Evolution of Outdoor Historical Drama

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The American playwright, Paul Green, often told the story of his first visit to a quiet little grove on Roanoke Island, North Carolina, where a small, squat stone had been erected to the memory of Virginia Dare, the first English child to be born on American soil. These colonists lived on Roanoke Island from 1587 to 1590 and then disappeared, mysteriously swallowed up by the wilderness, leaving only the message "Croatoan" carved on a tree. Awestruck and inspired by the bravery of the parents of this child and their compatriots who came to make their home in an unknown land, Green set down his thoughts that day about this little group of pioneers who came to settle on this strip of sand, seeking to establish a new English-speaking colony thousands of miles across the seas from their homeland.[1]

The notes which Green made on Roanoke Island became the genesis of what was to become a new dramatic form in American theatre and one of the two theatrical forms indigenous to America. Outdoor historical drama, which Green called "symphonic drama," was born on July 4, 1937, with the opening of **The Lost Colony**. This production, built in part upon previous pageant presentations given by the people of Roanoke Island, North Carolina, commemorates the birth of Virginia Dare, the first white child born in America in the only Elizabethan English settlement made in the New World. Since 1937, outdoor historical drama has evolved from being primarily a local community pageant to become a type of regional theatre worthy of being recognized in its own right as a separate genre of American theatre and drama. Its roots, grounded in pageantry, sometimes receives the name "pageant drama."[2] Paul Green preferred to call his plays of this type "symphonic drama" bacause he felt that they differed enough from the pageant form to be given a different name. Moreover, in recent years, the term "pageant" seems to have obtained a negative connotation as being somewhat second rate—an entertainment produced and performed by local amateurs as a one-time or a one-season commemorative event. It usually has little, if any, story line, but incorporates primarily a series of processions, pantomimed events, or short, unconnected or vaguely connected events which are strung together like beads on a string by a live or recorded narrator. It involves large numbers of people, many of whom have little or no acting ability. Its primary emphasis is on thematic spectacle.

J.E. Prudhoe, senior lecturer in drama at the University of Manchester in England, has defined pateant as "an entertainment, frequently in the open air, illustrating a theme by means of spectacle rather than by consecutive narrative and dramatic characterization." He also states that as early as the seventeenth century the word had acquired the "perjorative" meaning of a "raree-show."[3]

Nevertheless, the elements of pageantry can be traced back to the earliest recorded form of our western drama. For instance, in early Greek and Roman days, processions used in religious festivals and victory celebrations were early forms of pageants, and the Greek dythrambic processions with singing and dancing are thought to have been the forerunner of Greek drama from which our modern western drama is said to have evolved. Both the Greek and the Roman festival drama productions were presented in outdoor amphitheatres with a scene house serving as the stage background for the action. Between the scene house and the audience was a circle or semi-circle where some action—usually of the chorus—also took place. A similar arrangement has been adapted for the productions of modern outdoor historical drama. Additionally, the Roman mime, or **fabula riciniata** (comic mime) and **fabula saltica** used an actor-dancer in a plot which was usually taken from history or mythology, a chorus which sang the libretto, and an orchestra composed of flute, pipes, and cymbals to accompany the performance.[4]

Even during the Dark Ages (sixth to tenth centuries A.D.) when theatres were closed and formal dramatic performances were banned, pagan mimes and rituals using dance, music, costumes, and impersonations (elements of the modern pageant) were still performed.[5] Then, when medieval drama was instigated at the end of the Dark Ages, it incorporated the pageant form. Prudhoe records three early usages of the word "pageant" in English which deal with medieval drama. One usage denoted the individual episodes of a miracle play cycle. A second usage described the wagons upon which miracle plays were presented in the streets of certain English towns, while a third usage described "any piece of stage scenery or machinery, such as those used in the indoor court masques." Many of the medieval pageants developed into plays with complete plots and full characterization while retaining a large measure of spectacle.[6]

An outgrowth of these medieval passion plays which survives today is the decadal performances of the Oberammergau Passion Play in Germany. It is also presented at special times such as the three-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the first performance in 1634 which was commemorated in performance in 1984. This passion play was first presented as a fulfilment of a religious vow made in 1633 when the villagers prayed for and received a cessation of the Black Plague. They vowed to present these plays in an open-air theatre every ten years, and the villagers have carried out this tradition for over three-hundred and fifty years.

During the Renaissance which followed the Middle Ages, plays continued to be presented primarily outdoors until the Italian Renaissance developed theatre architecture and scenic devices, including perspective painting in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During this period, theatre academies attempted to "regularize" drama, limiting time, place, and action, and thus eliminating much of the epic proportions and spectacle found in pageant-type outdoor drama.

During the Renaissance era in England, plays like those of Shakespeare and his contemporaries continued to be played in open-air theatres, and to maintain broad interpretations of time, place, and action, thus retaining much of the pageantry. But English drama also narrowed its scope and went inside in the Jacobean era of the seventeenth century. Pageantry survived primarily, then, in ceremonies outside the theatre, such as processions of royalty, religious ceremonies, and the like. Of course, indoor performances still made use of spectacle and pageantry in costuming and scenic practices, and productions of Shakespeare and other older plays were still given with much pomp and pageantry.

A major revival of outdoor pageantry came about in modern times. In England, in 1905, Louis N. Parker presented his pageant of Sherborne, Hampshire, in which he illustrated local history by means of dramatic episodes, music, dancing, and processions. Likewise, in the United States, in 1914, a similar type of pageant, **The Pageant and Masque of St. Louis**, was presented by Percy MacKaye, a well-known theatre artist of the early twentieth century. MacKaye states that the word "pageant" is "misleading." He continues as follows:

> True, there was a very important element of pageantry in my masques, as indeed there would have to be in a spectacle in which up to 10,000 participants were involved. There was also music, dancing, and pantomime. But my masques were fundamentally related structurally to the Greek forms of drama in which the spoken word played a very important role.[7]

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MacKaye, Steele MacKaye, had influenced many of the production techniques of the twentieth-century pageant. Steele MacKaye had produced pageants in the late nineteenth century which incorporated complex and detailed theatrical spectacle. For example, his pageant, **The Drama of Civilization**, presented in 1886 at Madison Square Garden, incorporated stampedes, fires, a cyclone produced with live steam and huge exhaust fans to forcefully underline historic fact while utilizing music and poetic symbolism to suggest historical philosophy.[8]

Most critics trace the evolution of pageants of the type developed by Parker, the MacKayes, Stevens, Baker, and others to the 1937 production of **The Lost Colony**. Brooks NcNamara explains it:

> The pageants of the early twentieth century survive today in the guise of outdoor drama—it is cleaned up, stabilized, somewhat more streamlined and down to earth. . .the majority of the most professional and established of outdoor dramas are historical and commemorative—following the tradition established by Paul Green's watershed play **The Lost Colony**.[9]

McNamara also suggests that this play by Green started a second phase of interest in historical pageants which continues today.

But McNamara did not go far enough in his analysis. For example, one of the differences in traditional pageants and the modern outdoor historical drama is that although modern outdoor drama has all of the goals of the pageant, other elements have been added, and the spirit and emphasis of the depiction of the historical events are altered. For instance, traditional pageants generally attempt to illustrate a familiar theme with a series of loosely connected vignettes that are presented informally and episodically with little cause and effect motivated action and little depth or development of characters. As a director, producer, and promoter of outdoor historical drama, Samuel Selden expressed it, the "form is usually panoramic, discursive, rather than concentrated."[10]

One of the ways that outdoor historical drama differs from the traditional pageant is that it focuses on fewer, more fully developed characters and on a narrower segment of history. Outdoor historical drama also attempts to use a definite story with motivated sequences that lead from a beginning to a climax. It is similar to traditional pageants in that it is still rather episodic, contains mass acting, is filled with popular symbolism, and is aimed at a broad popular audience. In the same manner, spectacle is strongly emphasized with large images, bright costumes, strong color, broad and flowing movement, often using flamboyantly perpetrated images that project easily in performance to the popular audience, and the performance situations are usually far less focused and controlled than those in a conventional theatre. Perhaps the major difference in pageant drama and outdoor historical drama can be found in the remarks of Mark Sumner, director of the Outdoor Drama Institute:

> The outdoor historical drama tries to focus on the complete struggle of a fairly narrow segment of history, while the pageant lists an extensive panorama of history. It is the inward spirit of the history that drama catches and pageantry almost never does.[11]

Recently, however, some of the outdoor historical dramas (such as **Lincoln** at Harrodsburg, Kentucky) have begun to borrow many of mainstream theatre's more intimate and controlled effects, thus narrowing the gap between outdoor drama and other regular theatre forms. In spite of this influence, a certain dynamic remains in outdoor historical drama that is not present in mainstream American theatre. The modern pageant evolution (or outdoor historical drama) continues to use a mixture of music, dance, mime, spectacle and theatre to create a kind of ritual performance splendidly presented in a larger-than-life form. It is not, as some critics have suggested, merely overblown theatre. As McNamara states, neither is it a "kind of sanctified folk epic for the masses, but simply a contemporary variation of an old and enduring performance form."[12] Even though McNamara's statement has some validity, this "contemporary variation" has continued to the point that it may now be considered a separate genre on its own.

According to George McCalmon and Christian Moe in **Creating Historical Drama**, pageant-drama and outdoor historical drama, which they call "epic-drama," are similar but different forms of drama.[13] A further difference in traditional pageants and outdoor historical drama is that the traditional pageant deals with events and situations while outdoor historical drama deals with the people involved in the events and how these people relate to the situations themselves and to other people or elements therein. The oldest play of this new genre, The Lost Colony, provides verification of this difference. While the play deals with the subject of the historical event of the attempted settlement of America at Roanoke Island by Elizabethan colonists, it focuses on the characters of Queen Elizabeth, Sir Walter Raleigh, Eleanor Dare, and John Borden and their actions and reactions to situations and events.[14]

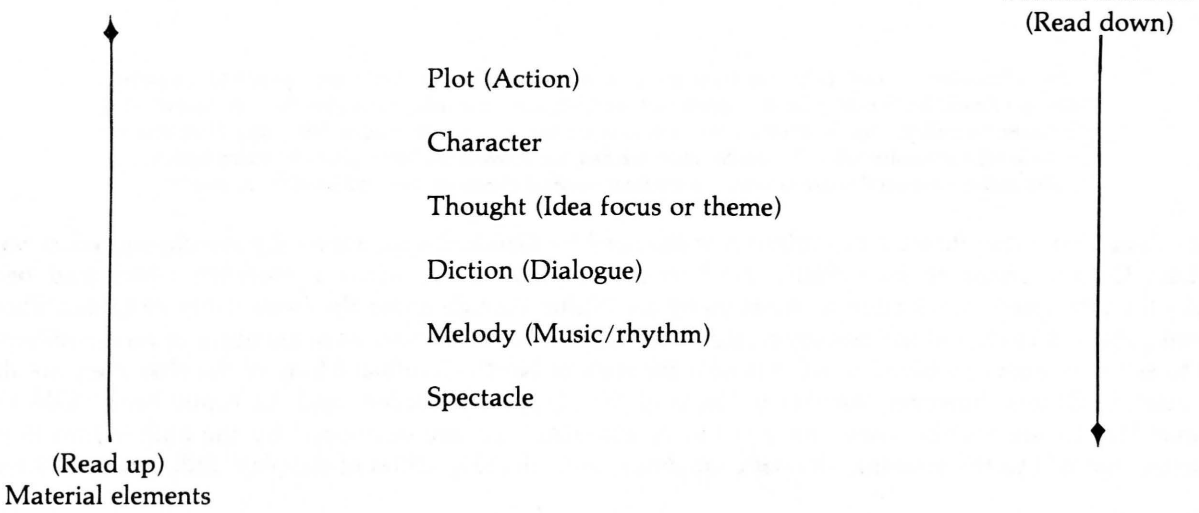
In fact, as a genre of theatre and drama, modern outdoor historical drama can be shown to embody all six of the elements which Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, lists as making up Greek drama. Moreover, modern American outdoor historical dramas and ancient fourth century B.C. Greek dramas deal with similar subject matter, such as legends of folk heroes. The Greeks used heroes like Hercules, Oedipus, Prometheus, Achilles, Paris, Theseus, and Hippolytus. Outdoor historical drama has such heroes as Daniel Boone, Abraham Lincoln, Indian chiefs (such as Tecumseh, Junaluska, Sequoya, and Blue Jacket), a Moravian missionary, and musical genius Stephen Foster. Greek plays told the stories of various peoples such as the Trojans, the Thebans, and the Athenians. American outdoor historical plays tell of the Cherokee Indians, the Shawnee Indians, the Moravian Christians, and the lost English colonists from Roanoke Island, North Carolina. Greek plays tell of feuds like that between brothers in **Seven Against Thebes**, while American outdoor historical dramas tell of feuds between Kentucky and West Virginia neighbors—the Hatfields and McCoys.

As the Greeks (especially the Athenians) advocated a democratic system of justice and individual freedom through suffering in Aeschylus' **The Euminides**, so do outdoor historical dramas **Horn in the West** and **Honey in the Rock**, which deal with attempts by Americans to find individual freedom and justice and with their sufferings as they fight to gain this independence in the American Revolutionary War and in the Civil War. Additionally, **The Seven Against Thebes** can be compared with these latter two American plays in that they all deal with revolution against established government.

Like the Greek dramas, American outdoor historical dramas contain music and dance. In fact, the drama of both eras is structured according to Aristotle's six elements of drama: plot, character, thought, diction, melody, and spectacle.

Aristotle was a fourth century B.C. Greek philospher who wrote a treatise on drama entitled **Poetics**. The portion of the treatise which survives is concerned with tragedy and has been used by scholars through the ages to study and teach dramatic structure. Modern American outdoor historical drama, although it cannot be classified as tragedy, still can be analyzed according to Aristotle's six basic elements. In fact, outdoor historical drama is one of the few types of modern American drama that utilizes all six elements.

The following diagram and discussion provide a summary explanation of Aristotle's six elements.



A theatre scholar and professor, Hubert Heffner has observed that the list when read downward comprises the formal elements of a play.[15] The plot or action is formed from the material of the other five elements, each element being formed, comprised of, or caused by those elements below it. For example, the plot or action of the play is formed according to the kind of characters who people it, the thought or meaning the writer wishes to convey, what the characters say and sing and the pattern in which the words are chosen and put together (diction and music), and by the manner in which the action is presented in the form of spectacle. Characters, in turn, are formed by the meaning to be conveyed through their words and movements, their costumes, and their environment which includes setting, visual effects, sound, and lighting. Each element can thus be shown to be formed of the material found in the elements below it until spectacle remains alone as the final form of the drama.

If Aristotle's list is read upward, according to Heffner, the material elements of a play are indicated because each is dependent on the elements above it. For instance, a play is meant to be seen and heard, not just read, and the production of the complete form results in theatrical performance or spectacle which contains the material of music, diction, thought, character, and action. The spectacle gets its life from the material of sound (rhythm, tone, pitch, pattern), and this sound grows out of the material of the dialogue which utilizes the material of thought or ideas. The ideas spring from the material of character formation which is based upon the action or plot line of the play which unifies the whole composition.

As a general rule, outdoor historical dramas can be analyzed as proceeding from the material to the formal in terms of emphasis. The emphasis is upon spectacle—the production—the performance as an "experience," and the emphasis of the script usually moves up Aristotle's list in terms of importance. Next to spectacle, which includes all "seen" effects as well as meaning the total performance, is sound, especially music. Third, in emphasis, is the thought conveyed through what the characters say, which is usually the unifying element in these plays. The characters are formed or chosen primarily for the purpose of conveying the message, and the plot is loosely formed in order to provide a unity for the thoughts or ideas (such as historical heritage) that are being presented.

Both the Greek plays and modern outdoor historical drama mingle fact with fiction to dramatize historical legend. In the Greek drama, for instance, such personages as Ajax, Achilles, Hector, Agamemnon, Menalaus, Helen, and Paris did exist, and there wa a Trojan War in which these people were involved. Several of the dramatists wrote plays that used these people as characters, but each dramatist, by intermingling some fiction and hearsay with historical fact and by using a different approach, emphasis, or incidents, wrote a different play from that of his fellow dramatists.

In like manner, modern outdoor historical drama uses historical legend as subject matter peopled with real historical characters such as Daniel Boone, Abraham Lincoln, William Henry Harrison ("Tippecanoe"), Andrew Jackson, Daniel Webster, Rev. Daniel Zeisburger, Tecumseh, Blue Jacket, Sequoya, and Junaluska. In addition to these historical figures, fictional characters are included to help dramatize incidents about which few historical facts are known or to round out incidents that are included in order to make a point, convey meaning, or to serve as transitions in the action. Many of the characters, including the authentic historical characters, are often portrayed as types, painted in broad, bold strokes, and often are used to get across an impression or idea or to give authenticity to the event. In such manner they can again be compared with the Greeks:

> Greek dramatists were very economical in the number of events and character traits they included, preferring a few broad strokes to multiplicity of detail. They. . .(concentrated) on the psychological and ethical attributes of their personages.[16]

Like the characters in plays by Aeschylus, characters in outdoor historical drama usually have the following traits:

> A limited number of traits exist, but these are incisive, powerful and entirely appropriate to the action. Although Aeschylus is essentially a philosophical and religious dramatist, he is also the most theatrical of the Greek tragedians, for he makes great demands on the theatre's resources. His plays often call for spectacle on a monumental scale: second choruses and numerous attendants; chariots drawn horses; . . . He also makes considerable use of visual symbolism, unusual choral dances, and lavish costumes.[17]

That Paul Green was directly or indirectly influenced by Greek drama, especially Aeschylus, when writing **The Lost Colony** seems to be evident. He based that play on an actual occurrence which had become legend—the attempted colonization of America by Sir Walter Raleigh under the sponsorship of Queen Elizabeth between 1584 and 1590, and the unknown fate of the English colonists who were members of an expedition that came to settle on Roanoke Island in what is now the state of North Carolina. Many of the characters are drawn from history. Others, however, such as the hero of the play, John Borden, and the comic hero, "Old Tom," (Thomas Harris) are merely names on a roster of colonists, but are developed by the author into fictional characters that add to the meaning, dramatic emphasis, and ethical qualities of the play. Still others, like the old

Indian squaw Agona, are fictional characters, created by the author as dramatic tools.

Green composed his play as a commemorative drama to celebrate an event—the birth of Virginia Dare. Thus the plot was constructed of the events surrounding the first English attempts to settle the New World, the individuals who were a part of them, and the social climate that made them possible. Because of the wide spectrum of events which the plot would cover, the form chosen was epic in scope. Also since the discovery in 1590 of the disappearance of the colony from Roanoke Island, the fate of the colonists has remained an unsolved mystery. Therefore, Green had to construct fictional suppositions as to what happened to the colony between the end of August, 1587, when Governor White returned to England for supplies, and 1590, when he was able to return and found the colony on Roanoke Island deserted and overgrown.

The story parameters actually involve all of the colonization efforts of England in America between 1584 and 1590. Consequently, much of the action is outside the plot of the play. The principal action is telescoped into representative scenes which introduce characters, establish mood and precepts, and advance the story line. The isolated scenes are unified by means of a narrator who may be compared with the chorus leader of the Greek plays. To be sure, several plot devices of Greek drama seem to have been adopted and adapted by Green in this play. He used a chorus in much the same manner as the Greeks did to serve several functions: (1) It served as an agent (character) in the play; (2) it established an ethical or social framework of events: (3) it frequently served as an ideal spectator reacting to events and characters; (4) it helped to set the mood for scenes and the overall action of the play; (5) it added movement, spectacle, song and dance; and (6) it served an important rhythmical function, creating pauses during which the theatre audience might reflect upon the action.[18]

In the 1937 version of Green's script, the chorus was a separate entity who stood in a banked enclosure at the left of the proscenium and served only the main Aristotelian function of melody and diction. In the present version of **The Lost Colony**, however, the chorus has evolved to fill all the functions of the Greek chorus. In this modern revision, Green uses two choruses—one of singers and one of dancers—who also serve as actors in the play, and serving as colonists and Indians, they interact with other characters. Their songs, comments, and dances help to establish ethical and social frameworks, set mood, and provide pauses between the scenes to reflect and comment on the action. As spectators in crowd scenes, they react as the playwright wants the audience to react, while still serving a primary purpose of contributing to theatrical effectiveness in movement, spectacle, song, and dance.

Like Aeschylus in the **Oresteia**, Green dramatizes conflicting ideals of justice as they are embodied in human affairs. For example, **The Lost Colony** deals with the conflict between the Indians and the white man who is seeking to establish a colony on Indian lands, the unjust killing of an Indian king, the retaliatory killings of the colonists by Indians, the unwillingness of Queen Elizabeth to allow Raleigh to leave England and go with his colonists to America because she wanted him to lead armies against Spain, and her refusal to send ships with supplies to the colonists because she needed the ships for war. An additional injustice is found in the refusal of the ship captain, Simon Fernando, to abide by his promise to deliver the colonists to Chesapeake Bay rather than to Roanoke Island.

Similarly, the trilogy of the **Oresteia** by Aeschylus deals with the evolution of justice in the power of the state, thus releasing individuals from the guilt and punishment found in personal revenge. Like Aeschylus, Green is able to reconcile conflicts of justice in an all-encompassing principle: the freedom of the individual in a democratic state. The English colonists came to America with a dream of building a new nation in a new world in which men could determine their own destinies under the guidance of a democratic state. As the Historian, who serves as narrator in **The Lost Colony**, states:

> On this very site /on which the play is presented today/ was laid the first foundation for it. Here these pioneers of a new order, or a new form of government lived, struggled and suffered. And in the symbol of their endurance and their sacrifice let us renew our courage and our hope. For as we keep faith with them, so shall we keep faith with ourselves and with future generations everywhere who demand of us that the ideals of liberty and free men shall continue on the earth. (Act I, sc.1)[19]

And with the idea that the spirit of these hardy pioneers has helped to perpetuate—the spirit of individual freedom—Green resolves happily the action of **The Lost Colony**.

The second element of Aristotle's list, character, can be analyzed in **The Lost Colony** as follows. Almost all of the characters have an historical background. Their names can be found on the roster of colonists who sailed from England to Roanoke Island in 1587. Thus Green fashioned his characters from known historical fact. Even so much character formation had to be created by imagination to serve particular functions in the play because history does not tell enough about several of the lost colonists; many are merely names on a roster. Except for John Borden and "Old Tom," history does have more to say about most of the principal characters in the play, particularly Queen Elizabeth I and Sir Walter Raleigh. According to Paul Phillips, publicity director for **The Lost Colony**, history tells us very little about John Borden. Finding his name on the roster of the lost colonists, Paul Green has shaped this character, Borden, into a composite of all the lost colonists, "the common man who can survive under adversity."[20] Green also establishes a love connection between John Borden and Eleanor Dare which history does not record. By so doing Green provides a romantic interest which the audience enjoys while at the same time, furnishes specific motivation for the characters and the meaning or thought of his play. This development also helps to provide plot unity and strengthens credibility. At the same time it establishes a precedent for the worth of the common man and American democracy because Eleanor Dare is a Lady of high birth while Borden is a commoner, and in sixteenth-century England such a match was unacceptable. In America, however, their status is equalized—even more so in this play as they become joint leaders of the lost colony after the death of Eleanor's husband, Captain Ananias Dare.

The other two principal characters which Green fashions from his imagination are Thomas Harris (Old Tom) and Agona, an old Indian squaw who is lovestruck for Old Tom. The name "Thomas Harris" appears on the roster of colonists, but Agona is a purely fictional character. These two characters provide the comic relief in an otherwise serious and tragic story of these colonists who faced all sorts of privations, then disappeared into the unknown.

Old Tom, portrayed by Green as a drunken, no-account man in England, survives on the streets by his wits with no hope for change. But in America, Tom can and does change. Perry Turner, who in 1982 had played Old Tom for four seasons, comments on the role:

> Agona is the only person in the world who thinks Old Tom is somebody. She doesn't care who he was or what he was in England. Tom represents the "American Dream" come true—the guy who as a nobody could become somebody. Tom says that in his whole character development throughout the play.[21]

To indicate this change, Green has Old Tom volunteer to stand guard on the parapet of the fort in Roanoke when everyone else is too tired and hungry to do anything, and Tom says:

> There in England all remembered me—aye with kicks and curses. . . .And deep I drowned me sorrows in the mug. But here where there is no rememberance I who was lately nothing am become somebody. For—item—have I not now the keeping of some sixty souls in me care—I who could never care for me own? Verily, Tom, I hardly know thee in thy greatness. . . .Roanoke, thou has made a man of me! (Act II, sc.6)

Why does Green create Agona to fall for Old Tom? According to Cora Mae Basnight, native Roanoke Islander who played Agona for twenty-six consecutive seasons, "everyone wants to be in love with someone. I think Agona did not have anyone, and finds Old Tom someone she may have a chance with."[22] Agona, likewise, provides Tom with a chance for a new beginning in a new world and helps him to find new meaning for his life. In spite of the broad, epic nature of the play which often leads to shallow characterizations, that of Old Tom shows quite a bit of development. His character experiences a complete reversal which Aristotle states is a necessary element in plot and character development in Greek drama.

Other major characters, such as Sir Walter Raleigh and Queen Elizabeth, painted by Green with broad strokes, give a fairly accurate portrait of the historical figure and serve dramatic and story needs. Other nimor characters, such as colonists and Indians, both with and without names, and with and without lines, serve to flesh out the script, to provide spectacle, and to lend historical accuracy to the events.

The third element which Aristotle enumerates in his treatise is thought, also called theme, meaning, purpose, and other such terms by various critics and theatre scholars and practitioners. In outdoor historical drama it is often the major unifying factor. The thought in **The Lost Colony** has been alluded to above in the discussion of plot and character because it is the material of both. As purpose in **The Lost Colony**, thought is the commemoration of the attempted settling of America by English colonists in 1587. Most Caucasians in America can trace some of their ancestry to England as our country grew from English colonization. Therefore, **The Lost Colony** is a celebration of our roots—our beginnings on American soil. As meaning or theme, **The Lost Colony** expresses the ideals of freedom, hope, courage, and struggle and the continuance of these ideals for future generations. The narrator in the character of the Historian states a meaning when he recounts that the spirit of those brave colonists will live in future generations who demand that "the ideals of liberty and free men shall continue on the earth." (Act I, sc. 6) In his final speech of the play he elicits an emotional response:

> And in the cold hours before dawn the colonists began their march into the unknown wilderness—out of our sight forever.
> But from our memory they have not passed!
> And down the hollow trackless years
> That swallowed them but not their song,
> We send response—
>
> The dream still lives,
> It lives, it lives
> And shall not die! (Act II, sc. 6)

John Borden also reiterates such ideals:

> Somehow a destiny, a purpose moving deeper than we know has brought us both together here upon this lonely land—to prove our love, to test our strength—aye to make us worthy of the heritage we hold for those that shall come after us. Once Sir Walter Raleigh said—the victory lieth in the struggle, not the city won. To all free men it standeth so. (Act II, sc. 6)

The theme of becoming a better individual through struggle is also shown in the character of Old Tom who declares, "Roanoke, thou has made a man of me!" Perry Turner, who plays this character, has expressed the thought that this struggle is "what America is all about, and this colony was the beginning of that." (P.T.)

The fourth part of a play on the list of Aristotle is dialogue. Parts of the dialogue in **The Lost Colony** can be observed above in quotations from the speeches of various characters. Green attempts to give his dialogue the lilt and flavor of Elizabethan English while at the same time makes it understandable to a modern twentieth-century audience. Also, the script captures the cadence and terms that are befitting to the particular Elizabethan character who is speaking:

> Elizabeth: La, what a wrecking of times when a queen must run after a man! Come Sir Walter, is it state matters keeps you here in secret?
>
> Raleigh: Somewhat of statecraft, your majesty. Question—Shall England be an empire or an island?
>
> Elizabeth: Uhm—. From what I hear of this child *[Eleanor Dare]* she is capable of giving advice on the subject. Well, Sir Walter, while they eat and play the games we must settle your little matter. Now, no growling or chewing the lip behind by back. Rather thanks. You may send your colony to Roanoke. . . .
>
> Raleigh: My queen! (Act I, sc.3)

Old Tom's dialogue also is apropos to his character as can be seen in the following passage when he is a drunken man in London:

> So after all, I am a fool. For a fool is he who speaketh to shadows and getteth no answer. Then I tell it to God behind the shadows—between him and me is a great confidence . . . and God knows I be cold and hungry. (Act I, sc.3)

Overall, the dialogue is believable and appropriate. The Historian speaks in scholarly and dramatic language and ties the scenes together, especially in the early, less complete scenes of Act I which give a background to the main action. In these scenes the Historian also interprets some dances of the Indians as well as some panomimic actions of various characters.

Music, Aristotle's fifth element in the formal structure of drama, can be found in the rhythm and pattern of the dialogue. Music is also an entity unto itself. An example of the poetry and music of the dialogue of **The Lost Colony** can be found in the following quotation from the prologue:

> For here once walked the men of dreams,
> The sons of hope and pain and wonder,
> Upon their foreheads truth's in bright diadem,
> The light of the sun in their countenance,
> And their lips singing a new song—
> A song for ages yet unborn,
> For us the children that came after them—
> "O new and mighty world to be!"
> They sang,
> "O land majestic,, free, unbounded!" (p. 1)

But the music is also found as songs sung by the chorus and as dances perfomed by the chorus of dancers; the chief dancer who plays Uppowoc, the Indian medicine man; and various dances by the colonists. Charles Horton who has been involved with the music for **The Lost Colony** and several other outdoor historical drama productions has said that the very fact Paul Green called **The Lost Colony** a "symphonic drama" indicates the merging of many elements into a single dramatic experience. He says that music, pantomime, and dance are so integrated into this play that "it is difficult to consider one form to the exclusion of the others."[23]

Green has constructed his play with a musical backdrop that melds scenes and actions while being a part of the action and lending color, tempo, story, thought, mood, and dramatic force. He uses ancient English hymns and chants, and ballads and carols that are in keeping with the religious, historic, and patriotic spirit of the play. Although the melodies are taken from old English airs, many of the lyrics for the melodies were written by Green as musical dialogue for his play. The choral arrangements were made by the first musical director, Erle Stapleton, and special effects music to be played on the organ was written by Lamar Stringfield.[24] In fact, the organ (both live and recorded) is used as the major instrument to accompany outdoor historical dramas.

Dance, which is music but also movement, forms a part of the fifth formal element on the list of Aristotle as well as a part of his final element, spectacle. The most arresting part of outdoor historical drama is indeed spectacle. Foster Fitz-Simmons, a former choreographer for **The Lost Colony** describes the use of dance in that play. He indicates that Green uses the dance in a decorative function such as the color and pageantry exhibited in a milkmaid's dance in the Queen's garden scene (Act I, sc. 3), but dance also serves as a comment or contrast to the action as seen in the English folk dance which follows the solemn christening ceremony of Virginia Dare (Act II, sc. 3).[25] A third function is the medium of storytelling of which two scenes in Act I are obvious examples (sc 2 and sc. 4). In scene two, dance and choreographed panomimic action describe an Indian village on Roanoke Island in the sixteenth century. Indian dancers perform a ritual corn dance and set a mood for the play. The story of how the white English explorers came into this picture was all described in choreographed pantomime in the 1937 version of the play. In the present script some spoken dialogue has been added, but much of the scene is still done in pantomime. Later, scene four in which the Indians are massacred by a party of Englishmen is performed effectively in dance and pantomime. In fact, much of the action in the play is choreographed by the playwright and the director, and the script includes scenes and processionals which call for choreographed action. Indeed, the entire action of the play flows among the three stages in the ryhthm of choreographed movement.

The rhythm of the movement is also captured in the spectacle elements of setting and costume as balance and line and color capture and co-ordinate that rhythm in the many effects created for the eye and the ear. Such effects are evidenced in the Queen's garden scene, for example, with its heavy textured, colorful, Elizabethan costumes and banners, its festivities of jugglers and common folk with their trade implements, and two Indians with their gifts of tobacco and the potato from America. In addition there is music and dance and fireworks.

A contrasting spectacle and equally dramatic in its effect on eye and emotions is found in Act II, scene 5, a scene which the personnel of **The Lost Colony** refer to as "the Depression scene." Here the colonists are destitute—in rags and starving but determined to struggle on to survive against all odds. The Depression scene culminates in a final emotional climax, in a spectacle that incorporates all the other five material elements of the parts of a play according to Aristotle. The hungry, tattered colonists move downstage right in a slow procession, singing as they go, while the Historian imparts his final message of hope for free men of the future which the spirit of these colonists will inspire. The hero and heroine, John Borden and Eleanor Dare, pause to give one last look at their tattered flag, still flying above the chapel of the fort which they are leaving. Then they turn and vanish with their compatriots into a wilderness, never to be seen again, thus ending the story with an unsolved mystery as history records it. The singing ceases, the stage lights dim except for a single spotlight which, for a brief moment, pinpoints the tattered flag as a symbol of hope for the future. Then there is a blackout and a moment of emotional silence before the house lights come up slowly and the applause of the audience reawakens reality.

Notes

[1] Paul Green, **Drama and the Weather** (New York: Samuel French, 1958), p. 154. See also, Mark Sumner, "Paul Green," **Souvenir Program, The Lost Colony,** 1982, p. 5.

[2] See, for example, Gassner's article "Outdoor Pageant-Drama: symphony of sight and sound," **Theatre Arts**, July 1954, p. 80f; also in an interview with Cora Mae Basnight who plays Agona in **The Lost Colony**, she calls the play "the pageant" as did other local residents in Manteo who spoke to this writer of going over to see "the pageant."

[3] J.E. Prudhoe, "Pageant," **Encyclopedia Britannica**, 1970 ed.

[4] Oscar G. Brockett, **History of the Theatre** (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1968), p. 20.

[5] Brockett, p. 82.

[6] "Pageant," **Encyclopedia Britannica.**

[7] Percy MacKaye, "A Letter from Percy MacKaye," **Theatre Arts**, July 1950, p. 51.

[8] Brooks McNamara, "The Pageant Era," **Theatre Crafts**, September 1975, p. 61.

[9] McNamara, p. 12; see also John Gassner, "Outdoor Pageant-Drama," pp. 80-83, 89; Mark Sumner, "American Outdoor Epic Theatre," **Players Magazine, 47,** (1972), 198-203; Charles B. Lower and William J. Free, **History Into Drama** (New York: Odyssey Press, 1963); and "Pageant," **Encyclopedia Britannica**. In the encyclopedia article, Prudhoe makes a misleading and seemingly false statement about outdoor historical dramas as follows: "Many of these modern pageants (notably Paul Green's **The Lost Colony**, produced at Roanoke Island, North Carolina, in 1937) showed a marked tendency to develop into spectacular plays with well-constructed plots and rounded characters. Few of them, however, achieved lasting performance or have been deemed worthy of revival." (p. 32) **The Lost Colony** has been running for 42 seasons; **Unto These Hills** since 1950; **Horn in the West** since 1952; and all the plays in this study (with the exception of the three newest ones) have had long runs, and all except one continue in annual production.

[10] Samuel Selden, "America's Outdoor Dramas," **Players Magazine**, February 1955, p. 106.

[11] Mark Sumner, "Pageant Versus Outdoor Drama," **Major Factors Contributing to the Artistic Success of the Outdoor Drama**, bulletin of the Institute of Outdoor Drama (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, November 1974), p. 1.

[12] McNamara, p. 62.

[13] George McCalmon and Christian Moe, **Creating Historical Drama** (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), pp. 6-7.

[14] An excellent article on Green's plays and on the structure of his scripts is the following: Paul Clifford, "Paul Green, True American Artist," **Players Magazine, 48** (1973), 210-215; a good study on the scripts of 11 outdoor historical dramas is: Paul Henderson Crouch, "Patterns in Contemporary, Outdoor Historical Drama: A Guide for Dirctors," Diss. The Florida State University 1979. The plays are analyzed on the basis of theme, plot, character, spectacle, music and dance. The plays in his study are **The Common Glory, Cross and Sword, The Lost Colony, The Stephen Foster Story, Texas, Trumpet in the Land, Horn in the West, Trail of Tears, Unto These Hills, Hatfields & McCoys,** and **Legend of Daniel Boone.**

[15] **Hubert C. Heffner, Samuel Selden, and Hunton D. Sellman, Modern Theatre Practice: A Handbook of Play Production**, 5th ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1973), pp. 76-96; see also: Sam Smiley, **Playwriting: The Structure of Action** (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971).

[16] Brockett, p. 20.

[17] Brockett, p. 20.

[18] Brockett, p. 28.

[19] Paul Green, **The Lost Colony** (New York: Samuel French, 1938); all references cited from **The Lost Colony** script are taken from this source unless otherwise indicated.

[20] Paul Phillips, "Those First Visitors!" **Souvenir Program, The Lost Colony**, 1981, p. 13.

[21] Personal interview with Perry Turner, 11 August 1982; all other references to this interview are indicated in the text by the initials P.T.

[22] Personal interview with Cora Mae Basnight, 13 August 1982; all other references to this interview are indicated by the initials C.M.B.

[23] Free, p. 149.

[24] Erle Stapleton, "Music in the Play," **Souvenir Program, The Lost Colony**, 1938, p. 13.

[25] Foster Fitz-Simmons as related in Lower and Free's work, pp. 153-154.