A GOOD NIGHT OUT
(Popular Theatre: Audience, Class and Form)
John McGrath
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John McGrath's long years of experience in conventional theatre, film and TV qualify him eminently as a commentator on the economic and cultural pressures of those worlds; his experience as founder and leading light of 7:84 Theatre Company qualifies him also as a recorder of the thinking behind the move away from those prisons for sixties' cultural radicals into the uneasy liberation of the small touring theatre group, gigging around working class clubs, students' unions, 'fringe' theatre venues and small studio theatres. A Good Night Out is a compilation of six talks McGrath gave to Cambridge students, and lays out the convictions behind both his critique of established middle class culture and the justification of his work with 7:84.

Behind the Cliches of Contemporary Theatre' is the first of these talks and successfully identifies the mistaken myths of the 1956 Royal Court 'revolution': 'What Osborne and Tony Richardson achieved was a method of translating some areas of non-middle class life in Britain into a form that could be sold to the middle classes.' Correctly, McGrath observes that 'danger' and novelty were the principal qualities on sale here, and that the network of agents, critics, impresarios, directors and foreign literary scouts (the 'entrepreneurs of the new international culture market') who surround this kind of theatre 'scene' would scoop up and neutralise a 'dangerous' working class talent, be it actor or writer, at the slightest hint of exploitability.

Like many another socialist however, McGrath's analysis is stronger than his programme. The 'authentic working class voice' of which he speaks towards the end of that chapter is assumed near the beginning of the text — 'Towards a Working Class Theatre' — to speak in 'the language of working class entertainment'. Describing a night of entertainment in a working men's club in Chorlton-cum-Hardy circa 1963, McGrath refers to the people there as those who may well be making revolution. While I can't agree with David Edgar's elitist sneer on this (quoted by McGrath) that such popular forms are atrophied, the stubborn materialist in me does find the leaps in the logic of this argument hard to take. Some big questions are begged. Is there, in the first instance, an 'authentic working class voice' anywhere? Second, why look for it in the language of club entertainment; what's wrong with the language of actual working class life? Third, while I agree with McGrath that the people in that club have 'many excellent qualities', I find the connection he makes between the club (with its plastic flowers) and revolution hard to swallow. Hardest of all — and possibly the source of McGrath's mistake — is his identification (and occasional confusion) of the overthrow of bourgeois cultural forms with the overthrow of the bourgeois state.

Having voiced this reservation however, I cannot fault his observation through the following chapters of the great strengths of working class dramatic entertainment: directness and immediacy; anarchic comedy; the uninhibited enjoyment of music; unashamed emotion; variety in pace and intensity; a sense of identity between performers and audience. Nor, as one who also enjoyed that immediate positive feedback which is the particular reward of 'going out to' new audiences (albeit south of Luton), would I disagree with the importance of creating an alternative set of theatre values for producers and consumers alike. That is McGrath's unique achievement as a playwright and as manager of his theatre companies.

But if there is one nagging question which remains at the end of this extremely readable compilation, it is whether McGrath's emphasis on objective conditions is overdone. I would agree that the equivocations of Pinter and Stoppard make them the perfect court-jesters for our contemporary bourgeoisie; I would agree that Arden's 'fall from grace' is largely to do with his refusal to toe that line; I would agree that the language of our new theatre needs to extend to both reassuring and criticising the working class; but I cannot accept that it's right to show 'individual human emotions' (plural) in Oh What a Lovely War, and wrong for plays to be about the 'reaction of one sensibility'. Surely it is from that individual sensibility that each artist's creativity collaborates with that of others as it enters the public sphere. McGrath quotes Sanchez Vazquez at one point as 'cautionary quote' to himself: 'The artist can only create in response to an inner need ... not on account of an external demand ...'

The danger for McGrath, I feel, is that in doing away with the demands of bourgeois culture on his work, he has sought out a hidden demand and created a substitute. Socialist art is surely not just a response to the objectively analysed needs of the working class. It needs its individual voices too.

Steve Gooch

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL DIVISION OF LABOUR
J Fröbel, J Heinrichs, O Kreye.
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One of the main features of post World War II capitalism is the emergence and spread of activities by multinational corporations. A more recent development, in the last fifteen years, has been the rapid increase in the share of foreign investments by German and Japanese Multinational Companies.

Fröbel, Heinrichs and Kreye use devel-