment to the little man in American society. The dominant attitude to be found in all the Odets plays is expressed by Charlie Castle in *The Big Knife* when he speaks of what he learned by reading Victor Hugo: "Love people, do good, help the lost and fallen, make the world happy, if you can!"

The 1964 Modern Drama Conference of the Midwest Modern Language Association will be held at Normal, Illinois, in early May. Anyone interested in reading a paper should write to the 1964 Modern Drama Conference Chairman, Professor Frederick P. W. McDowell, Department of English, 118 University Hall, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.