

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Non-realistic Stagecraft in Thornton Wilder's Play *Our Town*

**A thesis submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan
University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
in English**

By

Subas Dahal

Central Department of English

Tribhuvan University

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

September, 2006

Tribhuvan University**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences****Approval Letter**

This thesis titled "**Non-realistic Stagecraft in Thornton Wilder's play *Our Town***" is submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mr. Subas Dahal has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Research Committee Members

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head of English Department

Date: -

Acknowledgements

I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all my teachers at the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University who have inculcated in me the thirst for knowledge. I am heavily indebted to Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma, the head of the Department, and the members of Research committee for providing me the opportunity of researching on the topic: "**Non-realistic Stagecraft in Thornton Wilder's play *Our Town***". It was the happiest moment when I could get Dr. Shiva Rijal as my supervisor. I think no words can properly express the profound gratitude to my most respected teacher without whose constant supervision and scholarly guidance the present thesis would never have taken its present shape. I owe a great deal for him who despite of his busy schedule provided a lot of constructive comments, creative suggestions, and cooperative encouragements.

I'm not less indebted to my respected gurus Prof. Abhi Subedi, Prof. Chandra Prakash Sharma, Prof. Ananda Shrestha, Dr. Arun Gupto, Dr. Sanjeev Upreti, Mr. Devi Gautam, Mr. Suvaraj Ranavat, Mr. Lok Bahadur Chhetri (Srijon), Mr. Shanker Subedi who all directly or indirectly provided me the essential help for my academic journey.

I must acknowledge to those great writers, editors and publishers whose writings, books and publications I consulted for the completion of this project. I am grateful to my parents Chandramani Dahal and Rama Dahal without whose financial and moral encouragement this thesis would remain incomplete. My dearest sisters Bimala, Sitala, Huma, and brothers Bimal and Ramesh are the persons of my thanks. Special thanks go to my friend Ganga who assisted me in typing this paper and the owner of computer Bekha.

September 2006

Subas Dahal

Abstract

Thornton Wilder in *Our Town* employs the dramatic techniques other than the realistic to provide a new experience to the theatre goers and to free the theatre art from the narrow convention of realism. He develops non-realistic stagecraft through experimental theatrical techniques like minimalist stage sets, an Omniscient Stage Manager who narrates and controls the action, unreal time sketch, and the characters who speak from grave. By challenging and rupturing the hierarchy between actors and audience, stage and auditorium, illusion and reality, Wilder has been able to establish a new and fresh relationship between art and life. The major agenda is to disestablish the Eurocentric norms and theatrical values and to expand the literary 'canon' by including so many aspects and influences from the world wide theatrical habits from the Oriental Chinese theatre to the native American of the West. After all, the attempt is to widen the scope of theatre art in general by opening an artistic domain of dynamism and expansive reveries of world wide theatre experience.

Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
INTRODUCTION	1-11
Thornton Wilder as a Playwright	
Critical Responses to <i>Our Town</i>	
THEATRICAL DISCOURSE	12-47
Heritage of Experimental Theatre of the West	
Technical Innovation	
Realistic Acting Techniques: The Stanislaviskian System	
Naturalism Becomes Realism in France: Zola	
Ibsen and Realistic Theatre	
Strindberg and New Form	
Chekhov's Innovation	
Extension of Realistic Theatre: Eugene O'Neill	
Emergence of Experimental Theatre Practices	
Luigi Pirandello: Experimentalist Par Excellence	
Bertolt Brecht and Epic Theatre	
Wilderian Intervention	
TEXTUAL ANALYSIS	48-74
Dramatic Structure of <i>Our Town</i>	
The Structure of Plot	
Setting: Stage Design	
Narration: Non Realistic Tendency	
Metatheatrical Consciousness: Meta Characters	
Stage Auditorium Relationship	

CONCLUSION

75-79

Extension of Theatre Art

Works Cited

80-81