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INTRODUCTION

After more than five thousand years of civilization, there is still ignorance, superstition, violence, disease, intolerance, and national, ideological, racial, and religious hostilities. Knowledge has not abolished fear, nor has it made all men brothers.

Modern man is confused about his place in the world. He no longer has faith in the powers of reason and science, his gods, or himself. Too often his relationships with his fellow man are impersonal. Life in the twentieth century has seen a continued rise in alienation and dehumanization.

It is my hypothesis that urbanization and industrialization have led to the deterioration of humanistic values and further, that the consequent dehumanization and alienation are reflected and commented on in George Tooker's paintings Subway and Government Bureau, and in Elmer Rice's plays The Adding Machine and The Subway.

In this thesis, I present those American traditions in literature and art which pertain to the

city, followed by an analysis, interpretation, classification, and evaluation of George Tooker's paintings and Elmer Rice's plays in the context of their time.

The city as subject matter has a long tradition in American literature, but not in American art. To please patrons, the artists had to produce paintings which were either enobling or inspirational, historical, escapist, or visionary. Unacceptable before the twentieth century was the "ordinary" or the "depressing" representation of the city.

Major literary figures, representing a wide range of tendencies in American thought, rejected the city. These include: Jefferson, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Poe, Melville, Henry Adams, Henry James, Howells, Dreiser, Norris, Louis Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright.¹

Because these figures dominate or sum up certain phases of American intellectual development, they form a body of intellectual lore and tradition which continues to affect thought and action about the city today.... They virtually constitute our intellectual tradition as it is known today.²

Thomas Jefferson delighted in some of the things associated with urban life, but was against

¹Morton and Lucia White, The Intellectual Versus The City, (N.Y.: The New American Library, A Mentor Book, 1962), p. 15.

²Ibid.

the manners and principles associated with manufacturing. "...I view great cities as pestilential to the morals, the health and the liberties of man."³

Thoreau also shared Jefferson's distrust of manufacturing centers.

I cannot believe that our factory system is the best mode by which men may get clothing.... and it cannot be wondered at, since, as far as I have heard or observed, the principal object is, not that mankind may be well and honestly clad, but, unquestionably, that the corporations may be enriched.⁴

The distrust of the American city that Emerson and Thoreau shared was typical of the American transcendentalism, though they differed in degree of their antipathy.

Melville, Hawthorne, and Poe, in the period before the Civil War, were disturbed and offended by the American city's effect on the human spirit. In The Blithedale Romance, Hawthorne finds the conformity of both architecture and people intolerable:

...there was a general sameness...they were so much alike, that I could only conceive of the inhabitants as cut out on one identical pattern....After the distinctness of separate characters to which I had recently been accustomed, it perplexed and annoyed me not to be able to resolve this combination of human interests into well-defined elements. It seemed hardly worth while for more than one of these

³Ibid., p. 28.

⁴Henry David Thoreau, Walden, (N.Y.: New American Library, A Signet Classic, 1960), p. 22.

families to be in existence, since they all had the same glimpse of the sky, all looked into the same area, all received just their equal share of sunshine through the front windows, and all listened to precisely the same noises of the street....Men are so much alike in their nature, that they grow intolerable unless varied by their circumstances.⁵

These early writers, using European cities as models, warned of the city of the future. But Henry Adams and Henry James lived in a time when America was urbanized, industrialized, and immigrant-filled --the Gilded Age. To Henry Adams, "The crowd, the bankers, and the Jews all became obsessive symbols of the cities he came to despise."⁶

Henry James thought London, rather than New York, was the place for an English-speaking man of sensibility. He described the ugliness he found in Manhattan:

...two small shabby rooms in a somewhat decayed mansion...the near neighborhood of which was fatal to any pretensions Ransom...might have had in regard to gentility of situation....The house had a red rusty face, and faded green shutters ...slats were limp and at variance with each other....greasy pavement...dislocated flags...⁷

⁵Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Blithedale Romance, intro. by David Levin, (N.Y.: Dell Publishing Co., The Laurel Hawthorne, 1960), p. 184.

⁶White, The Intellectual Versus The City, p. 67.

⁷Henry James, The Bostonians, intro. by Irving Howe, (N.Y.: Random House, The Modern Library, 1956), pp. 189-90.

In The Jungle, Upton Sinclair presents the horrors of Chicago, depicting the barbarous working conditions of the city stockyards where business and government officials exploited and victimized immigrants. Jurdis Rudkus, a young immigrant, arrives in Chicago.

They were on a street which seemed to run on forever, mile after mile...each side of it one uninterrupted row of wretched little two-story frame buildings. Down every side street, it was the same...the same endless vista of ugly and dirty little wooden buildings. Here and there would be a bridge crossing a filthy creek, with hard-baked mud shores and dingy sheds...; here and there would be a great factory, a dingy building with innumerable windows...and immense volumes of smoke pouring from the chimneys, darkening the air⁸ above and making filthy the earth beneath.

Throughout the novel, Sinclair portrays the filth, stench, and cruelty of the city. Many of Sinclair's fellow socialist writers agreed with his evaluation of the city as the home of oppression and injustice, a nightmare of misery and suffering--a human hell.

Even America's two most famous architects, Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, were critics of the American city. "To look at the cross section of any plan of a big city is to look at something

⁸Upton Sinclair, The Jungle, with an afterword by Robert B. Downs, (N.Y.: New American Library, Inc., A Signet Classic, 1960), p. 29.

like the section of a fibrous tumor."⁹

From Thomas Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright, distinguished thinkers have proclaimed open hostility toward the city, attacking its ugliness, its commercialism, and its lack of compassion towards those miserably impoverished.

For these writers, the city represents crime and sin, smoke and noise, frightening experiences, personal defeats, and loneliness. They saw the city as artificial, soulless, and doomed to extinction.

Unlike the moral indignation and reforming zeal of the "exposé" journalists and novelists, most of the American artists before the 1930's either offered no moral judgment or viewed the city with optimism.

The Ashcan school, which principally represents a reawareness of a national consciousness first seen in the nineteenth century paintings of Winslow Homer and Thomas Eakins, was the first group of twentieth century American artists to use consciously the city as subject matter.¹⁰ Led by Robert Henri, the painters showed

⁹Frank Lloyd Wright, The Living City, (N.Y.: Horizon Press, 1968), p. 34.

¹⁰This group, first called the "Eight" and later the Ashcan School, varied in style and theme, but most of the members used the city as subject matter (Henri, Sloan, Glackens, Shinn, and Luks more often than others).

the men and women of the city going about their daily activities. But with the exception of Sloan, for the most part they avoided the sweatshops and the miseries of tenement life.

John Marin, like the "Eight," lived in a time of urban construction which saw the rising New York City skyline. Marin, a student of Thomas Anshutz (who had been a student of Thomas Eakins and who later taught the "Eight"), produced cubist compositions which depicted the energy and vitality of the city.

Joseph Stella, like Marin, saw in the city a world of movement and flux, his futurist paintings, presenting the city as a symbol of explosive power. In contrast, Charles Demuth and Charles Sheeler were precisionists, who painted the city as a place of geometric order in complex formal compositions, while William Hopper, known for his depictions of the city as a place of vague emptiness and loneliness, combined stasis with pathos in his urban paintings. Even when Hopper "peopled" his canvas, he evoked this sense of loneliness. But, Hopper too avoided other contemporary social issues.

After 1930, a different view of the city emerges among the social realists. Political as well as economic upheaval (depression, union movement, strikes, Fascism, Nazism, Spanish Civil War) brought forth a

new proletarian art, which was influenced by the French artists Daumier and Courbet, exemplified by the Mexican muralists, Orozco, Rivera, and Siqueiros, and interpreted as a class struggle between management and labor. Social realism, the dominant art of the 1930's, embraced the ideology of the Left, giving the artist a new subject matter as well as a new view of himself. The social realists, identifying with the workers, now depicted scenes of police brutality, picket lines, bread lines, strikes, etc. Art became a means of communicating social values; the goal was to be instrumental in demanding militant social action. Idealization, when it occurred, was of the "worker," whom the social realists viewed as the only dynamic force in American society. Unlike the alienated and isolated expressionist artist, the social realist sought a common bond with the workers.

With rare exceptions, the social realists were not intellectuals.¹¹ Believing that the economic collapse of the 1930's was a result of corporate exploitation, many turned to Marxism. This outlook produced paintings portraying the corruption of the ruling classes and the humiliation of the poor.

¹¹David Shapiro, ed., Social Realism: Art as a Weapon, (N.Y.: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1973), p. 13.

With these social realists (i.e. Raphael, Isaac, and Moses Soyer, Reginald Marsh, Jack Levine, William Gropper, Ben Shahn, Jacob Lawrence), American art aligns itself with its literary counterpart in dealing with urban themes.

George Tooker, like the social realists, bases his art on social comment. His themes seem to be an extension of those concerns of the 1930's, but there are too many disparities to classify him within that movement. A mathematical outlook and intellectual formulation permeate all of Tooker's art. Though stylistically embracing the caricature, distortion, and exaggeration of social realism, Tooker focuses on the universal, not the contemporary. Tooker is more an observer of his society than a proselytizer for social change, and his self-imposed isolation further contrasts with the social realists' desire to be an integrated part of their society.

Elmer Rice, like George Tooker, believes in the isolation of the artist. His expressionist plays which also contain caricature, exaggeration, and distortion (expressionist devices also), share with social realist plays the didacticism and the contemporary concerns. Following in the literary tradition of opposition to the city and combining elements of

classical tragedy with elements of expressionist drama, Elmer Rice also deals with themes of social realism.

The artists' works, when analyzed carefully, reveal a common twentieth century response to the evils of the city and a unique creative response to its dehumanization.

CHAPTER I

THE ADDING MACHINE

The Adding Machine is a powerful one-act play, which, while attacking industrialized society for dehumanizing man, holds man himself responsible for his state of slavery. It suggests that this "mark of the slave" has been man's state all through his evolution, and that because of his provincialism, his education, and his institutions, the modern white-collar worker is doomed to subservience. Representing these white-collar workers is Zero, a complete failure in life and death.

Zero is a modern character. He is a construction and not an imitation of a living human being. Elmer Rice arbitrarily has created a character irrespective of moral purpose or religious faith, or faithfulness to nature. Zero is a symbolic character. He is pure aesthetic function, pure thought, and not a fixed individual personality. He is an expressionistic character whose actions are not always consistent with psychological plausibility. The characterization of Zero is not limited to his speeches or

actions, or by what others say about him. He is characterized also by his name, his appearance, the settings under which he is seen, and his thoughts which are verbalized to the audience. The functional relationships of these elements express the characterization of Zero in particular, and the meaning of the play in general.

Zero and his wife are introduced in the first scene of the play. Zero is seen lying in an "installment plan bed," which has matching dresser and chairs; he is facing the audience with only his head and shoulders visible. The setting is realistic with the exception of the wall-paper (sheets of foolscap covered with columns of numbers). There is a single glaring naked lamp in an ugly electric fixture overhead, and one small window with the shade drawn. Zero is described as thin, sallow, undersized, and partially bald. He has no dialogue in the scene, but merely occupies space (something that could also be said of his life).

The installment plan furniture is symbolic of mass-production. It is common and cheap because it is assembly-line or machine produced rather than hand-crafted. Inferred is the advertising which accompanies the production of such assembly-line goods.

Zero is a representative character of the 1920's,

a time which saw the dawn of mass advertising, modern mass production techniques, and the torrential output of consumer goods. The 1920's saw the growth of chain-stores and installment buying. Easy credit and effective indoctrination by the media opened up new vistas for the working man who sought to gratify his desire for the material possessions which he saw advertised in the newspapers and magazines.

With Mrs. Zero's monologue in the first scene, Zero is further defined:

1. He takes a subway to and from work (This places Zero in an urban setting.)
2. He sits on a chair all day (This stationary-type of employment can be said to be emasculating and accounts in part for his physical appearance. It also contrasts with the physical labor associated with out-door work.)
3. He is a bookkeeper; he adds figures (He is a human adding machine--thus the significance of the title of the play.)
4. He has had the same job for twenty-five years and has never missed a day (This suggests monotony and regimentation [negative aspects] as well as reliability and faithfulness [positive aspects].)
5. It has been seven years since he last had a raise (His virtues go unrewarded.)

When Zero returns home at the end of each working day, he finds no refuge. Instead, he is surrounded by ugliness, personified in the character of Mrs. Zero, a sharp-featured harpy, shapeless in her long-sleeved,

cotton nightgown, wearing ungartered stockings which sag over her shoes. The stockings are Rice's mark of femininity, class ("women of fashion" wore them), and of new affluence. Paradoxically, everything about Mrs. Zero is asexual, common, and cheap.

Zero's wife sits at the dresser complaining of her life of drudgery and his worthlessness (he is cheap, lazy, inconsiderate, and unambitious). He is responsible for her life of slavery and capable of holding only a second-rate job. "I didn't pick much when I picked you, I'll tell the world. You ain't much to be proud of." With this diatribe, she emasculates her husband.

But even though Zero does not respond outwardly to his wife, his thoughts, revealed expressionistically in the second scene show his resentment toward her and women in general.

"Talk, talk, talk, Just like all the other women. Women make me sick."

"I wonder if I could kill the wife, without anybody findin' out."

That Zero is seen first at home, specifically in the bedroom is significant. The office paradoxically becomes a place of refuge from Mrs. Zero.

"One week's vacation with pay. And another week without pay if you want it. Who the hell wants it? Layin' around the house listenin' to the wife tellin' you where to get off. Nix!" (scene iv)

"Women as shrews" are part of the literary tradition in general and of the vitalist phase of Expressionism in particular. Zero's marriage echoes his occupation--there is the same alienation, the same regimentation, and the same degree of dreary faithfulness (both marriage and job have lasted for twenty-five years.)

Zero's passivity is generated by his fear of authority. In scene two when he dreams of killing his wife, he expresses no guilt, no thought of sinning, but only his fear of getting caught. "I'd get found out though. They always have ways." Zero is the little man intimidated by authority.

"An' when I see him [the boss] comin' up to my desk, I didn't know where I got off. A big guy like that comin' up to my desk. I felt like I was chokin' like and all of a sudden I got a kind o' bad taste in my mouth like when you get up in the morn'!"

(scene iv)

This totally ignored human machine has never in twenty-five years been acknowledged by his boss.

"He never talked to me before, see? Except one mornin' we happened to come in the store together and I held the door open for him and he said 'thanks' - just like that, see? 'Thanks!' That was the only time he ever talked to me." (scene iv)

The Boss cannot even remember the name of his faithful employee, "Oh-er-Mister-er." Furthermore,

he has no idea how long Zero has been working for the company, nor what his job has been all that time. When efficiency experts recommend the installation of adding machines which do Zero's work in half the time and can be operated by a high-school girl, Zero is summarily fired. His age and experience mean nothing. That a high-school girl will replace him adds to his humiliation.

Rice demonstrates that in seeking progress, man has too often eliminated humanity. He has become addicted to technology and thereby relegated himself to assisting machines. That an employee (Zero) has been a faithful, competent worker holds no consideration in a system where efficiency comes first.

Rice specifically condemns the bureaucracies which have arisen from the need to control the massive productivity born from the technology. Bureaucracy, the hierarchal division of labor, aims at precision, speed, expert control, efficiency, continuity, and discretion.¹ "They, the people to be administered, are objects whom the bureaucrats consider neither with love nor with hate, but completely impersonally."²

¹Eric and Mary Josephson, eds., Man Alone: Alienation in Modern Society, (N.Y.: Dell Publishing Co., Laurel Edition, 1962), p. 123.

²Ibid., p. 61.

The human factor is too often subordinated to and shaped by the mechanics of efficiency. Bureaucracy implies power. Zero's fear of authority (defined as legitimate power)³ confirms some of the basic principles of power: through conditioning, submission can be achieved; power is a substitute for communication; alienation increases when power is exercised.

The Boss's authority derives from an acknowledged status; he has no name in the play--he is "the Boss." The authority, therefore, is inherent in the office and not in the individual who performs his official role.

Alienation as a result of power or authority can express itself in many ways either through overt hostility to the power wielder or in the victimization of others, alcoholism, neuroses etc.

Zero, the alienated white-collar worker, kills his Boss. The man seen as passive with his wife and boss can easily join with the anonymous violence of the mob.

"I never got in trouble. You wouldn't count that one time at the Polo Grounds. That was fun like. Everybody was yellin' 'Kill the empire! Kill the empire!' An' before I knew what I was doin' I fired the pop bottle. It was on account of everybody yellin' like that...anyhow, the bottle didn't hit him.

³Power used in accord with the subject's values and under conditions which he views as proper.

An' when I seen the cop comin' up the aisle,
I beat it..." (scene iv)

"That was fun like"--It is Zero who now has the feeling of power. "It was on account of everybody yellin'"--Zero needs the support of others. He has no sense of identity unless he is in a mob. "Before I knew what I was doin'"--It was an instinctive act like the murder of his boss. "When I seen the cop comin'...I beat it." Zero combines acts of violence with cowardice.

Zero represents the little man, mediocre, cowardly, "the raw material of slums and wars - the ready prey of the first jingo or demagogue or political adventurer who takes the trouble to play upon...ignorance, credulity, and provincialism." (scene vii)

With this speech, Rice seems to be responding to his age and to people like A. Mitchell Palmer, the ambitious and overzealous Attorney General of the United States in the early 1920's, who led the nation on an irrational crusade against radicals.⁴ Palmer's targets were socialists, liberals, atheists, free thinkers, or anyone rumored to be associated with Bolsheviks.⁵ Suspect were the recent wave of immi-

⁴Fon W. Boardman, Jr., America and the Jazz Age: A History of the 1920's, (N.Y.: Henry Walck, Inc., 1968), p. 9.

⁵Ibid., pp. 9-10.

grants, some of whom were employed by industrial barons as strike-breakers.⁶

The Adding Machine reflects the spirit of the time when in scene three, the Zeros and their friends reveal their fear of foreigners:

Six: Too damn much agitation, that's at the bottom of it.

Five: That's it! Too damn many strikes.

Four: Foreign agitators, that's what it is.

Three: They oughta be run outa the country.

Two: What the hell do they want, anyhow?

One: They don't know what they want, if you ask me.

Six: America for the Americans is what I say!

The Zeros and their friends are in part victims of mass hypnosis which uses oversimplification--through slogans, stereotypes, generalizations, and rationalizations--as a major technique. The effects of these, seen in the third scene, are cliché thinking (mass values), loss of individuality (because of fear of non-conformism), and dogmatism.

Zero represents the little man at his worst, aroused to violence because of his prejudices.

"An' that time in the subway, I was readin' about a lynchin' see? Down in Georgia.

⁶Ibid., p. 293.

They took the nigger an' they tied him to a tree. An' they poured kerosene on him and lit a big fire under him. The dirty nigger! Boy, I'd of like to been there, with a gat in each hand, pumpin' him full of lead..." (scene iv)

The early 1920's saw a resurgence of racial hatred which included the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan, whose membership swelled to four million by 1924.⁷ The Klan often paraded carrying American flags. This irony is paralleled in scene three.

All: (in unison) That's it! Damn foreigners! Damn dagoes! Damn Catholics! Damn sheenies! Damn niggers! Jail 'em! shoot 'em! hang 'em! lynch 'em! burn 'em! (They all rise and sing in unison) "My country 'tis of thee, Sweet land of liberty!"

The Adding Machine also presents the provincial attitudes of the time. In scene two, the office, the large square sheet of ruled paper upon which Zero enters figures is symbolic of not only the bureaucratic hierarchal relationships (knowing your place in the hierarchy), but also true of "knowing your boundaries" in societal relationships. This keeping "within the lines" is called respectability, refinement, "being on the level," or "being a steady guy."

In scene three, the Zeros and their friends dramatize the provincialism of the day. The six couples who visit the Zeros file into the room in a double

⁷Ibid., p. 102.

column, which separates, each man taking a chair from the right wall, and each woman taking one from the left wall. The regimented and mechanical movement continues as each sex then forms a circle with the chairs very close together. (for security) This scene is expressionistic in setting, costume, action, and dialogue. The men's clothing is identical with that of Zero's in every detail though each wears a wig of a different color. The women are all dressed alike, too, except that each dress is a different color. Their common appearance and actions, their names, and the numbers on the wallpaper (the same as seen in the Zero's bedroom) are expressionistic devices used to reveal their conformity and their reduction to an automaton-like state. The expressionistic dramatist is departing from objective reality and using symbols to give his subjective response to the inner nature of the white-collar worker.

Banalities are exchanged. Acting out their sex-roles, the men discuss the weather and tell dirty jokes; the women talk about clothing and plunge into gossip.

Mrs. Six: (sotto voice) Did you hear about the Sevens?

Mrs. Five: They're gettin' a divorce.

Mrs. Four: It's the second time for him.

Mrs. Three: They're two of a kind, if you ask me.

Mrs. Two: One's as bad as the other.

This play on numbers ("second time," "two of a kind," "one's as bad") shows that each woman's remarks are supportive of what the other women say. This expressionistic dialogue shows that the women not only dress and act alike, they also share common thoughts.

The men's common thoughts about women reveal their provincialism, if not their chauvinism.

Six: I think this woman suffrage is the bunk.

Five: It sure is! Politics is a man's business.

Four: Woman's place is in the home.

Three: That's it! Lookin' after the kids,
'stead of hangin' around the streets.

The women are all shrews.

Mrs. Six: Men sure get me tired.

Mrs. Five: They sure are a lazy lot.

Mrs. Three: Always grumblin' about something

Mrs. Two: When they're not lyin'

Mrs. One: Or messin' up the house. (scene iii)

Despite their lives of drudgery, the women are as passive as the men in accepting their roles. The use of partial sentences may convey the lack of wholeness in their lives (form fitting content). Their conformity extends from dress to action to thinking to resignation to their fate. As Mrs. Zero says at the end of the first

scene, "...I've stood it for twenty-five years an' I guess I'll have to stand it twenty-five more."

Interestingly, provincial morality prevents the characters from enjoying life.

Daisy: I'm too refined, I guess. That's the whole trouble. (scene ii)

Zero had been "getting his kicks" from observing a neighbor (wearing only a shirt) across an air-shaft. Observed by his wife, he is pressured into making a complaint to the police, who arrest the girl for "indecent exposure." That Zero would be responsible for the arrest of the girl is significant, because being a "peeping Tom" has been his only pleasure.

Zero hasn't the nerve to stand up to his wife.

"I shouldn't 'a' done that. But what was I gonna do? The wife wouldn't let up on me. I hadda do it." (scene iv)

Nor does he have the nerve to be aggressive with other women.

"Them birds - [sic] how do they get away with it? Just grabbin' women...I've seen lots I'd like to grab like that, but I ain't got the nerve...." (scene iv)

Zero's "sinful nature" is the specific object of Mrs. Zero's nightly attacks: "You'd better not start nothin' with women, if you know what's good for you. I've put up with a lot, but I won't put up with that."

The Adding Machine presents the morality of Zeros, in whose lives, good and evil are sharply defined. What constitutes good and evil is presented by Shrdlu, whom Zero meets in a graveyard after his death: The good man is one who is thrifty, devout, unselfish, and who shuns evil companions and all temptations of the flesh--"in short...a virtuous, respectable, and god-fearing man." (This characterizes Shrdlu.) Zero has also been a "good man" (punctual, hardworking, competent, loyal, faithful to his wife). The irony is that both Shrdlu and Zero become murderers in one instinctive moment. Their goodness was only a response to external pressures, i.e. church, mother, authority.

The evil man is one who thinks of nothing but enjoyment, and may waste his time on painting pictures, sculpturing, composing music, or writing. The evil man, therefore, is not concerned with punctuality, efficiency, or bureaucracy. He is not a machine, but a creative individual. The evil man may spend his whole day just reading books, lying under a tree, or just doing nothing. The evil man, lacking Zero's regimentation and structure is forever telling stories, laughing, singing, drinking, and dancing. The evil man, not confined by provincial morality, is responsive to his fellow-man and enjoys life. He is human: a

drunkard, a thief, a vagabond, a blasphemer, or an adulterer (scene vi). He is a non-conformist dominated by his "sinful" nature.

Shrdlu blames his crime on his sinful nature.

Both he and Zero have killed by instinct.

Zero: I'd be holdin' my job yet, if he hadn't o' canned me. But he kept talkin' an' talkin' and there was the bill file right where I could reach it. (scene iv)

Shrdlu: Well, I raised my knife to carve the leg of lamb - and instead cut my mother's throat! (scene v)

Both are adamant about admitting their crime.

Zero: I want you to get that right. I killed him, see? (scene iv)

But where Zero justifies his crime by citing pressures ("I'm all mixed up, see? On account of them lawyers. And the figgers in my head," scene iv), Shrdlu is vehement in blaming his sinful nature.

Zero: You must 'a' been crazy.

Shrdlu: No! Don't try to justify me. I wasn't crazy.

Ironically, Zero and Shrdlu, the two murderers, go to heaven, while Shrdlu's mother, the saint who devoted herself to giving her son an honest and moral mode of life, does not. Nothing has turned out as expected.

Shrdlu: I saw everything so clearly - the flames, the tortures, an eternity of suffering as the just punishment for my unspeakable crime. And it has all turned out so differently.

Zero: Well, that's pretty soft for you, ain't it?

Shrdlu: No, no, no! It's right and just that I should be punished. I could have endured it stoically... But this - this is maddening! What becomes of justice? What becomes of morality? What becomes of right and wrong?

In Shrdlu's life, morality was more important than humanity. Humanistic values are more abstract; there is greater security in adhering to a moral code. Right and wrong are clearly defined. Yet, at the trial, Zero recognizes that "There's some things you can't answer yes or no." (scene iv)

Zero and Shrdlu cannot stay in the Elysian Fields (heaven), because even in death they want "goodness" to be rewarded and "evil" punished.⁸ Even more, they cling to moral values and Zero flees this pleasant place because of the "evil" companions who inhabit it--men who write indecent tales, couples who aren't married, etc.

Daisy: You said you like it here.

⁸The influence of the movie industry--films in which the good man triumphed and the villain perished--is discussed on page 31 of this chapter.

Zero: (looking at her in amazement) Liked it?
 Say, you don't mean you want to stay
 here, do you, with a lot of rummies,
 an' loafers an' bums? (scene vi)

Zero ends up in a repair and service station for white-collar souls. He will enter the world again as a baby, like millions of others, and start once more on a journey to slavery.

"And then when you get a little older you'll begin to learn things - and you'll learn all the wrong things and learn them all in the wrong way. You'll eat the wrong food and wear the wrong clothes and you'll live in swarming dens where there's no light and no air! You'll learn to be a liar and a bully and a braggart and a coward and a sneak. You'll learn to fear the sunlight and to hate beauty. By that time you'll be ready for school. There they'll tell you the truth about a great many things that you don't give a damn about and they'll tell you lies about all the things you ought to know - about all the things you want to know they'll tell you nothing at all. When you get through you'll be ready for your life-work. You'll be ready to take a job." (scene vii)

In this important speech, Rice shows the effects of taking man away from nature. In the cities are the "swarming dens," "no light and no air" (Zero's bedroom has only one small window. There are no windows in the Zero's living room, in the office, or in the court.), "wrong food" (canned food rather than fresh farm products), and "wrong clothes" (tight-fitting and restrictive). In the city children are more apt to misbehave, because neighbors are indifferent (the anonymity of the city), and they have little restric-

tion in their relationships to others. In a small town, there is a feeling of responsibility for another's child which has been lost with urbanization. The security felt from those relationships has also been lost. A child's education in the city emphasizes moral rather than humanistic values ("they'll tell you lies about all the things you ought to know"). The oppressive atmosphere in the school system mentioned by Rice is echoed by Allen in Only Yesterday: Tight control over the schools was maintained, textbooks were combed for slights to heroes of American history, and none but conservative speakers were allowed in the schools or colleges.⁹ "You'll be ready to take a job." A job: to be an employee, to have a boss, to be regimented, to be dehumanized, to die.

Though Elmer Rice sends Zero to his reincarnation with a small glimmer of hope, he is callous in his presentation of a life of a white-collar worker.

"You're a failure, Zero, a failure. A waste-product. A slave to a contraption of steel and iron. The animal's instincts, but not his strength and skill. The animal's appetites, but not his unashamed indulgence of them...." (scene vii)

⁹Frederick Lewis Allen, Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920's, (N.Y.: Harper & Row Publishers, Perennial Library, 1964), pp. 50-51.

Zero registers this complaint when he says, "I ain't had a square deal! Hard work! - That's all I've ever had!" (scene vii) To which Rice replies,

"What else were you ever good for?"

The playwright is more sympathetic to the character of Daisy, Zero's co-worker, who, remarkably, is attracted to Zero. Like Zero, she feels life has treated her unfairly. "Anyhow, why ain't I got a right to live? I'm as good as anybody else." (scene ii)

Rice presents two human beings who, unable to communicate while they are alive, meet in "heaven." She has committed suicide on learning of Zero's death; unlike Zero, Daisy is no longer ruled by provincial morality. Throughout her life she has longed for a romance as passionate as those she has seen on the movie screen.

"That one the other night - [sic] 'The Devil's Alibi' - [sic] he put his arms around her - [sic] and her head fell back and her eyes closed - [sic] like she was in a daze." (scene ii)

Daisy even uses a movie as a guide for her suicide:

"I seen Pauline Frederick do it once." (scene ii)

Daisy Diana Dorothea Devore, a plain, middle-aged woman, has a movie star's name but not her glamor.

Mrs. Zero's monologue in the first scene reveals that she, too, is preoccupied with the movies.

"I'm gettin' sick o' them Westerns."

"I like them sweet little love stories."

"Mrs. Nine was tellin' me she read in Picture-land that she ain't livin' with her husband."

"...comedy called 'Sea-Sick,' Mrs. Twelve... says it's a scream." (scene 1)

These women symbolize a phenomenon of their period. By 1920, melodramas, slapstick comedies, and westerns drew some forty million Americans to the movies at least once a week.¹⁰ Every aspect of a star's life was followed with fascination. The silent movies represented a world of fantasy and sex. The extravagant settings and exotic costumes fed an appetite for romance. Hollywood, newly converted to Freudian theory, became known as the sex capital of the world. Sophisticated sex became big box office. Divorce, seduction, and the use of drugs were presented in many films as symbols of fashionable life.¹¹

But late in 1922, within the space of a few short months, there came in succession a sordid rape case, a murder case, and a drug addiction

¹⁰Boardman, America and the Jazz Age, p. 96.

¹¹Arthur Knight, The Liveliest Art: A Panoramic History of the Movies, (N.Y.: New American Library, A Mentor Book, 1957), p. 111.

scandal.¹² Public indignation and protest and the threat of government censorship led the movie industry, in 1922, to create the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (M.P.P.D.A.), also known as the Hays office.¹³

The Hays Office promulgated...a theory of "compensating values"....According to the quaintly Victorian theory, if virtue were always rewarded and sin punished, if good eventually triumphed and the evildoer perished miserably, the laws of God, man, and the drama, would be simultaneously satisfied."¹⁴

Therefore, the films were able to portray six reels of "sin" if in the seventh reel, the sinner was punished. Also, the audience came to expect the "evil man" to perish miserably; he would not go to the Elysian Fields.¹⁵

The characters though outwardly respecting the boundaries which delineate good and evil and pretending disapproval, are nevertheless attracted to the sex and violence which they vicariously experience on the screen.

¹²Ibid. The rape case involved "Fatty" Arbuckle, a well-known comedian. The victim in the unsolved murder case was movie director William Desmond Taylor. Movie star Wallace Reid made headlines telling of his addiction to drugs.

¹³After Will H. Hays, its director.

¹⁴Knight, The Liveliest Art, p. 112.

¹⁵See Shrdlu's speech, p. 26 of this chapter.

Mrs. Zero complains that Zero doesn't take her "downtown" to the movies.

"They sure are pullin' some rough stuff in the pictures nowadays....an' by the time they get uptown half of it is cut out." (scene i)

While Mrs. Zero and Daisy sublimate their drives, Judy O'Grady (ironically, the "girl-next-door") leads an uninhibited life, but she is jailed for her nonconformism. Judy is not a fully developed character--she appears in only one scene--so there are many unanswered questions about her. She reveals in scene five that she knew Zero was watching her and also that she was put in jail because this had been her third offense. Is she an exhibitionist? She has visited the graveyard "lots o' times" for romantic trysts because there "the dead ones - [sic] they don't bother you." Her precise age is unknown; there is no physical description given, nor an indication of her marital status or occupation. She represents sexuality and daring (as seen in the movies and the tabloids of the day). She contrasts with the asexual, dominating (mother) Mrs. Zero and the graying middle-aged romantic Daisy. Zero reacts passively to his wife, lustily towards Judy (but fear prevents him from responding to this lust), and petulantly toward Daisy.

Zero: Speed it up a little, cancha?

Daisy: What's the rush? To-morrer's another day.

Zero: Aw, you make me sick.

Daisy: An' you make me sicker. (scene ii)

Yet in this surly, gruff atmosphere, their thoughts, expressionisticly presented to the audience reveal their fondness for each other.

Zero: You oughta move into that room. It's cheaper than where you're livin' now. I better tell you about it. I don't mean to be always pickin' on you.

Daisy threatens to ask to be transferred, but reflects, "Then I'd never see you at all."

Lately, Zero's attention is focused on "the bold ones;" he pursues sex not romance, and Daisy's hair is turning gray, "your face is gettin' all yellor," and she no longer wears "shirt waists...with...low collars." (scene ii) The low-collared shirtwaist dresses were considered scandalous in the early 1920's. "A bill was laid before the Virginia legislature which forbid [sic] any woman from wearing shirtwaists or evening gowns which displayed 'more than three inches of her throat.'"¹⁶ Daisy, therefore, has not been as confined by provincial morality as has Zero. In the

¹⁶Allen, Only Yesterday, p. 77.

Elysian Fields, the music which Daisy hears is symbolic of her escape from these societal boundaries.

Daisy, Zero's only hope for a responsive relationship, is rejected even in Paradise. On the one hand he is thwarted by dead convention and on the other driven by lust. In the final scene, one in which Zero has a recognition,¹⁷ his despair is alleviated by the promise of a young sexy girl.

The setting of the final scene is a repair station for white-collar workers who are reborn and sent back to earth to once again begin their lives of slavery. Ironically, the "angel" who exposes this evolution is a comic character, Lt. Charles. He is described as middle-aged and inclined to corpulence. It is Charles who expresses bitterness aimed at the waste-products of the world. That these failures in life are the masses and not the exceptions is indicated by phrases such as "there's ten thousand like you layin' around the street" (scene iii) and "There'll be millions of others like you..." (scene vii).

At the end of scene four, Zero confronts his peers with the accusation that any of them could be murderers.

¹⁷See p. 39 for discussion of Zero as a modern tragic hero.

"Do you get me? I'm just a regular guy like anybody else. Like you birds, now."

The jurors rise as one and with their verdict condemn themselves as well as Zero.

(shouting in unison) "GUILTY!"

According to Rice, the white-collar worker is guilty of being regimented, emasculated, and common. He leads a barren life in a vulgar culture. The specific nature of Zero's job, adding long columns of numbers is also dehumanizing. He says to the jury,

"I want you to get that right - [sic] all of youTwelve of you. Six and six. That makes twelve. I figgered it up often enough. Six and six makes twelve. And five is seventeen. And eight is twenty-five....Aw, cut it out! Them damn figgers! I can't forget 'em."

This speech is symbolic of Zero's inability to escape from the regimentation of his job. Even in death Zero cannot escape. In the final scene, the "dead" Zero is seen operating an adding machine, pressing the keys and pulling the levers with mechanical precision.

Charles: I said stop punching that machine.

Zero: (bewildered) Stop? (He goes on working mechanically.)

Charles: (impatiently) Yes. Can't you stop? Here, Joe, give me a hand. He can't stop. (Joe and Charles each take one of Zero's arms and with enormous effort detach him from the machine....)

Zero will be reincarnated to operate "a super-hyper adding machine with the great toe of his right foot." This goal of efficiency experts (maximum production with minimum effort) requires so little mental or physical effort that man's usefulness and his sense of meaning or destiny are negated. He might as well be dead.

Elmer Rice portrays the mediocrity of "Zeros" by not only what they say, but how they say it. For example, the following are representative of Zero's and Daisy's English:

"Don't be tellin' me..."

"The Eights seen it."

"I says..."

"...ain't lookin'..."

"Talk about laugh!"

"...if I'd 'a' had any sense."

There are also words such as "cancha," "tomorrer," and the "g" is dropped from all words ending in "ing"--gettin', showin', sayin', tellin', etc.

Speech patterns are only one of the devices used by Rice to show the mediocrity of the characters he has created. Word choice and emphasis also mirror the inner barrenness. Ugliness surrounds Zero. Ironically, he feels uncomfortable when surrounded by

beauty in the Elysian Fields. He is at home only in a second-rate graveyard or amongst installment-plan furniture.

The weary and dispirited Charles, whose job it is to prepare Zeros for their rebirth, though each time they get a little worse, ends the play by shaking his head and saying, "Hell, I'll tell the world this is a lousy job!" It is Elmer Rice's way of saying, "Hell, this is a lousy world," but implying, "This lousy world is Hell!"

The Adding Machine is a tightly constructed seven scene play without extraneous actions, dialogue or characters. The first three scenes occur during a twenty-four hour period in the life of a white-collar worker. The transitional fourth scene, Zero's trial, breaks the classical unities, but unifies thematically those indictments of the white-collar worker presented in the preceding three scenes: dehumanization, imprisonment by provincial morality, and submission to mass hysteria.

It is in the last three scenes that the playwright departs entirely from realism, as the action now takes place in Zero's afterlife, first in a second-rate graveyard, then in the Elysian Fields (heaven), and finally in a repair station for white-

collar souls, which prepares the Zeros for their return to Earth.

The plot pattern is therefore cyclical, and Zero's name, when drawn as a number, is symbolic of this reincarnation.

The structure of the play can be represented as follows:

3	1	3
(Scenes 1,2,3)	(Scene 4)	(Scenes 5,6,7)

Each unit of "3" (Scenes 1 & 5) begins with Zero asleep (or dead). The action of these beginning scenes can be drawn as a horizontal line.

The action peaks in the middle scene of these units (Scene 2, the killing; Scene 6, Zero fleeing the Elysian Fields). The final scenes of the units (Scenes 3 & 7) are the denouement (Zero accepts his fate).

Each unit has an office setting (Scenes 2 & 7). Both offices function as a place of refuge - from human relationships. Each unit has a communal setting (Scenes 3 & 6). In Scene 3, there is peer affirmation and conformity; in Scene 6, it is Zero who is the deviate and who must leave the society.

The structure of The Adding Machine reveals a series of conflicts whose resolution is enacted against a background of Freudian psychoanalysis.

The urban setting is specifically New York City (Zero talks of going to the Polo Grounds in scene iv) and the artificiality and ugliness of urbanization contrasts with the natural beauty of the Elysian Fields. Elmer Rice unifies his play with the theme of urbanization and therefore, according to Rice, dehumanization. The play is also unified by irony.

Zero, a person who has become a "number," says at his trial,

"They're funny things them figgers. They look like people sometimes." (scene iv)

The "dead" Daisy wistfully comments upon Zero's departure from the Elysian Fields,

"I might as well be alive."

Rice's irony extends to the construction of The Adding Machine as tragedy. Zero and the play are in many ways the antithesis of the classical tragic hero and classical tragedy, as listed below:

<u>The classical tragic hero</u>	<u>Zero (the antihero)</u>
noble descent	common man
better than average man	worse than average man
unmerited misfortune	Rice: "What else were you good for?"
true to life	symbolic

<u>The classical tragic hero</u>	<u>Zero (the antihero)</u>
consistent	killing inconsistent otherwise, consistency in regimentation and provincial attitudes
moral purpose	"sinful nature"
<u>The World of the Classical Hero</u>	<u>Zero's World</u>
(chorus)	
awareness of tragic hero	Zero goes unnoticed
importance of man	insignificance of man
world of harmony	world of dissonance
tie with natural and super- natural world	away from nature, god
<u>Classical tragedy</u>	<u>The Adding Machine</u>
character subsidiary to actions	actions symbolic of character
embellished language	fragmented, hackneyed, banal language
pity and fear, catharsis	pathos, disgust, depression

The first section of The Adding Machine (Scenes 1, 2, 3) like classical tragedy take place within a twenty-four hour period. Like the tragic hero, Zero has a recognition and a reversal of his situation, though both are presented with irony. In scene three, an adding machine is heard in the background for a brief moment. In scene seven, Zero briefly understands Rice's labelling of him as a slave and begs Charles

not to return him to Earth. The reversal occurs when Zero becomes a murderer, and again when he goes to the Elysian Fields rather than Hell.

Shrdlu's crime of killing his mother is more classical than Zero's murder of his boss. Zero's crime is a reaction to his firing as well as an affirmation of worth. Shrdlu had no such provocation. Also Shrdlu has the embellished speech of the classical hero. Zero's tragic flaw is not only the "mark of the slave" but also his lust. Shrdlu is also a slave--to his mother and to the church.

A tragedy like Zero's is more relevant to our times because the audience identifies more with the "little man" than with a hero. The classical tragedy was an imitation of noble actions. The tragic writer believed in the greatness of man. In the modern or Freudian Age, the identification with the common man condemns the society as much as Rice condemns Zero.

The Adding Machine is expressionistic drama, specifically, as mentioned earlier, the play can be lined to the Vitalist phase of Expressionism. Six years after The Adding Machine was produced, Rice wrote his second and final expressionistic play, The Subway.

The Subway is the tragedy of Sophie Smith, a shy, suffering, sentimental, eighteen-year-old file clerk, who is chosen by Rice to represent a typical white-collar office worker, doing a monotonous job as a result of industrial efficiency, and who is so overwhelmed by the artificiality surrounding her, that the only escape is suicide. This theme of artificiality is only hinted at in The Adding Machine when Daisy says of the flowers in the Elysian Fields, "They're so beautiful, they're almost artificial."

The character of Sophie is not presented with Zero's animal instinct or prejudice ("sinful nature"); she is dominated (like Shrdlu) by religious upbringing and provincial morality.

The vitalist theme of women-as-shrews can be seen in Sophie's mother (linking her with Mrs. Zero), though Mrs. Smith is equally disappointed with the state of motherhood.

Zero's regimentation is materialized in Sophie's home as the family exhibits mechanical behavior (rhythmic action) showing that they have been reduced to automaton-like states. This expressionistic device of action symbolizing character is thematically associated with the vitalist's anti-industrialization outlook. In the Smith home is seen the striped wallpaper (re-

flecting their imprisonment) which is analagous to the numbers on the Zero's wallpaper. Mr. Smith, Sophie's father, wears a uniform (symbol of conformity) and echoes Zero's concern for numbers as he reads headlines in the Smith home:

"Scientist Sets Age of World at Three Billion."

"Tidal Wave Death-toll Five Hundred Thousand."

(scene iii)

Headlines serve as expressionistic elements in both plays, symbolizing the fragmentation in the workers' lives. Sophie, Zero, and Daisy imagine the headlines caused by past or intended actions, each of which is a result of their "sinful natures," (i.e., individuality). Ironically, the only way for the characters to be noticed is to react against provincial morality or to commit acts of violence (difficulty of self-assertion because of urbanization).

The characterization of Sophie parallels that of Daisy in many ways: Both are repressed and efficient office workers, whose sentimental dreams are conditioned by the romances they see at the movies; when she is sexually aroused, Sophie's face is "all hot;" Daisy's face is "all red." Neither has any hope of marriage with the man she loves, and both commit suicide.

In the foreword to The Adding Machine, Philip Moeller defines melodrama as the type of play in which the situation creates the character. Tragedy he defines as that mightier form in which the character creates the situation.¹⁸ In The Subway, it is society's institutions and morality which are responsible for Sophie's suicide. In The Adding Machine, this is also applicable to Zero, but his inner nature is also blamed for his fate ("the mark of the slave").

Both plays are good examples of expressionistic drama. Sophie and Zero are both symbolic characters (the only fully developed characters in each play); Zero, in addition, may be considered the archetypal "little man." In language, the plays use pictorial symbolic images; speech is used functionally, i.e. fragmented sentences. The characters' thoughts are translated into action resulting in symbolic dramatic situations. Settings, sound, and lighting are also used symbolically. For example, as Zero's boss begins to fire him, the soft music of a distant merry-go-round (another circle) is heard, which increases in volume until the boss's voice can hardly

¹⁸Philip Moeller, foreword to The Adding Machine by Elmer Rice, (N.Y.: Samuel French, 1922), p. vii.

be heard and symbolizes Zero's inability to deal with authority. The boss's mouth open and closes repeatedly, but only the music is heard, now at a deafening pitch, and to this is added every stage effect of the theater -- wind, waves, galloping horses, locomotive whistles etc. It ends with a sudden "terrific peal of thunder" which represents the stabbing, a flash of red, symbolic of blood, and then the stage is plunged into blackness. The actual murder is not seen, but more powerfully, through expressionistic devices, the crime is "felt."

Rice uses music in conjunction with both characters, Sophie and Daisy. In The Adding Machine, the music is symbolic of freedom from society's values and institutions; in The Subway, Sophie's response to music is both an escape from her environment and a symbol for beauty--the beauty of her soul.

Lighting is used expressionistically in The Adding Machine to convey ugliness; in The Subway, the emphasis is on artificiality.

Despite the common themes and stylistic devices, I believe The Adding Machine to be a much better play than The Subway. The latter play seems more contrived, the soliloquies are too long, the thesis becomes an essay. Sophie as a character is not plausible. She embodies little more than fear. Her hystriionics are less

effective than Zero's plea to the jury, for example. Zero has been given a choice of leaving or staying in the Elysian Fields; Rice gives Sophie no such option, she is the heroine despoiled by a villain. The Subway differs from pure melodrama in that the villain goes unpunished. Zero is a more interesting character as the waste-product doomed to play the same role over and over again.

The friends of the Zeros are presented more subtly than Sophie's family. The conversations in the Zero home, where prejudices are revealed while exchanging banalities, is more effective in presenting dehumanization and conformity.

So many stylistic devices seen in The Adding Machine (1923) recur in The Subway (1929) that it may be fair to suggest an attempt on the part of the playwright to capitalize on the success of the earlier play. But the overly dramatic characterization of Sophie fails in comparison to the sex-starved Zero. Sophie's fear of men and her rising sexual awareness make good soap-opera, but not good drama.

The Subway lasted only six days on Broadway. The Adding Machine, by contrast, was a financial and critical success. It is included in many drama anthologies and is performed even today on college campuses.

The play's durability is based primarily on Rice's superb ironies and also, despite the dated language, the continued relevance of the issues raised. It may be said that Zero's speech does not "fit" a white-collar worker. Rice portrays Zero as much stupider than an auditor would be in real life.¹⁹ In The Subway, Sophie, another white-collar worker, exhibits none of the grammatical ineptness witnessed in Zero. This may be due to the fact that Rice, more mellow now, is presenting his heroine sympathetically.

Yet it is difficult to imagine Zero being presented in any other form. The economical construction borrows heavily from tragedy and expressionistic drama, but it is Elmer Rice's creativity and sense of humor which is responsible for this unique interpretation of a white-collar soul.

¹⁹Zero is a comic hero as well as a tragic hero.



SUBWAY



GOVERNMENT BUREAU

CHAPTER II

SUBWAY

George Tooker's Subway (currently in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City), an egg tempera painting on gesso panel, is relatively small in size (18" by 36"), but substantive in the ideas presented and in the insights gained from its study.

Subway may be compared to dramatic art--it has emotional impact as the viewer's eye moves from the "main character" (figure 1)¹ and then radiates to other sections of the painting discovering new characters wherever the eye may lead. It is silent theatre because the viewer discovers that none of the twenty-two characters are talking. Like symbolist drama, there are many levels of meaning. Like expressionist drama, there are illogicalities, distortions, and exaggerations.

Figure 1 (the "lady in red") is the central character in this drama by virtue of her frontal placement at the convergence of three axes, her size, and the expressive nature of her face and hand. She walks

¹See reproduction, p. 48.

toward the viewer, but apprehensively glances to her left, her grotesquely enlarged hand covering her abdomen.

The "lady in red" appears to be middle-aged and middle-class. I find no ethnic assumptions to be made. She wears a plain V-neck bright red dress, the color symbolic of passion and feeling,² and a plain steel-blue coat with upturned collar. There is a contrast then between the red dress (a warm color signifying assimilation, activity, and intensity) and the dark coat (a cold color signifying dissimulation, passivity, and debilitation).³

When two colors are contrasted in a given symbolic field, the inferior color is feminine in character and the superior is masculine.⁴

The brightness of the dress is also significant. "The purity of a color will always have its

²Jolande Jacobi, "Symbols in an Individual Analysis," from Carl G. Jung, M.-L. von Franz, Joseph L. Henderson, Jolande Jacobi, Aniela Jaffé, Man and His Symbols, (N.Y.: Dell Publishing Co., A Laurel Edition, 1964), p. 350.

³J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, trans. Jack Sage, foreword Herbert Read, (N.Y.: Philosophical Library, 1962), p. 50.

⁴Ibid., p. 57.

counterpart in the purity of its symbolic meaning."⁵
 The "lady in red" has a muscular build and a thick neck; the only sign of femininity is what appear to be polished nails on the masculine-looking hands. Her layered short hairdo and her bushy, precisely delineated eyebrows reflect the terror seen in her face. The high forehead, the bags under her eyes, the straight broad nose, the high cheek bones, and the jutting chin are features similar to those of the men who walk behind her.

There exists the possibility then that the "lady in red" is a hermaphroditic figure by virtue of her masculine characteristics and symbolically contrasting clothes, which relates to Jung's concept of the animus--the male element in the female unconsciousness.

...the animus often appears as a group of men. In this way the unconscious symbolizes the fact that the animus represents a collective rather than a personal element. Because of this collective-mindedness, women habitually refer (when their animus is speaking through them) to 'one' or 'they' or 'everybody'...

Figure 2 and figure 3, the two men who walk directly behind the "lady in red," may therefore be the materi-

⁵Ibid., p. 52.

⁶M.-L. von Franz, "The Process of Individuation," Jung, Man and His Symbols, p. 206.

alization of her animus. The two men and figure 1 have the same eyes and build. The two men in effect walk in her shadow. "The shadow represents the unknown or little known attributes and qualities of the ego."⁷

The "lady in red" reacts physically to what may be fear by clutching her stomach.

In actual fright, however, certain organs of the body more commonly react than others.... The upset stomach⁸ is another almost universal fear reaction.

Stomach ulcers is an example of...a psychomatic disease. It may arise when the body manufactures too much hydrochloric acid which is necessary for the digestion of food. The stomach ulcer patient is a person who reacts to strong emotions, especially repressed hostility,⁹ with an excessive secretion of hydrochloric acid.

If indeed this reaction is caused by repressed hostility, the focus of this hostility is the woman seated at the end of the hall (figure 6) whom I shall call "mother." In contrast to the other figures who are dressed with extreme simplicity, "mother" is dressed with some thought to fashion. She wears a

⁷Ibid.

⁸Joost A.M. Meerlo, The Rape of the Mind: The Psychology of Thought Control, Menticide, and Brain-washing, (N.Y.: Grosset and Dunlap, The Universal Library, 1961), p. 174.

⁹Ibid., p. 42.

red coat with fur skins around her neck. The odd white feather crown-like hat, and the white strokes at her wrists, which suggest other feathers or fur, also contrast with the drabness of the other figures. Also, she alone is seated. Her face is almost white and mask-like.

In the original painting (unlike the distorted reproduction) this anachronistic woman is surrounded by a bright lavender light which draws the viewer's attention to her. The "lady in red" and "mother" are linked by their bright red clothing and their polar positions in the main hall. The facial expression of "mother" is ambivalent, but, if indeed she is the dreamer's mother, then the whole drama is being enacted for an audience of one.

"Mother" is then the hostile and malevolent watcher and persecutor. Significantly, the "lady in red" is placed physically at a "crossroad" which according to Jung is a mother symbol.¹⁰

Subway can be hypothesized to be the dream of the "lady in red."

...the seat of the Self is presented in a ... dream as a traffic center of the human collective

¹⁰Aniela Jaffé, "Symbolism in the Visual Arts," Jung, Man and His Symbols, p. 258.

- a railway station. This may be because the Self...is usually symbolized by an object from the realm of personal experience - often a banal object...

The illogicalities of the drama support the hypothesis of the painting as a dream. The "lady in red" carries no pocketbook, nor does she wear jewelry. The three men in the "phone booths" (though these are not labelled as such) are cramped into a space too small for that purpose. Figure 18 and "mother" add to the drama and support the hypothesis as do the three women walking towards an exit-only turnstile. As stated earlier, none of the twenty-two figures are talking, but, with the exception of "mother," neither are they looking at anyone. Only "mother" is watching the drama.

The drama of Subway takes place in the evening (the outside world seen at the top of the stairs is dark). The setting of Subway is therefore at a time when "the threshold of consciousness is lowered and the impulses and images of the unconscious can pass across it."¹² It is in such a condition that the

¹¹Jacobi, "Symbols in an Individual Analysis," from Jung, Man and His Symbols, p. 361.

¹²M.-L. von Franz, "The Process of Individuation," from Jung, Man and His Symbols, p. 369.

anima and animus are most easily evoked.¹³

Night is related to the passive principle, the feminine and the unconscious....Within the tradition of symbology it has the same significance as death and the colour black.¹⁴

The evocation of the animus in Subway is six-fold, for figures 2,3,4, and 15 (and figures 16 and 17 by implication) are in effect the same man.

Figures 2 and 3 are more stylized (caricatures) to look threatening--their hats are pulled down menacingly over their eyes. The two men are identical in face and clothing except that the color of the coats and hats are different shades of brown.¹⁵

Also, figure 3's collar is turned down and figure 2 carries a briefcase. Their mouths resemble those seen in tragic masks and their eyes seem to look up in their sockets.

The same turned-down mouths can be seen in a group of three women, figures 9,10, and 12, who appear to the viewer's right. They wear plain garments. Figures 10 and 12 appear to be identical; figure 9 has the same egg-shaped head and sleek pulled-back hair. Figures 9 and 12 look to their

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Cirlot, Dictionary of Symbols, p. 218.

¹⁵Tooker's use of color for balance and unity will be discussed on p. 68.

left; figure 10 looks to her right. Figure 12 holds her arms tightly to her side; figures 9 and 10 seem to have their left arm raised slightly. The women head toward the turnstile, but they will be unable to enter the subway--the turnstile is an exit only.

The women's egg-shaped faces recall the girl's face in Edvard Munch's painting The Scream. There is another connection between Subway and Munch's painting, namely that the "lady in red" is being followed by two men as seen in The Scream. Neither group of men is overtly threatening either woman, but the fear is nevertheless there.

Figure 11, a young man in a brown jacket (he alone in the painting wears no coat) stands at the bottom of the steps leaning dejectedly against the wall, his chin close to his chest.

Figure 18, to the left of the "phone booths," is a baldheaded man who faces the wall, his head in his upraised arm. He appears to be crying.

Both figures 11 and 18 are framed by bars, which "cage" them (see p. 59 Subway as a prison).

Figure 5, who will be referred to as the "little old lady" clutches her pocketbook tightly to her chest, her left arm tight to her side as seen in the group of women. She has tightly pulled back gray hair and wire-rim glasses. Her dress is a

brighter shade of lavender than is figure 9's. The "little old lady" glances downward to her left. The secondary female characters in this drama appear to react to fear by having their arms close to their bodies and by not looking ahead.

A partial view of figure 8's head is seen directly behind figure 1; a braid is twirled around her head. Interestingly, the women in the painting are all middle-aged or elderly. With the exception of "mother" they all wear grey shoes (the color grey signifying neutralization, egoism, depression, inertia, and indifference).¹⁶ This then may symbolize the paradoxical expressions of fear - indifference and apathy.¹⁷ The reaction of figure 18, using as justification the above quote, is of less concern than the apathy seen in the other characters of the drama.

An elderly man walks down the hall toward "mother;" two men head toward the lower level of the subway, wearing bowler hats which contrast with the fedora hats on figures 2 and 3. They as well as the other figures not specifically mentioned wear the same plain coat in somber colors.

¹⁶Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 52.

¹⁷Meerlo, The Rape of the Mind, p. 165.

The subway devoid of people raises elements for discussion. The ceilings with their repetitive beams are low, producing a claustrophobic effect when inhabited. The walls are white tile; the bars, railings, and steps, and parts of the pilasters are green. The cast shadows have a green tonality. Everything in the subway is clean, antiseptic, and cold.

There are three levels to the subway, with stairs on the left, leading to a lower level, and stairs on the right leading to the street outside. The place is well-lit, the light coming from an unknown source. The location of the subway is unknown; Tooker gives no clues to its identification. The subway station is devoid of decoration. There are no trash receptacles, candy or gum machines, nor are there street or other directional signs.¹⁸

In this drama, the subway appears to be a prison, a cage-like environment which is suggested by the barriers or bars which separate some of the figures from the others (especially figures 11 and 18), the railings around the stairs (more bars), and the turnstile, which leads to an exit. The "lady in red," who looks elsewhere, cannot escape her prison

¹⁸Also supporting the hypothesis of the painting as a dream.

regardless of exits from the subway. The clothing worn by the figures (except for "mother" and figure 11) also reflects the monotony of prison clothing.

The same psychological imprisonment is found in Louis Gugliemi's painting, Terror in Brooklyn.¹⁹ Both paintings are successful in portraying what many perceive to be the prisonlike character of urban existence, reflecting the frightening insecurity of the people of the city. The situation, the sense of loneliness and menace are exaggerated, yet the message is credible. The figures in each painting wear winter coats (winter symbolizing death and cold; a coat symbolizing concealment of inner self from prying eyes).²⁰

The psychological imprisonment seen in Subway, painted in 1950, may be related to what William Manchester refers to as the "Age of Suspicion,"

¹⁹In this antiwar painting, the characters are not as realistically portrayed; one woman is painted in the Cubist style. The protective glass enclosure does not provide security--they cling to each other in terror. The silence in Gugliemi's painting comes from a deserted threatening street with ominous-looking buildings. The silence in Tooker's painting comes with a well-inhabited subway.

²⁰Jacobi, "Symbols in an Individual Analysis," Jung, Man and His Symbols, p. 350.

the 1950's.²¹ Tooker's prison may in fact be a bomb shelter. The illogicalities of Subway (figures 11 and 18, "mother," and the group of women before the turnstile) may be explained as an air-raid drill, that in fact, they have no actual destination. The fear seen in Subway may be Tooker's response to the hysteria of his time: Communism, A bomb explosions by Russia, McCarthyism, the Korean War, and flying saucers.

Subway has a sterile oppressive atmosphere. The cold tile walls and the green tonality add to the institutional setting. The inhabitants of the subway are like chronic patients, childlike, and unresponsive, therefore, to others.

The subway is a maze, out of which the dreamer may never escape,²² a labyrinth which represents a loss of spirit and remoteness from the fountain of life.²³ It may be hypothesized that the labyrinth of the subway reflects the complexity of urban life-- there are too many choices. It may also symbolize the bureaucratic control of man's affairs, entangling him within a labyrinth of often inhuman social forces.

²¹William Manchester, The Glory and The Dream: A Narrative History of America, 1932-1972, 2 Vols., (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1973), p. 579.

²²See Subway as a cave, p. 65.

²³Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 167.

The turnstile emphasizes a feeling of entrapment.

Another Tooker painting, Government Bureau,²⁵ enlarges on this theme of the vulnerability of man-- he is always caught in some nightmare and his solutions never seem adequate.

This 1956 painting²⁶ is also well-populated with middle-aged and elderly men and women who wear the same winter coats seen in Subway. Some of the women, however, wear scarves on their heads and galloshes. Interestingly, there are two women who wear bright red shoes (the woman to the left of the man in the center of the painting and the woman at the far left). In each painting, therefore, Tooker provides some aspect of individuality, saying in effect that there are a few people who have not been reached by the "system."

In Government Bureau, the people who wait in line are seen only from the back ("the least human side")²⁷ and no hands are visible. This is signifi-

²⁵Government Bureau is on exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.

²⁶See reproduction, p. 49.

²⁷Jacobi, "Symbols in an Individual Analysis," Jung, Man and His Symbols, p. 349.

cant because the hand symbolizes protection, power, authority, and strength.²⁸

The government employees who face the viewer through cramped glass booths (the same crowding seen in the phone booths of the earlier painting) are framed by the circular cut-out glass of the enclosure.

The mouth (a symbol of creativity²⁹) is not shown. Yet the eye (a symbol of understanding) is. One eye means extrahuman powers (Cyclops). But multiple faces and eyes (and the men in the circles are one and the same man) imply disintegration.³⁰

A dream that occurs quite often among certain abnormal types of subjects involves a multitude - [sic] objects or of people - [sic] all with the same characteristics, that is the multitude comprises the multiplication of one single phenomenon instead of a collection of many different ones. This is a symbol alluding to the secret and, at root, terrible unity of all things. Now, the anguish which nearly always attends this symbol is a psychological consequence of 'repetition'...and of the fact that in this world it seems to be the law of diversification that prevails. Or, ...only diversity justifies multiplicity...otherwise it is a characteristically pathological symbol.³¹

²⁸Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 130.

²⁹Ibid., p. 211.

³⁰Ibid., p. 213.

³¹Ibid.

Through the opening between the glass and paneling, elongated fingers rest on what appears to be an adding machine with red and white keys producing an American flag. But for this device, the painting could appear to be a government office in an Eastern European country (possibly Russia) by virtue of the stocky women and their "babushkas." However, this scene is also representative of New York City in the 1940's and 1950's.

A flag, which generally symbolizes victory and self-assertion,³² and an eye with a hand, which generally symbolizes clairvoyant action,³³ are used ironically by Tooker in an office in which no action is apparent. No two people speak. The faces seen in the circles are grotesque, with whiteish wrinkled skin, heavy bags, creased foreheads, and an aura of death. Tooker captures the endless waiting that is associated with bureaucratic dealings.³⁴

Another explanation for the symbology of Government Bureau is a religious connotation, with bureaucracy being the new religion. Unlike the

³²Ibid., p. 103.

³³Ibid., pp. 130-31.

³⁴This points out the inefficiency of bureaucracy. Workers, regimented into adhering to a set of rules, have difficulty functioning when the rules change.

claustrophobic effect of Subway, the ceilings in this office are quite high, and with the pilasters and aisles, produce an ecclesiastical atmosphere. The circular fixtures, hanging from the ceiling by thin metal bars, cut across the ceiling beams to produce a cross and orb. Also, the faces of the workers, seen in circles, correspond to religious icons.

Parallel religious allusions can be found in Subway. The final levels of interpretation of Tooker's Subway is the subway as a cave, a cellar, and the underworld. Subway as a cave represents introverted withdrawal into "...consciousness where...[she] can succumb to subjective fantasies."³⁵

The maze of strange passages, chambers, and unlocked exits in the cellar recall the old Egyptian representation of the underworld, which is a well-known symbol of the unconscious with its unknown possibilities.³⁶

³⁵Jacobi, "Symbols in An Individual Analysis," Jung, Man and His Symbols, pp. 348-9.

³⁶Franz, "The Process of Individuation," Jung, Man and His Symbols, p. 175.

There can be many explanations for the three levels of the subway:

<u>Lower level</u>	<u>Middle level</u>	<u>Upper level</u>
lower world (Hell)	terrestrial or intermediary world (Earth)	celestial world (Heaven)
sin	passivity or choice	virtue
obscurity	struggle	loftiness of spirit
instinct	dynamism (intellect)	spirituality
ignorance	choice	knowledge

The pairs of steps may represent "breaking through the levels of existence in order to open up the way from one world to another."³⁷ They therefore establish the relationship among heaven, earth, and hell; virtue, passivity, and sin.

The sterility, coldness, and darkness suggest death and point to the subway as a grave.

Formally, Subway is a painting of precise geometric order. Its organization is based on linear perspective. Subway may be said to relate to a modern tryptych. The composition's balance is achieved by psychological interest in different areas of the painting (figures 18 and 11

³⁷ Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 298.

balance figure 1), exciting the viewer's curiosity in each of the three sections of the painting.

Balance by interest:

Left Section

stairs
phone booths (3 men)
crying man (figure 18)

Right Section

stairs
turnstile (3 women)
dejected man
(figure 11)

Center Section

long hall
"lady in red" and "mother"
(polar positions)

two men
(frame figure 1)

Balance by color:

<u>Left Section</u>	<u>Center Section</u>	<u>Right Section</u>
lavendar	red	
brown	lavendar	
dark blue		
brown	brown, brown	brown
	red (dark blue)	lavendar (dark blue)

Note: There is also a basic green tonality to the work (seen in the tile, cement, railings, pilasters, and cast shadows). The choice of medium (tempera) requires careful execution, this deliberate precision culminating in a polished, finished look, yet done in flat or dry incandescent colors. Work is done with small hatchings in a draftsmanlike manner. The technique allows many overpaintings which are carried out in quick succession (the paint dries rapidly) and upon completion, the tempera panels are varnished.

The painting is balanced by the use of light and dark. Exceptionally dark areas are the outside world, in the right section, the vent at the end of the main hall, in the center section, and a portion of the lower level, in the left section. Bright light is cast on the faces of figure 1, the two men who walk behind her, figure 14, and "mother." This points to the religious allusion again as Tooker forms a cross with his lighting--the length of the main hall is lit as is a line from figure 14 to figure 11, horizontally crossing the main hall. The rest of the figures are in dark shadows, much darker than those seen in reproductions of the painting.

George Tooker's Subway is a coherent composition; all elements have an interdependence. The painting is unified, all the elements are brought together and seen as a whole by the viewer. Tooker achieves unity by the convergence of lines, the use of repetition, the similarity of figures, and the use of color. Despite the "sameness" of figure and clothing, the painting is not monotonous. The coloristic organization and formal structure are charged with astonishingly expressive power.

The characteristics of Tooker's "public art" as seen in Subway and Government Bureau are as follows:

1. well-populated, shapeless masses portrayed as average individuals (middle-aged and middle-class)--resigned to their fate or with fear of the intangible (Especially with Government Bureau, the artist is not dealing with the problem of a particular person, but is commenting about a universal problem--dehumanization, and dealing with the archetype, not the specific.)
2. unidentified settings, but the architecture of urban and industrial America
3. cage, box, or prison settings--bars, barriers, separation of one figure from another
4. precise geometric order, formal organization, linear perspective (like orderly, methodical surrealist terror)
5. elements of cold (tile, cement, metal, glass), winter (coats, scarves, galloshes), and silence (no two people speak), used to portray a sterile, oppressive institutional atmosphere
6. light from unidentified source (link with surrealist terror)
7. didactic
8. intellectuality--synthesis by the knowledgeable viewer
9. flat color, brushwork not evident, finished, polished appearance; modelling reduced to a minimum
10. illogicalities (red shoes in Government Bureau, "mother" in Subway)

Tooker uses the stylistic devices of repetition, fragmentation, and caricature, as well as the expressionist devices of distortion and exaggeration. Images frequently used are:

1. eyes (drooping lids, accentuated bags under eyes)
2. hair (clearly delineated hairs, used also for eyebrows)
3. long noses
4. hands (elongated fingers)

Tooker's work concentrates not on the individual personality, but much more on types within a society which he has created to show life as he sees it.

His concern is with society, what it is and how it may be bettered. Tooker attributes the quote, "All art comes from other art," to Thomas Aquinas. He uses this to explain his stylistic sources. Specific sources for Tooker's art, however, are much less important to him than the synthetic effects to which this knowledge of past events can be put.³⁸

George Tooker became aware of the technique and style of Renaissance artists while he was a student at Harvard University, during which time he spent

³⁸Thomas H. Garver, George Tooker: Paintings 1947-1973, (San Francisco: The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1974), n.p.

his leisure hours at the Fogg Art Museum.³⁹

The following characteristics of Tooker's "public" paintings seem to be echoes from the Renaissance masters:

1. rhythmic compositions (Giotto)⁴⁰
2. technique of perspective (Masaccio)⁴¹
3. disguised symbolism (Master of Flemalle)⁴²
(With this method or technique, almost any detail may carry a symbolic message--the symbolism is immersed in the world of everyday appearances. Realism and symbolism once separate entities now become interdependent [see Tooker as a symbolic realist, p. 77].)

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰For painting, the Renaissance is generally acknowledged to have begun with Giotto, whose rhythmic compositions draw the viewer's eye from every angle to the center of interest.

⁴¹Masaccio is regarded as the first artist to apply the new principle of perspective with great success.

⁴²The Merode Altarpiece, (@1425) attributed to the Master of Flemalle, was a new pictorial experience. The realism of the Merode Altarpiece focuses on the household of a Flemish burgher not on an aristocrat or religious dwelling.

"This bold departure from tradition forced upon our artist a problem no one had faced before: how to transfer supernatural events from symbolic settings to an everyday environment."

(H. W. Janson, History of Art: A Survey of the Major Visual Arts from the Dawn of History to the Present Day, [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969], p. 287.)

4. modeling reduced to a minimum, simplified descriptive detail (Rogier van der Weyden)⁴³

The main difference between Tooker's art and the paintings of the Flemish masters is the medium, for the Flemish artists were the first well-known painters to use oil.

Tooker uses egg tempera, the medium used by the Southern or Early Renaissance school of painting. Tooker acknowledges the influence of Piero della Francesca,⁴⁴ whose figures conveyed an "inner life" by glances and gestures, and who relied on scientific perspective as the basis of painting more than any other artist of his day.⁴⁵ This mathematical outlook permeates all Tooker's work.

The Northern Renaissance artists to whom Tooker acknowledges an indebtedness were Antonio del Pollaiuolo and Andrea Mantegna. Like Pollaiuolo, Tooker endows his compositions with a centrifugal impulse; like Mantegna, Tooker uses settings to echo the action and mood.

⁴³The works of Rogier van der Weyden are known for their emotional drama, his style differing from his predecessor (Van Eyck) in that modeling is reduced to a minimum and descriptive detail has been simplified or omitted.

⁴⁴Garver, Tooker, n.p.

⁴⁵Janson, History of Art, p. 327.

There is also a relationship between Tooker and Albrecht Durer, who copied Mantegna paintings and who was the first artist to do self-portraits throughout his career.⁴⁶ Durer is known for his superb draftsmanship and his precise rendering of texture. Tooker's self-portrait of 1947 (the first of many) shares with Durer's portrait of 1500, the solemnity, the frontal pose, and idealization of features. This first self-portrait seems also a tribute to Botticelli. Of note is the way that Tooker has tied his sweater around his neck like a cowl as seen in the angels in Birth of Venus.

Tooker's self-portrait (a face in a circle), a rondo, like the government workers, looks like a secularized icon. It is in fact Tooker himself who appears in Subway and Government Bureau (as figures 2,3,4,14 etc. in Subway, as both the man waiting in line and the government worker in Government Bureau).

A comparison may be made between Tooker's paintings and the "surrealist" paintings of Giorgio deChirico. Mystery and Melancholy of a Street has as its setting, a deserted street and endlessly diminishing

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 391.

arcade (contrasting with Tooker's populated paintings). Both deChirico and Tooker present an ominous atmosphere, partially achieved by the use of lighting. deChirico distorts his perspective, the buildings overpower the girl; Tooker's building in Subway cages the inhabitants claustrophobically. The two paintings of Munch (mentioned earlier) and deChirico, like Tooker's, are nightmares, a response to the unconscious. The staticity of Government Bureau is reminiscent of the paintings of René Magritte, another surrealist.

Tooker was much influenced by Reginald Marsh's ideas and learned to paint in Marsh's fluent and transparent tempera style, but unlike Marsh, Tooker gives his paintings a finished, polished appearance. Also, Tooker's staticity contrasts with Marsh's dynamism. As Marsh's pupil, Tooker occasionally went to Coney Island, one of Marsh's favorite sketching spots, to make drawings of bathers, but feeling too self-conscious there, sought the semi-privacy of sketching in the subway.⁴⁷ Like Marsh, Tooker sketches incessantly, filling sketch books with drawings of everyday life.

Later Tooker studied with Paul Cadmus, who encouraged him to explore further the possibilities

⁴⁷Garver, Tooker, n.p.

of painting with tempera in the classical manner rather than the more transparent technique developed by Marsh. Tooker had now found his niche, the perfect medium for his contemplative studies. Cadmus's Bar Italia and Tooker's Subway share the common characteristics of caricature, irony, classical allusion, and formidable architecture.

George Tooker is generally described as a "magic realist," and "magic realism" is seen as an extension of realism.⁴⁸ The realistic artist seeks to portray his contemporary world, objectively and to convince the viewer that he has portrayed reality. By the use of realistic details on meticulously and skillfully executed painted surfaces, the realistic artists achieve extraordinary accuracy in creating identifiable images.

The magic realist, on the other hand, seeks to give the viewer an identification not with reality, but with fantasy which he portrays as reality. "Magic realists try to convince us that extraordinary things

⁴⁸Encyclopedia of Art, (N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 5:1981; John D. Morse, ed. Ben Shahn, (N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, 1972), p. 174; Avant-Garde, September 1968, n.p.; reprint from Rehn Galleries, New York, agents for George Tooker, n.d., n.p.

are possible simply by painting them as if they existed."⁴⁹ Magic realism is a supernaturalistic art which brings every detail of a picture into sharp focus, so that every point seems to be the high point.⁵⁰ Tooker, however, dislikes the term "magic realist" principally because he finds it so inaccurate.

The very word "magic" implies manipulation and slight of hand beyond the vision or comprehension of the witness, and Tooker's ambitions do not include this sort of illusionary (or delusionary) artifice.⁵¹

A more appropriate classification would be to group Tooker with the figurative artists working outside of the Abstract Expressionist mainstream of American art and known as "symbolic realists." Symbolic realism takes painting to be an intellectual more than an emotional or manual profession or responsibility.⁵² The symbolic realists (which include Edward Hopper, Ben Shahn, and Andrew Wyeth) assume that the durable products of art are the expressions of ideas rather than

⁴⁹Dorothy C. Miller and Alfred H. Barr, Jr., eds., American Realists and Magic Realists, (N.Y.: Arno Press for the Museum of Modern Art, 1969), p. 7.

⁵⁰Morse, Ben Shahn, p. 174

⁵¹Garver, Tooker, n.p.

⁵²Ibid.

demonstrations of self-love or self-pity.⁵³ They see painting as a result of formal organization, moving toward the universal and essential, rather than toward the specific or anecdotal. It is an art of intelligence; the matrix of their work is metaphor.

Tooker's "public paintings" (actually comprising only a small portion of his work) stress issues of a profoundly important social nature which are still relevant today. Since they also deal with perennial themes, they are universal as well. His paintings are intense, yet he offers no answers or responses to the specific issues which are raised. He is as much an observer as a commentator of his society. The public paintings deal with the individual in an urban setting, showing his fear of and resignation to urban life. He is successful in capturing the anonymity of urban existence and with Government Bureau, the anonymous processing of bureaucracy. In his paintings, Tooker shows man isolated from himself as well as from his fellow man. Tooker's vision of Hell is man being with others, but nobody responds, nobody cares. All

⁵³Ibid.

are trapped, but either they are unconscious of their condition or unwilling to acknowledge it.

The larger body of Tooker's work is more intimate in imagery and more positive in tone. He deals with relatively few themes, which are given many variant restatements. Tooker has painted at least eight variations of the "Window" theme which involves working out variations of figures enclosed in a small space. The "Mirror" series are variations of the traditional "vanitas" portrait, showing that youth and beauty are transitory. The "Sleeper" series are dream/death paintings, two are in memorium to the artist's parents. They may have been influenced by Tooker's friend and contemporary Jared French, who executed a number of paintings of semi-nude men on the beach some years before Tooker's series.⁵⁴

Tooker's Subway and Government Bureau have been widely reproduced (not only in books on art, but also in publications on psychology and sociology), yet in spite of all the recognition he has received throughout the years (from major museums and critics), his work, as a whole, remains unknown. It deserves the awareness of a much larger audience, because he is a remarkable painter.

⁵⁴Ibid.

CHAPTER III

SYNTHESIS

The Adding Machine is drama, written to be produced physically (e.g. performed by actors) in front of an audience. The fact that it is a live performance distinguishes the medium fundamentally from other literature (words become speech) and from other art forms. Most significantly, with each new audience, the play is somehow different from the preceding presentation. Also, the playwright is probably sensitive to public approval, for only with this approval, will his/her play be produced.

In synthesizing an expressionist play (The Adding Machine) and a symbolic realist painting (Subway), I find a relationship between these two genres in their modernity, their intellectuality, and their concern with philosophical and moral values.

Both artists can be called modern because in their works of art are seen worlds willed by their respective creators. Ideas are presented by the expressionist playwright (Rice) and the symbolic realist painter (Tooker) by departing from objective reality. Rice employs symbols and stylistic devices

to convey a subjective picture of man who is both individual and type; Tooker constructs "public" paintings in which the archetype replaces the individual in order to show more intensely the anonymity and isolation of contemporary society. The society is of more importance to Tooker than the words or actions of any individual within that society.

There are common issues raised in this 1923 play and 1950 painting which seem to support Nietzsche's belief that the world is an eternally senseless play and that man is doomed to play the same role over and over again. The fear of foreigners and Boshevism in the early 1920's has its counterpart in the 1950's (fear of Communism), only the terminology is changed. In the early 1920's, the enemies were clearly defined. Zero and his friends know that foreigners are responsible for strikes. The Ku Klux Klan informed millions of Americans that their problems were caused by the immigrant minorities and only when America was made safe for white, Protestant Americans would these problems be alleviated. Zero is alienated, but he knows from whom. He fears his boss, his wife, and his "sinful nature"--he is concerned with belonging.

Subway may be said to reflect the "Age of Suspicion," the 1950's, with its atmosphere of unknown threatening forces. Though Americans were

fighting a war in Korea, the newspapers were warning about atomic secrets which the Russians had stolen from the United States and about flying saucers, perhaps from other planets. The United States, once preeminate in world affairs, was now sharing the global spotlight, and warnings of America being "second" were editorialized and widely discussed.

Both Tooker and Rice were activists in their societies (Tooker for a brief time during his college days), and it was natural that both ultimately turned their talents to attack with fervor the social evils they found in their societies.

Rice, a socialist, attacked the politics, economics, and morals of his society, believing that

...social evils are the accumulation of individual acts of aggression and malice, and that social betterment can be achieved only through individual affirmation and creativeness.

Tooker, while a student at Harvard, stood on Boston street corners distributing Communist literature and "hating it, but feeling that somehow it was the thing to do."² Like Rice, he too became increasingly aware of

¹Elmer Rice, Minority Report: An Autobiography, (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1963), p. 143.

²Thomas H. Garver, George Tooker: Paintings, 1947-1973, (San Francisco: The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1974), n.p.

art as a tool for social expression and possible change, being moved by the social and emotional content of the Mexican painters, David Alferos Sequeiros and Jose Clemente Orozco.³

Tooker considers painting a very isolated occupation. He quotes from Thomas Mann's Death in Venice:

A solitary, unused to speaking of what he sees and feels, has mental experiences which are at once more intense and less articulate than those of a gregarious man. They are sluggish yet more wayward, and never without a melancholy tinge. Sights and impressions which others brush aside with a glance, a light comment, a smile, occupy him more than their due; they sink silently in, they take on meaning, they become experience, emotion, adventure. Solitude gives birth to the original in us,⁴ to beauty unfamiliar and perilous--to poetry.

Rice, like Tooker, believed that man is at his greatest when he is self-reliant and self-sufficient.

I believe that when an individual becomes a unit in a parade, a mass demonstration, a military organization, a convention, a religious assemblage, a sports event gathering, he functions on a lower intellectual and moral level than when he acts independently of group pressure and the fear of being a nonconformist....From the time I first ventured into the streets, I have distrusted and shunned crowds. The minority man I have always been is just a grown-up minority boy.⁵

³Ibid.

⁴Garver, Tooker, n.p.

⁵Rice, Minority Report, p.36.

Tooker and Rice, therefore, sought and shared the common experience of being artists in isolation, believing this to strengthen their insights and creativity.

Live with your century, but do not be its creature, render to your contemporaries what they need, not what they praise....The gravity of your principles will scare them from you...

(Frederich Schiller)

George Tooker and Elmer Rice are intellectual artists. Both are aware of shades of meaning of the natural and cultural symbols which they incorporate into their works. Both artists use form and content supportively, the structural or physical properties echoing the content or the philosophical aspects of their works.

George Tooker, the observer, and Elmer Rice, the commentator, present their themes combining sociological perspective with aesthetic merit, while illustrating the dilemma of urban existence. To present his view of society as sterile and oppressive, George Tooker in Subway depicts an institutional atmosphere which he stylistically enhances with cold elements (tile, steel, cement, glass and with claustrophobic and cage-like effects. Elmer Rice focuses on the ugliness of urban life, finding the society and its

citizens to be second-rate (cheap and common), the barren settings echoing the inner barrenness of his white-collar worker.

It is fitting that both artists deal with the theme of the city in an indoor setting, thereby contrasting urbanization with nature. Using exaggeration and distortion, each artist places his central character into this indoor setting--Rice, making Zero worse than a white-collar worker would be in real life. Both Tooker and Rice deal with archetypes, Zero representing the white-collar soul and Tooker's subway and government office inhabitants representing middle-class urban society.

Both Tooker and Rice portray the urban dwellers as middle-aged and middle-class, though Tooker's figures in Government Bureau have the heaviness and asexuality usually identified with portrayals of the lower or peasant classes. The Zeros' friends, in scene three, are extensions of Zero, the little man, and therefore a part of the mediocrity. Their names, Mr. One, Two, Three etc. can be linked to the receding images of those who stand in line in Government Bureau; in both cases, the lines in the office and the friends who are "numbers" could be repeated endlessly.

Tooker and Rice both equate the masses with conformity, and use in their paintings and plays the stylistic devices of repetition in face, dress, actions, etc. The theme of conformity is further developed in Rice's play to show how an emphasis on conformity leads to the rigid dogmas and self-righteousness of the Zeros and their friends. By accepting conformity, these characters reject diversities, and those who exhibit any aspect of individuality are considered social deviates.

The artists see regimentation as an outgrowth of the conformity. Those who wait in line in Government Bureau mirror the regimented couples who file mechanically into the Zero home. In Rice's play The Subway, mechanical behavior is expressionistically exhibited by the members of the Smith family, symbolizing the white-collar worker's regimentation. This conformity and regimentation may be said to emanate from the monotonous occupations associated with industrialization and bureaucracy, since the nature of bureaucracy lowers the skill level of the white-collar worker, making his work seem more and more factory-like. Because Zero performs the same task continually, he is reduced almost to the level of a machine.

Tooker uses irony in presenting his government office (where nothing is being done), showing that even though both employee and client are regimented, the system is still inefficient. The impersonal control seen in the government office is further developed in The Adding Machine as Zero goes unnoticed in a job which he has faithfully performed for twenty-five years. His firing emphasizes the technical rather than humanistic goals of the system, which both Rice and Tooker condemn. They see the achievement of maturity as an individual task and the system as perpetuating conformity and regimentation. Also, when "the system" uses mass persuasion formulated from psychological principles, its power becomes nearly impregnable.

Both Government Bureau and The Adding Machine dramatize a concern for the strict adherence to regulations which induces timidity. This fear of authority is instilled through conditioning so that, in time, no implementing condition (no overt threat) need be present to produce a similar reaction. Fear of something in one area tends to generalize to fear in other areas. Therefore, the apprehension seen in Subway may be an extension of the fear of authority or the fear of non-conformity.

The fear shown by Zero and Shrdlu is a result of their emasculation by authoritative women (Zero, by his wife; Shrdlu, by his mother). The passivity seen in Government Bureau and in the Zero home contrasts with the murders in the play, but both are paradoxical reactions to fear. In Subway the reaction of figure 1 may be said to be either apprehensive or fearful. Confused and powerless, the "lady-in-red" makes no attempt to communicate with the other inhabitants of the subway, while they are unresponsive to the tragedies which surround them.

Anonymity, an element of both bureaucracy and urbanization, increases the alienation seen in the paintings and plays. Tooker presents the theme of alienation in Subway by separating certain figures from others with bars. In Government Bureau, the government workers are separated from those who wait in line by their confining cubicles. As discussed in Chapter I, Zero is alienated from his wife, from Daisy, and from his employer. Representing the alienated urban man, Zero feels trapped by his anonymous and alienating society. Psychological imprisonment is symbolized by the wall-paper in the Smith home (Rice's The Subway) and by railings, bars, and turnstile in Subway. Tooker's characters as seen in his

"public" paintings are too regimented, apathetic, or fearful to break out of their cage/jail, appearing to be forever caught in the labyrinth, forever waiting in line.

In summary, because of his conformity, regimentation, and subservience to power in an alienating and anonymous society, urban man is dehumanized. Rice develops the theme of dehumanization in four ways, reducing Zero to child-like, animal-like, machine-like, and puppet-like behavior. Zero symbolizes man as child. By the use of power, authority, and discipline, Zero has been dominated, resulting in his being dependent, subservient, and exploited. Secondly, Zero symbolizes man as animal. Though he is obedient (until the murder) because of his fear of authority, Zero exhibits the animal's instincts and appetites (primary drives) but not unashamed indulgence of them. Thirdly, Zero symbolizes man as machine. Through programming, he has been reduced to a human automaton; his responses are conditioned and his behavior is "routinized." His job in the bureaucracy is only a little fragment of the corporate picture; so Zero believes himself to be only a fragment. Lastly, Zero symbolizes man as marionette. He has been manipulated by the societal institutions to be the perfect consumer. In effect, Zero has been de-ce-bralized!

The image of man as machine and man as child appear also in the Tooker paintings. Like, Rice, Tooker also uses the stylistic device of fragmentation to enhance the theme of dehumanization, using men who appear in phone booths in Subway and receding images in Government Bureau. The conformity seen in each work studied and the additional use of numbers in The Adding Machine, represent urban man's loss of identity.

Rice in The Adding Machine and Tooker in Subway reinforce their theme of "man is dead," by placing their central characters in graves.⁶ The artists' view of urban man is tragic (or pathetic). Tooker's progressive structure and repetition parallel Rice's assertion that the white-collar soul will play the same role over and over again, each time, diminishing in value.

In summary, Tooker's Subway is a symbol of the city. For Rice, the metropolis symbolizes artificiality, vulgarity, and barrenness. Like Tooker, he sees the conformist urbanites as regimented, emasculated, and alienated, fearful waste-products of an industrial and bureaucratic culture. Therefore, both artists reach the same conclusion: The city is Hell!

⁶Each artist offers a small glimmer of hope for urban man by presenting an aspect of individuality (the character of Judy O'Grady in The Adding Machine, the women who wear red shoes in Government Bureau), which says, in effect, that there are some people whom the system cannot reach.

The issues raised by George Tooker and Elmer Rice in their creative efforts are still valid today. The central forces at work in the American society of the 1920's and 1950's--industrialization, bureaucratization, and urbanization--still perpetuate in the 1970's the standardization and depersonalization of urban life and the loss of humanistic values. Mass production, mass marketing, mass communication, and mass education have been further refined in this mass society. For comforts and conveniences, modern man weakens his physical stamina and his moral fibre. If the values of an age define that age, then twentieth century America's emphasis on science and power is responsible for the disintegration of the traditional forces which in the past served to support man and guide him in his behavior.

It seems paradoxical that at the same time that man "masters" nature, he becomes enslaved to other men. The white-collar man as depicted by Rice has been denigrated to machine-like behavior, losing his intuition, his imagination, his creativity, and his human responses. Zero cannot believe in his capabilities, his emotion, or in his power of reason.

Zero has tried to define his life by his work, seeking recognition as well as remuneration in his employment. But industrialization and bureaucracy have

taken the meaning out of the work that a man does for pay. Zero has tried to define his worth using technological principles, striving to be productive in a system which has as its goal the maximum productivity at minimum effort, and which treats man as a "waste-product."

The moral rebirth of Zeros is possible only under conditions that lie outside the idea of progress and institutions which foster this idea. Only when the white-collar worker learns that what he is does not depend on external conditions, but on the value which he gives himself, will he be in harmony with himself and his universe. As long as Tooker's inhabitants of the subway feel powerless to express their own uniqueness, they will find their world meaningless and absurd, and themselves trapped in immobility, pre-occupied with self, and unable to respond to others.

Man needs beauty, meaning, and a sense of pride. As a social animal, he needs affection, recognition, and gratification only to be found in interaction with others. Unlike Zero, with his "mark-of-the-slave," modern man has the free will to accept the beauty of the Elysian Fields. He has a choice: conformity and bestiality or independence of spirit and humanitarianism.

"All we have gained the machine threatens, so long
as it makes bold to exist in the spirit instead of
obeying.

Lest the lovelier lingering of the glorious hand
longer invite us
for the more resolute building starker it cuts the
stone.

It nowhere stays behind so that we might just once
escape it.

and oiling in silent factory it would belong to
itself.

It is life, - thinks it knows best,
that with equal resolve arrays, produces, destroys.

But to us existence is still enchanted; at a hundred
points it is origin still. A playing of pure
forces that no one touches who does not kneel and
marvel

Words still gently fade before the unsayable...
And music, ever new, out of most tremulous stones
builds in unusable space her deified house."

from
Rainer Maria Rilke's
"Sonnets to Orpheus"

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