

May 9, 1935

A meeting of the Art Division was held Thursday, May 9, 1935 at 3 p.m., in the Lauterers' apartment. Present: Mrs. Brockway, Miss Hill, Mr. Lauterer, Mrs. Lauterer, Miss Ogborn, Miss Schönberg.

I. SHIRLEY STANWOOD

A. Counselor's estimate (Mrs. Brockway). Shirley has maintained a very independent attitude in her work and in her relations with her counselor and her other instructors. She is developing very well now because of this impersonal attitude. She says that she wants to write proletarian plays, but her content is rather slim---she doesn't know much about proletarian problems. She has done very little work in social studies.

B. Interview with Shirley Stanwood.

Mrs. Brockway. The purpose of this meeting is not to examine you but to allow the members of this group to inform themselves about what your past work has been, what you are doing right now, and where you are going, so that in the end there won't be any noticeable gaps which will not have been checked up on. I think if you would begin by telling what your past work has been at Bennington, it would be helpful. What have your interests been?

S. S. The first year I was a literature major, interested in writing, and at the end of that year I suddenly switched to drama because most of my writing seemed to be along that line. At the beginning of my second year, the Committee decided that that was my line and I have stayed there.

Mrs. Lauterer. What is the final end you have in view in your writing?

S. S. I want to write social plays if I can.

Mrs. Lauterer. Do you intend to ally yourself with a theatre and write definitely for a certain group or simply work as a free lance writer?

S. S. I want to combine directing and writing. I don't want to write for the commercial theatre.

Mrs. Brockway. What about the vocational side of the thing if you don't write for the commercial theatre? How will you earn your living?

S. S. I was thinking of a cooperative theatre such as the Group Theatre or the Theatre of Action. That is the kind of thing I want to get into.

Miss Schönberg. Do they have women directors?

S. S. No, I don't think they do.

Mr. Lauterer. Did your exploration in the Junior Division in any way change your interests? Did you always want to write for the theatre?

S. S. No, I hadn't thought of it when I entered Bennington.

Miss Ogborn. You did really use the first two years for exploration then, didn't you?

S. S. Yes, but I didn't think of it as exploration. I knew I wanted to write, but I didn't know exactly what.

Mrs. Lauterer. How much have you delved into social studies?

S. S. I tried to do a good deal in them because it was along my interest in theatre and this is the first term I haven't done anything in social studies.

Miss Ogborn. What do you plan to do in social studies next year?

S. S. American labor, perhaps.

Miss Ogborn. History and development or contemporary problems.

S. S. Contemporary problems as much as possible.

Mr. Lauterer. When you took the examinations in art last year, how did you feel about your knowledge of painting and music?

S. S. I don't remember feeling any particular lack. I know I have a gap in painting.

Mrs. Lauterer. Have you done much reading on other arts than writing and theatre?

S. S. In the field of painting, etc.?

Mrs. Lauterer. Yes, and aesthetic theories of art, etc.

S. S. I have seen a good deal of art in Europe, but I haven't done much reading on it.

Miss Ogborn. Do you plan to do work in philosophy?

S. S. I planned to do work in psychology but I dropped it this year because I was disappointed in it. It didn't go with my drama, and I couldn't get the point of view of it.

Mrs. Lauterer. Do you think that it was because of a lack in yourself that you didn't make this correlation?

S. S. It was a disappointment with Mr. Newcomb's point of view in attacking psychology. I think I can get as much as I want from observation. Psychology here would be a tool for surveys and would provide a general background which I am not interested in.

Miss Ogborn. Why had you felt that psychology would be of value to you?

S. S. I had thought I would be interested in it. I think certain parts of it would be interesting.

Mrs. Lauterer. I know that you gave up production and I wonder why you did if you want to direct. The visual side of directing is so important.

S. S. I didn't mean to give it up. I do need it and I intend to take it later. I realize that it is necessary to learn to do everything before directing.

Miss Ogborn. Do you hope to take more work in production here?

S. S. Next year I will take acting again and some line of production.

Mrs. Lauterer. And of course go on with directing?

S. S. Yes.

Mr. Lauterer. Do you think more tool courses should be offered in the Junior Division? The first semester of the first year, when you took design, you didn't learn it as a tool; would that have been better do you think?

S. S. I think I should have known more about it as a tool than I did. It was more or less theoretical.

Mr. Lauterer. Would it be better to introduce these subjects as tools?

S. S. Yes, but I think the theoretical approach should be given too. The tool part should be emphasized though. You should get your theory from the tool.

Miss Ogborn. How do you feel about your contact with science? You have been studying biology haven't you?

S. S. Yes, it is very straight and clear and it makes you think in a different way.

Miss Ogborn. Do you feel you have learned about scientific method from biology?

S. S. What do you mean by scientific method?

Miss Ogborn. Do you use a scientific method in dealing with materials?

S. S. I could analyze things, but I don't quite know what the



scientific method would be.

Mrs. Lauterer. Have you done much with movement? Have you danced?

S. S. I have started it this term.

Miss Hill. What do you think about dance as a movement tool in the theatre? Do you think it should be in a more applied form? Is the gap between what we are doing as movement and its application to the theatre too wide for you?

S. S. I think that rhythm is very important. I do feel a gap; I have been worried about the relation of dance to the theatre.

Miss Hill. I think we could have some discussion about it. Do you like to discuss the meaning of movement rather than take the scientific approach to movement as such?

S. S. Yes.

Mrs. Lauterer. Do you think rhythm will be of value to you in directing?

S. S. Yes, very definitely, in handling actors and in directing and writing.

Mrs. Lauterer. What about your background work? Do you need more? And if so, what?

S. S. My main project being playwriting, it is hard to get a background for it. I feel a lack of background in the history of drama.

Miss Ogborn. Don't you feel that knowing the plays of the past and the technical approaches is important to you as a playwright? Do you plan to do any more of that work?

S. S. Yes, I am doing it now with Mr. Fergusson and Miss Osgood and will again next year.

Mr. Lauterer. Do you feel now that you could go out and educate yourself in a new field, anthropology, for instance? Do you know how to go about it? Could you find material on any subject?

S. S. I don't know that I could. I don't think I could tell.

Mr. Lauterer. Don't you think that there will be many subjects that you will want to know more about in your career as a playwright? How do you propose to do it?

S. S. I would say that in college I might as well get what I could out of college, but the actual experience that I need I will have to get later.

Miss Ogborn. One of the things you can learn in college is how to

approach a new field. How would you do it?

S. S. It would depend on why I wanted it and where I was.

Mr. Lauterer. If you wanted to write a play about Indians in the southwest, how would you go about it?

S. S. I would try to find out about the social, economic, and artistic characteristics and conditions.

Mrs. Lauterer. Bennington has taught you to think for yourself, hasn't it, so that your study doesn't stop with what you learn at Bennington?

S. S. Yes, I think so.

Mr. Lauterer. Yes, I think so from the way you describe what you would do.

S. S. Bennington has given me ideas about what I want to do and how to work.

Miss Ogborn. What about literature other than dramatic? And languages? How do you feel about your background there?

S. S. I have had French and German and I have taken two or three courses in literature here. I probably haven't as much as I should have.

Miss Ogborn. Do you feel sufficiently equipped with critical standards so that you can get it for yourself when you are out of college? How about French and German? Have you spoken French?

S. S. I thought I would do much more with languages when I came here, but I dropped that idea. I thought it was futile to go on with French unless I was interested in literature because I knew enough to read and could learn to speak it again in a month or two.

Mr. Lauterer. You mentioned a lack in the field of history of theatre. If you were free in your plan next year to study two periods what would you choose that would relate to your work on leaving Bennington?

S. S. I am studying pre-Shakespearian now and I would probably choose Greek and Shakespearian. I would like to study Ibsen for what I am writing.

Miss Ogborn. Would it involve studying the economic and social background of his time? Is that why you would want to study it?

S. S. Yes, I feel Ibsen has more to do with our time and he is a social writer.

Mrs. Lauterer. Have you acquainted yourself thoroughly with all the European plays that deal with social upheaval?

S. S. I have studied the American ones and as many European ones as I know of.

Miss Schönberg. Have you done anything in music? The theatre is using music as a vital part of production.

S. S. I like music very much but I couldn't analyze it at all.

Miss Schönberg. Do you feel a need for that?

S. S. No, I think I could if I tried.

Miss Ogborn. Is history and analysis of music important to you?

S. S. No, I don't think so.

Miss Hill. Are you averse to writing for the commercial theatre?

S. S. I don't mean I never want any money for my plays, but I want to get away from the commercial theatre approach to a play.

Miss Ogborn. Would you take a script to someone if it were produced in the same manner and for the same purposes as The Children's Hour?

S. S. I don't know much about it.

Miss Ogborn. Shouldn't you find out more about this sort of thing?

S. S. I haven't been in that atmosphere and I like the other.

Mrs. Lauterer. Do you feel it will limit you at all?

S. S. No, quite the contrary.

Mrs. Lauterer. The lack of equipment <sup>and money</sup> / doesn't disturb you at all?

S. S. I just want to make enough to live on.

Mrs. Lauterer. I was thinking of the treatment of your play.

S. S. I would rather they would do it. The spirit would make up for any lack of equipment.

Miss Ogborn. Do you think the Cooperative Theatre will improve in this respect?

S. S. Yes, I do.

Mr. Lauterer. Do you think it is necessary to go to New York to practice this trade?

S. S. Yes, I would rather be in New York than anywhere else. I wouldn't want to stay in Bennington.



Miss Ogborn. Why?

S. S. It would take years to develop an audience in Bennington.

Mrs. Lauterer. If your ambition is to further the change in the social scheme, to speed it up, don't you think you might be of more service to that cause if you made some effort to establish a company and write plays outside of New York?

S. S. I think I need to learn the technique of it first. I don't think I can learn the technique here.

Mrs. Brockway. Have you thought of just what you are going to do next year? You said history, American labor, directing, and some acting, what else?

S. S. Playwriting and history of theatre, and I might go into dance.

Miss Ogborn. Do you think you can swing all that? Is there danger of dissipation?

S. S. I think I will have to cut down next year on the things I want to take. I haven't decided yet whether I will work hard on playwriting or take the technical work.

Miss Ogborn. What use have you made of your winter periods?

S. S. I think they have been very valuable. The first winter period I drove out to California and spent a month on a ranch and went home through the canal. This last year I learned how little I know and what I want to know.

Miss Ogborn. Do you have any plans in mind for the summer or next winter?

S. S. I want to stay here this summer and earn money to go to New York next winter. I may try to go to the same place I went last year.

Mrs. Lauterer. Will you feel at the end of next year that you are ready to face the world? Can you go on with your own education and development successfully?

S. S. Yes, I think so.

Mrs. Brockway. Would you do the same thing if you took your course again? Would you have got the same thing at another college such as Radcliffe?

S. S. I certainly wouldn't want to seek my education at Radcliffe.

Mrs. Lauterer. If you were doing it over again, would you arrange your course differently or has it been logical and to the point?

S. S. I don't think it would be very different.

Miss Ogborn. Do you think any changes in your have been due to Bennington, yourself, or other causes?

S. S. I think it has been due to Bennington.

Miss Ogborn. Have you any questions to ask us?

S. S. No.

Mrs. Lauterer. Have you any suggestions about Junior Division work?

S. S. No.

Miss Ogborn. What kind of plan should be made for Senior Division work?

S. S. I don't believe in the plans. I haven't followed mine. It can only be a temporary thing. I think if they are going to be made they should be done much more carefully; I didn't think about it until about a week before I had to make it.

Mrs. Lauterer. Do you think a plan should be more flexible?

S. S. I think you should be free to change it. I think one or two lines should be held to, however. I have stuck to the part of my plan which includes playwriting and directing.

#### C. Recommendations to the Counselor

She was sensible and direct. She took psychology as a tool for drama, but she has no conception of any science in the study of psychology. She didn't see the scientific method in the approach to the study. One danger in her make-up is the lack of open-mindedness. Another danger is that she is interested not in revolt in the theatre but in revolt in the revolutionary theatre. She thinks of it in small groups entirely apart from the history of the theatre in this period. She belongs in an art theatre rather than in a commercial theatre. She is interested only in the thought. Her work with Mr. Fergusson on theatre techniques should be helpful. In the general culture test given last year she had a total score of 335, which was quite good. Her literary acquaintance score was very high. She hasn't had much work in social studies. Her historical background is weak. She needs psychology and social studies and music and dance. She might have a conference course next year with someone in social studies who could help her with getting materials.



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## II. MARY PARKER

A. Counselor's estimate (Mrs. Lauterer). She started as a very flighty person with little idea of how to study or think, but she has developed a great deal and has learned to organize her time and thinking. She needs to develop still more, however. She appears to be more superficial than she is. Her first interest is in acting. It is hard for her to see beyond that. She has ability and can achieve something.

### B. Interview with Mary Parker.

Mrs. Lauterer. The main object of this is to get a general point of view about you and your attitude toward your work and ~~what~~ your plans ~~are~~ for the future and how you are relating your work to your future. Will you tell us something about what you have already done at Bennington?

M. P. I want to go on the stage when I finish college. I will probably have to go to a professional school first. My first year I took dancing and acting and economics and French and painting and production and the physics of lighting.

Mrs. Lauterer. What relation had French to your final ambition of acting in the theatre?

M. P. Sometimes it is necessary in playing a part to speak French, and I think it is a good thing for anybody to speak more than one language. It is good to be able to read in another language and get a different point of view. Last year I took costume design and criminology and French and dance and acting and Shakespeare. Those things link up pretty well with the theatre. I took up criminology because I wanted something outside of the theatre. I think I should branch out in college because my field will be narrow after college.

Mrs. Lauterer. Do you think you specialized too much in the first two years?

M. P. I don't know. I don't regret anything I have taken, but I would like to have been able to have covered a wider field.

Mrs. Lauterer. Do you think that you should explore more now?

M. P. I have been thinking about that but I don't know which is the best thing for me to do.

Mr. Lauterer. You mentioned art in the first year. You haven't had that since. Are you satisfied to leave here with that much background in art?

M. P. No, I'd like to have some more but I thought it was wisest to have other things.

Mrs. Lauterer. What would be most valuable for you in art?

M. P. I would like to take a history of art.

Miss Ogborn. Does history of art have any direct bearing on your work as an actress?

M. P. I think it would. The style of periods would be useful.

Mrs. Lauterer. You said you might go to a professional school after you left here. Do you think that the winter periods you have spent in professional training might be sufficient to prepare you for the theatre?

M. P. I think I do need more schooling; my voice and my movement need more work.

Mrs. Lauterer. But couldn't you go on with that after you have started theatre work?

M. P. I don't think I would have time or energy for evening work.

Miss Ogborn. What about the professional people you worked with in Madame Ouspenskaya's classes?

M. P. I think I need a great deal more basically before I attempt much work of this sort outside a professional school.

Miss Ogborn. You say your voice isn't right. Do you think you could spend time and effort on it at Bennington.

M. P. I think it would be a very good thing to do. I ~~would~~ do it by myself sometimes, but there are so many more other things here at Bennington that I can only get here that I hate to make this a purely professional school. And if I don't ever get to be an actress, I will want other things to fall back on.

Mr. Lauterer. Have you ever questioned whether the commercial theatre is fulfilling its obligation to society?

M. P. I have often questioned that.

Mr. Lauterer. Does it disturb you that the theatre you are studying now may change a great deal?

M. P. Yes, and I think if I prepare myself the way I want to here at College I will have what the theatre will always demand, flexibility, understanding, intelligence, and a creative quality.



Miss Ogborn. What are you doing this year? What are your plans for next year?

M. P. Now I am taking acting and history of the drama. I have taken Greek drama and medieval plays of the 13th and 14th century. I haven't gone into the style of acting of these periods. I am writing a children's story. I have submitted four to Child Life and they haven't come back yet. I am taking production.

Mrs. Lauterer. What is your reason for doing the writing for children?

M. P. I am very much interested in children. When I first came to College I studied progressive education for children and I had some work with grammar school children. I like to tell children stories.

Mrs. Lauterer. Can you think of it in relation to your theatre work? Will you continue it after Bennington?

M. P. I would like to do it as an avocation.

Miss Ogborn. Would you be interested in acting in a children's theatre or in writing plays for such a theatre?

M. P. I don't know. I wouldn't do that solely. It is a definite technique of acting. I don't know just why I don't want to do it.

Miss Ogborn. What are you planning for next year?

M. P. I am going to go on with acting and take a modern literature course, and a history of art course. It all depends on how specialized I am going to be. I would like to take production and costume design and history of drama. If I don't specialize I will go on with acting and take history of art and modern literature.

Miss Hill. Do you find it difficult to be open-minded about a point of view in the theatre and about modern life?

M. P. I know I did when I first came, but I think I am becoming more sympathetic now.

Mr. Lauterer. Have evening meetings contributed to that?

M. P. Yes.

Miss Ogborn. What have evening meetings meant to you?

M. P. I don't go to a lot of them, unless I am attracted by the title. I am much interested in criminology, so that I went to the last two meetings. I felt very self-conscious when I met people outside the theatre--- I had nothing to say, so that I have been attending more meetings lately to avoid this.



Mr. Lauterer. Do you read the daily newspaper?

M. P. I read the theatre section every morning, and I do look at the first page. I read it carefully every Sunday.

Miss Ogborn. Do you read the news of the week in review?

M. P. No. I read the Readers Digest and News Week, and the Literary Digest sometimes.

Miss Ogborn. Do you feel any need for social and historical background?

M. P. That comes in through Miss Osgood's class. I have read two histories of England from 1300 to 1550. I have studied the social significance of plays in relation to their time. I had never studied any medieval history before and I think it is very important.

Mrs. Lauterer. You studied criminology. Have you studied psychology?

M. P. No, but I would like to. I wanted to take it last year but couldn't take it as a quarter.

Mrs. Lauterer. Why do you like it?

M. P. Anything connected with acting is psychological. You can grasp things so much quicker with a knowledge of psychology.

Mrs. Lauterer. Would it help with character interpretation?

M. P. Yes, and in working with people.

Miss Ogborn. Have you any interest in biology.

M. P. No. I had chemistry in high school.

Miss Hill. Are you looking toward psychology as an intuitive process, or do you realize that it has a scientific approach?

M. P. I realize it has.

Mr. Lauterer. Are you interested in philosophy?

M. P. I would like to do something in that and I thought I'd like to study religion too. I think everybody has to be guided by a philosophy or religion and college is one place where you can build one up. In college we have the time to do it. You can think it out carefully. We have something to begin on.

Mr. Lauterer. Wouldn't you feel it wiser to study Aristotle than

some religious philosophy. Would Greek plays mean much to you?

M. P. Yes, because I followed Greek life always with the reading of the plays. I studied the Greek mode of living etc.

Mrs. Lauterer. Do you think of religion as a sectarian thing?

M. P. No, not really. I don't know enough about it. Religion is belief in God and allowing one's life to be guided by that belief. I think ~~that~~ all religions are based on the same thing.

Miss Ogborn. Would you be interested in studying James' Varieties of Religious Experience?

M. P. I think I would.

Miss Ogborn. Which ones of your summer and winter periods were most valuable?

Mrs. Lauterer. What did you do in each period?

M. P. The first year I had great luck and worked in all parts of theatre work---in the workshop and finally in speaking parts. It was the first real taste I had had of the theatre. Then I went out to Cleveland and got an entirely different point of view. Then going back to Ogunquit as a member of the company showed me how inferior I was to everyone else in the company. I think living at home with my father and mother and meeting all of my family's friends was just as important as the theatre work. Going to the Playhouse in New York was quite an experience. Their approach was different. They tore everything down ~~at~~ at first and I think in two months that was a very bad thing to do, because they don't have time enough to build us up again. They take your self-confidence and make everything seem hopeless. I think working with Martha Graham was one of the most vital experiences I have ever known. It gave me an entirely new point of view. She is a very inspiring person. Making friends with Mrs. Veazy was a good experience. She ~~she~~ treated me as an individual and that means a great deal. I wouldn't give one of those experiences.

Mrs. Lauterer. How do you feel about the ordeal of going to the offices looking for a job?

M. P. I love it; it is very exciting.

Mrs. Lauterer. Do you think you would be able to retain that enthusiasm?

M. P. I don't know. Other people say it is a very grim experience. I didn't find it so, but I had introductions from people with names and that may have given me an added prestige.

Miss Ogborn. Do you look forward to being stage manager for the

next show? Do you think it will be worth doing?

M. P. I don't look forward to it but I think it will be very good for me.

Mrs. Lauterer. If you had to plan your first two years over again, would you make many changes?

M. P. I would change my first year around. I wouldn't take economics. I am not interested enough in it. It didn't mean much to me.

Mrs. Lauterer. You didn't feel you could drop it the first year?

M. P. I thought it would be bad for my morale to do that.

Miss Hill. What about movement?

M. P. I am taking music for dancers with Mr. Tucker this year.

Miss Hill. Do you think you get something out of music and dance for the theatre? Martha Graham teaches movement as a science; could you apply that to your theatre work?

M. P. I would rather have Martha Graham's approach to it than any other. I would rather draw what I want to out of it. You should have the formalized technique and after three or four months you can begin the creative work.

Mrs. Lauterer. Do you think you are bound by the old-time idea that you must start at the bottom and build to the top?

M. P. Yes, I think I am.

Mrs. Lauterer. Would it be better for you to explore various things before you start building? What value is there in taking things historically? In having a broad survey?

M. P. I think if you begin at the beginning, you can draw your own conclusions and place things for yourself. You should have a background before you begin to branch out.

Mrs. Lauterer. Did you have that feeling the first year, or has it grown?

M. P. It has grown, I think. I wasn't conscious of it until this summer.

Mr. Lauterer. Would you just as soon have gone to Smith or Vassar?

M. P. No, because they don't offer anything I want until the last



two years at least.

Mrs. Lauterer. Do you like the freedom of organizing your own work at Bennington?

M. P. Yes.

Miss Hill. Do you miss discipline?

M. P. I think I do miss it to a certain extent, but I don't think I would like it if I had it. You have to discipline yourself here and you will always have to do that.

Mrs. Lauterer. Have you any questions to ask us?

M. P. No.

C. Recommendations to the Counselor.

Her broader curriculum is better than too much specialization. She should work on voice next year, though. She needs contact with music, too, so it would be wise for her to take singing. Her voice lacks power, and she has been putting off working on it since her first year. In movement she is very good. On the whole, she has improved tremendously in her three years at Bennington. She came through her winter period experience this year very well. She has a good sensible mind; she is working in the right direction. Her writing for children is a great release for her. She was most successful in story-telling at Bennington. During the summer she plans to work on a book on Portsmouth.