

Michael Chokhov

September 3, 1940

NATURALISM  
 DETAILS  
 MELODRAMA AND DRAMA  
Cricket on the Hearth  
 Shakespeare  
 Bacon  
 Cervantes  
 Dr. Rudolf Steiner

NATURALISM: Cricket on the Hearth

There is a difference between actual photography and artistic reproduction. We must have in Cricket this urgency of outstanding events, then it will become a piece of art but not naturalistic in the sense of photography. If these outstanding events are gone from it, it will still be true, but no one will have any interest in it.

DETAILS:

You must encourage the love of details. They must be everywhere, and they will save the play, any play, from being "in general." Details have the right to exist and to take time, and they need not become "apples."<sup>1</sup> It is the actor's profession to act with details.

MELODRAMA AND DRAMA:

Too many unnecessary pauses - gaps. Discard them in your imagination. If you get a part in which the person is good, then immediately find out the moments in which he is evil. Melodrama is uniform - the good and bad characters never change. For instance, in The Old Curiosity Shop, Little Nell is pure melodrama. When the uniformity is broken, it



M. Chekhov

September 3, 1940

loses its sentimentality and becomes drama.

Shakespeare is never melodramatic. Even when he goes along the same line. Shakespeare is an actor, not a playwright. He acts the whole time and, therefore, what he writes we must act because he was acting and not writing. Therefore, he was never sentimental. The whole of life was a performance - he watched life and then wrote about it as an actor.

From Rudolf Steiner we learn that - from the mystical point of view - from ancient times certain great figures appear at certain times. At the time of Shakespeare, certain great figures came, and they were inspired. Bacon, Shakespeare, and Cervantes were inspired by the same high person, therefore, there is a certain similarity, and all of them were performing, through their writings, certain strong things which had to be put before their audiences - Don Quixote, King Lear, Hamlet. And in Bacon's philosophy and scientific writings you have the same strong things. There was a high initiate behind them who inspired such big, cosmic, and humanly warm things. Shakespeare was an actor of life.