I SEARCH:
PROBLEMS OF IDENTITY:
Woman, Artist, and Breadwinner in the plays of Henrik Ibsen, Tennessee Williams, and Arthur Miller

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To the fragrant memory
of my father

and

To my mother
With gratitude for
her gracious loving -
past, present, and future

"I don't understand it. Why did you ever do that? Help me, Willy, I can't cry. It seems to me that you're just on another trip. I keep expecting you. Willy, dear, I can't cry. Why did you do it? I search and search and I search, and I can't understand it, Willy. I made the last payment on the house today. Today, dear. And there'll be nobody home . . . . We're free and clear. . . . We're free . . . . We're free . . . . We're free . . . ."

Linda Loman in

Death of a Salesman

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Who kindly sets a wanderer on his way
Does e'en as if he lit another's lamp by his:
No less shines his, when he his friend's hath lit.

To make verbal acknowledgements of my indebtedness to those who have accompanied me through the four seasons of writing a thesis, so to say, is perhaps to remain indebted. Inarticulate though my words may be, I must entrust them with my innermost feelings of appreciation.

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I suppose many a thank has remained unsaid, and many a person unmentioned. That which remains to be said, those who are yet to be thanked, I must leave, hoping that time and space allow the unfolding of what might be valuable for them, and is so undoubtedly for me.

Nada Zeineddine

15.12.1983

A Tribute to Mr. G. S. Fraser

"I lust to linger to the last"

G. S. Fraser,
"Older"

Death claims its victims but they defiantly survive in the vaults of memory. This is a tribute to the late Mr. G. S. Fraser who had to confront the inescapable reality implied by him in his expression: "the time comes when the leaf must fall". The leaves of his life may have withered, but his "lust to linger" is satiated for the present thesis is the leaf of a tree Mr. Fraser had planted in the course of a creative life. His memory most preciously lingers "to the last".

Preliminary Declaration:

I wish to acknowledge the fact that part of the material produced in connection with Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller is, to a certain extent, related to the subject-matter of my M.A. dissertation, presented in September, 1977.

Note on Translated Texts:

The study of Henrik Ibsen has presented the problem of trusting translations. While I make no pretentious claims to a knowledge of Norwegian, I wish to acknowledge the help of Dr. Gordon Campbell who has alerted me to the pitfalls of judging a translated work without recourse to the textual accuracy of the original; and consequently helped me through a semantic maze of Norwegian.

Key to ABBREVIATED TITLES

All My Sons	AMS
Camino Real	CR
A Doll's House	DH
Death of a Salesman	DS
Ghosts	G
The Glass Menagerie	GM
Hedda Gabler	HG
The Master Builder	MB
The Night of the Iguana	NI
A Streetcar Named Desire	SND
A View from the Bridge	VFB
When We Dead Awaken	WWDA

INTRODUCTION

The present thesis is an attempt to study the problems of identity, as experienced by what I propose to call "the producers", in the plays of Henrik Ibsen, Tennessee Williams, and Arthur Miller.

I will concentrate attention on plays in which problems of identity are particularly salient. The texts of the plays to be examined will be approached according to the chronological order of their publication in the case of each dramatist. In Chapter I, I will focus on five plays by Ibsen; namely, A Doll's House (1879), Ghosts (1881), Hedda Gabler (1890), The Master Builder (1892), and When We Dead Awaken (1899). I will then in Chapter II approach four plays by Tennessee Williams; namely, The Glass Menagerie (1945), A Streetcar Named Desire (1947), Camino Real (1953), and The Night of the Iguana (1961). Of Miller's output, I will mainly treat, in the third chapter, All My Sons (1947), Death of a Salesman (1949), and the two-act version of A View from the Bridge (1957).

The terms "problems of identity" and "producer" are central to my argument and require an introductory word of explanation.

As my emphasis is on "problems of identity" as experienced , I do not wish the phrase to be taken to imply that one particular set of problems or one specialized mode of approach, characterizes the work of each playwright or of all three of them. Nor have I sought to establish a full conceptual structure, based as it might be, on sociology, or psychology, or some other discipline in terms of which

identity problems might be understood. Rather, my procedure is discursive and eclectic, seeking to establish the ways in which the problems are elaborated in each play. This will, it is hoped, reveal ways in which the dramatized experience of such problems commonly relates to more general processes in which the individual is enmeshed. These processes reflect a defective relation between the individual and his whole context, as well as peculiarities in his or her conception of the role of the self in relation to that whole. Reference will therefore be made to a wider social context, with the consequent need to use terms that may not be used by the dramatists themselves, nor by the characters in the plays. A need will arise, in the discussion of plays like The Master Builder and The Night of the Iguana, to broaden the reference to the social context in order to show the ways in which the outlook of certain characters in face of absolute matters is inseparable from their experience of entrapment within more immediate contexts.

The dramatists have sought different ways of dramatizing the problems and have presented different constituents of them. It is not suggested that a clear line of development is to be found within the work of each dramatist or of all three. Nevertheless, affinities emerge: sometimes the problems have similar broad features; for example, the role of women, or professional ethics. The plays frequently show the problems and their possible solutions to be relative to the specific moments at which they are very variably conceived or often misconceived.

My term "producer" is offered as a convenient means of indicating several of the focal points of the theme of identity in these plays. The term producer refers to four major kinds of agent, three of which are found within the plays. These three are: the woman, the artist,

and the breadwinner. The significance of these agents does not only stem from their centrality (in varying degrees) within different plays, but also from the ways in which their interactions with each other and with their social contexts become suggestive of the more general causes and effects of the problems of identity.

Ibsen and Williams mainly stress the problems of identity experienced by the artist and the woman. This is not to imply that the woman and the artist face different sets of problems. Rather, it is to emphasize that in most cases the problems, as experienced by the producers in their plays, cannot be entirely separated. The interrelation of the producers' problems emerges from a specific kind of relation that each of them has, on an individual level, with society, and from the consequent uses that the woman and the artist have for each other as possible sources of assistance in overcoming their problems. The kind of relation the woman and the artist bear towards each other in the plays of Ibsen and Williams draws attention to the point of view from which the art in question is regarded. This carries implications for the art of the dramatist himself.

Some preliminary general observations may be useful at this stage. The woman and the artist in Ibsen's plays use each other as a means of climbing out of a situation which is, more often than not, imposed by some social arrangement. They also turn to each other as, so to speak, a Muse to help release creative drives. Williams presents the case of women who use their illusions about their selves to pose as artists, an act which is largely precipitated by their inability to meet the demands of shifting social backgrounds. The term 'artist', in reference to Williams's plays is not, strictly speaking, to a practising professional artist (<u>The Night of the Iguana</u> is an exception). Williams is concerned, rather, with a subjective view of what an artistic sensibility <u>is</u>.

Miller stresses the problems of identity of the breadwinner. I have chosen this term as a common ground between the "organization man" and the inseparable role of the father in All My Sons and Death of a Salesman; it also applies to the role of the guardian in A View from the Bridge. The term also does not indicate any strict social or economic function and therefore can with varying degrees of precision describe a salesman or a longshoreman. The term "breadwinner" is also a means of refraining from passing any judgement on what their immediate societies would label as an economic function which becomes at once descriptive of the causes and effects of their problems of identity.

I will be using the term "producer" mainly when I wish to refer to broad similarities between the woman's, the artist's, and the breadwinner's experiences. I will not, however, burden the thesis with the term "producer" unnecessarily where references to the individuals concerned could be sufficient for the purposes of my analysis.

These producers within the plays are engaged in generating a meaningfulness for their selves. The impetus for this intense involvement in selfhood lies in their inherent need for individuality. As the desired sense of identity must of necessity derive in part from means external to their selves; at once codifying their experience of meaning for them while deriving the general meaning of the codes from applicability to specific individual examples, a clash occurs between the producers' particular needs for a serviceable self-definition and the available external codes, which are general social ones. In consequence, there is a need to generate a new code. This need, at odds with social conformism, aggravates the problems of identity. Some producers believe they are producing a self dictated by their authentic responses to their experience but fail to realize

that producing a meaning for the self depends not only on the way it is produced, but also on the way it is received.

At this point, it becomes possible to introduce the function of the fourth producer: namely, the interpreter of the plays. The interpreter stands to some extent outside the dramatized producers' interactions with their respective societies. The interpreter observes, sometimes more clearly than they do, the contingency involved in their experience. The interpreter as producer would aim to clarify the interrelation between the individual and his or her dramatized context; and seeks to define, in each case, the ways in which individual experience is shown to be determined by society. This is not to imply that obscurities should be diminished by explanatory interpretation. Obscurity itself exerts a potent influence on the dramatic predicaments.

There are cases in which the understanding of some producers' problems of identity within the plays may be furthered by noting a degree of autobiographical involvement on the part of the dramatists themselves. The most prominent examples are Rubek, as a projection of Ibsen, in When We Dead Awaken, and Tom as a projection of Williams in The Glass Menagerie. This is, however, subsidiary: I will attempt to analyze the dramatized problems mainly with reference to textual evidence. Thus the position of the interpreter is at once simple in so far as he simply sets himself to interpret the text; but the dramatic materials are often themselves obscure and indeterminate. The primary source for understanding the producers' problems is, of course, dialogue. But what seems to be an explicit verbal statement is sometimes undermined by a silence, or a gesture or such like; or by a level of meaning that results from a process of associating words, images, and so on. Thus what might appear to be the clear expression

of a problem or a straightforward understanding of the problem by the speaker might prove otherwise to the interpreter. Such dubieties as these are often of crucial importance. While the interpreter will wish to avoid mere subjectivity, I must emphasize that part of the interpreter's experience is built on that of the three other producers; the interpreter's sense of the text's complexity and indeterminacy is related to the contingency of the producers' experience within the text. Their terms in which they seek to understand their problems are incomplete without a process of contextualizing these producers within their social context - often, within more immediately domestic circles. The interpreter seeks to unfold the relation of the producers to these contexts, picking up hints given by the dramatists in the text but not necessarily spoken by any one character at any one time: the interpreter's own grounds of judgement are activated. This is not to say that an act of interpretation is necessarily biased; rather, it is to assert that it is virtually impossible, in face of confused and painful dramatizations of problems of identity, to provide a wholly dispassionate and definite account. Confusion and indeterminacy are often material constituents of the problem of identity. There are cases where I could not altogether escape formulating the problems in terms that would appear to have as their pivotal points sociology or economy because the producers' problems are symptomatic of underlying social or economic causes.

As the interpreter's understanding of the problems is conditioned by what the producers say and as their perception of their problems may be partially blocked through a deficient relation to reality, the degree to which the interpreter can remain outside the text varies. As the attempt has been made to approach the plays through the producers' understanding of their problems, then the interpreter's

view of the process of interaction with society, the interpretive act, is not only conditioned by the measure of the producers' grasp of their problem but also by their grasp of reality. Let us take an example of a case where such a difficulty may arise. Willy Loman, for instance, in Death of a Salesman, struggles to grasp the meaning of his experience and his position within his family and society. His mental excursions, so to say, and his wandering viewpoint across different temporal and spatial axes, among real and illusory experiences, require an act of interpretation that will sometimes have to supply conjectural motivation, if some grasp of the problems of his identity is to be achieved. The interpreter has to understand the meaning of Willy's suffering with reference to the process of entanglement within an economic and social system which - to borrow Willy's words - eats the orange and "throws the peel away". Thus though Willy can see that a man is not a piece of fruit, the interpreter can more fully draw on the implications of that problem.

Some introductory examples of "producers" and their problems may help to clarify my argument. Some producers like Willy Loman or Joe Keller have a notion of their creativity as an ultimate expression of their selves. Willy Loman sees even his conformism as a form of unique self-expression. To him, salesmanship, though codified by society and standardized by the measurements of success is a talent worthy of comparison with pioneering individualism. The real qualities of creativity which he possesses are relegated to the background. Joe Keller sees his business in terms that are not dissimilar to the way Rubek sees his art - a means of resurrecting his lost self-image through passing on a business synonymous with his name and immortality. Thus creativity, to the producer, pertains to the degree of role-playing determined by him and the ways in which he conceives of his self in the

social context. Even in cases where role-playing is not desirable by the producer and where the need for breaking the mould of conformism becomes greater, the terms in which the individual sees his self are part and parcel of what his social experience has made available to his consciousness. Thus a Nora Helmer who stresses that "first and foremost" she is a human being cannot altogether counter a male criticism that she is "first and foremost" a wife and a mother because her concept of her self derives partially from the authority of the institution of marriage and also from her own projection of a higher form of membership onto it, which is an ironic comment on the fact that if she is to remain subservient to the ways in which society labels her and codifies her experience for her, she will have to forsake her humanity. Her experience of social entrapment represented by marriage becomes obtrusive to the extent to which she, as an individual, will allow it to exercise its authority on her. And it is she who criticizes the institution of marriage by referring to the "miracle" as one in which their lives together will "become" a marriage. Yet, if marriage had not presented the pressurizing trap, an incentive to search for an identity that she could call her own might have not been so acute.

Ibsen, Williams, and Miller stress the problems which result from social subjection, and this subjection derives, to a greater or lesser extent, from an underlying social or economic cause. Particularizing the broader contexts with which the producers in their plays have to interact substantiates the grouping of the dramatists together, and shows that they conceived of the producer as experiencing identity problems that are symptomatic of the more general context.

Ibsen conceives of the social structure in the Norway of his time as crystallizing in a distinct dichotomy between the male and female

worlds: women are dependent on men and are thrust into the doll's house. While the problems of identity faced by women are part of a larger social problem, in Ibsen's plays, the artist completes the expression of that problem in so far as he, more often than not, projects the social problem as pertaining to the woman's experience. Thus while it would appear that the artist's experiences are an expression of his own subjective need for creativity, they are in fact closely linked to processes outside him. Mrs. Alving, for instance, finds in Oswald a useful means of articulating what she had so far dared to think but not to express because the desired emancipation would have been a threat to "law and order". Yet, Oswald cannot creatively express his views in an artistic medium in the Norwegian society which had precipitated Mrs. Alving's problems.

Williams stresses the problems of women who lack the ability to come to terms with their desires. Their problems partly stem from the loss of land and home, and from the consequent disorientation of these Southerners within a rapidly developing "northern" society that clashes with what they think is an artistic sensibility.

Miller views the demands of the rat-race in America as precipitating the problems of his breadwinners. Eddie Carbone in A View from the Bridge is, of course, less directly involved with the demands of a competitive economy than Joe and Willy, in the earlier two plays. However, he uses his ideas of what a good citizen should be and turns informer. The analysis of the play will reveal the ways in which his motives are masked, and the degree to which Catherine is used by him and Rodolpho to evade the pressures of social impingement on Eddie's desires, and on Rodolpho's need to join the rat-race.

While, in Ibsen's plays, the producer as an artist who is subject to the demands of a market does undergo problems that share certain

points in common with those of the producer as breadwinner, the emphasis is placed on his relation to the woman and on his prostitution of his art in conformity with social demands or debilitating factors, or in subjection to the demands of a woman whose own needs are, in turn, frustrated by society. The male artist in Williams is in the background not as far as the action is concerned but as a representative of an ineffectual approach to reality. Tom Wingfield provides an example. Don Quixote as manufacturing the dream which is Camino Real is significantly evading reality through dreaming. Women tend to be relegated to the background of Miller's plays and artistic strivings are presented as being suffocated by the demands of a competitive economy.

The relation between society and the producer within the plays and the consequent emergence of certain problems of identity become symptomatic of a more general problem. But it is useful and legitimate to pose an enquiry as to whether the relation of these producers to each other also becomes symptomatic in the sense that the emphasis placed by the dramatists on the problems of identity of each or the relegation of them into the background becomes a reflection of the broader social contexts which precipitate their problems.

This is not to indicate that the dramatists have deliberately placed their emphases as such. Nor is it to deny the existence of possible variations in the degree of tendentiousness on the dramatists' parts in presenting these relations. It is hazardous, for instance, to maximize the degree to which Williams was being tendentious about the relation between the South and his characters' problems. It is significant, however, that in a play like The Night of the Iguana, Hannah's sexuality is not underlined whereas her artistic tendencies are. The play does not have the South in the immediate background

and Hannah is a fugitive type. In Camino Real, the locale is unspecified, and Kilroy is presented as a man "without" a woman. Ibsen and Miller are in all probability more tendentious than Williams in presenting the implications of the problems of identity on the general and particular levels.

The general and the particular implications of the dramatized problems of identity provide fertile possibilities for interpretation and for further speculation. To overstabilize the act of interpretation would be to deny some of the problematic and provocative power of the plays.

CHAPTER I

PROBLEMS OF IDENTITY, AS EXPERIENCED BY THE PRODUCER, IN FIVE PLAYS BY HENRIK IBSEN

The theme of identity in Ibsen's plays is closely associated with the individual's act of freeing himself from social demands and from instinctual drives in an attempt to experience the expanding concept of the self. Ibsen's main concern is with human development, with the continual shaping and re-shaping of the individual by time and by action within time, the process of becoming and in becoming the shedding of layers and layers of the Gyntian onion in search of the "heart" thus running the risk of discovering

> Just a series of shells
> All the way through, getting smaller and smaller.

In the process by which Ibsen's characters find the heart or nothing lies their vocation.

In Drama from Ibsen to Brecht, Raymond Williams explains the question of vocation in Ibsen's plays in terms of the structures of feeling of liberal tragedy. Williams argues with particular reference to Brand, that the individual is caught between an absolute call for fulfilment and absolute barriers thwarting it. He sees in this tension between the call and the barriers "the fundamental statement", in Brand, and points out that it is perhaps the fundamental statement in the whole of Ibsen. Raymond Williams further argues for the inseparability of self-fulfilment from what he describes as "social reform". The relation between them represents in Williams's view,

the classic position of liberalism: "that social reform is self-fulfilment and the purpose of changing the world is to gain the knowledge of being oneself".[1] Thus the vocation comes to be defined as "liberation", the "realization of what man can become". In Modern Tragedy, Williams explains that the individual's attempt at fulfilment and his evasion of it, within a social context, end either in the destruction of the individual or in the perpetuation of the falsity of social relations or in both.

This very paradox which Williams points to in connection with liberal tragedy leads in Ibsen's plays to a delicate balance between self-fulfilment and self-annihilation. The act of liberation which is so prominent in Ibsen on an individual level encompasses, however, the very notions and concepts that encumber the individual and hinder the development of society. What accounts largely for self-fulfilment in Ibsen's plays is the individual's ability to prove his personal identity as opposed to an otherwise all-pervasive animality, by having a developed mentality and overcoming the obstacles that prevent the individual's development. Conformity is the fatal social demand on which the individual liberator must impinge. In An Enemy of the People, Ibsen voices this idea through Dr. Stockmann's indictment of conformity, and his attack on the individual who, by being infected by the "mass mind", becomes more like an animal.

Women and artists in Ibsen's plays are primarily concerned with the attempt to experience an expanding concept of the self. That their views of what constitutes an expansion of that concept are very often at odds with what their societies would expect of them or allow them is an issue that the analysis of the five plays by Ibsen will seek to explain.

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1. Raymond Williams, Drama from Ibsen to Brecht (London, 1968), pp. 35-36.
2. Ibid., p. 39.

For the woman and the artist in Ibsen's plays the process of becoming is particularly salient because it involves a recasting of their respective roles as wives and mothers, and as artists. In women and artists, Ibsen saw the key to the aristocracy of mind and spirit that would lead to social progress and establish the individual as superior to his confining social environment conformity to which spells animality. Women and artists are faced with the dilemma of having to renounce their creative relatedness for fear of social ostracization, which often leads to an act of prostituting these creative functions. The implications of relatedness, and of the consequent significance of ostracization for the major female characters and for the artists in the five plays to be discussed are relative to the ways they conceive of them. The kind of fulfilment sought by them is not a solipsistic desire for self-expression. Rather, it is an innate need to stand on the fringe of their experiences within a social context to attain a certain measure of objectivity and to refuse a subordination to a social order that seeks to exploit the resources of the woman and the artist by directly repressing the expression of the former and leading to an abuse of the gifts of the latter, in the service of the exploited woman, or the service of the demand for a particular kind of creativity that would rise above the artist's immediate concerns. The interaction of the woman and the artist with each other and with their social contexts becomes Ibsen's means of discussing problems of identity that are not only relevant to each but also to the nature of the more general processes with which they interact. Ibsen questions the nature of society: is it to be seen as an abstract organization, or a living concrete organism composed of men and women who by forging their solutions to their individual problems of identity recreate society, as it were.

In A Doll's House (Et dukkehjem),[1] Ibsen attempts to unveil the tacit assumptions on which the relations between the individual and society are built, through a female's consciousness that sets out to define itself in terms other than the prevalent constituent terms of society, which are basically male terms.

The action of A Doll's House starts with the opening of a door and ends with the slamming of it. The acts of opening and slamming ironically underline the meanings that will emerge from the play in so far as they will come to suggest a need to re-define the extensions of the worlds on either side of the door and the relative position of the "doll" - Nora Helmer - in relation to each world.

The Helmers have been married for eight years, have three children, and are at last financially secure as a result of the appointment of Helmer - a lawyer by profession - as the manager of a bank. This semblance of security which would obliterate the past need that drove Nora to forge her father's signature on a cheque to save Helmer's ailing health is threatened by the intrusion of Krogstad, a figure from the past, who has discovered Nora's game. Krogstad blackmails Nora by demanding a job at the bank whereby he can restore his reputation that was jeopardized as a result of a forgery. When Helmer refuses to comply with Krogstad's demand, the latter retaliates by sending a letter disclosing Nora's deed. Under the influence of Mrs. Linde, an old friend, Krogstad mellows and sends Helmer the promissory note in which Nora's father had been named as security for debt. The once dangerous document is duly

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1. References are to the English text of A Doll's House as printed in The Oxford Ibsen, translated and edited by James Walter McFarlane, 8 vols (London, Toronto, New York, 1960-1977), V (1961), and the Norwegian text in Henrik Ibsen: Nutidsdramaer 1877-1889 (Oslo, 1973). All subsequent page references to the English version will be incorporated within the text of the thesis, after the abbreviated title.

burnt, and Nora forgiven by her husband. These events, however, have led Nora to question provocatively her own duties and priorities, and the nature of social demands. She storms out of the doll house in search of an answer.

The Helmer's middle-class drawing room is set with the essential domestic elements - a stove and a Christmas tree. Nora enters with a bundle of presents: a doll, a cradle, a horse, sword and trumpet, and clothes. The action takes place on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Boxing Day.

In terms of the play, Nora Helmer's increasing awareness of the social and familial obstacles to her development motivates her to break away from a confining physical environment that comes to represent other kinds of limitations. In the context of describing, to Helmer, her father's frivolous attitude towards her individuality and his consequent way of treating her like a live doll, Nora says:

> He used to call me his baby doll, and he played with me as I used to play with my dolls. Then I came to live in your house. . . . (DH, 280)

While the emphasis on the ownership of the house must not be overlooked, the house itself within which Nora is allotted a play-pen is seen by Helmer as more than a physical boundary; it is a whole social institution:

> What way is that to talk about our marriage? (DH, 280)

His response is in a way expressive of indignation and resentment. It is an emotional response, more expected of a woman. His idea of marriage is one of ownership, and ownership for him starts at the boundaries of "my" house and extends within those walls to all objects in the house including his wife.

In her calm and "imperturbable" language, she describes the act as one of passing "out of Daddy's hands into yours" (DH, 280). Contrary

to Helmer's views of her as being "first and foremost" a wife and mother, she has come to the conclusion that she is first and foremost a "human being".

Nora has to struggle out of the social costumes that have so far been suitable for a game of role-playing in which the "self" is covered by layer after layer of masks - not unlike the onion which Peer Gynt tries to peel, only to find that while socially imposed images of the self could be easily disposed of, at the heart lies nothing. In Peer's words, nature is "witty" - but not too witty for a persistent Nora.

While Nora is enmeshed in the very relations that make a masquerade given for a special occasion both contradictory and gratuitous, Mrs. Linde, who makes her contribution to the masquerade by sewing Nora's torn costume, has to literally and metaphorically sit "downstairs" and work out a better way of using her hands. She states that she must work if she is to find life worth living. She will join forces with Krogstad and try to make a different person of him. The fact that she stands on the fringe of the Helmers' social life enables her to see things more clearly and to realize that "all this secrecy and deception" must end (DH, 266). Her words do not suggest, of course, that at the time of that particular masquerade Nora was oblivious to the need for an end to evasions. While Mrs. Linde can objectively state her view, Nora has to work from within the set of relationships that have turned her own private life into part of a larger public masquerade.

The text illuminates the interpreter to Nora's perception that this effect in turn can lead to more masquerades thus the effect for her becomes a new cause in the sense that in it could lie the origin of more masquerades. As a mother, she sees herself as a potential

disaster to her children, not inasmuch as she individually is concerned, but in so far as she sees herself as a carrier of inescapable social attitudes not unlike the ghosts that Mrs. Alving will come to fear. Nora sees disaster as imminent if she allows herself as a masked woman to "pass on" to her children all the social diseases she has inherited which are as crippling as Oswald's syphilis because they mean deprivation. A helpless inert doll in a male world could be even more infectious than the big babbling baby to which Oswald regresses, for while the baby is the last in a chain of destructive causes and effects, a doll can lead to the building of more doll houses, and "houses" in male terms mean "marriages", and marriages mean ownership, and ownership means a class of owners and a class of "owned", which translated into the terms of the middle-class bourgeois society which A Doll's House portrays means economically productive males, and economically dependent females.

The act of forgery provides the context for the presentation of the ways in which laws governing human relations are revealed as subtle masks for the furtherance of the interests of a male-dominated world. Ibsen dichotomizes the male-female worlds on the basis of their members' usefulness to and centrality within a social system. The fact that a doll forges her father's signature on a cheque at a time when dolls had no signature to call their own very often eclipses the other equally important fact that Krogstad is also a forger. To refrain from describing either forgery as a crime or a transgression is perhaps more expressive of the need implied by Ibsen to revise standardized notions of what a crime is, which in turn leads the interpreter to question, with Nora, the terms in which worn-out assumptions about right and wrong can be altered on account of human motives which do not perpetuate

either right or wrong but rather allow for right and wrong to co-exist. The fact that Krogstad's forgery is more often than not overlooked in the interpretation of the play does not stem from the facile justification that A Doll's House is a play about a woman's search for identity and as such her actions are the axis round which the play revolves. While Nora is central, overlooking Krogstad's forgery would probably be a male-biased reading. Krogstad's forgery and the social attitude towards it are indispensable to an explanation of A Doll's House if the play is to be understood as it comprehensively should - not merely as the "portrait" of a doll, but of a doll living in a doll's house which becomes permeated not only by the values that Helmer, the husband, brings into it, but also by the very social intolerance towards women which he typifies. While highlighting the effects of forgery on a woman, the social attitude towards it points out the causes of this very forgery.

When Helmer reads Krogstad's letter he "walks" round the room, and exclaims:

> Oh, what a terrible awakening this is. All these eight years . . . this woman who was my pride and joy . . . a hypocrite, a liar, worse than that, a criminal! Oh, how utterly squalid it all is! Ugh! Ugh! (DH, 275)

That the forgery was Nora's pride is of no consequence in a world of man-made laws, for as Nora defiantly puts it, "What would my story have counted for against yours?" (DH, 284). While Helmer had earlier in the play described Krogstad as morally "dead", this very "dead" man has the power to intimidate Helmer not only because he is a vindictive "miserable pen-pusher" and as such will use the power of media to soil Helmer's reputation and accuse Helmer of being an "accomplice" in her crime, but also because on the domestic level, giving in to Krogstad's blackmail will make "the new manager" a doll

in his wife's power, and because on an even more private level Christian name terms between Krogstad and Helmer will make Helmer unable to dissemble or conceal the familiarity between the two men.

While Krogstad's power to intimidate Helmer is important on a particular level of interaction between Krogstad and the Helmers, the more important questions as to how and why Krogstad can exercise such power must be asked and the more general social scene with which Krogstad also provides a link must be investigated.

The answer to the question is provided by Dr. Rank who is on the fringe of the Helmers' experience in so far as the domestic circle is concerned, while having the material means and consequently the courage to criticize the social system built on corruption. Krogstad, who is described by Helmer as having to "dissemble" and wear a mask, and thus "poison" his children, has a connection with the bank. Rank addresses Mrs. Linde in an attempt to draw comparisons between what by implication would be "our" part of the world, and his actual expression "yours" (Deres kanter). Mrs. Linde is, of course, a working-class woman who married a well-to-do man in order to help her mother and two brothers. Dr. Rank's and Mrs. Linde's dialogue is a forceful indictment of "contemporary society":

> Rank: I wonder if you've got people in your part of the country too who go rushing round sniffing out cases of moral corruption and then installing the individuals concerned in nice, well-paid jobs where they can keep them under observation. Sound, decent people have to be content to stay out in the cold.
>
> Mrs. Linde: Yet surely it's the sick who most need to be brought in.
>
> Rank [shrugs his shoulders] Well, there we have it. It is that attitude that's turning society into a clinic. (DH, 219)

The English "people" is a rendering of the Norwegian "mennesker"

which is a neutral reference to mankind. At one point, when Krogstad reminds Nora of the fact that the law takes no account of motives, she replies, "Da ma det vaerer noen meget darlige love". Thus she describes law as "darlige" which could mean ill, sick, or of bad quality. McFarlane translates it into "They must be very bad laws" (229); Meyer into "The law is stupid". While both English translations do not exactly misconstrue the connotation of the word, the strict denotation in fact serves to enhance the image of a society that has turned itself and its members into a hospital. Society exploits both Krogstad and Nora, but while the corruption represented by Krogstad is typical of the more pervasive social corruption, and thus indirectly the motive for his forgery becomes socially acceptable and forgiven, the socially unacceptable fact of a woman forging a signature on the one hand but simultaneously becoming a breadwinner on the other will have to remain a cause of unalleviated oppression. Yet it is Nora who makes her personal contribution towards ending the social malaise, by re-acting within the private circle of the family against a pattern of inherited social relations which will pass on "corruption" in the way Krogstad will pass it on to his children. Nora announces that she must educate herself before she can educate the children. In reply to Helmer's question as to whether she has been happy in their marriage, Nora replies:

> No, just gay. And you've always been so kind to me. But our house has never been anything but a play-room. I have been your doll wife, just as at home I was Daddy's doll child. And the children in turn have been my dolls. I thought it was fun when you came and played with me, just as they thought it was fun when I went and played with them. That's been our marriage, Torvald. (DH, 280-281)

By opting out of the Helmer household, and deciding to give priority to her "duty" to her self, Nora is not altogether renouncing

the value of maternal feelings. Rather, she sees both duties as "equally sacred". By leaving, Nora will stop the process of playing and of fun associated with father-figures and by implication with hereditary diseases. Nora's and Rank's fathers respectively pass on destructive and debilitating qualities. On the public level, Nora's father was an irresponsible spendthrift, a quality which Helmer could see in his doll: "Your father's professional conduct was not entirely above suspicion" (DH, 242), Helmer holds. Rank's father, like Captain Alving, causes his family members to suffer some "cruel retribution".

> Yes, really the whole thing's nothing but a huge joke. My poor innocent spine must do penance for my father's gay subaltern life. (DH, 246)

Thus gaiety and father-figures intertwine. When Nora says, "I've been gay" Ibsen most probably deliberately associates that inherited gaiety with the one passed on to Rank. In the Norwegian text, Ibsen refers to gaiety as "lystig" which has the root "lyst" related to "desire". While the association of words cannot, of course, be considered solid ground for argument for a thematic indication of inheriting disease, it serves to underline the pervasive thematic concern with the notion of a process of deterioration which Nora will stop. To enhance the relation between Nora's decisive exit and the end of a process of erosion, Ibsen introduces the powerful image of a fire devouring the promissory note, the document in which Nora's father was named as security for debt. Earlier in the play, Nora offers Rank a "light" for his cigar. Thus the final act of burning seems to complete the joint effort of "son" and "daughter" to cancel the effects of fathers. The English "light" could have the connotation of brightness which Ibsen, of course, develops in his later symbolic plays and of which the "Solness" of The Master

Builder provides an example. But the light in question in A Doll's House is not the sol (sun) nor lys (light). It is ild which is both a reference to light and to the fire in which it originates.

Shortly after the promissory note is burnt, Nora "takes off" her "fancy dress" and appears in her everyday dress. The borrowed and inherited masks are burnt; the masquerade is over as far as Nora is concerned:

> Nora [in her everyday dress]. Yes, Torvald, I've changed.
> (DH, 279)

The burning of the promissory note and the emergence of Nora in her everyday dress thus signify her development.

The method used by Ibsen to manipulate Nora's increasing awareness of her identity relies primarily on a close connection between the fancy dresses and change. In Act I, when Nora is still content to be Helmer's doll, she is also dependent on his choice of a costume for her to wear. However, as her need to be re-born increases, her conviction that the whole masquerade is meaningless increases. Struck with horror at the painful possibility of corrupting her children, Nora reacts against the possibility and against her own complicity in it violently:

> Nora [pale with terror]. Corrupt my children . . . ! Poison my home? [Short pause; she throws back her head.] It is not true! It could never, never be true! (DH, 234)

Following Nora's exclamation, which is also implicitly a declaration of a new course of action, the maid walks in with a box of fancy dress costumes which need mending. To underline the relation between Nora's development and the disguised exteriors that she will be asked to present, Act II has for a background the Christmas tree. The first command Nora issues to the maid in Act I is to "hide" the tree. In Act II, the tree is described as "stripped, bedraggled"

DH, 235). In the Norwegian, the tree is described as "forpjusket", a reference to being dishevelled, or unkempt, which could be used for clothes. That Ibsen meant to emphasize the confusion Nora faces about what masks to wear, what to discard, and in fact whether to wear any at all is further pointed out in Nora's expression:

> Oh, if only I could rip them up into a thousand pieces. (DH, 235)

In the final Act, when Helmer decides to forgive her for her forgery, thus making her his property in "a double sense", the costume and her self become one in so far as she now projects the desire she had expressed earlier to tear the costume to pieces onto herself:

> . . . But you neither think nor talk like the man I would want to share my life with. When you had got over your fright - and you weren't concerned about me but only about what might happen to you - and when all danger was past, you acted as though nothing had happened. I was your little sky-lark again, your little doll, exactly as before; except you would have to protect it twice as carefully as before, now that it had shown itself to be so weak and fragile. [Rises.] Torvald, that was the moment I realized that for eight years I'd been living with a stranger and had borne him three children . . . Oh, I can't bear to think about it! I could tear myself to shreds. (DH, 284-285)

Tearing herself to shreds would necessitate finding a new self, new clothing - the latter being one of the presents under the Christmas tree, and the clothing she finally decides upon is that of her "everyday self"; what Rank had earlier on described as the "Spirit of Happiness" (McFarlane) which is the English rendering of "lykkebarn", the child of luck, happiness, or success - perhaps as opposed to the child of her father or the child of Helmer. Changing into her everyday clothes involves a "transformation" of character. Ironically, when in Act II Nora appears on the scene to practise her tarantella in her everyday dress, Helmer remarks that he had

expected some kind of "transformation" (DH, 257) with reference to her appearance, her real transformation has taken place. Ibsen relates the male version of transformation to the female one by means of playing on transformation (forkledning) in the sense of disguise and change. McFarlane's text would lead one to associate a "change" of clothes with a change of character thus leading to a more facile way of concluding that the two changes are connected.

Men and women in A Doll's House conceive of change and transformation in different ways - the difference being, of course, Ibsen's means of making his characters typify the more pervasive patriarchical attitude that determines the number of roles a woman can play on a particular social stage and at a particular, historical moment. "First and foremost", commands Helmer, you are a "wife and a mother". Nora's priorities are different: "First and foremost, I am an individual" (DH, 282). Meyer renders the Norwegian "menneske" into "human-being". The difference in the two translations probably stems from the fact that, as pointed out earlier, "menneske" is a neutral word for men and women together. Although both translations certainly cover the desired semantic field, they call into question the context against which an "individual" or a "human-being" are to be pitted. The "individual" would be set in direct opposition to the social; while a "human being" would be opposed by the image of animality that was later to be pejoratively used in An Enemy of the People as descriptive of a state of conformity and corruption. Within the text of A Doll's House, Nora's emphasis on her humanity can be better understood when contrasted with Helmer's emphasis on her animality. That he chooses somewhat delicate animals does not alter the implicit condemnation of a woman's personal identity. Thus Nora is his "squirrel", his "skylark", his "dove" among other

things - all docile, and dependent on fluttering round or shying from subjects external to themselves. Whether "individual" or "human-being", the point at issue here is Ibsen's attempt to designate a particular relation between men and women, which is a mask for exploitation and utility.

Ibsen conceives of the social structure, and of the historical factors shaping it as crystallizing in a distinct division in society between men and women. Therefore, in Ibsen's conception of that social structure, and in the nature of its effects upon women lies the answer to a query, the interpreter may pose, as to why Ibsen as a member of a given society, and given class within it, treated the problems of women, and as to the causes and effects of the particular problems afflicting women. Ibsen's thematic concern in A Doll's House is with the ways in which relations between men and women express the social hierarchy based on the superiority of the male in so far as what may be called economic individualism is concerned. Thus Ibsen implies that one of the class oppositions that appears in the history of a bourgeois society is that between man and woman in a confining monogamous relation. Ibsen focuses on the encroaching effects of the social stance towards the latter's need to assert their selves. Nora is caught in the contradiction of realizing that her need for financial support within that society leads to a kind of subordination to the male while at the same time using money as a means of ensnaring the male or rebelling against his authority. Earning money becomes a means of identification with a male world. She wistfully reflects on the days when she sat up copying. It was "like" being a man. It was then that she

could escape the tyranny of Helmer's favourite pronoun, "my", and be a productive member within the family. However, in a man's world, such partly altruistic, partly self-realizing acts are considered in the interest of the male. When the promissory note arrives and Helmer exclaims "I'm saved", Nora asks "And me?". To which the answer is "You too of course." (Italics mine, DH, 277). The play revolves round the axis of money and financial problems but these raise questions about the nature of society, religion, and marriage. In A Doll's House, Ibsen treats the question of women's subordination to a social and economic order that fails to find an appropriate form of reconciliation between a view of society as an abstract organization with laws designed to inhibit individual expression and the reality of society as a living organism of men and women. His treatment does not only cover the economic base of a marriage but also the laws that originate in that conception of self-reliance for a man and total reliance on a man, by a woman.

In his notes to A Doll's House, Ibsen outlines the dilemma of Nora in the following words:

> Depressed and confused by her faith in authority, she loses faith in her moral right and her ability to bring up her children. Bitterness. A mother in contemporary society, just as certain insects go away and die when she has done her duty in the propagation of the race.[1]

Ibsen thus stresses the missing dimension in the woman's formation of identity, namely, an interaction with society which can only be rendered meaningful when women, like men, can express their selves and be individuals not mere adherents to man-made laws. The central issue in Ibsen's indictment of modern society is in itself a contradiction in terms. Faith in authority has for Ibsen a derivational

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1. Quoted in James McFarlane, Vol. V, 437.

value. Consequently this value diminishes when this very authority is presented, in the course of the play, as a product not only of male domination but also of women's subservience to an authority that has to act as a moral right. While the identity-crisis of Nora can only be resolved in the light of her equal right to self-expression, authority as such cannot be annulled, for only through a process of its continuation and through her interaction with it can the identity emerge.

Ibsen's thematic intention in A Doll's House focuses on the relation between particular individual experiences of "authority", and the ways in which they reflect the general laws by which cultural development as a whole can be explained, and in turn extend the meaning of the general. Ibsen relativizes the individual's experience of the social. To Ibsen, "authority" as such cannot exist, for there is no ultimate unit for measuring values of right and wrong in society. Ibsen implies that there can be as many social realities as there are individuals to perceive them or generate them. Thus while Nora has to depart from some kind of authority which acts as an organizing principle to her action, she must also confront the fact that the authority in question is a highly relative matter. The contradiction becomes suggestively resolved in her compromising notions of duty as "my duty to myself" (DH, 282) (pliktene imot meg selv) in which she introduces a new set of beliefs and concepts of duty - the latter being one form of authority expressing itself. The male notion of duty to an "infallible guide" is presented by Ibsen as being the result of the economic structure of society in which marriage becomes the context for the operation of constraints on a woman and ultimately provides the playwright with the context for presenting his argument for revising the

received notion of what the alleged guides are. Ibsen implies that the notions of duty and authority are not arbitrary but rather emerge as the logical conclusion to the economic base of marriage, as an institution within a larger social structure. Ibsen attempts to dramatize through the dilemma of Nora the danger of imposing that social hierarchy of men and women as final because, as such, it becomes an arbitrary act which denies the woman her place not only as a product of a certain phase of social development but also as making her individual contribution to it, thus becoming part of the more general process of development. Nora's open challenge, "I must try to discover who is right, society or me" contains the gist of the contest between the woman and society - the "I" as a response to social attitudes and the "me" as the organizing set of attitudes of other particular individuals in her familial circle and of inherited or borrowed notions on the more general social level.

Ibsen's treatment of Helmer's character and of Nora's relation to him suggests this ambivalent relation between a woman and authority. Ibsen first introduces the ambivalence in a familial context. When Helmer tries to prevent Nora from leaving, with the command: "I forbid you", Nora's reply implies that provided a woman takes her personal belongings with her and leaves the husband his, he can have no claim on her. The form of marriage which to her lacks a content, if the individuals concerned do not assume the responsibility of their roles, is annulled automatically by returning material ownership to its rightful owners:

> Listen, Torvald, from what I've heard, when a wife leaves her husband's house, he is absolved by all law of all responsibility toward her. I can at any rate free you from all responsibility. You must not feel in any way bound, any more than I shall. There must be full freedom on both sides. Look, here's your ring back. Give me mine.
> (DH, 285)

Nora has "heard" but unlike many of her contemporaries she dares to put words into action. While her duty to her self motivates her to leave the doll house with her "personal belongings" only, and on what she believes to be her own terms, she in fact leaves it in a manner which, if given the chance, Helmer would have suggested to her. To understand this connection between the content of Nora's challenge, and the form of carrying it through, the interpreter would have to rely on a close textual reference. Nora does not commit suicide, and thus remains beautiful. What is more, she makes a "dramatic" or "effective" exit. She satisfies the aesthete in Helmer, if not the husband. This is not to say, of course, that an act of suicide would have been refrained from on an aesthetic basis if she could find the ethical grounds. Nor is it to point out that she deliberately makes that kind of exit with no conviction of the validity of her cause and need to find her self. It is rather to stress that Ibsen makes Nora discuss suicide in terms of loss of beauty. The instance when she discusses it with Krogstad as courage is soon substituted by another kind of courage which is to defy Krogstad's belief that a "precious, pampered thing like you" would not lie "bloated, hairless, and unrecognizable" (DH, 254). She will now have the courage not to die; to live on her own terms while becoming recognizable as an individual. Her words: "I'll show you" thus contain a challenge to his threats, challenges which Hedda Gabler will later not face. Thus although on the face of it her threat seems to imply that she will commit suicide she subverts Krogstad's notion of herself and of the ugliness of suicide by finding an exit that is more beautiful if not less suicidal. Her other references to thirty-one more hours to live, for instance, do not necessarily mean suicide any more than a kind of "theatricality"

or performance. Nora throughout the action shows a fighting spirit that almost rules out the possibility of her opting out of life - a suitable ending to a play of a certain kind of heroine, but not to a play in which Nora embodies a more general cause and a revolutionary self. She chooses the form of exit that could be desired by Helmer because it is more in harmony with beauty. Helmer throughout the play is referred to as abhorring ugliness which is why the imminent death of Rank must be kept from him because it is "ugly". He, moreover, uses images which would suggest a kind of order and harmony that would perhaps only exist in a work of art of his imagination. When Nora disobeys him, she is "chirrupping out of tune". He almost classifies experiences into aesthetic and realistic levels and more often than not he hovers on the first. Describing Nora's "performance of the tarantella" to Mrs. Linde he outlines the two levels:

> She dances her tarantella, there's wild applause - which was well deserved although the performance was perhaps rather realistic . . . . I mean, rather more so than was strictly necessary from the artistic point of view. But anyway. The main thing is she was a success, a tremendous success. Was I supposed to let her stay after that? Spoil the effect? No thank you. I took my lovely little Capri girl - my capricious little Capri girl, I might say - by the arm, whisked her once round the room, a curtsey all round, and then - as they say in novels - the beautiful vision vanished. An exit should always be effective, Mrs. Linde. But I just can't get Nora to see that . . . (he throws his cloak over a chair and opens the door to his study). (Italics mine, DH, 267)

The magician for whom Nora performs tricks, to borrow her summation of what her role-playing as a dutiful wife amounts to, becomes man again as he turns to face a world outside "novels". Helmer's vision of the relation between art and life is not consistent. To him, art is an illusion of reality in which beauty stands still as the grecian urn becomes an Italian girl, one of his many possessions. His stance

towards a realistic performance alters radically when Nora decides to perform realistically an exit of her own making, one which would not entail his success but rather becomes a tribute to hers, and one in which she will decide on what "will spoil the effect". But on that account Helmer resents her, because she dispossesses him not only of his role as husband but as director of her marriage performance, conjurer of tricks, and producer of masquerades. In other words, she will be depriving him of his doll by choosing for herself a realistic "cradle", which is metaphorically, a duty to her self sought in her everyday dress. Thus when Nora offers him to take the blame on herself, he commands her to stop play-acting. By developing her own notion of self, Nora is depriving Helmer of his, yet at the same time offering him a new avenue of self-development "if" his doll is taken away from him. Ibsen seems to imply that when women cease to accept their roles in the social gutter they will be allowing men to develop their own selves, but the mutual need of subjects for objects to exploit continues. Nora is an object to Helmer in two senses: she is the muse for his artistic vision, and an object of his passion. At one point, Helmer explains to Mrs. Linde why embroidery is more suitable to a woman than knitting. Knitting involves physical action of arms in a certain way whereas embroidery is so much prettier because the hand holding the needle moves in a "long graceful curve". Nora is, to Helmer, the object of his art; but in order for her to remain so he has to carefully manipulate his feelings towards her as the child of his imagination - innocent, young, and pure - and as the woman who has the tarantella in her blood making her even more desirable.[1] In parties, when Nora becomes common property for

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1. Shaw uses this dichotomy in Pygmalion but he divided this pedagogic versus sexual view into Higgins and Eliza respectively. The similarity in the live doll with which Higgins indulges himself is, of course, quite significant.

everyone's eyes to feast on, Helmer casts her "secret looks":

> And when it's time to go, and I lay your shawl round those shapely, young shoulders, round the exquisite curve of your neck . . . I pretend that you are my young bride, that we are just leaving for our wedding, that I am taking you to our new home for the first time . . . to be alone with you for the first time . . . quite alone with your trembling loveliness. All evening I've been longing for you, and nothing else. And as I watched you darting and swaying in the tarantella, my blood was on fire . . . I couldn't bear it any longer . . . and that is why I brought you down here with me so early. (DH, 270)

Thus she becomes the live muse, and his two forms of possessing her become one. The innocence of childhood which is to Helmer expressed in a woman's purity, on the one hand, and in the purity of a man's attitudes towards a woman, on the other, is to be exploited. Thus even when as in the latter case, a man forgives his wife, she "becomes his property in a double sense", he gives her a "new life" and she becomes in a way both his wife and at the same time his child. Helmer stands as a supreme example of the authority that a woman is supposed to derive her own notions of authority from. His concepts of art, childhood, womanhood, manhood are diffuse, which in a way justifies Nora's borrowing the outer layer while searching herself for the core of the Gyntian onion. Nora can outline for herself the boundaries of realism and illusion and she is endowed with the ability to see that for a long time she has been conceived of not as a reality but as image of it:

> You two never loved me. You only thought how nice it was to be in love with me. (DH, 280)

Her father and husband were in love with one of her imaginative extensions, a doll, which masked to them their own helplessness and justified their domination. Like institutions of which they become an expression, they have concealed themselves from themselves in a

series of masquerades which were "fun" to play, but expensive to pay for in terms of consequences in so far as the doll who intends to use a "sword" and possibly sound "a trumpet" is concerned. Yet the rewards, as far as Ibsen would have them, are great. Nora is a mother, and her strenuous and sustained labour might lead to awakening a "conscious feeling of culture and discipline". Yet it is also the individual in Nora that is in jeopardy as a result of "debt" so the problem of a woman also becomes a "problem of mankind in general"; in the liberation of the individual lies a real revolution which has to antecede any broader revolution. Nora's version of it is a "miracle" - a form of transcendence which is much more effective than Helmer's performances. However, it is an act of the impossible that involves taking responsibility and standing alone within a marital relationship. Ibsen is, of course, indicating the general needs for subverting the idea of marriage. He voices his provocative thoughts later in Ghosts in Oswald Alving's ideas about "couples" abroad. Strindberg saw the redeeming virtue of the play in the fact that marriage was revealed as "being far from divine institution".[1] Nora would probably have criticized Strindberg. Her new notions would alter "institution" and make every marriage or rather every particular marriage decide on its base first and then belong within a more general whole that is composed of particular examples. "Divine" to her would mean nothing, for she would have to find out for herself "whether what Pastor Hansen told me was right - or at least whether it's right for me" (DH, 283). A marriage sanctioned by law has to become one, for law is behind the corruption of a Krogstad. Law preserves and propagates corrupt species. It is an enemy of she who stands alone, a female Stockmann who develops an aristocracy of mind and spirit by

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1. Quoted in Michael Meyer, Ibsen : A Biography (London, 1974), p. 476.

holding that the majority is wrong and that the law must take account of motives. The alternative to law and order is change, but Nora realizes that change constitutes a miracle of miracles. But would that bring salvation? Ibsen subverts the power of his miracle of miracles and its rhetorical effect by pointing out in the text that an attitude towards a miracle can be ambivalent. A miracle can be both a threat and a promise, something to be dreaded and hoped for. When Nora expresses her hopes at one point that Helmer would have lived up to one of his bombastic statements that he was man enough to take everything on himself, and her consequent disappointment that he fails to do so, her words almost imply that had he taken responsibility for the real forgery then she would be committing a forgery towards her self by remaining dependent on a man: the responsibility entailed in the miracle she went "in hope and dread of" (DH, 284). Thus what appears to be a tentative solution cancels itself out, for even the miracle of miracles is likely to contain within it the germs of its own destruction. However, while the complete miracle entailing a change of "both" man and woman seems to be doomed to failure, Nora demonstrates the ability of taking up her own responsibility as part of the duty to her self and as part of her personal identity.

For the interpreter, to elicit meanings from Nora's words and actions is not as arduous a task as it might be in the case of Hedda. Nora is articulate and honest to her self. Nora stands alone. She had first attempted to identify with a male world that defines itself in sharp opposition to her. She must extricate herself from the social situation if she is to find her own self. She gradually works her way out of an insular and closed system, and questions a complex of ideas about the nature of the relation between the individual and society. In the process of questioning, she exposes a

number of problems that were masked and hitherto not made available to consciousness. In A Doll's House, the male and female consciousness are presented as mutually interacting. Ibsen seems to suggest that females make their contributions if not to consciously suppressing the needs of the male and the damage done to his identity by law and order, then unconsciously by remaining inert dolls thus stabilizing the very law that suppresses their needs and development. The conclusion that can be distilled from the reading of A Doll's House, and from a position that attempts to examine the attitudes of both parties in the struggle and of the playwright's towards it is that for male and female, exploiter and exploited, to avail themselves of a consciousness, of an identity as such, they must speak the same language. One of the masks that will have to be discarded manifests itself in the form of a "tremendous gulf" not only between Helmer and Nora as partners in a marriage but between a man's sense of self and society projected into language, and that of a woman. Part of a woman's growing need of an identity is a need to speak a language that will express those needs. The touchstone for their success or failure in communicating their thoughts lies not in their inarticulateness but rather in men's deafness to any meaning but the one they wish to hear. When Nora criticizes laws, Helmer remarks, "You are talking like a child. You understand nothing about the society you live in" (DH, 283). To him, so serious a notion is dismissed as babbling. Her criticism of religion is met by his words: "This is incredible talk from a young woman" (Italics mine, DH, 283). Helmer would have a woman remain credible and childish in a social context but save her incredibility and childishness for his fantasies alone. Just as a woman should in his imagination live on one level but function on another, she must talk but never act. Every action to him is

merely talk - a vicarious level of living on which responsibility for words is dreaded when opposing the male's interest, yet hoped for when it is in his favour. A linguistic miracle as the most basic of miracles stems in itself from a game of language, and the needs to circumvent the breakdown in communication that results from it.

It is in the light of this evasion of truth at the most basic of levels that Raymond Williams's criticism, in Drama from Ibsen to Brecht, of the final scene between Nora and Helmer as a "declaration", not a "discussion" can be meaningfully extended.

The passages lack, according to Williams, "a living confrontation between actual people"[1] and "are straight, simple single declarations". He does see this declaration in its individual sense on the level of a woman announcing her departure, and on the level of the play as stating a moral. But in both cases, he sees Torvald Helmer's questions as rhetorical and as susceptible to being spoken by Nora herself. Williams's reasons for this final judgement are not entirely clear within the course of that argument but it becomes illuminating in so far as it stresses the kind of monologue which Nora conducts in the absence of a listener or the presence of a deaf man.

It is significant that Ibsen's alleged alternative ending for the German stage makes Nora respond to Helmer's description of her children in event of her leaving them as "motherless" by "sinking" outside their door. The alternative to slamming the door on an uncomprehending male world is responding to the power of a word by becoming speechless, which diminishes the power of the illuminated

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1. Raymond Williams, Drama from Ibsen to Brecht (London, 1968), p. 49.

individual whose "I" lives up to its meaning to the extent of placing it in an either/or relation in as far as the meaning of "right" is concerned.

The speechless mother who sinks at the thought of her being heartless, in the play that was significantly to become Nora, for with that ending the emphasis becomes on the domestic problems of a "doll" within her immediate house rather than the more general social implications of the Norwegian, becomes Mrs. Alving for a while only to surpass the Nora of the German and herself as the Alving drawing-room particularizes the problems of identity faced by a woman with no sense of duty towards herself; thus relies heavily on authority, and authority becomes a form of disease recreating itself by denying the potential of an identity that might by exposing the truth about "who is right society or me" unmask ghosts for what they are, and in the process unmask the self for what it is. To liberate the self is to infuse education, law, economics, and marriage with the benefits of relative standards. Nora had slammed the door eight years ago when she surrendered to an institution that opposes a woman's basic needs. At the end of A Doll's House, she does not slam the door. She opens it.

In Ghosts (Gengangere)[1] Ibsen explores the contaminated constitution of society, and highlights the ways in which the woman and the artist become embroiled in it while themselves partially contributing to the continuation of its crippling effect both on its own progress and on their own identity as conditioned by the more general process.

The plot of Ghosts is fairly straightforward. Two menacing outsiders walk into the Alving's seemingly cosy drawing-room and gradually rekindle the embers of the past. Engstrand, the first menace, is dismissed by his daughter Regine who distrustfully refuses to live with her father, and states her intention of helping Mrs. Alving to run an orphanage constructed in memory of the late Captain Alving. Pastor Manders arrives on the scene to make arrangements concerning the orphanage. The conversation between this second menace and Mrs. Alving discloses the fact that the latter's marriage to the promiscuous Alving has polluted their home atmosphere thus necessitating the act of sending Oswald, their son, abroad to be reared in more congenial surroundings. Oswald, who has just returned, is not the only offspring of Alving. Regine was the result of Alving's affair with a maid thrust into marriage with Engstrand to avoid scandal. Alving's death deludes his widow into believing that a menacing past is, likewise, dead. The long shadows of old sins, however, threaten the present. Oswald has inherited his father's venereal disease. The victimized son burns in the furnace of life, the fires of which offer the only ruthless light. The doctor's pronouncement of the causes of Oswald's condition -

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1. References are to the English text of Ghosts as printed in The Oxford Ibsen, translated and edited by James Walter McFarlane, 8 vols (London, Toronto, New York, 1960-1977), V (1961), and the Norwegian text in Henrik Ibsen: Nutidsdramaer 1877-1899 (Oslo, 1973). All subsequent page references to the English version will be incorporated within the text of the thesis, after the abbreviated title.

"The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children" (G, 396) - is a bitterly ironic statement underlining Ibsen's thematic concerns; for Ghosts is fundamentally a haunted battlefield of ghosts of fathers and father-figures, within and without.

To reach a maximum effect and to express his ideas through artistic means, Ibsen exploits the whole range of dramatic craftsmanship by integrating symbol with action, lighting effects with thematic developments, exteriors and interiors with states of mind and being. Ibsen makes use of stage-directions to enhance his desired effects thus displaying a totality of control over the particulars of subject-matter. Ibsen primarily juxtaposes darkness and light. This duality was made feasible, in Ibsen's times, of course, through the introduction of gas lights. Parallel to this juxtaposition are a number of others: home and abroad; life-lies and authenticity; imperative and impulse; restrictions and spontaneity; duty and freedom. Early in his career, Ibsen had established the duality between light and darkness in a poem entitled "The Daylight Coward" (Lysredd) (1855). The poet presents himself as someone whose approach to life is a retreat from it.

> Now it is trolls of daylight,
> Life, busy life is the troll
> That kindles a dismal grey light
> Of fear in my freezing soul.
>
> I snatch at the black disguises
> Of bugbear Night and hide:-
> Then up my ambition rises
> Like an eagle in its pride.[1]

In terms of characters, Pastor Manders is represented as the power of darkness trying to stifle the light. Manders's function is underlined in the implicit meaning of Engstrand's words:

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1. Henrik Ibsen: Lyrics and Poems, translated by Fydell E. Garrett (London, 1912), pp. 19-20.

> I quite distinctly saw you take the candle
> and snuff it with your fingers and chuck
> the end away straight into some shavings.
> (G, 407)

Ibsen effectively mingles the tangible with the intangible, and presents external equivalents for what can only be seen by the inward eye, resulting in a dialogue that has been fruitfully described by Michael Meyer as a "double-density dialogue".[1] Manders indeed snuffs out the light of authenticity, thus setting the Alving home ablaze. Throughout the action, Manders is presented as the voice of moral authority. He persists in using his cherished word "duty" (plikt) on any occasion. In the opening scene, Manders is heard delivering a lecture to Regine on the reverence of her duties towards her father. Similarly, he has sounded Mrs. Alving on the same note while reminding her of her duties as a wife. In a passage with strong ironical moral implications, he admonishes Mrs. Alving for having been rebellious enough to attempt to overthrow "sacred" matrimonial ties and follow her own impulses:

> My dear lady, there are many occasions in life
> when one must rely on others. That's the way
> of the world, and things are best that way.
> How else would society manage? (G, 360)

Mrs. Alving is expected to conform to a role dictated by society. She is required to meet the demands of governing social imperatives. Ibsen is heavily indicting societies where individuality is nullified because Manders-like figures have the upper hand. Anarchy is fiercely opposed by the church and the state.

In A Doll's House, Ibsen had introduced a notion of duty which has the self as a primary point of reference. In his plays, and in a number of his letters, Ibsen conceives of progress as emerging only through the repudiation of duty to existing authoritarian institutions.

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1. Michael Meyer, Ibsen: A Biography: The Top of a Cold Mountain: 1883-1906 (London, 1971), p. 337.

In Ghosts, he emphasizes the fact that being a dutiful adaptive molecule of society directly opposes any chances of happiness and self-fulfilment. He voices, through Manders, the social attitude towards duty:

> All this demanding to be happy in life, it's all part of this same wanton idea. What right have people to happiness? No, we have our duty to do, Mrs. Alving! And your duty was to stand by the man you had chosen and to whom you were bound by sacred ties. (G, 371)

Ibsen's thematic concern in Ghosts is primarily with the tragically debilitating effects of the individual's victimization by forces external to his self. Ibsen repudiates the current basis of marriage and in a letter describes its effects as centring on "nemesis invited on the individual by marrying for extrinsic reasons".[1] Ibsen points, in Ghosts, to a contradictory stance within the very nature of conformists by satirizing Manders's hypocrisy and corruption. Manders believes in the hollow sham forms of religion, not in their spiritual content. Religious values do not stand as their own justification. So-called morality and ethical codes are to be adhered to and erected only for the sake of public opinion. This is evidenced in the debate over the insurance of the Orphanage. Manders believes that it should be insured, but he lacks the courage to stand by his convictions. Being a conformist, he is terrified of public opinion. For "others" to think that Pastor Manders has no "proper faith in Divine Providence" (G, 362) is a serious charge against him. When Oswald broaches the subject of unmarried couples living together abroad, Manders reacts in a conventional manner:

> But how is it possible for any young man or woman with . . . with the slightest sense of decency to consent to live in that fashion . . . openly, for all the world to see! (G, 369)

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1. Henrik Ibsen: A Critical Anthology, edited by James Walter McFarlane (London, 1970), pp. 92-93.

Manders, in a way, reacts inauthentically; his reaction is dictated by his vocation, and his social and religious roles. Ibsen drives his own point home forcefully by voicing through Oswald the belief that the homes of these unmarried couples are far from being immoral, and that morality exists at "home", and not abroad. Paradoxically enough, immorality lies within the traditional moral framework of marriage and can be found in seemingly respectable homes between couples who pretend to be exemplary in their behaviour, but who are in reality licentious and profligate.

While men can debate the purpose of the traditional frameworks, it is the woman who has to suffer for the consequences of men's words and deeds. Mrs. Alving is trapped. Her performance of the role of wife and mother masks a struggle which, in her words, is "with ghosts, both within and without" (G, 385).

In a draft manuscript of Ghosts, Ibsen describes Mrs. Alving as having been "a religious fanatic" in her youth.[1] This description is, in fact, not only one of Mrs. Alving but also of the more general trends that circumscribe the life of the individual and force extreme or fanatical responses to outside pressures.

The play traces Mrs. Alving's attempts to work her way out of the trap. Mrs. Alving has ambivalent attitudes towards change. The past is a burden which must be put down. Yet the future is "unknown" and as such it is frightening yet attractive. Consequently a discrepancy between Mrs. Alving's verbal proclamations of freedom and her actual practice of it is readily discernable. Her awakening is gradual, slow, and sometimes suffers from relapses. Yet these relapses and discrepancies between word and deed indicate the contradiction inherent in the nature of social demands. Ibsen effectively

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1. Quoted in James Walter McFarlane, op. cit., p. 467.

dramatizes the social and individual forces in the scene in which Pastor Manders discovers some books advocating free-thinking and consequently admonishes Mrs. Alving for reading them. She defends her intellectual emancipation on the grounds that it projects her needs:

> I find it [reading] seems to explain and confirm a lot of the things I had been thinking myself. That's the strange thing, Pastor Manders . . . there's really nothing new in these books; there's nothing there but what most people think and believe already. It's just that most people either haven't really considered these things, or won't admit them. (G, 359)

Mrs. Alving fears an actual emancipation of the kind Nora could attempt. Consequently, she lives vicariously through the content of these books. When Manders delivers his sermon on duty, she retracts her liberal thoughts. When Mrs. Alving assimilates the implications of the dialogue between Oswald and Pastor Manders about sham values and illicit love affairs, she agrees with Oswald that instincts should be allowed more freedom of expression. She lives vicariously with these unmarried couples, wishing that her own instincts could have won the battle over duty. Yet, she cannot "stand alone". The artist in Oswald will complement her needs. Having lived "abroad", Oswald returns and brings with him the need to re-define "infallible guides". When Pastor Manders sounds Mrs. Alving on the subject of her marriage, she adamantly rejects what he would have her believe - that she did the right thing: "the fact remains I did not, after all, take counsel with myself" (G, 381). Ibsen makes this point pivotal to her development, for its implications contrast natural laws that only abide by what man desires with man-made laws that acknowledge only law and order. When Pastor Manders implies that Mrs.

Alving's act of "taking counsel" with herself is not socially acceptable and that her marriage was arranged "in strict accord with law and order", Mrs. Alving, now gaining strength, contends:

> Oh, all this law and order! I often think that's the cause of all the trouble in the world. (G, 381)

Mrs. Alving verbally rebels against social fetters:

> I'm not putting up with it any longer, all these ties and restrictions. I can't stand it! I must work myself free. (G, 382)

When it is put to the test, Mrs. Alving's intention fails. At one point in the action, Mrs. Alving states that if Oswald and Regine's marriage would make them happy, she would be prepared to allow it. Mrs. Alving is treading on dangerous ground, for she is verbally breaking the incest taboo. When Manders's sensibilities are outraged, she retreats to the security of former habits of thought:

> But I'm not willing! I couldn't wish it, not for anything. That's precisely what I'm saying. (G, 384)

In his notes to the play, Ibsen outlines a similar distinction between "wishing" and "willing":

> To wish and to will. Our worst faults are the consequences of confusing the two things.[1]

A third instance of Mrs. Alving's hovering development occurs when Mrs. Alving expresses contradictory views of the same issue, namely that of honouring one's father. When Manders admonishes her for entertaining thoughts of destroying Oswald's ideals about his father, Mrs. Alving argues that the dictum "Honour thy father" cannot be applied to any father. But towards the end of the play, she reverts to her "shoulds" and plays the role of Manders with Oswald, stating that a father should be honoured.

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1. Henrik Ibsen: A Critical Anthology, op. cit., p. 98.

Ibsen presents Mrs. Alving as torn by a conflict between impulses and imperatives. The conflict is symbolically underlined by Ibsen's integration of the two dominant images of the play through Mrs. Alving: namely the sun and ghosts. Mrs. Alving has suffered from the effects of "ghosts". Her ambivalent attitude towards them has led to her being victimized by them. She thus indirectly deprives Oswald's life of the desired sunshine. Mrs. Alving realizes that the past can only be redeemed in the present. In Ibsen's plays, time gains dynamic dimensions. In Ghosts, Ibsen implies that the individual can recreate and remake himself in time thus redeeming himself by transcending the imposed deadlock of social sterility. However, he sees the first step towards bringing this redemption into effect as an acknowledgement, on the part of the individual, of his complicity in the evils of society:

> But then I'm inclined to think that we are all ghosts, Pastor Manders, every one of us. It's not just what we inherit from our mothers and fathers that haunts us. It's all kinds of old defunct theories, all sorts of old defunct beliefs, and things like that. It's not that they actually live on in us; they are simply lodged there, and we cannot get rid of them. I've only to pick up a newspaper and I seem to see ghosts gliding between the lines. Over the whole country there must be ghosts, as numerous as the sands of the sea. And here we are, all of us, abysmally afraid of the light. (G, 384)

The "ghosts" of degenerative moral and social views of older generations will fall on the emerging society and retard its development. Alving's syphilis killed his young son and deprived him of any chances for physical or spiritual growth. In a similar manner, old ideas have a crippling effect on social progress. Mrs. Alving has committed the unforgivable sin of "murdering love" in a human being. It is ironic that the younger generation should be able to point out the truth to fathers and mothers. Oswald's statement of

the need for the joy of living makes his mother envisage matters in a totally new light. "Suddenly I seemed to see my whole life . . . everything in a new light." Mrs. Alving admits that her husband had to:

> eat his heart out here in this little provincial town; pleasures of a kind it had to offer, but no real joy; no chance of any proper vocation, only an official position to fill; no sign of any kind of work he could throw himself into heart and soul - only business. He never had a single real friend capable of appreciating the joy of life and what it meant - nothing but a lot of lazy, drunken, hangers-on . . . (G, 412)

Mrs. Alving sees the disparity between her self-image and her real self through acknowledging her earlier failure to perceive Alving's dilemma. Home offered him no real happiness; the job was simply mechanical, and afforded no real satisfaction. Now comes the "moment of truth".

> Your father could never find any outlet for this tremendous exuberance of his. And I didn't exactly bring very much gaiety into his home, either. (G, 413)

Gaiety was killed by fatal adherence to duty:

> They'd taught me various things about duty and such-like, and I'd simply gone on believing them. Everything seemed to come down to duty in the end - my duty and his duty and . . . I'm afraid I must have made the house unbearable for your poor father, Oswald. (G, 413)

For once in the play, husband and wife are reconciled: they are both victimized by imposed standards of conduct - ghosts.

Mrs. Alving comes to believe that Oswald should be brought within the full arena of truth. That this can only be accomplished at the price of shattering ideals and illusions does not seem important. Thus Mrs. Alving is liberated. She has found her self, and is starting to coin the metal in it. Mrs. Alving describes her husband's notorious, dissolute past:

> Your father was a broken man before you were even born . . . Regine belonged here in this house . . . just as much as my own son.
> (G, 413)

Ibsen effectively integrates his thematic content with scenic effects. He makes use of light, dark, rain and sun to delineate the gradual process of unveiling certain truths about the self, society, the world, and subsequently the final contours of the play itself. The stage directions initially point to "a gloomy fjord landscape, shrouded in steady rain" (G, 349). In Act Two, "a heavy mist still lies over the landscape" (G, 379). At the end of Act Two, just as Mrs. Alving is on the verge of dispelling illusions and burning ideals, the fire blazes. In Act Three, a "lamp is still burning on the table. It is dark outside, apart from a faint glow in the background" (G, 406). Light creeps in now. As the action approaches its end, "day is dawning; the lamp is still burning on the table" (G, 421). Natural daylight blends with man-made light, but soon there will be no need for the light as the "glacier and the mountain peaks in the background gleam in the morning light" (G, 421).

In Ghosts, the masks of society and the individual are peeled off and burnt; only thus can ghosts be conquered. Only one ghost remains now: the lethal ghost of Mr. Alving's disease lurking in Oswald. Once more Mrs. Alving is put to the test.

The deadlock of sterility reached by Oswald, and the repugnant conditions life unrelentingly imposes upon him drive suicidal thoughts into his mind. But the big baby will soon be too helpless to take away his own life. Therefore, he throws back the task to the very giver of his life. The labour pains which ushered Oswald into the world were joy for his life-giver. To give life is to be rewarded by joy; a feeling of fertility and continuity. But to sever the umbilical cord forever, to kill one's own flesh, is a problem to be

painfully pondered by the ill-starred Mrs. Alving.

Oswald: Well then, now you'll have to give me this helping hand, Mother.

Mrs. Alving [with a scream] Me!

Oswald: There's nobody with a better right than you.

Mrs. Alving: Me! Your mother!

Oswald: All the more reason.

Mrs. Alving: Me! Who gave you life!

Oswald: I never asked you for life. And what sort of a life is this you've given me? I don't want it! Take it back!
(G, 420)

The crucial issue dividing Oswald and his mother is of extreme importance in highlighting the identity problems of the woman and artist in Ghosts. Oswald's demand that Mrs. Alving should take back the life that she, as a mother, has given him, is an implicit request to enforce upon him a different way of life: death. The paradox emerges as a result of the relative meanings of life and death in view of the fact that a condition characteristic of life can only be realized in death under the social and familial conditions prevailing for Oswald, as artist and son. It is, moreover, related to the two roles that Oswald and Mrs. Alving play for each other, and to the consequent emergent levels of the interaction of both characters in each of their separate roles. If Mrs. Alving, as mother, takes back the life of Oswald, the son, she will be giving the artist in him life thus the mother becomes muse. To assume that she will give Oswald the morphine tablets, or the helping hand, would diminish the effect of a deliberate ambiguity on Ibsen's part, which becomes more meaningful when conceived of not as an isolated particular incident but rather as an expression of the ambivalence in the general social forces involved, and the way they serve or thwart the needs of particular individuals.

It is highly ironic that the helpless state to which Oswald is relegated as a result of the "sins" of "the fathers" being "visited" upon the sons becomes for him the cause to renew his desire for what should have been normally both the condition for and the effect of an artist's productivity, and which deteriorates from a "joy of life" to, as it were, a joy of dying in the absence of congenial circumstances and the accumulation of inherited relations which determine the course of his life, on the one hand, but act as an authority which has to be overthrown even at the cost of death, on the other.

To Oswald, the "joy of life" and the "joy of work" are the same thing. "But," he explains to Mrs. Alving, "people here don't know anything about that either." While he, as an artist in a state of exile, can exercise the joy of living beyond the confines of his society, the subjects of his art are not dictated by social reality but rather by a projection of the artist's ideal vision into his art. Thus a social reality is present through a portrayal of what should be rather than what is. The "joy of working" is practically non-existent in Norway, for the artist or for what could be his subject. People are brought up to believe that

> . . . work is a curse and a sort of punishment for their sins; and that life is some kind of miserable affair, which the sooner we are done with the better for everybody. (G, 405)

The consequence of this view of work as dull routine - which is precisely the dilemma Oswald's father had suffered from, the lack of "any proper vocation" and the dullness of a "provincial town, with no sign of any kind of work he could throw himself into heart and soul - only business" (G, 412), is a channelling of the energy and vitality into "outlets for this tremendous exuberance". Oswald paints holiday faces abroad. As artist, Oswald has to be removed from a social context, and the subjects of his art are similarly

removed from any context. It is a "holiday" mood of drifting away from the darkness of "duty" to the light and sunshine of creativity and progress:

> Oswald: Mother have you noticed how everything I've ever painted has turned on this joy of life? Always and without exception, this joy of life. Light and sunshine and a holiday spirit . . . and radiantly happy faces. That's why I'm frightened to stay at home with you.
>
> Mrs. Alving: Frightened? What have you got to be frightened about, here with me?
>
> Oswald: I'm frightened that everything I care about would degenerate here into something ugly.
>
> Mrs. Alving: [looks hard at him]. You think that would happen?
>
> Oswald: I'm convinced it would. Live the same life here as abroad, yet it still wouldn't be the same life.
>
> (G, 403)

Ibsen implies that the individual has to interact with society and as such a change of locale for the artist is not sufficient - it is the process of change that must be brought about into that locale, and that must emanate from it that could enrich the chances of an artist both "here" and "abroad". The absent face in Oswald's art is ironically typified by the exuberant father bogged down by routine, the father in whose light other father-figures have stood by teaching women "various things about duty and such-like" and producing women who, unlike Nora, simply go on "believing them".

In so far as it is a clear indicator to the individual's self-furthering, self-fulfilling road to salvation, the joy of life seems to be the only positive affirmation. But that seeming affirmation must be questioned, not as it overtly stands in the text but in so far as Oswald suggests that this affirmation is only possible through death, and that he sees it in Regine, Lieutenant Alving's daughter.

Oswald's view of her does not change even when he learns that she is his sister; thus the irony continues.

Oswald's death-wish is expressive of the need to re-create, by dying, the conditions that he could not realize through living. He asks his mother for the sun at the moment of his paralysis, and seeks to find a condition beyond that of an imbecile child.

Ibsen makes a significant comment on the relation between the problems of identity for women and the class to which they belong. It is important to view Regine's refusal to act as a "helping hand" and Oswald's consequent request to his mother as more than simply a personal choice on Regine's part. Regine is, despite her being Alving's daughter, "healthy". But she is also the "maid's" daughter who by virtue of her class was not as intimidated as an Alving by familial and social circumstances yet, by Mrs. Alving's admission, was a "fine" woman. Regine demonstrates the "joy of life" as it ideally should exist, according to Oswald. The difference between brother and sister does not lie in a literal and metaphorical venereal disease. It does not lie in the identity of the father, rather in the liberating effect of a different set of relations into which Regine was born, and in which the exuberant lieutenant found a way out of lethargy by re-invigorating himself with the maid, and though the result is indirectly the "fun" which Rank's father had, it leads on the other hand, to "vitality". "If Oswald takes after his father, I probably take after my mother, I suppose," says Regine (G, 414). The father remains "his" (Oswald's) father whom Regine seems ironically to disown as a diseased parent but to realize that "I've just as much right to a bit of that money as that rotten old carpenter" (G, 414).

While Regine would use the Alving money as her rightful share but retain her independence of "his" (Oswald's) father, Mrs. Alving

donates money to the Orphanage so that it adds up to the amount that made Lieutenant Alving such a good match in his day. By paying back into Alving's memory her "purchase price", she liberates herself of the economic bondage of marriage in a bourgeois society, and thus makes sure Oswald is dis-inherited.

For Regine, the joy of life synonymous with the joy of working lies in an act of freedom from social constraints, she will not "stay" out "here in the country, working [herself] to death looking after invalids", because she has "also got some of this joy of life" (G, 414).

Regine leaves but Ibsen refrains from using lighting effects at her departure. Rather, he has her walk out through the hall, while Oswald "stands at the window looking out" (G, 415). Regine has crossed the boundaries that Mrs. Alving was locked in through social intimidation - a state she describes as "cowardice" and rebels against by "drumming on the window frame" (G, 383). But her cowardice has to be paid for through her substitution for Regine in Oswald's consciousness as the source of salvation. Regine had no responsibility towards Oswald. But Mrs. Alving, the carrier of ghosts, becomes Ibsen's means of demonstrating that a mother should have stopped the process of "fun" if it prevented "culture" and discipline. Her admission of the individual's complicity in the evils of society is now put to the test.

Oswald locks the door of the hall. The two infected individuals face the ghosts "within" and "without" in a coffin-like claustrophobic room. The general social trends that had infected them directly or indirectly are present through their effects on Mrs. Alving and Oswald, and their oppression is heightened through the immense responsibilities with which they leave the inhabitants of a drawing-room, while they glide away. But Mrs. Alving still stands a chance

of making her particular contribution, through personal responsibility, of shedding her "ghost-like" layer and finding her "everyday dress" in a social masquerade. Like Nora, she would have to "change". It is ironic that that change would seem to necessitate a reversal of the role of a mother who traditionally gives a son life to one who deprives him of life to give him a different one. But the new role is dictated by the artist's need for "livsglede" through death.

Both the affirmative power of livsglede and the concomitant affirmative power of a mother as a "giver" of life are undermined by Ibsen through his transformation of the normal functions of a woman's body to the imposed ones of a pain-killer. Ibsen's deprivation of a woman of a bodily function, which was to culminate in the pure and unprofaned Irene, is a bestowal by him of another function on women, a new duty - equally sacred. The woman, who is traditionally held to be, first and foremost, a wife and mother, has to prove that she is first and foremost a "human being" capable of making choices that would subvert tradition if necessary.

Sustenance to a child is no longer through a mother's breast, it is rather through a mother's "fumbling" in that child's "breast" pocket for the morphine tablets - thus giving him his "joy of life" and herself the new role of a muse for an artist who now embodies the light, and a vision that he imparts to her through his dilemma:

> And suddenly I seemed to see my whole life . . .
> everything in a new light. (G, 412)

Ibsen carefully manipulates the reversal in a mother's function, by making Oswald and Mrs. Alving indicate their respective views of it. Oswald "takes a little box out of his breast pocket" and informs her that it contains morphine (G, 419). Shortly afterwards, in an attempt to pacify her child, Mrs. Alving "bends" over him - a posture

which becomes highly meaningful when a tableau of mother and child is visualized:

> What terrible ideas they were to get into your head, Oswald. . . . But now you'll be with your mother beside you, my darling. Anything you want you shall have, just like when you were a little boy. . . . See what a lovely day we're going to have, Oswald? Brilliant sunshine. Now you'll be able to see the place properly. (G, 421)

But Oswald vegetates, and "tonelessly" asks for the sun. He has a word left to express his need but no intonation pattern to infuse life on what is almost beyond the possibility of expression. Life has devitalized the forms of expressing his needs, but it has not robbed him of his cause. Mrs. Alving's child is now a lump of "flaccid muscles", and "expressionless face": she cannot "bear it", she says. "It" could refer to the situation, the sight, or the secret thoughts she is entertaining:

> Mrs. Alving: [Suddenly] Where's he put them? [Hastily fumbling at his breast.] Here! [She shrinks back a step or two and screams.] No, no, no! . . . Yes! . . . No, no!
>
> [She stands a few paces away from him, with her hands clutching her hair, staring at him in speechless horror.] (G, 422)

While to a listener, the exclamation mark would most certainly be a result of her rising screaming tone, it is possible to view her "yes" and "no" as meaning quite the opposite of their denotation, in which case Mrs. Alving would have to be regarded as her own listener in this dramatic monologue, where she is divided like Prufrock into a "you" and "I", facing impotence as a mother, but fulfilment as a human being. The idea of "secret thoughts" emerges from the text in relation to the oppressive representative of authority, Pastor Manders:

Manders: We two don't understand each other.

Mrs. Alving: Not any more, at least.

Manders: Never once . . . not in my most secret thoughts . . . have I even regarded you as anything other than another man's wife.

Mrs. Alving: Really?

Manders: Helene . . .

Mrs. Alving: It's so easy to forget one's own past.

Manders: Not me. I'm the same as I always was. (G, 385)

Mrs. Alving's "really" invites the interpreter to read into it her scepticism about the discrepancy between the claimed and the real. Thus the ambivalence attached to her final exclamation becomes meaningful when seen as an expression of the very contradictions which Ibsen tries to embody in his play, and which emerge as a result in the very ambivalent meaning of "law and order", and of standards of right and wrong in so far as these standards are presented as having different uses for different individuals not because of their flexibility but because of their functionality in becoming masks behind which authority-like figures escape personal weaknesses and exploit women and artists through imposing on them masks of duty and requiring a debilitating kind of performance of marriage and art. The intimidating power of these uses of authority to abuse the individual is probably expressed in the ghosts which Mrs. Alving sees gliding through the lines of a newspaper. Ibsen relates newspapers to an attitude of corruption and debauchery in which Lieutenant Alving lies on the sofa and reads an "old government gazette" (G, 376). But the artist in Oswald who advocates the free marriage and sunshine in artistic circles abroad while criticizing "our model husbands and fathers", "crumples a newspaper" (G, 394), presumably because he sees in it forged values and forged relations.

But authority becomes subversive of itself as general and particular interests clash. Manders's use of "law and order" to achieve what he views as victory over himself and what Mrs. Alving sees as defeat becomes the cause of her examination of the nature of law and order. On the other hand, while law acted in the interest of Manders, it enforced on both Lieutenant Alving and his wife a confinement within a marriage, for the sake of duty. While frustrating the needs of both husband and wife and leading to a diseased son, the repressive marriage also led to a healthy daughter who despite the possibility of her "throwing herself away", as Mrs. Alving would describe it, in "The Captain Alving Home" does possess, by an artist's vision and judgement of her, the necessary pre-requisites of the "joy of life".

Thus Ibsen reiterates an idea he had earlier presented in A Doll's House - while acting as a means of preserving itself the social system contains within it the factors that will lead to its own destruction. It eventually annihilates itself through corroding its individual members. Society imposes duties which the individual rejects; yet when granted the freedom to erect his own standards the individual is doomed to failure for these standards will be judged continually by the organizing social principles that do not change. To abide by one's own principles is, in itself, an opposition of a social system, which is incapable of generating new levels of experience. Yet these standards are needed to provide a point of departure from them. This contradiction explains Mrs. Alving's fear of the light, and Nora's longing for but dreading of the miracle of miracles. Mrs. Alving's feat of courage in expressing the need for the light is seen by Manders as a fruit of the pamphlets advocating free thinking. But Mrs. Alving locates the cause of this

enlightenment in the kind of established order that Manders typifies:

> You were the one who goaded me into doing some thinking . . . . When you forced me to submit to what you called my duty and my obligations. When you praised as right and proper what my whole mind revolted against, as against some loathsome thing. It was then I began to examine the fabric of your teachings. I began picking at one of the knots, but as soon as I'd got that undone, the whole thing came apart at the seams. It was then I realized it was just tacked together. (G, 384-385)

The "fancy" dresses of the law need stitching. Ibsen implies that the act has to be performed by the artist, the self-exile. The image of a torn fabric is possibly a deliberate but effective reiteration of that image in A Doll's House. As such, the act of stitching performed by Mrs. Linde in the earlier play under Helmer's instruction of what constitutes a beautiful embroidery as opposed to an ugly knitting is, in Ghosts, performed by both Mrs. Alving and Oswald in so far as they both expose sham values and inasmuch as Mrs. Alving becomes Oswald's means of implementing his art by offering salvation. It is not, in this context, important to judge this implementation on the grounds of whether she gives him the tablets or not. The point at issue here is the way Oswald came to regard her, which ceases to be important at the point at which Oswald's consciousness fails him. Mrs. Alving's consciousness of the need for light increases as her notion of what constitutes her identity sharpens.

Oswald's call for creativity is an attack on the cramping effect of that society, which is extended by a woman's denunciation of law and order. While Oswald, as artist, explains the central theme of his art as embodying the spirit of happiness and of a holiday atmosphere, it would be hazardous to imply from that that Mrs. Alving's problem is the subject of an artist. Oswald perceives social forces and their effects on men and women; he uses a woman as a means of

rising above his own subjective agonies by providing the muse for his creative possibilities to remain above "ugly" realities. His art rises above ugliness by portraying happiness.

Ibsen had professed that Ghosts "points out that there is a ferment of nihilism under the surface, at home as elsewhere"[1] and he could foresee that:

> Ghosts will probably cause alarm in certain circles, but that cannot be helped. If it did not, it would not have been necessary to write it . . .[2]

In Hedda Gabler, the aim of art as expressed by Lövborg becomes more ambitious. The medium of art in the later play is writing and as such within the scope of two books Lövborg is able to expound his views and to be more realistic than Oswald in so far as he confronts the social problem, and studies the future "course of civilization".

The "alarm" in "certain circles" that Ibsen had anticipated with regards to reactions to Ghosts is demonstrated by the woman and the Gabler in Hedda. The links between the artist and the woman become more intricate in the sense that Hedda's reaction to the possibility of "light" is, in a way, more professed than that of a Nora or an Alving. Her reaction is more typical of her class, for breaking away from it would necessitate breaking away from the father at the cost of any semblance of identity. Ibsen stresses the interaction of individuals as products of a certain society in which the imbibed attitudes of the father or towards the father become part of a cycle of cause and effect in the development of society and of the individual as part of it.

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1. Extract from a letter to Sophus Schandorph (6 January, 1882) printed in Ibsen: Letters and Speeches, edited by Evert Sprinchorn (Massachusetts, 1964), pp. 200-201.

2. Extract from a letter to Frederick Hegel (23 November, 1881), Ibsen: Letters and Speeches, pp. 196-197.

In Hedda Gabler (Hedda Gabler)[1] Ibsen portrays a woman faced by the persistent need for a re-definition of her relation to her own self, and to others; and for an integrating principle that will harmonize the welter of confusion characterizing her drives and instincts. That this portrayal is effected more subtly than that of Nora or Mrs. Alving, and that Hedda's needs are more masked from herself invites the interpreter to supply conjectural motivation.

Like Nora Helmer, Hedda resents her mundane conventional existence. Like Mrs. Alving, she willingly subjects herself to the torture of conventional codes of morality. Like Ellida, in The Lady from the Sea, she yearns to intertwine the threads of her own true existence, and to choose her life in a spirit of freedom. However, Hedda lacks Nora's courage to cross the boundary between words and deeds. She lacks Mrs. Alving's spiritual strength, and Ellida's ability to "acclimatize" herself.

Hedda decides to degrade herself respectably, not by surrendering to her desires but by letting her repressed desires take revenge on her, and distort her vision of herself and others.

She has apparently condescended to marry Jörgen Tesman, and the couple have just returned from a long honeymoon used by Tesman to collect material for his doctoral thesis. There are hints that Hedda is pregnant. The information about the newly-wedded couple is imparted through the conversation of Tesman's Aunt Julie and the servant Berte. Both are elated at the fact that a grand lady like Hedda should condescend to marry Tesman. It soon becomes clear that

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1. References are to the English text of Hedda Gabler, translated by Jens Arup, as printed in The Oxford Ibsen, edited by James Walter McFarlane, VII (1966), and the Norwegian text as printed in Henrik Ibsen: Nutisdramaer 1877-1899 (Oslo, 1973). All subsequent page references to the English version will be incorporated within the text of the thesis, after the abbreviated title.

Hedda and Tesman are incompatible. Their respective feminine and masculine roles are reversed, in view of the masculine influence on Hedda's childhood, and the feminine one on Tesman's. Tesman is a "mouse" of a man. Boyishly jovial, sentimental and gentle, he is the domestic sort of man. Significantly the subject of his thesis is "domestic" crafts. Hedda's harshness and ruthlessness constitute a marked contrast to Tesman's docility. Hedda enjoys humiliating others. Her selfishness is betrayed by all her words and movements. Three outsiders walk into the Tesman household: Thea Elvsted, Ejlert Løvborg, and Judge Brack. The latter is strongly reminiscent of Pastor Manders in his stealthy exits and entrances, and in his precipitation of action. Apparently, Løvborg was, at one time in the past, a lost soul now reformed under the regenerative influence of Thea. Both had been joined in a combined effort to write a book. Thea, however, informs Hedda that a shadow of a woman stands between Løvborg and herself. It will later be disclosed that the woman is Hedda, and that she had once threatened to shoot Løvborg with the Gabler pistols when he tried to make advances to her. From this point in the action, events quicken their pace. Løvborg arrives, they both share past memories of what Hedda calls their "comradeship". Løvborg accompanies Tesman and Brack to a party. In a state of drunkenness, he loses the manuscript of his book. Hedda gains possession of the manuscript and burns it. She then orders him to kill himself "beautifully", and gives him her father's pistol as a "souvenir". Løvborg fulfils Hedda's desires, leaving Thea and Tesman to work on some surviving notes of his book. Judge Brack informs Hedda of the scandal that will arise because of her pistols being found in Løvborg's hands. Unable to bear the smear of scandal, or the blackmail of Brack, Hedda commits suicide.

Ibsen presents Hedda as a battlefield of opposites. To understand the dividedness inherent within the structure of Hedda's character, and the discrepancy between the objective reality of her image, and her subjective vision of it, the interpreter would have to understand the ways in which Ibsen carefully manoeuvres his characters and images. Through an effective method of comparing and contrasting the characters' reactions to life with Hedda's, Ibsen forcefully throws Hedda's character into sharp relief. Furthermore, as in Ghosts, Ibsen displays a totality of control over the stage directions because they are meant to be exceedingly functional. Ibsen resorts to a pattern of images that have representational qualities and symbolic resonances. Every image contributes to the overall pattern, and to the emergence of the compelling sub-text with full force. The play runs along a set of antinomies: light and dark, spring and autumn, fecundity and sterility, intellect and instinct, beauty and duty, lust and frigidity, freedom and imprisonment, realism and romanticism.

Hedda emerges as a woman who denies herself the right to womanhood; a coward who seeks adventure; a morally impotent individual who revels in the spiritual fulfilment of others; a burning flame of desires who hides under a facade of steely ice; an insecure woman who shuns security because the very notion of it makes her bored. Hedda's ruling passion lies in exercising absolute and unrestricted control over other human beings. Hedda strives for power over people because she lacks the power to exist meaningfully, to have control over her divided self. In this light, her malignant malevolence can be seen as a defensive measure taken against the world, for beneath the calm and cool exterior, Hedda is insecure. The death of her father has left her not only homeless, but also rootless. In a letter, Ibsen indicates that Hedda's new environment acquired

through marriage is felt to be "a strange and hostile power, aimed at her very being".[1] Demonstrations of feelings frighten her because feelings threaten to engulf her very being. Her pressing, obsessive need to feel superior entails destroying anything that may obstruct the flow of this urge. Her cowardice stems from intense feelings of powerlessness, loneliness, and impotence.

Ibsen suggests that the root of Hedda's psychological problems lies in her childhood, and her upbringing. Like Miss Julie, Hedda is, to borrow the term Strindberg used to describe his heroine, a "half-woman" (halvkvinnan). Her identification with her father has incapacitated her and hindered the full development of her femininity. She has been brought up to conceive of the union of love as an act of weakness and a form of destruction. Therefore, Hedda can only think of the encounter of man and woman in terms of power, attack, or defence. Ibsen underlines this vision of love and human relations by his symbolic reference to the Gabler pistols, and by placing Hedda within a disciplined military heritage. Hedda's conception of human relationships, as such, is contained within the subtext of her reply to Tesman's question:

> Tesman: What are you looking at, Hedda?
>
> Hedda: I'm just looking at the leaves on the trees.
> They're so yellow. And so withered.
> (HG, 183)

This sense of deadness informing Hedda's vision makes her dread and fear the new life developing within her. Hedda's attitude to her unborn child rivals, in its implicative significance, her attitude towards her dead father. In her own scale of meanings, her father is the root of familial security and respectable social standing. Her relation to him represented security, most probably because it

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1. Extract from letter to Kristina Steen (14 Jan. 1891), printed in Ibsen: Letters and Speeches, p. 299.

did not entail any "responsibility" on her part. But her own child represents a totally different case. It is the result of loss of roots, and of present familial insecurity. After all, it would never have come into being if Hedda were not forced into this marriage of convenience. The child threatens her very being, for Hedda cannot love or give. She can neither accept responsibility nor tolerate power over herself. The child is resented strongly by her, most probably because it is growing beyond her control thus making demands on her paralyzed emotions. Furthermore, as in the case of Strindberg's Laura, Hedda views the child as the fruit of female submission and male virility. Like Laura, she is seized by a feeling of guilt for having surrendered her "man-hating" (man-hataren) principles, in an act of sexual intimacy.[1] Moreover, the child constitutes an impingement upon her romantic ideals and strong aesthetic sensibility, and marks the destruction of her romantic ideals of manhood. Hedda has always lived with a beautiful dream of spiritual affinity with Løvborg, which has deteriorated in reality to a convenient social arrangement with Tesman in which dreams cannot be afforded and the undesirable reality embodied in the child has to be confronted. Moreover, the child is slowly altering her concept of the beautiful. It will disfigure her - a fact she is too frightened to accept, even on a temporary basis.

Hedda is imprisoned by her need to be free from the demands of love, responsibility, and duty. Her life is conditioned by the

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1. Strindberg accused Ibsen of copying him. Hedda, according to Strindberg, is a bastard of Laura in The Father and Tekla in Creditors; and Løvborg is based on the Swedish playwright. Ibsen had held in 1887 that the area of life with which The Father is concerned runs contrary to his own interests but he did admit to being "gripped" by the "violent force of the author". For Strindberg's comments see Michael Meyer, Ibsen: A Biography, p. 675, and Ibsen: Letters and Speeches, p. 268.

failure or success of her search for means of continually liberating herself from reality with all the emotional and moral bonds it entails.

Stifled within the confines of her self-erected psychological prison, Hedda resents other individuals who seem to indicate a way of freedom which she can never attain. Thea Elvsted is a case in point. She is a painful reminder of the type of woman Hedda admires but can never be. Like Christine in Miss Julie, Thea is the antithesis of the heroine, a woman capable of exercising and enjoying the rights of womanhood, within a normal, healthy pattern of relationships. To Thea, womanhood involves loving, giving, and creativity. The contrast between Hedda's and Thea's characters, and their attitudes towards life is symbolically underlined in Ibsen's detailed description of their physical appearance. Hedda is described as such:

> Her face and her figure are aristocratic and elegant in their proportions. Her complexion is of an even pallor. Her eyes are steel grey, and cold, clear, and dispassionate. Her hair is an attractive medium brown in colour, but not particularly ample. She is dressed in a tasteful, somewhat loose-fitting morning gown. (HG, 179)

Hedda's aristocratic bearing is contrasted with Thea's common one; her dispassionate look and correspondingly dispassionate character with Thea's passionate eyes and correspondingly passionate one; Hedda's thin hair suggestive of sterility, Thea's abundant hair symbolic of fecundity:

> Mrs. Elvsted is a slight woman with soft, attractive features. Her eyes are light blue, large, round, and somewhat protruding, with a scared questioning expression. Her hair is strikingly fair, almost whitish-yellow, and unusually rich and wavy. She is a couple of years younger than Hedda. She wears a dark, going-out dress, tastefully styled but not quite in the latest fashion. (HG, 185)

Thea has exercised a constructive influence on Løvborg. Far from conceiving of power as domination, Thea views it as a stimulus

for creation; hence her ability to merge her own self with Løvborg's in an attempt to produce an intellectual child, and a reformed, regenerated man. Thea has sought complementariness in Løvborg. Her spiritual generosity is mobilized, while Hedda, who denies otherness, is immobilized by her inability to transcend the circumscribing walls of her distorted self.

Hedda envies Thea her power over Løvborg, her openness, and creativity. Yet her envious response precludes by its very nature any positive relatedness to Løvborg. Her devastating envy becomes an estranging experience. Viewing Thea as a threat to her own identity, and to her acquisitive possessive nature, Hedda is obsessed by the thought of eliminating this source of danger by dispossessing Thea of Løvborg and reclaiming him for herself. To free herself she must free Løvborg from Thea's positive influence. The first course she sets out upon is to restore the image of the "prodigal" Løvborg. By a number of hints and suggestive remarks, Hedda goads Løvborg into drinking. She insinuates that Thea has not yet reached a firm conviction of his reformation. When Løvborg announces that he is not going to Brack's party, Hedda subtly plays her game:

> Hedda: . . . . Firm as a rock then. A man who is steadfast in his principles. Well, that's how a man should be! [Turns to Mrs. Elvsted and pats her.] There, wasn't that what I said this morning when you came in here in such a state of desperation . . . .

Hedda's poisonous remark bears fruit:

> Løvborg: [pulled up]. Desperation?
>
> Mrs. Elvsted: [in panic]. Hedda . . . oh but Hedda . . .!

Thea's outburst is justified in view of her horror at Hedda's distortion of the truth. But Hedda is oblivious to Thea's feelings.

Drowned in a Machiavellian desire to reach her aim, she tauntingly resumes her campaign:

> Hedda: Just look at him! There isn't the slightest need for you to go about in mortal terror . . . [She breaks off.] There! Now we can all be lively!

Lövborg's reaction conforms to Hedda's expectations; his strength rooted in a strong sense of reliance on Thea as the source of confidence and moral sustenance begins to decline as he is given to believe that Thea has let him down.

> Lövborg: [Looks at her [Thea] steadily for a moment. His face is tense.] So that was my companion's confident belief in me.
> (HG, 227)

whereupon he starts drinking heavily. It is a moment of gloating glee for Hedda. She has not only undermined the source of Thea's hold over Lövborg, but also driven Dionysus, the god of her youthful dreams, to reclaim his first personal attribute - a goblet. She is progressively proceeding to restore her relation with Lövborg. Her revenge on Thea, the present, and Lövborg restores vestiges of her threatened sense of identity.

But Hedda is not yet certain that her first step towards Lövborg has ensured his liberation, and by implication her own. Therefore, she must embark on another. When fate brings Lövborg's and Thea's child - the manuscript - into her hands she seeks to complete her liberation by aborting another fruit of Lövborg's and Thea's spiritual and intellectual marriage. Her employment of an accidental occurrence to her own advantage is reminiscent of Laura's advantageous use of the doctor's hints about madness, in The Father. Unscrupulously, Hedda burns the manuscript. As in Ghosts, Ibsen employs the image of fire for acts of demolition. In Ghosts, the fire burns falsehood and misplaced ideals. In Hedda Gabler, the fire is used even more

effectively and encompasses a larger scope of meanings. It underlines the fierceness of Hedda's jealousy and the immensity of her burning desire to possess power in order to deny her nothingness. Throwing the manuscript into the fire, Hedda burns Thea's soul, and her future with Lövborg.

> Now I'm burning your child, Thea! With your curly hair. . . . Your child and Ejlert Lövborg's . . . . I'm burning . . . burning your child. (HG, 250)

Like Strindberg's demonic Laura, Hedda emasculates a male by depriving him of a child synonymous with the hope of immortality. Like Laura, Hedda is an example of a castrating female who deprives a male of his procreative gift in order to assert her identity and reconcile the unharmonious irreconcileable drives within her own nature. Ejlert Lövborg shares the fate of Oswald Alving in that the flow of his creativity is blocked by a debilitating factor. Hedda's loss of power over herself and her compelling urge to search for a target for her will creates a state of ennui and frustration. But though Hedda has lost hope in her own ability to bridge the gap between her will and its object, this very form of hopelessness prompts her to search for means external to herself, yet promising to make reasonable and feasible what seems impossible at the moment.

Hedda's sense of self can only be realized through Lövborg, the instrument of her will; with whom she identifies, and through whom she expresses herself. She conceives of Lövborg as a means of filling the void of her impotence on both the psychological and social levels; and as an embodiment of an admirably heroic manhood. Lövborg has been the only ideal with a shining halo surrounding it. He is a contrast to Hedda's drab existence represented by the dark drawing-room with its dark curtains.

Ibsen suggests that by virtue of her upbringing, Hedda has always wanted to relate to her father. The centrality of the father and his domineering influence on Hedda are further suggested by the portrait of General Gabler. Because it is a visual effect, it may be possible for the interpreter to relegate this telling effect to the background. To keep visualizing the setting is to concomitantly keep the thematic concern of Ibsen clearly focused, and to see the actions of the characters and of Hedda particularly in relation to the image, as it were, of the father.

Womanhood to Hedda is an ugly reality; manhood a beautiful ideal. In view of her father's death, Hedda has to find another man to affix herself to. Løvborg is the closest possibility, not only because he can look beautiful on a pedestal with vine leaves in his hair; but also because from a social point of view he is closer to her father and above the common herd of her new life. Løvborg, moreover, belongs to a phase in Hedda's life when she felt secure, when the Gabler identity flowed freely through her veins, and when she did not have to forge her own standards of morality. The affinity between Hedda and Løvborg is even stressed in Ibsen's highly suggestive physical description. Løvborg has Hedda's aristocratic bearing, and pale skin - possibly an indication of nobility:

> He is slim and lean . . . . Hair and beard dark brown, face longish and pale, patches of colour on either cheekbone. He is dressed in an elegant, black, and quite new suit. Dark gloves and a top hat in his hand. (HG, 215)

Løvborg, however, has more "colour", more zest for life and more promising possibilities of adapting to increasing personal and social demands on him.

To Hedda, Løvborg is instrumental. Like Julie who uses Jean as a means of externalizing her subterranean wishes, and proving

her own identity, Hedda uses the "Bohemian" in Løvborg to release the deep romanticism in her thus asserting her own self.[1] Like Jean who had risen above his humble social position by virtue of his sexual supremacy, and aristocracy rooted in manhood, Hedda has lost her aristocratic standing by becoming a common woman surrendering to Tesman's virility, and to society's demands for conformity. But whereas the male in Strindberg's Miss Julie had conceived of the sexual in a female as his means of ascendance and self-assertion, the female in Hedda Gabler conceives of the spiritual in a male as the means to the same end. To Strindberg, the reality of the flesh concretizing a female sexual illusion raises Jean and degrades Julie. To Ibsen, the reality of the spirit concretizing a female spiritual ideal raises Løvborg, degrades Hedda, only to raise her again. Løvborg is Hedda's means of ascendance over herself and her circumstances. With him, she can dictate her own standards of morality. She can bear children - not like Tesman's actual child of conformity, but like Løvborg's illusory child fathered by a beautiful intimacy, and wonderful adventure. That Løvborg cannot restore to her her sense of self through his life is of no consequence. If he can operate through death, Løvborg will have served her purpose. To start with, she will make Løvborg live, or if need be die, according to Hedda Gabler's standards. But, to serve her purpose, Løvborg must be master of himself, for how can a slave free another slave? How can Løvborg, a slave of another woman, free Hedda the slave of fear, cowardice, ugly surroundings, and split self? To restore her sense of self through Løvborg, Hedda must re-live a past that had been impregnated with a sense of belonging. To re-live the past,

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1. See Ibsen's notes, The Oxford Ibsen, VII, p. 482, to the effect that Hedda is drawn to Løvborg's Bohemianism but will not take the plunge.

she must recreate some of its pleasurable moments. Her perception of these lies in a feeling of intimacy and companionship shared with Løvborg. Significantly, Ibsen recreates the same background against which this earlier intimacy had developed. The magazine is replaced by an album, General Gabler by Tesman, as Hedda recollects nostalgically conditions of the past:

> When I think back to that time, wasn't there something beautiful, something attractive . . . something courageous too, it seems to me . . . about this . . . this secret intimacy, this companionship that no one even dreamed of.
> (Italics mine, HG, 222)

The first two adjectives qualifying the intimacy are of an aesthetic nature; while the third is of an ethical one. When the intimacy - beautiful, attractive, and courageous as it was - threatened to invade Hedda's privacy, Hedda was terrified because she could not trust her passions, nor could she guarantee the result of releasing her imprisoned fears and passions. Yet she failed, at the time, to shoot Løvborg because she was in his words a "coward" (HG, 223). Therefore, the restoration of these qualities descriptive of the intimacy is synonymous with restoring her past, her self, and of Løvborg as a viable expression of both, and of her weakness, and need for another individual.

But Hedda's attempts at restoring the intimacy can also be seen as an attack launched against Thea, and aimed at dispossessing Thea of the very cherished qualities that were so secret and private to her own self, and that had been now transferred by Løvborg to a description of his relation with Thea. Her dispossession of Thea would constitute another victory for Hedda, and a further consolidation of her power and identity. Among the qualities attributed to Thea, Hedda resents "courage" most because Thea surpasses Hedda, in

that respect. With courage "life might be liveable" (HG, 225), believes Hedda. So now aesthetic values are diminished in importance. It is courage that she compellingly needs. Therefore, she must redeem her cowardice through the very same situation where her courage failed her. Ibsen employs the Gabler pistols again to continue the rhythm of action, to which the pistols are integral. Hedda's presentation of the pistol to Løvborg brings her recreation of the past and redemption of the present to a climactic point.

At one point in the action, Løvborg states that one of the mutual interests he shares with Hedda is a "lust for life" (HG, 223) which is a translation of the Norwegian 'livsbegjaeret'. The Norwegian word covers a semantic field of meanings connoting desire and lust. In view of Løvborg's and Hedda's mutual attraction to each other, the sense of "lust" could raise a sexual image. It could also imply desire in the general sense of the word. Despite the fact that Hedda and Løvborg share this "lust for life", it carries different implications and meanings for each. To Løvborg, it means creativity and covers almost the same grounds as Oswald Alving's 'livsglede'. It would appear that Hedda's view of "lust for life" approximates to Strindberg's notion of 'livsglädjen' explained in the preface to Miss Julie: it lies in life's cruel struggles for power and domination. To assert her identity, Hedda plays her "lust for life" against Løvborg's. By indirectly killing the artist and man in Løvborg, she abortively turns his "lust for life" into one like her own - a form of sterility not creativity. Thus, she can achieve a wider identification with him, and consequently take a further step towards the restoration of her own self; for Hedda lives through others and through her power over them.

In her hero-worship of Løvborg and in her fantasies about his

liberation from Thea, and from his self, Hedda has always visualized him as a Dionysus with vine leaves in his hair:

> I can just see him. With vine leaves in his hair. . . . then he'll be master of himself again. He'll be a free man for the rest of his life. (HG, 230)

Before transforming Hedda's vicarious adventure into a reality Løvborg reminds Hedda of her earlier fancy:

> Hedda: . . . Ejlert Løvborg . . . listen to me. . . . Couldn't you let it happen . . . beautifully?
>
> Løvborg: Beautifully? . . . Crowned with vine leaves as you used to imagine?
>
> Hedda: Oh no. I don't believe in those vine leaves any more. But beautifully all the same! Just for this once! . . . Goodbye. You must go now. And never come here again. (HG, 249-250)

Hedda's surrendering of the image of paganism and beauty indicates her increasing awareness of the concrete content, as contrasted with her past obsession with abstract forms. What matters now is performing a deed beautifully, not the beautiful performance of the deed. That is to assert that Hedda's code of values now includes dynamic action with ethical implications - not only stasis with aesthetic significance. Hedda is gradually developing from the stage of passive romanticizing over the Dionysiac in Løvborg to the stage of realizing the potentials in him that can liberate her, satiate her need for power, and her desire to exist meaningfully.

So far, the development of Hedda's vision remains verbal and is yet to stand the test of practice, which takes place in the form of her suicide.

Hedda's suicide is neither simply the end of a life nor an escape from life. It constitutes a meeting of life for a fleeting second, on her own terms, and in accordance with her own values. That the

dictates of her values may entail an act of self-annihilation is of no consequence to her. The full implications of Hedda's death can only be fully grasped in the light of her reaction to Løvborg's death. When Brack breaks the news of Løvborg's final Bohemian riot in the boudoir of Diana, who is all that Hedda would like to be if she did not fear scandal, Hedda is elated. She experiences the cathartic effect of a play she had written, directed, and acted. She has deprived Thea of her hold on Løvborg; restored the qualities of her own earlier intimacy with him, and regained her power over him and over herself as an identification with his self. To her, the act is courageous and beautiful.

> Hedda: [triumphantly]. At last . . . a really courageous act! (HG, 260)

Løvborg's act is not the only cause of Hedda's triumph. His triumph is synonymous with her own triumph over him and over herself. The courage inherent in Ejlert Løvborg's death marks her victory over her earlier act of cowardice represented by her inability to shoot him. Courage is one of the qualities Thea possessed. Earlier in the action, Hedda had voiced the thought that with courage life is liveable. To that end, she exercises a vicarious sense of courage by making others perform courageous acts which would make her feel elated. The Norwegian phrase (endelig en dad) translated as "At last . . . a really courageous act" (HG, 260) incorporates the word "dad" which has, historically speaking, heroic overtones. The hero of her youthful romantic dreams has become a reality, performing a heroic act not necessarily with vine leaves in his hair. There is beauty in his act, which according to Hedda lies in the fact that he "has settled accounts with himself. He had the courage to do . . . what had to be done" (HG, 260). Both the Norwegian original text (Løvborg gjort opp regningen), and the accurate English rendering

of it suggest the fact that Løvborg had had a debt to pay, or an obligation to fulfil. To Hedda, the debt was owed now not so much to the aesthete in her, but rather to the code of conduct her own system of ethics dictated. It is a heroic code involving the possibility of living courageously and dying courageously. On another level of meaning, the accounts Løvborg has to settle lie in the price he has to pay for his practical, realistic, intellectual intimacy with Thea that excludes a former vicarious romantic fancy, which kills Hedda's soul.[1] However, the interpreter can, in view of Hedda's evident identification with Løvborg as an expression of her needs, regard Hedda's statement as a reference to her own settling of her accounts with herself - that is to say, her overcoming an act of cowardice by carrying out the threat she had made earlier to kill Løvborg, with a Gabler pistol. This is substantiated by her view of Løvborg's death as a "release" that has purged her of her own fear of facing life. The spontaneity of his act, or of her act as projected in him, defies her earlier rigid, static response to life; the beauty of Løvborg's death raises her own life above the mundane everyday ugliness of her life stressed in Ibsen's description of a typical, middle-class parlour:

> It's a liberation to know that an act of spontaneous courage is yet possible in this world. An act that has something of unconditional beauty. (HG, 262)

Therefore, Hedda conceives of Løvborg's death as her victory. Both Løvborg and Hedda are now masters of their selves. When her mastery over her self is threatened, Hedda is faced with the necessity of moving from the stage of a vicarious derivation of mastery over

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1. The question of "settling accounts" with the self will be broached again in When We Dead Awaken. Irene equates it with Rubek's need to repent for the actual sin of killing her soul and neglecting her humanity. See When We Dead Awaken, Act II, p. 281 in The Oxford Ibsen, Vol. VIII.

her self to a realistic stance towards it. When Judge Brack explains the impending scandal that her name may be soiled by, Hedda rebels. She is threatened to be deprived of the newly-acquired sense of freedom and release afforded by Løvborg's death. Furthermore, by being relegated to the status of a slave through Brack's power over her, Hedda will no longer be able to maintain an identification with the free Løvborg. The identity she has been striving to build through mastery over others would have to disintegrate in that case. To be controlled, in such a way, means to be powerless, lifeless, impotent, and empty. Hedda, like Julie in a sense, dies for her name, her honour, and identity. Unlike Ellida, in The Lady from the Sea, Hedda is not granted the chance to choose the mode of her own life "in absolute freedom".[1] To prove her mastery, Hedda will have to balance accounts with herself, as Løvborg has done. At this stage, one way of Hedda's identity expressing itself is through freedom. Freedom involves breaking away from the shackles of vital spiritual impotence. But given her character, Hedda will never be absolutely free because she will always need victims to act as extensions of herself. Thus freedom can only be sought where craving for power, and "lust for life", by her standards, cannot be exercised - that is in the dominion of death, a land free of victims. Like Ejlert, she will have the courage to "live life after [her] own fashion" and she will have "the courage to take [her] leave of life - so early" (HG, 262). But there is one point on which she will surpass Løvborg, and that is the target of her bullet. To her horror and repugnance, Hedda learns that Løvborg having failed to live up to her condition of committing suicide through a bullet in the temple, has shot himself in the abdomen. Her reaction is expressed as follows:

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1. See The Lady from The Sea, Act V, Vol. VII, p. 121.

> Hedda: [looks up with an expression of revulsion]. That as well! Oh. . . . Everything I touch seems destined to turn into something mean and farcical. (HG, 262)

And indeed, this discrepancy is suggested by the very name - Løvborg - which means "leafy castle" in Norwegian. In the Norwegian text, the target of the bullet is the 'underlivet', the dictionary denotation of which is "abdomen". However, Hedda's repugnance and horror can be explained not only on the grounds that Løvborg has failed to conform to one of her instructions, but also that the 'underlivet' refers to the lower half of him including his sexual organs; the reference constitutes a very revolting picture to Hedda who denies sensuality. That 'underlivet' should connote sexual organs is symbolically substantiated; it is furthermore highly meaningful. Prior to his death, Løvborg had been castrated, deprived of his ability to procreate. Unlike Løvborg, Hedda decides to shoot herself not in the seat of the sensual, but the seat of her calculating intellect. Shooting herself in the temple as opposed to Løvborg's shooting himself in the lower part is an act of achieving complementariness and wholeness with Løvborg. The image is furthermore, a reiteration of the image of ascent and descent, through sex, presented in the mutual relation of Jean and Julie, in Strindberg's Miss Julie. Hedda settles her accounts with a mind that has offered her nothing but a warped vision of human relationships. Hedda's final attempt to assert her identity and private values is symbolically underlined by her withdrawal into an inner room, and by drawing the curtains to ensure her privacy. But though Hedda's death reconciles her to her sense of self, it certainly does not have the desired impact on others.[1] Brack's

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1. Some critics have misguidedly underestimated the significance of Hedda's suicide. They fail to see in it any redeeming virtues, or any attempt to conquer herself. For examples see: Herbert Blau, "The Irony of Decadence", Educational Theatre Journal, Vol. 5, pp. 112-116, and James Hurt, Catiline's Dream: An Essay on Ibsen's Plays (Illinois, 1972).

final utterance is illustrative of a standard reaction:

> But, good God Almighty . . . people don't do such things! (HG, 268)

Hedda has challenged social norms and provincial ideas, and asserted her individuality, so much so that a typically middle-class citizen like Brack refuses to acknowledge her attempts at transcendence. Brack's curtain line becomes increasingly significant because it reiterates Hedda's own words. It represents the very smugness, conventionality, and restrictive attitudes that deeply enhanced Lövborg's meaning in Hedda's drab life, and transformed him into an expression of her ever-growing desire for freedom.

It is vitally important for the interpreter to understand the ways in which Lövborg and Hedda's relation, on an individual level, becomes Ibsen's means of commenting on the general social context of which they constitute a part. Whether deliberately or not, Ibsen does not use terms that could imply class distinctions. But the interpreter can, with justification, distil meaningful implications from Ibsen's subtle working of the relation of the woman and the artist and from the general background of the play.

Lövborg acts as Hedda's means of acquiring an identity, and as a threat to it at the same time. He releases her from her mundane surroundings and from the intimidating effects of a bourgeois marital relation thus the act of liberation, according to Hedda, is one of unconditional beauty and spontaneous courage. But the very need she has for an artist to perform a deed beautifully and courageously is ingrained in the confining effects of Hedda's belonging to the bourgeoisie. Thus the need for release becomes a comment on the restricting effects of confinement. While Lövborg fulfils that need for Hedda, he envisages a future for civilization and a result of cultural development which on the general level seems to imply

that the future course of civilization excludes Hedda-like figures and as such the figures that needed a release are in themselves a cramping confining effect on the cultural development. The artist in Løvborg is exploited by the woman and the Gabler in Hedda in so far as he serves her purposes. Løvborg becomes the medium for Hedda's dreams and flights from reality. Her view of him becomes Ibsen's means of indicating not only her deficient approach towards that reality but also the very bases which drive the artist in Løvborg to prostitute his art in order to satisfy the social consciousness, and then to use that art as a medium for the discussion of the social forces involved and the future course of civilization.

There are no explicit statements within the text of the play as to the specific nature of the threat posed by the manuscript on Hedda's class and on Hedda as a member of it. There are indications as to the fact that it runs contrary to the interests of a decadent class: Thea is a means of producing the book, Hedda an agent in rejecting it.

Thea remains an important agent in producing the book in the sense that she outlasts the artist and is needed to collaborate with another. The interpreter may justifiably question the degree to which Thea can be considered as a typical product of a working class or a bourgeois one, the reason being that Ibsen seems to imply that she is socially mobile in so far as she was the governess then became the mistress of the house. Hedda seems to be bent on seeing her in terms of her recent status as the wife of a man with a position, in charge of "the whole administration" of the district. While Thea remembers that Hedda was in the class above her at school and addresses her with the formal De: "men De gatt en klasse over meg" and sees the possibility of what Hedda describes as filling the gap

by using Christian names as almost impossible, Hedda thinks that Thea is foolish not to exploit the position of her husband and to remain cheap to keep. She would have Thea saddle her husband with expenses the way she, Hedda, would saddle Tesman with demands for a "bay mare" and a "liveried footman". Although the basis of Hedda's marriage is like that of Mrs. Alving or Nora - economic dependence on a man - her reasons for it are more pronouncedly a way of sustaining the illusion of the grand lady, the Gabler who must play hostess to a select circle. Ownership takes precedence in Hedda's notions of what constitutes a lady. She thus relegates the relation between the subject and the object to one of deadness not aliveness, possession not mutual existence, interdependence, or interaction. The importance of the pistol is first introduced verbally as a threat by Hedda to Tesman when at the end of the first Act she realizes that the promised appointment of Tesman on the strength of which they got married was a false expectation and a shaky foundation. The uncertainty of the social and economic foundations of her marriage is contrasted with the certainty of a tangible object from her past and from the past of a society stabilized by the attitudes of members who fear change and to whose tastes, consequently, Løvborg's subject would not cater. Georges Brandes points out that the history of Norway since the beginning of the nineteenth century was peaceful and devoid of importance. He further explains that a Norwegian general is a cavalry officer whose pistols are entirely innocent of bloodshed.[1] The fact remains, however, that Hedda is presented as obsessed by the fear of change that would run counter to a society of father-figures.

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1. See Henrik Ibsen, Bjornstjeine: Critical Studies. Brandes's book comprises three impressions. The date of the third impression including a study of Hedda Gabler is 1888 - the date acts as a terminus ad quem for the historical facts stated by Brandes.

Hedda's burning of the manuscript does not only constitute a destructive act aimed towards Thea, Løvborg, and their productive union that excludes her. It is also extended with further symbolic dimensions pertaining to Hedda in relation to her child, to Løvborg, and to the social and historical implications of Løvborg's manuscript.

As far as her relation to the intellectual child is concerned, Hedda's act can be viewed, by the interpreter, as the expression of a desire to burn her own child. The chance of a vicarious experience of infanticide is afforded to her, and in view of her extreme cowardice and fear of social ostracization, she has to be content with its temporary substitution for a real desire.

Ibsen seems to suggest that by the very nature of its contents, the manuscript constitutes a threat to Hedda's identity. The book is about the future, which means that it transcends a present inimical to Hedda, a present she cannot hold or grasp. Ibsen's relation of time to an evolutionary form of ethics is explicit here. How can Hedda accept the future, if she cannot stand firmly in the present and meet its demands? She is terrified because, given her state of cowardice and impotence, the future can only offer her the threatening state of spiritual drifting. To her, the future is "yellow" and "withered", like the autumn leaves. It holds within it an imminent disaster: the birth of a child and subsequently a new source of commitment. From a social and historical point of view, the manuscript represents a threat to the Gabler blood in her veins, to a form of belonging that existed in the past. The manuscript is a proof of the ineffectuality of decadent bourgeois morality into which Hedda is culturally and socially grafted. Therefore, her social and familial backgrounds are jeopardized. In short, Hedda's reaction to Løvborg's information about the manuscript is an amalgam

of resentment and rejection directed towards, and caused by, a variety of factors:

> Lövborg: But when this comes out . . . Jörgen Tesman . . . then you're to read it. Because this is the real thing. I put some of myself into this one.
>
> Tesman: Really? And what's that about?
>
> Lövborg: It's the continuation.
>
> Tesman: The continuation? Of what?
>
> Lövborg: Of the book.
>
> Tesman: The new one?
>
> Lövborg: Of course.
>
> Tesman: Yes but, my dear Ejlert . . . it carries on right to the present day!
>
> Lövborg: That is so. And this one deals with the future.
>
> Tesman: With the future! But ye gods, we don't know anything about that!
>
> Lövborg: No. But there are one or two things to be said about it, all the same. . . . Here, look at this . . . .
>
> Tesman: But that isn't your writing.
>
> Lövborg: I dictated it. . . . It's in two sections. The first is about the social forces involved, and this other bit . . . that's about the future course of civilization.
>
> Tesman: Amazing! It just wouldn't enter my head to write about anything like that.
>
> Hedda: [at the glass door, drumming her fingers on the pane.] Hm . . . . No - no. (HG, 216)

Hedda's frenzied "no" is directed towards the continuity of Lövborg's need for Thea's intellectual help, the continuity of time passing beyond her control, her fiercely uncontrollable fierce passions, and the growing life within her and without her throwing her helplessness and powerlessness into sharp relief. She militantly rejects the self-annihilating process and self-eroding forces, which

must be fought if she is to salvage any form of identity. Hedda further rejects the notion of continuity into the future, because the future precipitates her anxiety by painfully heightening her inability to transcend the present and reach out for the unattainable, symbolized by the future, as contrasted to Thea's and Løvborg's ability to do so. Significantly, Hedda's negative response to the implications of Løvborg's book, on the personal and social level, is uttered while she is standing by a glass door. In his stage directions to Act II, Ibsen states that the door is open (HG, 203). Ibsen gives guidance to further insight into the content of the manuscript by explaining in a note that the manuscript "is concerned to show that the task of humanity is: Upwards, towards the bringer of light".[1] In a sense, the manuscript with its stress on the future makes Hedda Gabler a visionary play in that it looks forward to The Master Builder. In his later play, Ibsen will maintain the image of ascent towards the impossible and unattainable, but will stress the question of the individual's will in relation to the unattainable.

There is an indication within the text of Hedda Gabler that Hedda's fears concerning the content of Løvborg's manuscript would seem to be groundless for although Ibsen points out that it is a "bringer of light" and stresses the reactions of two female characters as means of accepting change or rejecting it, the very light is mitigated with darkness and destruction not only of course in the instance of Hedda's burning of what she regards as Thea and Løvborg's child but also on the level of the general social implications of the manuscript. The aborted effects of Løvborg's manuscript are built into the very statement of the intended lectures on the subject of the manuscript. The future book seems to be advertised at the

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1. Quoted in The Oxford Ibsen, Vol. VII, p. 490.

bookseller's almost jeopardizing Lövborg's intentions of cancelling the need for profit sought by his production of his first book, by regarding this as the "real thing" and "putting some of myself into this one". Tesman informs Lövborg that

> I heard at the bookseller's that you're giving a series of lectures here this autumn."
> (HG, 218)

"This new subject . . . this business about the future" is to be introduced in the autumn which is "yellow" and "withered". When Brack invites Lövborg to join "a small and select gathering" and offers him the possibility of reading to Tesman "over at my place", he points out that there are "plenty of rooms" almost to imply that the two academics need to be isolated from the "select" gathering. At that moment, Hedda "intervenes". While her intervention can be seen as that of a possessive woman seeing a chance of being alone with a past time member of her own circle of friends, the Gabler in her invites the interpreter to see her intervention as reminiscent of one made by her father - if not in the way of a man, then in the way of the light of which the artist in Lövborg comes to represent. Relatively speaking, her position becomes analogous to that of General Gabler. At one point, when Hedda is left entertaining Lövborg they reminisce over their past. They both sit down with an album, viewing photographs of a trip through the Tyrol, thus recreating that past when Lövborg used to come up to her father's in the afternoon and when the General used to sit by the window reading the papers . . . his back towards us . . .". The General may have been facing the window of course which in terms of Ibsen's meticulous detailed descriptions is not to be easily overlooked, but his facing of the light is annulled by his holding of the newspaper and by his prevention, presumably, of a fuller light from penetrating

into the room. Thus, General Gabler's position in relation to the window, and to Hedda and Løvborg is considerably more important than his position in relation to the window as an end in itself. There are no clear indicators as to the content of the newspaper. However, the obscurity that pervades many objects and motives in Hedda Gabler and that has consequently called for an act of interpretation that would have to make assumptions, justifies the tentative conclusion that the newspaper is not altogether different from that for which Krogstad wrote or the one which Oswald crumples. It caters for old generals, the audience being pervaded by the ghosts that Mrs. Alving came to see in her self, and her society, and that she visualized in the lines of a newspaper. Thus there is no need to feel that the power of the media or rather perhaps its lack of power is in the decadence that the General comes to represent. Ibsen places the decadence and the light in close proximity not because he would have the interpreter see the light as cancelling the dark but rather to present the contradictions secreted in that very society, in which an onward or upward movement cannot be instigated without a backward one. In that society, a daughter may finally draw the curtains and decide her fate on an individual basis by the help of her father's pistols. She cannot, however, by her death or the death of the artist whom she has used cancel the interpreter's need to see the funeral of a Løvborg or a Gabler as a continuation of the life of the very tensions inherent within that society and within the individual's interactions with it. The tensions are embodied in the message of the art through which this social reality is mediated. Tesman and Thea will attempt to restore the effect of a commitment Løvborg could not make by living on. The future of Løvborg's book contains both a threat and a promise stemming from the past and

continuing into the future. The threat and the promise are of the very essence of an artist's interaction with a woman and of an artistic venture which Solness the master builder will undertake.

In The Master Builder (Bygmester Solness)[1] Ibsen develops the implications of the contradictory relation between the woman and the artist. In A Doll's House the miracle of miracles was related to change and social progress as effected by a woman. The "miracle of miracles" stems, however, from the very mundane realities of a society that - by chaining individuals to it - provides the incentive for breaking away. In Ghosts and Hedda Gabler, the contradictions that the woman and the artist embody within their selves, their interrelation and their interaction with society are symptomatic of a more general social question. In The Master Builder, Ibsen extends the individual and the social with reference to the metaphysical dimensions of Solness's experience. These interact with the experience of Solness as a man and as an artist catering for certain needs. To transcend his limitations as man, Halvard Solness decides to use his art in order to prove to God that he rivals Him in creativity and potential and thus will be a master builder in his own realm. Solness conceives of himself as a God who wills, desires, and rules. The premise on which this idealized self functions is that nothing is, or should be, impossible to the

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1. References are to the text of The Master Builder as translated by James Walter McFarlane and printed in The Oxford Ibsen, Vol. VII (1966), and to the Norwegian text as printed in Henrik Ibsen: Nutisdramaer, 1877-1899 (Oslo, 1973). All subsequent page references to the English text will be incorporated within the text of the thesis, after the abbreviated title.

self. But eventually Solness will labour under the heavy implicative burden of this self-image.

The plot of The Master Builder is basically simple and direct. Halvard Solness is an architect whose star has been in the ascendancy ever since he built the church tower in Lysanger. His wife's old home had burnt down leaving him a plot of land on which to build houses. Solness's prosperous and enviable public life was quite the opposite of his private one. The fire that had made him an architect had in reality deprived him of his twin sons, and alienated his wife Aline from herself and her husband. Thus public prosperity conceals private sterility. When Solness had completed the church tower ten years previously in Lysanger, he had met Hilde Wangel - a young girl in her early teens. After the inauguration of the tower, Hilde was so enthusiastic about Solness's act of climbing the tower and hanging a wreath that the triumphant architect's reply to her was a kiss, and a promise to make her his princess in the Kingdom of Orangia, ten years later. The action of the play starts when the ten years are up. Like Pastor Manders, Engstrand, Thea Elvsted, Ejlert Løvborg, and the Stranger in The Lady from the Sea, Hilde Wangel walks in to stir the placid waters of the present by bringing in strong currents from the past. Solness's promise to her must be fulfilled. She must reign over her promised kingdom. Strongly encouraged by her, Solness climbs the tower built in his own home, and from those giddy heights, falls to the valley of death. But Hilde is a princess in her kingdom at last. This deceptively unrealistic stream of events has invariably led to adverse reactions to the play at the time of its production.[1]

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1. For samples of such reactions, see Appendix III in The Oxford Ibsen, Vol. VII.

Understanding the problems of identity experienced by the woman and artist in The Master Builder would necessitate an act of interpretation in which the precision of the text, its painstaking design, and compactness, are taken into account. The highly suggestive associations of words, lines, colours, and images testify to Ibsen's masterful building and his complete control over this artistic mode of expression. The ingenuity of the play lies in the substratum of meaning that Ibsen manages to conceal beneath the terse, and tight surface of The Master Builder.[1]

As a man, and artist, Solness rebels against God, and achieves what in his view is the impossible by defying God, the Father, and deciding to be a God in his own realm. Solness, the artist, is guilty of killing life in a human being, that is depriving Aline of joy. If God has managed to deprive him of his human posterity then he will use his artistic potential to deny God the right of being Father. Solness is, however, fully aware of the price he has to pay for his pursuit of freedom:

> To be able to build homes for other people, I have had to renounce . . . for ever renounce any hope of having a home of my own. I mean a home with children. Or even with a father and mother. (MB, 405)

Solness's words gain deeper significance in view of the fact that his decision "to build homes for other people" is a direct consequence of his renunciation of God - an act that has rendered him a homeless exile in the literal and metaphorical sense - in a world whose "father" he had rejected.

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1. Maurice Valency, in The Flower and the Castle, allies Ibsen with the symbolist movement of Baudelaire, Mallarme and Maeterlinck and holds that Ibsen's modulation of the narrative in The Master Builder foreshadows expressionism. Brian Downs in A Study of Six Plays by Henrik Ibsen, sees in The Master Builder a "vulgarisation of the 'anti-realist', symbolistic movement".

Solness's relation to God is symbolically underlined by the introduction of Brovik, the old master of Master Builder Solness; and Ragnar, Brovik's son and Solness's young competitor. Brovik's relation to Solness the artist is analogous to God's relation to Solness the man. Brovik is, in reality, Solness's creator, for through his teaching, Solness has developed his own skills. Now master of his art, Solness no longer needs Brovik whose dying wish to see Ragnar a free and independent architect is denied through Solness's pride, limitless ambition, and fear of competition. Solness will use his will to deprive others of their unfolding creativity and future possibilities:

> I'm never going to back down! I'll never give way to anybody! Never of my own free will. Never in this world will I do that!
> (MB, 363)

This implied form of revenge against the father-figure, expressed in a forceful determination to assert his free will (frivilling), prompts Ragnar to describe Solness as:

> The man who held me down year after year! The man who undermined my father's faith in me. Who made me lose faith in myself. . . .
> (MB, 433)

Solness must hold his creator's son "down" if he is to guarantee the chance of climbing "up" and being superior. Ibsen employs prepositions and adverbs of place, accurately rendered in the English text, to stress the idea of climbing and falling, sin and retribution.

Holding God "down" after climbing up to considerable heights of the tower of pride, Solness attains what, in his view, is the "impossible" - a word ironically descriptive of the giddy heights of the "impossible" freedom he seemed to have reached. The "impossible" is reminiscent of the limitless ideals that are such vital ideas in Ibsen's plays. In Pillars of Society and An Enemy

of the People, the ideals are products of man's dissatisfaction with life, in social terms. In Hedda Gabler and The Lady from the Sea, ideals are the expression of a need for transcending the self to a plane where life is chosen on the heroine's own terms, in a spirit of freedom. Thus ideals become the vicarious substitute for and eventual road to freedom and self-realization. In The Master Builder, attaining the impossible is an urgent need stemming from man's realization that he cannot accept the position of being a by-product of social systems, or warped psychological complexes. He will transcend imposed social restrictions, and inherent psychological ones, and identify with characteristics of God. Thus by becoming "whole", he will rise above his fragmented parts. But such a transcendence will inevitably involve guilt. Solness's attainment of the "impossible" necessitates a threat to God. The very competition Solness is so frightened of on earth, will now take place with God:

> Solness: Then - just as He had - I did the impossible.
>
> Hilde: The impossible?
>
> Solness: Never before had I been able to stand heights. But that day I could.
>
> Hilde: [leaps up] Yes, yes, you could! (MB, 439)

Never before has Solness, who comes from a pious family, stood so high on a tower of rebellion, pride, and blasphemy. He has never been able, so far, to make such a wide leap and cross the border between belief and disbelief. Significantly, Hilde "leaps up" while listening - a movement synchronizing with the thematic issue of the ascent of a disbeliever, and his threat to God articulated powerfully:

> And as I stood there on high, at the very top,
> and as I hung the wreath on the weathercock,
> I spoke to Him: Listen to me, Almighty One!
> From this day forward, I too will be free.
> A master builder free in his own field, as you
> are in yours. Never again will I build churches
> for you. Only homes for the people. (MB, 439)

Like Hedda, Solness refuses to be in anyone's power. Like Ellida, who only agrees to make a choice in a full spirit of freedom, Solness must be free. But because the freedom he seeks is more daring, the threat to it is more challenging and frightening.

Thus Solness, the first syllable[1] of whose name means sun, does the impossible (umulige) by liberating himself from the limitations of man, and achieving an identification with God in Lysanger. Lys significantly means light. The attainment of the impossible becomes synonymous with the creation of his own kingdom of light and sun, and with ruling over it in the image of God. The sun Oswald had so ardently longed for is now an integrated part of man's new identity born of an identification with God.

As a mode of artistic expression of Ibsen's ideas, The Master Builder marks a departure from the realistic plane of earlier plays, and a movement towards more abstract, suggestive and symbolic terrains of expression. The curve upwards can be detected to a certain extent in The Lady from the Sea. However, the saliently Ibsenite dramatic feature manifested invariably in all Ibsen's works, lies in the way The Master Builder stresses the evolutionary nature of time and its relation to identity problems. It gradually unveils the interplay between past and present, and examines the possibilities of the individual's use of the past and present to redeem himself in a given moment of time, the implications of which will stretch into the future. This dynamic vision of time is thematically underlined by a movement of the internal action between two axes: a threat and a promise. These axes run parallel to the past and present in that they interact, overlap, coalesce in their ardent search for redemption

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1. In a letter to Jacob Hegel (26 February, 1893) printed in The Oxford Ibsen, Vol. VII, p. 534, Ibsen explains that the first syllable in Solness receives primary stress.

in a given moment that lies in the future. The play proceeds from the fear of retribution ensuing a threat made in the past, to a hope of redemption ensuing the present fulfilment of a promise made in the past. The fulfilment of the promise, however, threatens the position derived from the earlier threat thus promising a new threat to Solness. Thus Solness's threat to God threatens his promise to the self to be God; yet this promise threatens his promise to the self to be man so the threat is a promise, and the promise is a threat, but will their tension be resolved?

The tension in question is, paradoxically enough, the cause and effect of Hilde's meaningful appearance and re-appearance in Solness's life. She serves to underline, exteriorize, and interiorize the threat-promise nexus with its past-present associations, ethical and aesthetic implications, realistic and symbolic nature. Hence the ambiguity inherent in Ibsen's creation of Hilde becomes explicable in terms of the double role she is deliberately designed to play, both as an integral part of Solness's experience in the past and as an independent character. She hovers on the edge of Solness's consciousness for the ten years following his promise to her. But when this promise threatens to become a threat to his earlier threat to God synchronizing with his promise to her, it becomes increasingly difficult, for the interpreter, to draw the boundaries between Hilde the external reminder of a promise and Hilde the internal threatening invader of Solness's consciousness. The versatility of her role further increases, in view of the fact that she is related very strongly to the abstract idea of the "impossible". Carrying out the implications of his threat to God, Solness has to do the impossible. Fulfilling the demands of his promise to Hilde also involves the impossible. Yet through Hilde, the shades of meaning given to the

"impossible" and coloured by her vital relation to the threat and the promise, Ibsen reveals the potential inherent within man to retrieve irretrievable past moments by remoulding his image within them. The time framework of ten years brings back Hilde, a threat and a promise, and a realization on Solness's part that a God-like image is an illusion that cannot be sustained. Paradoxically enough, Hilde makes him perceive that the reality of his God-head is an illusion, and that illusions are the only realities. Thus Hilde Wangel plays a significant role in the objective reality of Solness's world, and its subjective reality. Yet, her role is confused even by Solness, especially when he fails to identify the dimensions of the world in which he functions: the subjective reality of his past threat surrounded by an unpromising present; or the objective reality of his present threatened by a threatening promise. This confusion is hinted at in a manner reminiscent of the initial functional differentiation made between God's rain and the devil's in the opening lines of Ghosts. Hilde remonstrates with Solness for neglecting his promise:

> Hilde: . . . . And the ten years are up. And you didn't come . . . as you promised me you would.
>
> Solness: Promised you? Threatened you, you mean probably?
>
> Hilde: I didn't think of it as a threat. (MB, 385-386)

No word by Ibsen can be taken at face value - especially when textual analysis gradually extends the dimensions of suggestive hints. The ambivalence of Solness's view of the threat and promise is linked with a similar equivocal stance towards "youth" embodied in Hilde:

> Hilde: What do you want of me?
>
> Solness: You are youth, Hilde.
>
> Hilde: [smiling] That youth you are so afraid of?

Solness: [nods slowly] And to which in my heart
I am drawn so sorely. (MB, 415)

Thus youth, the "impossible", the threat and the promise, interact through Hilde and Solness within a distinctly drawn framework of past and present, on the one hand, and reality and illusions, on the other.[1]

Ibsen does not underline the intricate relation of the threat and promise and its vitality in the overall thematic pattern of the play by words only. He resorts to careful timing of the intrusion of the young past on the old present, and that of the old present on the young one. In other words, he carefully manipulates the entrances of both Hilde and Solness on the stage. The young Hilde walks in on two older people discussing fear of youth. The middle-aged Solness walks in on the young Kaja desperately trying to draw Solness's attention to the attraction of youth. Thus, Ibsen makes a further successful attempt at enhancing the unity of the play and asserting his "masterful" control. By representing the equivocal nature of the past connected with youth, Ibsen is, of course, reiterating an idea he had articulated earlier in The Lady from the Sea; namely, the strange power of the unknown symbolised by the sea. Ellida finds the experience "awesome". She explains that "to be awesome . . . is to terrify and attract"[2] - which would be a fit description of Hilde's effect on Solness. Hilde is furthermore reminiscent of the Stranger - a voice from the past - arriving

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1. A psychological interpretation of the play has been made by Viva Schatia: "The Master Builder: A Case of Involutional Psychosis", Psychoanalytic Review, 27 (1940), pp. 311-318. The premise of Schatia's argument is that Solness developed a psychosis in the face of physical involution implying insecurity. Martin Esslin in "Ibsen and Modern Drama", Ibsen and the Theatre (edited by Erol Durbach) argues that Solness has "transmitted his own false self image to Hilde and that like Beckett's Krapp later he is faced with his false romantic self.

2. The Lady from the Sea, The Oxford Ibsen, Vol. VII, p. 101.

in the present, and offering liberating redemptive possibilities for Solness.

The fear of the alienating effects of youth, its inevitable encroachment upon the present, and the upheaval it is bound to cause to Solness's maintenance of the impossible is the subject debated at the moment of the arrival of a familiar young stranger from the past:

> Solness: The turn is coming. I can sense it. I feel it getting nearer. Somebody or other is going to demand: Make way for me! And then all the others will come storming up, threatening and shouting: Get out of the way! Get out of the way! Yes, just you watch, Doctor! One of these days, youth is going to come here beating on the door . . . .
>
> Herdal: [laughs] Well, good Lord, what of it?
>
> Solness: What of it? Just that that will mean the end of Master Builder Solness. [There is a knock on the door, left. He starts.] What's that! Did you hear something?
>
> Herdal: Somebody's knocking.
>
> Solness: [loudly] Come in! (MB, 375)

The famous knock in Macbeth is sounded again, as youth (ungdommen) walks in, in a manner bringing to mind Pinter's uninvited menacing guests threatening a status quo both in the objective reality of external surroundings, and the subjective reality of the character's consciousness. The relation whether past or present, of Hilde to Solness, is effectively stressed by a stage direction that becomes especially functional in the original Norwegian text. Hilde is described as 'litt brunet av solen'. She is tanned by the "sol", the sun, or Solness (MB, 375). The sun is related to light, to Solness's past experience in Lysanger. She, therefore, carries the effect of "sol" and light (lys). Ibsen carries this association throughout the text by relating Hilde to white, brightness and light.

The attraction of youth, with its implication of the "impossible", lies at the heart of Kaja's relation to Solness. When Solness walks in, Kaja his young accountant, removes the eye-shade she had been wearing. Her reason for doing that is disclosed in the following conversation:

> Solness: Why do you always take that eye-shade off when I come in?
>
> Kaja: Because I look so awful with it on.
>
> Solness: [with a smile] And that's something you don't want, eh, Kaja?
>
> Kaja: [half glancing up at him] Not for anything in the world. Not in your eyes. (MB, 358)

Kaja's second utterance is made while glancing up at him; her first is significantly made while writing in her book. Kaja is associated with the threat concerning the impossible state of freedom from God, and the impossibility of separation between youth and a promise made to it. Youth is keeping accounts of "impossible" threats and unfulfilled promises. Retribution will beat on the door and make the maintenance of the impossible impossible. In fact, the first mention of the "impossible" occurs in the context of the inseparability of "youth", synonymous in this case with retribution, and the impossible. Kaja cannot endure separation from Solness:

> I don't see how I can be separated from you. It seems so utterly impossible! (MB, 365)

It does not only "seem"; it is. That is why the fear of youth must be overcome by its attraction. Only by its attraction can youth be equated with retribution. It must attract Solness if he is to fulfil his promise to it and surrender the threat, thus redeeming himself and surrendering to the retributive effect of youth. In the Norwegian text, Kaja does not want to be "stygg" in his eyes. The English rendering of "stygg" into "awful" does not do it justice. The several

denotations of the word are not conterminous with the semantic field of the English "awful". "Stygg" suggests an aesthetic sense. It is related to "ugliness", which becomes feasible in view of the foregoing discussion. It is also given force by the fact that the "impossible" refusing to be separated from Solness is given the attributes of a young woman:

> Haven't you ever noticed, Hilde, how seductive,
> how inviting . . . the impossible is? (MB, 405)

In the Norwegian text, the impossible is described as "okker" (seductive), which conjures the image of an alluring, charming female "white devil".

The "white devil" who waved her flag to Solness ten years ago in Lysanger, upon his performance of the "impossible", has returned to seduce Solness and make him do the impossible again, but for different causes and different effects. Hilde is to Solness what Irene will later become to Rubek in When We Dead Awaken. Hilde is Solness's model for the day of resurrection.[1] She is, to Solness, the image of an ideal woman. By actualizing the dreams of this young idealist, Solness will prove that his God-like image was only an illusion of power and transcendence. The real Solness lies in this very life-lie.[2] He realizes the reality of his illusion, and the illusion of his reality. His God-like image is an illusion. His life as a man and artist is an illusion. Therefore illusions, castles in the air (luftslott) are the only tangible realities. The homeless exile fails to find a home in God; fails to find a home as a member of a viable family, and fails to find a home in his art.

> Solness: And now, looking back, what does it all add
> up to? In fact, I've built nothing. Nor did
> I really sacrifice anything for the chance
> to build. Nothing! Absolutely nothing!

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1. See When We Dead Awaken, The Oxford Ibsen, Vol. VIII, p. 278.

2. See The Wild Duck, The Oxford Ibsen, Vol. VI, Act V, pp.226-227 where Ibsen through Relling voices the thought that a life-lie is the stimulating principle that implies happiness.

Hilde: You're not going to build anything else after this?

Solness: [animatedly] Oh yes, I am! I am just about to begin!

Hilde: What's it to be? Tell me quickly!

Solness: The one thing I think can contain human happiness - that's what I'm going to build now.

Hilde: [looks fixedly at him] Master builder, you mean our castles in the air.

Solness: Yes. Castles in the air.[1] (MB, 439-440)

Solness will build castles in the air (luftslottet) thus fulfilling Hilde's expectations of him.[2] She urges him to "do the impossible once more". The impossible, in this instance, is related to Solness's promise, the fulfilment of which will annul the effect of the earlier threat and thus redeem Solness.

The Master Builder dramatizes a contest of wills rooted in Hilde's and Solness's different conceptions of and means to the "impossible". Therefore, when Hilde asks Solness to do the impossible "once more", the seemingly repetitive act he is asked to perform does not pertain to what Hilde has in mind. To a large extent, Hilde and Solness unconsciously play a game of language, an exercise in evasion. The shades of meaning covered by the "impossible" are different in both cases. Each speaks of the "impossible" investing the word with his own sense of the word, while the other party imbues its meaning with his own subjective understanding. The result is they are in

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1. Ibsen presents the idea of castles in the air, in a poem entitled "Building Plans" originally published in 1858. The poem anticipates the subject of The Master Builder. See Lyrics and Poems, translated by Fydell E. Garrett, p. 1.

2. Jean Reviere in "The Inner World of The Master Builder", International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 33 (1952), pp. 173-180 points to references in the play made to hypnotism, and thought transference. However, these do not sustain an interpretation of Hilde's and Solness's exercise of will as related to hypnotic powers.

reality at cross-purposes while believing they share the same purpose. The impossible is a mask they wear - Hilde to re-live a promise, Solness to re-live and escape a threat. To that end, the combat of wills largely engages a process of unmasking their concepts of the impossible by "using" the other. Their cross-purposes become clear to the interpreter when Solness in reply to Hilde's passionate plea to do the impossible says:

> If I try it, Hilde, I shall stand up there and speak to Him as I did last time. (MB, 440)

It is quite obvious, of course, that Hilde's thoughts of his promise to her are translated in Solness's mind as his own threat to God.

> I shall say to Him: Hear me, Great and Mighty Lord! Judge me as you will. But henceforth I shall build one thing only, quite the loveliest thing in the whole world. . . . (MB, 441)

Hilde is winning. She will have her castle. Hilde uses Solness to attain the impossible as Hedda has used Løvborg to realize a beautiful dream. Like Hedda and Ellida, Hilde entertains powerful desires for freedom, for the unattainable. Like Hedda and Ellida, her need for liberation from the mundane everyday reality can only be expressed through the vicarious adventures of an entity separate from herself to enable her to objectify the experience; yet forming a considerable part of her dreams to enable her to identify herself with it, and see herself in it. Hilde has left her home-town for good. Ibsen supplies scant information about Hilde's familial circumstances. The interpreter can deduce, though, that like Hedda, Hilde is cut adrift from her father. Unlike Hedda, however, her act is a voluntary one. She admits, with a trembling of the lips that "leaving Father wasn't all that easy" (MB, 412) yet something inside her "forced" her, "drew" her, and "tempted" her. The "impossible" embodied in Solness's promise has seduced her. Like Hedda who relinquishes the demand for vine

leaves, and becomes more interested in the emancipating effect of the content of Løvborg's experience on her, Hilde does not "want to hear any more about that stupid kingdom" (MB, 388). She wants it realized, established on real foundations, releasing her and finding an accurate expression to acute desires bordering on obsessions. Like Laura, she uses a male for her purposes but Hilde differs from the Strindbergian heroine in that her desire for power over Solness does not merely involve private claims. It is more in the nature of the sublime. Hilde's divergence from Laura is typical of Ibsen's objectified artistic aspirations as opposed to Strindberg's subjective aims. Ibsen forever searches for means of ascending towers; Strindberg must descend into infernos. But the point their heroines share in common is that only by emasculating the male can the female survive in an "impossible" dream of heroism that can only be created by idealizing the male. The male is seen as a victim of female fantasies.

The image of a battle is enhanced by Hilde's description of herself as "a forest bird" who will "swoop upon its prey" (MB, 429) rather than live in a cage.[1] Solness acts as a means to Hilde's flight to the impossible. He will once more stand "free and proud" (MB, 435), at the top of the tower. Hilde, in this case, empathizes with Solness, for his freedom is her release; his pride the sign of her masterful manipulation of his will. Ibsen throughout the play works out this identification between Solness and Hilde. Hilde had been up on the tower in her dreams a long time ago and for ten years, her will had been lying dormant waiting for the suitable time. A hint, to that effect, is made earlier on by Ibsen, by means of words and stage directions. At one point, Halvard asks Aline whether Hilde

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1. The cluster of images of birds, cages, broken wings, was earlier deployed by Ibsen in his poem entitled "Bird and Bird-Catcher", written in 1850 but published in 1871.

is still asleep. Significantly, Aline replies: "Miss Wangel was up long ago . . . . When I looked in, she was sitting there seeing to her things." The English idiomatic form of being "up" instead of awake, for instance, is an accurate rendering of the Norwegian: Hilde "er oppe for lenge siden". The idiomatic usage is of course deliberately consonant with the images of ascent to the impossible that feature so abundantly in the play. In her dreams, Hilde has been "up" and in Solness's consciousness she has also been "up" related to his threat and his promise. Significantly, when Aline relates that suggestive information about Hilde, she "steps in front of the mirror and begins slowly to put her hat on" (MB, 392). The former "up" is of course related to the "hat" and the "seeing" to things is related to the mirror. Hilde's dreams are mirrored in Solness and through him. It is highly significant that the "hat" is associated with the ultimate result of Hilde's "seeing" to her dreams in Solness's mirror, for when Solness climbs the tower in Lysanger he waves a hat, after his actualization of his own notion of the impossible, and he will wave it again after his actualization of Hilde's notion of the impossible ten years later. Thus once again Ibsen effectively yet subtly relates the hat and heights to the threat and the promise, to youth and retribution, and ultimately to the "impossible". Hilde uses Solness to extract a vision of transcendence and sublimity from the fleeting flow of time. She uses him as her will over a mundane reality. The use they have for each other is reciprocal, for Solness unconsciously uses Hilde's will to the "impossible" to redeem his own will to the impossible. Ibsen makes explicit references to Solness's use of Hilde. The interpreter must, however, keep in mind that as far as Hilde and Solness's relation to each other is concerned ambiguities and cross-purposes arise.

Hilde: . . . . Was it true what you said? Can you use me in some way?

Solness: . . . . You are the very one I have needed most.

Hilde: Oh, praise be . . .!

Solness: [tense] Well?

Hilde: Then I have my kingdom!

Solness: [involuntarily] Hilde . . .!

Hilde: [again her mouth trembling] Almost - I was going to say. (MB, 390)

Hilde's kingdom will be built on the ruins of Solness's. To fulfil his promise to her, Solness must relinquish the very pillar on which his threat to God is built - will. Hence, Ibsen's stage direction describing Solness's exclamation is highly functional. "Involuntarily" describes his deprivation of will pending his fulfilment of a promise but the will to be God will be diminished only to give rise to another will - that of being man. To that end, Solness uses Hilde to redeem his past. He is unconsciously compelled by the need to find a "use" for Aline's talent. Aline's vocation has been ruined by the fire, and by the subsequent loss of her twins. Solness feels guilty because he had "willed" the fire which played the equivocal role of "making him" while breaking Aline. He expresses this guilt to Hilde. Aline is now deprived of her talent for building children's souls. Even human beings are described in building terms by Solness:

> . . . building their souls that they might grow straight and fine, nobly and beautifully formed, to their full human stature. That was where Aline's talent lay. And look now where it lies. Unused . . . and for ever unusable. No earthly use for anything . . . . Like a charred heap of ruins. (MB, 407)

To expiate his guilt, Solness is intent on making Hilde sleep in the nursery, like a child. The question of use (brukt) is very prominent

in his consciousness for he tells Aline: "So we did find a use for one of the nurseries after all, Aline" (MB, 392). Solness wants to bring some "livsglede" into the life of Aline who is "dead - on my account" (MB, 428). He views himself as responsible for her sterility and impotence. Hilde can momentarily alleviate the dread of emptiness and loneliness. She can act as the twins by sleeping "like a child in a cradle" (MB, 396). The former occupants of the nursery died when they were three months old. Hilde and her formidable will are now the new twins. Hilde will be the real child that Solness and Aline will give birth to, instead of the nine dolls that Aline carried "under her heart", "like little unborn children" (MB, 425). Thus Hilde will be used by Solness to settle his accounts with himself over Aline. Hilde will brighten his and Aline's existence. She is an antidote to the "joyless" (glede laus) Aline. Ibsen once more displays total control over his subject-matter by underlining Aline's "deadness" by means of colour, and light. In the first two acts, Aline is clad in black. Her entrance on the stage is accompanied by Kaja's turning down of the lamp (MB, 367). In contrast to Aline, Hilde is described in terms of whiteness, brightness and sunshine. Solness's conscience proceeds from the symbolic suggestiveness of Aline's "blackness" to that of Hilde's whiteness - the process again symbolized by Aline's wearing of white in the final act coinciding with Solness's redemptive deed of the "impossible".

The fact that Hilde and Solness conceive of each other as tools for the attainment of aims and assertion of wills gives rise to the ambiguity inherent in the play as to the function of Hilde as a separate objective entity or an indivisible part of Solness himself. In all probability, the formidable adamant force they both exert on their roads to the impossible are as identical as Solness's lost

twins. This explains their mutual understanding of the urges, desires and powers that relentlessly drive the individual to attain his goal. Like John Gabriel Borkman, Solness sees himself as one of the chosen:

> Solness: [confidentially] Don't you believe too, Hilde, that you find certain people have been singled out, specially chosen, gifted with the power and the ability to want something, to desire something, to will something . . . so insistently . . . and so ruthlessly . . . that they inevitably get it in the end? Don't you believe that?
>
> Hilde: [with an inscrutable expression in her eyes] If that is so, we'll see some day . . . if I am one of the chosen. (MB, 411)

Although Hilde and Solness are at cross-purposes as to the object of their wills, they share the belief in the mysterious drawing power of the "troll" inside one, of the helpers and the servers that are summoned "imperiously, inwardly" (MB, 411). Significantly, Solness refuses to testify to the accuracy of Hilde's description of their first encounter till he admits that he must have willed it. "Frivilling" (free will) is vitally important to Solness.

> I must have thought it all. I must have willed it . . . wished it . . . desired it. And then . . . . Mightn't that be the explanation? (MB, 384)

Hilde, in turn, refuses to relinquish her almost hypnotic effect on Solness. She will see him doing the impossible.

> I will! I will see it! I must see it,

she exclaims to Ragnar (MB, 435). Thus, Solness and Hilde can identify with each other, through their close identification with will and its attributes. The process of identification is so strong that it threatens the credibility of Hilde, and can very easily lead to the confusion of her role with that of will.

The moment Hilde is introduced on the stage, her youth is associated with retribution (gjengjeldelsen) which is gradually brought upon Solness through his use of Hilde's will to the impossible.

Solness: . . . . Retribution is inexorable.

Hilde: Don't say things like that! Do you want to kill me! Do you want to rob me of more than life itself!

Solness: And what is that?

Hilde: To see you great. See you with a garland in your hand. High, high up on a church tower. (MB, 416-17)

Her will is his redemption. Solness will climb the tower again in an act of self-annihilation born of the realization that man cannot achieve an identity by threatening God and occupying His place. His ascent now will be a form of begging for forgiveness. He will acknowledge his sins by withdrawing his threat. Thus his second ascent is an attempt to re-claim the innocence he lost by descending into the Faustian inferno of rebellion. Ten years previously Solness had outreached himself as man and become God. Now, Solness the God will climb the tower, become man again, and outreach himself as man by acknowledging his complicity and guilt. As man, he triumphs over himself by bridging the schism of torment and remorse tearing him apart. Hilde's introduction into his life has had a therapeutic effect on him, for she causes a change in him as a result of her own conscious deliberate aim to use him to realize her dreams. The Furies of the past have taken their revenge. Solness is restored to his self. His retributive fall is highlighted symbolically by Hilde's waving of Aline's white shawl. Through Hilde's act of waving, Ibsen achieves a double purpose. On the one hand, he recreates the conditions of the first climb in Lysanger, when Hilde, "the white devil", made him dizzy by waving a flag. On the other hand, he stresses the redemptive nature of Solness's fall by exchanging Aline's "joyless" "dead" black with a more joyful, lively "white" - to signify Solness's atonement for his sin. Solness and his God-image originating in a will that

so far has been his twin climb the tower. Yet Solness and his man-image originating in a will that had recently become his twin fall. It is highly suggestive that descriptions of his ascent and descent are repeated twice - a deliberate contrivance on Ibsen's part. "Climbing, climbing. Higher and higher!" exclaims Hilde (MB, 443). "He is falling! He is falling!" (MB, 444) cry Mrs. Solness and the crowd. The master builder's final descent is in reality an ascent to the heights of moral demands. The Satanic song in the air has turned ten years later to a song in praise of God. He is "great and free again" (MB, 443) but not in the sense Hilde implies. His standing up at giddy heights is to Hilde simply a release, as Løvborg's death has been to Hedda. Hilde's final cry: "My - my master builder" resounds with certain echoes of Laura's "My child" at the end of The Father. Though a coincidence of style, the ideas implied are not too far removed from each other. Solness is the child of Hilde's imagination, and as such he has honoured his "mother". But he is also Hilde's builder, in the sense that he set her free from the confines of her life.

Solness's seat of the intellect is smashed. It is his head that is cracked (MB, 445) not his "underlivet".[1] It is clear that Ibsen is suggesting an image of transcendence that will make man innocent and ideal. In When We Dead Awaken, Rubek contends with notions of innocence and corruption and makes these the informing principle of his art.

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1. See the implications of the word, p. 77

In The Master Builder, Ibsen underlines the implications of the threat and the promise and the ways in which these form the artist's and woman's concepts of identity. The interaction between Hilde and Solness leads to an achievement of the impossible and a cancellation of it at the same time. In When We Dead Awaken (Nar vi døde vagner),[1] Ibsen presents a more concrete level of interaction between the woman and the artist. The product of their union becomes an expression of identity on the one hand but also a deprivation of it on the other hand. When We Dead Awaken looks into the causes and effects of the woman and the artist being a threat and a promise to each other.

Arnold Rubek, a sculptor, has created what is, to him, a masterpiece - "The Day of Resurrection" - which has won him world-wide acclaim. His model, Irene, has disappeared from his life. After the creation of "The Day of Resurrection", Rubek becomes restless. Rubek holds that he has had one model for everything he created. He has got married to Maja thus making her move in more "exclusive" circles. Rubek, his wife, and model meet at the seaside resort and through their dialogue the past is unfolded.

In the period intervening between the creation of "The Day of Resurrection" and their meeting, Irene has posed on a revolving pedestal in variety halls, and as a naked statue in peep halls. She has made a lot of money, married twice - once to a South American who committed suicide, and then to a Russian. In the highly symbolic language of the play, she claims to have killed the Russian along with many children. Meanwhile Rubek has created portrait busts, which have gained him financial success.

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1. References are to the text of When We Dead Awaken as translated by James Walter McFarlane and printed in The Oxford Ibsen, Vol. VIII (1977), and the Norwegian text as printed in Henrik Ibsen: Nutisdramaer, 1877-1899 (Oslo, 1973). All subsequent page references to the English version will be incorporated within the text of the thesis, after the abbreviated title.

Rubek and Irene decide to climb to the top of mountains to recapture their past glory; while Maja joins Squire Ulfheilm, a bear-hunter, and climbs the mountains too. While the latter couple descend, thus surviving a storm, Irene and Rubek are destroyed by an avalanche.

Rubek's artistic productivity is described almost exclusively in his own terms. Maja comments on Rubek's responses towards the void left by finalizing the work, or on those of his audience towards the work. Irene sees her creation with him as her child and has maternal responses to it.

Rubek explains that "The Day of Resurrection" originated in an image, with aesthetic qualities:

> My vision of Resurrection - the loveliest, most beautiful image I could think of - was of a pure young woman, untainted by the world, waking to light and glory, and having nothing ugly or unclean to rid herself of. (WWDA, 278)

The content of the vision is one in which he describes

> how the pure woman would wake on Resurrection Day. Not wondering at things new and unfamiliar and unimagined but filled with a holy joy at finding herself unchanged - a mortal woman - in those higher, freer, happier realms, after the long and dreamless sleep of death. That is how I created her. Created her in your image, Irene. (WWDA, 259)

The content of the vision, and its form coalesce:

> It was to take the form of a young woman waking from the sleep of death. . . . (WWDA, 259)

Irene, who left the artist before "The Day of Resurrection" (Oppstandelsens Dag) was fully formed, is informed by Rubek of the fact that "The Day of Resurrection" "wasn't then what it later became" (WWDA, 277). Rubek has learnt from his experience:

> In the years that followed, Irene, the world taught me many things. I began to conceive "The Day of Resurrection" as something bigger, something . . . something more complex. That little round plinth on which your statue stood, erect and lonely . . . no longer provided space for all the other things I now wanted to say. . . . (WWDA, 278)

Therefore, he extends the plinth, creates "an area of cracked and heaving earth", and

> out of the cracks swarmed people, their faces
> animal beneath the skin. Women and men . . .
> as I knew them from life. (WWDA, 278)

His "changed conception" demands that he should move the figure of the young and radiant (lysgleden) woman for the sake of the total effect. "Otherwise it would have been much too dominant" (WWDA, 278). Therefore the sculpture now expresses life as he has come to see it. In that group, he places himself as such:

> In the foreground - beside a spring - as it might
> be here - sits a man weighed down with guilt.
> He cannot quite break free from the earth's crust.
> I call him remorse for a forfeit life. He sits
> there, dipping his fingers in the rippling water -
> to wash them clean. He is racked and tormented
> by the thought that he will never, never succeed.
> Never in all eternity will he win free to achieve
> the life of the resurrection. He must remain
> forever captive in his hell. (WWDA, 279)

The joint effort of Irene and Rubek to produce this work of art has only borne fruit as a result of the artist's suppression of his desire for his model and his placing of the child of art first. His desire to "create the great work of my life" required the possibilities of seeing Irene as someone to use. He was, in his words, "above all else an artist" (WWDA, 259) (Først og fremst kunstner):

> For me you became a sacred being, untouchable,
> a thing to worship in thought alone. I was
> still young then, Irene. I was obsessed with
> the idea that if I touched you, if I desired
> you sensually, my mind would be profaned and
> I would be unable to achieve what I was striving
> to create. And I still think there is some
> truth in that. (WWDA, 259)

Irene had agreed to serve him as a model for his art fully and freely naked. She had considered that he had done damage to her "deepest inmost being" by not touching her. She resents the fact that for Rubek the work of art comes "first" and the human being comes "second". They regard the work in different lights. She

sees in it the more mundane product, a child, while he conceives of it as "resurrection".

Rubek conceives of his art as a form of self-expression, but it is hazardous for the interpreter to decide on the extent to which Rubek sees the content of his art as an expression of the need to find his self. What is available to the interpreter in the language of the play is Rubek's rather episodic description of the meaning of his works and the impetus to create them. In other words, if seen through Rubek's eyes, the only work that expresses him is the figure of remorse and penitence within the group that goes into the formation of "The Day of Resurrection". It is the only occasion where he admits having placed himself in the "foreground". And the image of that self is one in which his recognition of complicity in evil prompts him not to break from the earth's crust and "to remain forever captive in his hell". Yet there are other indications in the play as to the fact that his artistic products on the whole are subjectively linked to his character. To Rubek creativity is a basic need and for that reason, he needs someone who can be at one with him and with everything he does:

> I live at such a pace, Maja. We live like that, we artists. For my part, I've lived through a whole lifetime in these few years we've known each other. I've come to realize that to seek for happiness in idle pleasure is not for me. Life isn't like that for me and my kind. I must keep on producing . . . creating work after work . . . until my dying day. That's why I can't go on with you any longer, Maja. Not with you alone.

Rubek continues:

> That's just what it does mean! I'm tired - sick and tired and unendurably bored with living with you! Now you know. These are hard ugly words I'm using. I know that very well. And you are not to blame in all this . . . this I readily admit. It is my fault, and mine alone. I am going through another upheaval. [half to himself] . . . . An awakening to the life that is really mine. (WWDA, 271)

That the content of Rubek's art should be taken as a measure of his identity and as an expression of it is suggested by his stress on his subjective art. In the context of discussing the wide acclaim of "The Day of Resurrection" with Maja, Rubek voices the thought that the public, the mass, saw in "The Day of Resurrection" things that he had not had in his mind.

To place Rubek's works in the chronological order in which he creates them is to notice that he first conceives of an image of resurrection, then visualizes the pure woman - moves her for the sake of the total effect, creates an area of cracked and heaving earth, and then projects people with animal faces beneath the skin, creates himself as "a man weighed down with guilt" and unable to break free from the earth's crust. Having completed "The Day of Resurrection", he creates the double-dealing works of art under which are hidden the animals that man has corrupted in his own image and which have corrupted man in return.

This creative process is interrupted by the departure of Irene which has had an effect on Rubek, described by him as such:

> In here, Maja . . . in here I have a tiny casket, securely locked. And in that casket lie all my visions. But when she went away, vanished without trace, the casket snapped shut. She had the key . . . and she took it with her . . . . Poor little Maja, you had no key. So everything inside remains unused. And the years go by! And it's impossible for me to get at the treasure!
> (WWDA, 271)

Yet it is clear that although the "visions" he had were locked in his mind, Irene's departure has signified a movement from the ideal level to the more practical, and thus has contributed to the creation of his visions.

Although the only place in which Rubek sees his self actualized is in the figure of remorse, the interpreter can observe a unifying

thread that links his works and that culminates in the revised "Day of Resurrection". His work is a projection of his self because its logical development is one in which he realizes evil as part of life and of his self as part of that evil. Although he only narrows down the guilty artist-figure in the end, it must have been his realization of the corruption within him and in people around him that led him to "image" purity in one form or the other. "The things" he now wanted to say were "things I saw with my own eyes in the world around me" (WWDA, 278).

Following Irene's departure corruption started figuring in his work. The plinth which had previously provided the base for Irene's figure now becomes one of "cracked and heaving earth" probably an expression of the "desert" which Irene's departure signified. Therefore his "changed conception" which demanded an act of moving the statue for the sake of the total effect is prompted by a personal involvement with Irene.

Relativism is of the very essence of Rubek's vision. He has to relativize everything and to realize the position of the woman in relation to the group. The new "Day of Resurrection" is not only more mature but also more realistic because he contextualizes the image of purity and presents the other side of it - that which makes it meaningful - corruption. Hedda's escape from society, and Hilde's need for sublimity reflected the nature of that from which they were escaping. In the same way, Rubek's later product brings in his own maturity in two forms: in the form of an understanding that purity cannot be comprehended out of context, and in the form of an "I" that is repentant. Irene believes that Rubek's act of modelling his self as a figure of remorse is prompted by the "poet" in him.

Yet in a way there seems to be the implication that while Rubek models himself as a figure of remorse, and Irene sees this form of self-exoneration as "poetry", she is also guilty of the same kind of evasion of responsibility. As his model and source of creation, she has either dissembled or Rubek has been so intent on conveying his vision of a "pure woman" through art that her ungratified sexuality has evaded that vision, thus distorting reality.

Irene sees the work as their child, while Rubek sees it as Resurrection Day. Ibsen suggests that the divergence of their views as regards the work of art signifies the different emphases Rubek and Irene place on celibacy and sexuality respectively. For Rubek, the work about purity has originated in a need to escape corruption - which nevertheless finds its way back in a compromise between purity and corruption, and in an attempt to acknowledge the evil in the self as part of the evil of the world.

The greatest desire of Rubek's life was that of creating that work. While Irene can understand that the "child" is important, she views herself as dead despite the glory of having herself immortalized in a work of art. To Irene, sexuality is synonymous with her deepest innermost being: and she phrases Rubek's rejection of her as such:

> You did wrong to my deepest inmost being . . . .
> I offered myself wholly and completely to your
> gaze . . . . And never once did you touch me.
> (WWDA, 258)

The relation between the woman and the artist in When We Dead Awaken is complex because it is not a one-to-one relationship. The artist and the woman meet in their double roles as artist-muse and man-woman so the woman plays the role of muse while seeing that as a negation of her femininity and a man plays artist at the cost of suppressing his maleness. Male and female sexuality are suppressed

for art's sake. In the play's terms, art has deprived them of life and to collaborate in the act of producing a work of art, Rubek and Irene have had to see themselves first as dead then as seeking a form of awakening. They have been deprived of a "soul", deprived of sexuality, so soul the source of animation seems to lie in sexual fulfilment. To Rubek, sensuality and purity cannot be reconciled therefore one has to give way. Rubek sees sexuality as militating against the artist in him. Irene sees art as militating against the woman in her:

> I should have borne children. Many children.
> Real children. Not the kind that are preserved
> in tombs. That should have been my calling.
> I should never have served you - poet! (WWDA, 280)

Their respective identities seem to have been born out of a certain "calling" and the degree to which they depart from it.

It is extremely ironic that the free woman, the resurrected one meets the conditions in Rubek's life as man not as artist. Although he claims to create the free woman, his wife complains of being imprisoned in a cold, damp cage with works of art and consequently she has to gradually work her way to freedom.

Maja holds that she will find a way for herself somewhere. She can see that Rubek needs someone to attach himself to. She will "find something new, somewhere. Something free! Free! Free! . . ." (WWDA, 272).

She proves this freedom in a way by standing back and becoming the detached observer who manages to relate to Ulfheilm the very "funny" story which sums up that of Ibsen's heroines bought into the institution of marriage:

> Once upon a time there was a silly little girl.
> She had a father and a mother, but they were
> rather poor. Then into this life of poverty
> came a splendid gentleman, and he lifted the
> little girl up in his arms - just like you -
> and carried her far, far away . . . . (WWDA, 290)

Thus, in When We Dead Awaken the 'resurrected' woman of marble becomes a 'resurrected' woman of flesh who seems to redeem all Ibsen's female characters with the exception of Nora Helmer. While there is no perceptible or obtrusive social interaction the claustrophobic sense of society which pervaded Ibsen's earlier work is present through the institution of marriage, into which Maja is brought in contact with the "exclusive circles". The saviour is notably the bear-hunter who is free from social constraints as opposed to the "mountaineer in his own way" - who promises his wife high mountains, but uses that only as a "catchphrase".

It is equally notable that when Ulfheilm suggests that he and Maja should join forces, he talks to her in terms of "patching something together from our tattered lives".

Maja: So you fancy starting up in the rag trade?

Ulfheilm: Dammit, I do. Couldn't we try tacking a few pieces together . . . . And we might be able to make some kind of life out of it?

Maja: And when that poor little outfit was worn through - what then?

Ulfheilm: Then we'll stand there free and unafraid. As we really are! (WWDA, 291)

Ibsen effectively reiterates the image of disguise used in A Doll's House. The fancy dress that Mrs. Linde tries to stitch for Nora is one of the "everyday selves" that Nora gradually discards in favour of a self that is "free" from social institutions.

When We Dead Awaken is a coherent and self-contained work in itself. Yet, the interpreter is continually faced by the need to treat the play as Rubek treated the "woman" in his work - that is move it within the context of Ibsen's work as a whole "for the sake of the total effect". In order for that step to become feasible, the identity of the artist as Rubek or the artist as Ibsen would

have to be questioned. One example of the difficulty resulting from seeing the artist as Rubek and "The Day of Resurrection" as his product is the incomplete meaning of that very work. To borrow Rubek's word used to describe the reception of his work: it was a "tragedy". While he describes his working relation with Irene as an "episode", the cause and effect relation that has been outlined above and that results in the revised "Day of Resurrection" becomes, to him, a "tragedy". When We Dead Awaken as a play can easily be mutilated so to speak when the resurrected woman, "unchanged" and "free" in those "higher realms" is an expression of Rubek's vision of women. If the artist who created Rubek and ultimately his vision is to be brought to the fore, the meaning of the "unchanged" woman is extended. And it becomes possible to visualize an Alving or a Nora maintaining their need for a sense of self and an awareness of the stifling effects of a social context which serves as a catalyst not a deadener of perceptions. Rubek's woman will not wonder "at things new and unfamiliar and unimagined". While Ibsen's woman does "wonder" and dread, yet hope for the "miracle of miracles" to borrow Nora's words, the threat and the promise implied by change are projected onto an idealized level of existence in Ibsen's later works like The Master Builder in which the image of freedom is enhanced through the idea of the sublime, which borders on the very metaphysical sense most probably implied by Rubek's higher realms. The question of freedom from social confines, and the importance of free choices is the main theme of The Lady from the Sea.

While the assumption of a character as a mask for Ibsen's subjectivity, and as such as an objective means of projecting his experience, helps to see Rubek's experience as independent and meaningful in its own right, it also makes subjective that which

Ibsen was trying to neutralize in the same manner that suppressed sexuality in the name of art proved the very impetus of it. The meaning of the original "Day of Resurrection" lacked the total effect that it later gained and which was only made possible by the ambivalent attitudes of Irene and Rubek to their sexuality. Irene rejects the immortality of her own self through art because her "inmost being" is missing from it; yet willingly subjects herself to modelling in the hope of fulfilment. She desires the child of marble, and that of flesh because she cannot reconcile herself to either image of herself. Rubek claims to be "first and foremost" an artist yet his sexuality so ardently suppressed is the very point at issue when he discusses "remorse for a forfeit life". It is the only life that could have been forfeited because within the text of the play only the cerebral life is emphasized. While Solness regrets not having fulfilled his duty to Aline and uses Hilde as a substitute for the dead children, Rubek has had no experience of real children, and no duties to his wife. His only explicit duty is that to the message of art excluding, as it were, sensuality which forces itself on him at the very level at which he was rigorously trying to be objective: in the very "Day of Resurrection". This is not to say that it detracts from his vision. Rather, it is to point out the figure of the artist as Rubek gradually brought to confront his inner needs through an act of self-knowledge which culminates in his awakening to the contingency of human experience and to the need to recognize that fact - his contributing to it and his partaking of it - if his self is to be meaningfully contextualized.

The analysis of the foregoing plays has sought to focus on the ways in which the woman and the artist face problems of identity that are mainly precipitated by ambivalent social demands on what these two producers hold to be their creativity. Thus one of the problems of identity is that creativity is in many ways a mask for impotence, and that consequently the woman and the artist see in each other means of achieving forms of vicarious experience that become expressions of their identity. It is difficult, of course, to draw the line between an impotence resulting from social attitudes towards the producer or that resulting from a producer's response to these attitudes. The interpreter must bear in mind this psychological and social relativity. It is useful to compare, for instance, the reactions of Nora and Hedda to their social surroundings.

Nora is debarred from being an individual in her own right. She must remain a doll playing the role of wife and mother, never "chirrupping out of tune". Her decision to break away represents a merging of roles that stems from a maternal instinct, which is able having exercised itself to open up to society. While defying it and seemingly polarizing the relation between them in her words, "I want to know who's right society or me", she is part of it in that she contributes to social progress by allowing her husband to mature, and by first educating herself before she can educate the children. Thus her concept of her self expands beyond the niche carved for her by a familial and social structure. She uses the role in order to grow out of it. Hedda denies, to her self, the confining context imposed by her marriage. She lashes out against it in ways that are seemingly trivial but convey the immensity of her frustration. She seems to retaliate against Tesman through her inhumane reactions to his elderly aunt. She operates from within the boundaries of the

middle-class drawing room. She not only desires to kill the symbol of fertility within her, but also denies Thea her right to the intellectual child, and to her being described by Løvborg as its "mother". Hedda seems to shrink within her self and her solipsistic desires till she ends up, through maximizing the effects of a social context and a familial upbringing on her, behind drawn curtains in a slot even narrower and less life-furthering than the actuality of her social position - as woman, daughter, wife, or muse.

The woman and the artist are forced to play discrepant roles which are not altogether dictated by society but are partly given rise to by the producers' need to preserve a concept of the self. While the woman and the artist reject social encroachment on them they act as a means of its continuation through choice or necessity. Yet in the continuation of the kind of authority imposed by society lies the background from which the woman and the artist derive meaning.

Society acts on the individual in various ways, and is present to the degree to which the producer will allow its permeation. Thus in A Doll's House, and Ghosts it is present through law and order. Its pervasive effects are diminished through Ibsen's ironic approach to the representatives of law and order, on the one hand, and by the heroine's resistance of their coercive effect on the other. On the objective level, it is not as pervasive in Hedda Gabler but because of its intimidating effects on Hedda its power is enhanced. In The Master Builder the process is subtly worked out and it becomes increasingly difficult in the play to relate the symbolism of the church towers and the homes for the people to Solness's attempt to place himself in a realistic context from which he can derive meaning. Hilde of course admits that "leaving father wasn't easy", and it is significant that she lives through Solness, but the play is too dense

to yield any definite conclusions. The dilemma of the woman and the artist is clarified in When We Dead Awaken. While this is not meant to imply that the meaning of The Master Builder is incomplete in itself, it is important to take into account the continuity in Ibsen's themes. Rubek attempts to escape corruption by idealizing a woman. But it is ironically the woman who is attached to him by a social commitment who attempts to escape the imprisonment of the social "exclusive circles" and be free. The ways in which the woman relates to the artist are furthermore indicative of more general social questions. It is useful for instance to compare the reactions of Regine and Hedda to Oswald and Løvborg respectively. Regine does not need to cling to Oswald even though he sees in her the potential for his art. Hedda uses Løvborg to transcend an impotence partly given rise to by her confinement within her class. Ibsen seems intent on presenting the reactions of women, who are socially mobile and others - the heroines - who are imprisoned.

To the artist, the problem exists in finding a receptive audience for his art. To that end, he is faced with the need to forsake his authenticity and to prostitute his art to appeal to an audience's tastes. Because his art is so closely linked to his identity and is very often the only expression of it, public acclaim of his art becomes crucial. The paradox lies in that public acclaim is often built on a misunderstanding of the artist's meaning, which becomes in the words of Rubek "a tragedy".

In the foregoing plays there is a firm link between the maternal in a woman, and a focus on the problems of her identity. Nora and Mrs. Alving reach decisions that are given rise to by their love for their children. The woman's evasion of her needs and the process of masking her desires take place when the maternal in her is a form

of solipsistic desire. Thus the child of art becomes a form of masking these needs, and devouring the artist. Even when Irene, for instance, claims that Rubek has deprived her of her innermost being, she lives through the child of marble and is dissatisfied with her removal into the background. The child of art becomes an expression of the threatening and promising relation between the woman and the artist which was expressed by Nora earlier in relation to her own self and to her need for change yet her fear of it at the same time. Even Nora's expression of the need for a "miracle" is, despite its reference to a domestic and social situation, indicative of the process of idealization with which Ibsen's women seem to become increasingly obsessed in the later plays. That the idealization is an escape from the needs of the self and is constituted by the very corruption of which it is a mask is the representative dilemma of Tennessee Williams's women. Yet Ibsen does not conceive of the problem along the lines of masks. His characters' terms for discussing the problems, with the exception of Rubek who achieves a sophisticated vision of the "double-dealing works of art" and the hidden meanings behind the faces, are basically a form of disgust with the self. The "animal" faces "beneath the skin" emerge as a result of an awareness on the artist's part of the evil in his nature. Rubek is given a chance to know his self in a way that Løvborg and Oswald were deprived of. Nora and Mrs. Alving are illuminated to the demands of their own selves. But Nora, Mrs. Alving, and Rubek achieve their visions only through the realization that dolls, ghosts, and figures of remorse are part of a whole, and that for the sake of a total effect, they have to admit their needs. But the paradox remains: to reach a knowledge of the self is to exercise that knowledge, and

to do that the producers are once more enmeshed in the very context that had precipitated their problems of identity and upon which will fall part of the responsibility in judging how creative a producer can be.

CHAPTER II

PROBLEMS OF IDENTITY, AS EXPERIENCED BY THE PRODUCER, IN FOUR PLAYS BY TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

The identity crises of women constitute the major dramatic concern of Tennessee Williams. Yet his dramatic presentation of them, his professed aims for discussing the subject, and his view of the role of women within the interrelated historical, social, and theatrical conventions make the assertion that there is a line of thought binding Williams to Ibsen, as far as the woman question is concerned, seem for the time being unverified and perhaps not grounded in any truth. At the outset, the superficial dissimilarities that conceal any relation between Ibsen and Williams must be overlooked. Ibsen and Williams both stress the economic and social relations into which women are born and which not only shape women's response to their culture but also contribute to portraying this culture and as such become part of the social history of the time. What must also be pointed out is that the attempt to group Ibsen and Williams can only be made feasible if the traditional categories into which the playwrights are usually placed are transcended, thus enabling readers to renounce their notions of what to expect from a play in favour of a response to the play which can enrich it instead of reducing it to a series of prescriptions. Tennessee Williams has often been grouped under "psychological school of drama". In The Theatre of Commitment Eric Bentley argues that the

> new psychological drama of Williams springs from the fear of the Other, of society of the world and from the preoccupation with the self. Now art that doesn't spring from the whole man but from one side of him tends to become not that art at all but to remain neurotic or quasi-neurotic fantasy.[1]

In The Stature of Man, Colin Wilson suggests that in its portrayal of the contest between the individual and society modern American drama presents an individual who is constantly crushed and defeated by society. Although Bentley and Wilson stress the process of victimization working from society on the individual, it is essential to realize that the need to take account of persistence and of change should be stressed. There may be a stress on the individual but what is more often than not ignored in the case of Williams is the social background that is even more effective than the playwright thought it would be.

To consider the possibility of the woman question in Williams as an outgrowth of the social and economic systems is to consider the importance of the Southern locale in his plays and the degree to which it is a physical setting or a setting with all the various connotations attached to it - a combination of historical factors working on it. As a result of most of Williams's comments and his awareness of being influenced by D.H. Lawrence, Williams's plays are considered to be concerned with the flesh-spirit duality which runs through his plays and which is perhaps symbolically suggested by the title Summer and Smoke. In the Preface to I Rise in Flame Cried the Phoenix, Williams applauds Lawrence's exposition of sex as the primal life urge in man, and his challenge of the Victorian notions of prudery and propriety.

While not discrediting the centrality of this theme, it is

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1. Eric Bentley, The Theatre of Commitment (London, 1968), p. 41.

important to realize that the prudery, duality, and mendacity that pervade all relations in Williams's world do not exist in a vacuum. The social Southern background that gives rise to them must be taken account of. At this point a further question must be asked, that is: what is the importance of the element of southernness in relation to the element of Norwegianism in Ibsen? In other words, how representative of their societies are characters like Amanda and Blanche if compared to characters like Nora or Mrs. Alving? But this question triggers off yet another, namely what do we exactly mean by 'society'? Is it a valid comparison to place Norway and the South in a kind of juxtaposition, and within that 'society' is class important? To discuss the identity crisis of Nora Helmer is to bring in the historical and social importance of marriage within that specific society and that time. The importance of belonging to a Southern society and to a certain class becomes perhaps even more evident if the responses of a Nora or a Hedda are compared to those of Mrs. Linde or Thea Elvsted. The value of membership of society in the case of the latter two characters is firmly related yet separate from the meaning of liberty to the class in question. Apart from the class question, however, the element of Norwegianism is in direct opposition to nothing outside itself.

There are, of course, cases in which it would appear that Norway is contrasted with other societies. The most immediate example is the "abroad" of Oswald. However, "abroad" like the sea, the church-towers and the mountain-tops in Ibsen, is suggestive of a different social context, or of the need to escape from one - but it remains hypothetical and metaphorical and is not made immediately tangible to the interpreter. However, the very existence of these means of escape and their suggestion of alternative contexts is important

in so far as it manifests Ibsen's awareness of the gravity of the consequences of imprisonment within a given context.

The element of Southernness holds within it a contrast to a society that is different as far as codes of morality and economic structure are concerned yet at the same time sharing a historical meaning and not standing in a kind of diachronic relation to anything outside itself but the American context. Yet another question must be asked: about the value of a battle fought by Nora Helmer as opposed to one fought by Blanche DuBois. The answer to that lies in the temporal and social standpoint from which the answer is made. But if the interpreter were to speak of two readers within the age and societies in which the two plays were written then it may be that the contribution made by Ibsen is greater than that made by Williams in so far as the formation of social ideas and social philosophy are concerned. Ibsen's plays had a powerful material reality for women of his time and society, and it is hardly surprising to find that the actress who was asked to play the role of Nora Helmer should have decided that she cannot do it because she cannot leave her children. The effect of the plays was powerful beyond Ibsen's intentions:

> What I really said was that I was surprised that I, who had made it my chief business in life to depict human characters and human destinies should without consciously aiming at it, have arrived at some of the same conclusions as the social democratic moral philosophers had arrived at by scientific processes.[1]

Yet in another statement Ibsen points to the fact that he has set himself the task of awakening a feeling of culture and discipline through women, who will solve the human problem. By the time Williams had written his plays, Freudian analyses and the popularization of

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1. Extract from a letter to Hans Lien Braekstad (18 August, 1890), Ibsen: Letters and Speeches, p. 292.

psychoanalysis had perhaps given women a measure of empathic release and the meaning that Ibsen gave the women of his time. To Ibsen's audience, Freudian ideas would not be known; therefore, what a Nora would mean to them is largely a release. To Williams's audience, women already have that release and that understanding. The feeling of culture which Ibsen allots to the women in his plays can be compared with Williams's statement that women are closer to life because they are closer to love and that they are related to the artistic consciousness. In the same interview, Williams relates the woman question to the slavery question in the South, which is the closest he would get to the profession of a social interest.[1] The power of the social theme is perhaps more discredited in Williams's plays because of the general trend to see his heroines as defeated by their developing society and by their inability to face change. This trend treats defeat as lessening the impact of the social force almost as if success or defeat would prove anything about the values of the society in which they live.

In the context of discussing the opposition between the individual and society in Ibsen's plays, Raymond Williams in Modern Tragedy uses the term "liberal tragedy" to designate the representative situation of man at the height of his powers and the limits of his strength, at once aspiring and being defeated, releasing and being destroyed by his own energies. Embodied within Williams's description of this situation are the struggle between the individual and society on the one hand and the individual within his self on the other hand. In Politics and Letters, Williams clarifies his discussion of liberal tragedy, and sees it as projecting Ibsen's radical disbelief in the liberal project of liberation. "There is never a cancellation of

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1. Tennessee Williams interviewed by Cecil Brown, The Partisan Review, XLV (1978), no. 2, pp. 276-305.

its impulses," argues Williams, "but there is always a uniquely powerful perception of what blocks it: a physical inheritance, social inheritance, every sort of circumstance. For Ibsen it is society that thwarts any such emancipation."[1] Williams further compares Ibsen with Hardy in the sense that both writers present a valid desire which is tragically defeated without cancelling the validity of the impulse, and which reaches the point of questioning the social order that has defeated it. This confrontation between individual and society is further discussed in the context of Williams's perceiving of relations between forms of art and phases of class. Ibsen's drama is naturalist in the sense in which it was a classical realist subject to Lukacs. The situation descriptive of a naturalist project is the confrontation between an individual making an effort to live a fuller life and "encountering the objective limits of a particular social order". Williams further argues that the stress in this naturalist drama is on the impulse toward life, not as an individual but as a general aspiration, and the structural constraints of a society. The generality of the situation is further stressed by Williams in that he conceives of the social as broader than yet encompassing the nature of a bourgeois society. The social formation of naturalist drama is not necessarily related to different phases of the bourgeoisie, but it is not the central ideological representatives of the bourgeoisie that are the focal point:

> What we are witnessing is the strange phenomenon of the last hundred years of bourgeois culture, of very significant groups breaking from the bourgeoisie, so to say, within its own terms. There is no question of saying they are not within its term but they break from it.[2]

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1. Raymond Williams, Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review (London, 1979), p. 198.

2. Ibid., p. 221.

Within this naturalist dramatic form, Williams further distinguishes between indicative and subjunctive drama, the main difference being that the social situation represents an utter deadlock in the case of the indicative whereas it is questioned in the case of subjunctive drama thus it is indirectly subversive of that order. The sense of subjunctive possibility can allow for all kinds of alternative futures and dynamic actions to be acted without breaking with the realist intention. The limits are in Williams's view part and parcel of the class structure in Ibsen's plays. Even if certain limits are pushed back, argues Williams, they will still subsist as long as the class society exists. Now this social reference which gives (by implication) Williams's plays a kind of general reference is seen by George Steiner in The Death of Tragedy as absent and the substitute for it is a pattern of recurrent images rather than a sedimentation of class struggle or a kind of social reference. To Steiner, the confrontation between the individual and society starts in the forces of disruption that break free in the human soul. But Steiner describes indirectly the limitations imposed by society by pointing out the most deadly of cancers, namely idealism: the mask of hypocrisy that men seek to guard against the realities of social and personal life. These very realities which Steiner discusses are the very social backdrop which Williams mentions in his plays. Yet there is a contradiction in the argument Steiner puts forward in the case of the absence of a kind of public context which is in a way contradictory to the sense of inevitability that pervades all social relations in Ibsen's plays. It is interesting to note that this kind of concurrence on the existence of the social in Ibsen is denied in the case of Williams. Raymond Williams terms his tragedy private in the sense that the "impersonal rhythms" are at best a question of "interlocking of

individuals in the act of sex." Raymond Williams explains that:

> The point has been reached, in our generation when the tense and cruel struggles can be assumed as a whole truth, an orthodoxy without anxious generalization and argument. What we get then is not the dramatic philosopher which O'Neill tried to be but the dramatist of the case-book who can afford simply to illustrate, to demonstrate. The plays of Tennessee Williams are the clearest examples of this. His characters are isolated beings who desire and eat and fight alone, who struggle feverishly with the primary and related energies of life and death.

The source of the tragedy of the human condition according to Raymond Williams is existent in the entry of the mind on the fierce and tragic animal struggle of death and sex:

> the tragedy of individual persons which began in the struggles of the aspiring mind ends as the fierce animal struggle and relapse: in the single act of sex there there is communication in which mind has tragically failed; an act of life and death, in the same rhythms, the tense and cruel struggle consummated at last in relapse. The end of the sex, the fierce humping life struggle is death.[1]

Raymond Williams quotes extracts from Williams's Preface to The Rose Tattoo, to the effect that "time" rushes towards audience with "varied narcotics" and that the audience becomes flooded with human sympathy, and is relieved from "self-consciousness".

Raymond Williams's argument is built mainly on two assumptions: the element of time is taken by him to refer to a kind of private context instead of the public one that Tennessee Williams was aiming at in the Preface to The Rose Tattoo which gives his plays a kind of mythological pattern. The second assumption is related to the "self-consciousness" which Raymond Williams takes to be an element of the private internal rhythms of Williams's plays. It may be useful to refer to Tennessee Williams's Preface to place the extract which

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1. Raymond Williams, Modern Tragedy (London, 1966), p. 120.

Raymond Williams quotes in the context of his argument within its own context:

> About their lives people ought to remember that when they are finished everything in them will be contained in a marvellous state of repose which is the same as that which they unconsciously admired in drama. The rush is temporary. The great and only possible dignity of man lies in his power deliberately to choose certain moral values as if he, too, like a character in a play were immured against the corrupting rush of time. Snatching the eternal out of the desperately fleeting is the great magic trick of human existence. As far as we know, as far as there exists any kind of empiric evidence there is no way to beat the game of being against non-being in which non-being is the predestined victor on realistic levels.
>
> Yet plays in the tragic condition offer us a view of certain moral values in violent juxtaposition. Because we do not participate, except as spectators we can view them clearly within the limits of our emotional equipment. These people on the stage do not return our looks. We do not have to answer their questions nor do we have to compete with their virtues nor resist their offences. All at once for this reason we are able to see them. Our hearts are wrung with recognition and pity so that the dusky shell of the auditorium where we are gathered anonymously together is flooded with an almost liquid warmth of unchecked human sympathies, relieved of self-consciousness, allowed to function . . . .[1]

Allen Tate's essay on "A Southern Mode of the Imagination" distinguishes between the rhetorical and the dialectical mode of discourse in the South and traces the roots of the Southern extroverted mind to the sense of dislocated external relations: because people "were not where they ought to be they could not be who they ought to be. Thus it seems that lack of self-consciousness is a desired effect in Southern literature."[2]

The public context which Tate's explanation helps to give Williams's work and to extend its dimensions is further explained

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1. Tennessee Williams, Five Plays (London, 1962), p. 128.

2. Allen Tate, "A Southern Mode of Imagination", Essays of Four Decades (London, 1970), p. 581.

by Tate with reference to the relation between modes of production and Southern morality which in turn helps to illuminate the degree to which Williams is representative of the South and by implication not merely concerned with "private" struggles. Tate holds that antebellum man was traditional man insofar as he achieved a kind of unity between his moral nature and his livelihood. In other words tradition is a process of equating moral nature and livelihood. In The Social Ideas of Allen Tate, Willand Arnold explains that according to Tate the agrarian system involved not only economic privilege but also moral standards. The whole economic basis of life was closely bound up with moral behaviour. According to Tate, finance capitalism which had removed men from the responsible control of means of livelihood was necessarily hostile to the development of a moral nature. Men did not have that kind of control over property. Ownership did not give the average man or stockholder any say in the policy of the company and he was tied to the stock market and to economic factors outside his powers. According to Tate, man had never achieved a perfect unity between his moral nature and his economics. In other words, an agrarian economy led to a sense of tradition because it formed a unity between a mode of production and a moral character. Arnold further explains that Tate admits that the perfect traditional society cannot exist but that the perfect traditional society as an imperative for reference would continue to haunt the moral image of man. Southerners related identity to land and material property. In Tate's view, the isolationism of the South was intense after 1865: it was the isolationism of defeat. The old Southerners being completely committed to the rhetoric of politics could not come to grips with the dynamic forces in the North that were rapidly making an exclusively political solution of the situation obsolete. They did not understand economics.

Keeping Tate's view in mind, it becomes perhaps easier to understand the importance of "belonging" to Williams's characters but also important to distinguish between men's reactions and women's, not because the reactions are different but because the male reaction sheds light on the female's. It is important to distinguish between the male reactions also in the sense that the artists among them like Tom or characters like Shannon are perhaps different. The prime example of the male reaction is, of course, Big Daddy. Big Daddy's relation to the land is born out of a sense of struggle for it and attempt to utilize it. His relation to it is not as tenuous as that of female characters like Amanda or Blanche not because he owns fertile land in the Nile Valley whereas the familial circumstances of Blanche have led to the loss of land and the loss of identity with it. Blanche's relations to the land are more enhanced because there is nothing else she can cling to. She has inherited one part of the Southern experience - the form of being an aristocrat with all that is associated with it of notions of prudery and mendacity in the area of social and sexual relationships. Big Daddy chose to be a Southern planter not because the land passed into his hands, but because he strove hard for it in a way that makes his morality in relation to the social attitudes of his time separate and different.

At one point in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Margaret describes Big Daddy as "a real Southerner, a real red neck"; and in the light of her words it becomes easier to understand the meaning of the agrarian economy to Big Daddy not as a system into which he was born but rather as a system he works himself into.

Maggie's description of Big Daddy as a real "red neck" can be usefully contrasted with her description of Gooper's children who want to inherit the wealth without working for it as no neck monsters:

> I've always sort of admired him in spite of his coarseness, his four letter words and so forth. Because Big Daddy is what he is and he makes no bones about it. He hasn't turned gentleman farmer, he's still a Mississippi red neck, as much of a red neck as he must have been when he was just overseer here on the old Jack Straw and Peter Ochello place. But he got hold of it an' built it into the biggest an' finest plantation in the Delta. I've always liked Big Daddy . . . .[1]

The meaning of Big Daddy's struggle is enhanced for Maggie in a way that would not pertain to Blanche or Amanda because her familial experience has taught her that the only truth is that money is needed for combatting the effects of time and old age - a theme that was to torment Williams himself as a playwright - though perhaps in a context that was more universal and more generally related to a mythical pattern. Unlike Blanche and Amanda, she could realistically channel her experience. The purpose of discussing Big Daddy is not to bring in at this point the question of the economic system for its own sake. It is mainly to shed light on the differences between a character like Blanche and one like Big Daddy. To lament the loss of land and the lack of home is a typical Southern female experience.

The historical connection between land and the dilemma of women as presented in Williams's plays is highlighted by Williams Robert Taylor in his Cavalier and Yankee. Taylor starts his account of Southern women in the year 1835. He points to the writings of Nathaniel Beverley Tucker and Thomas Dew. Thomas R. Dew, a pro-slavery theorist and Tucker's colleague, wrote three long and scholarly articles for the Southern Literary Messenger under the general title "On the Characteristics Differences between Sexes".

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1. Five Plays, p. 24.

Taylor, on whose judgement the interpreter would have to rely in view of the fact that the thesis makes no claims to original research into the historical background, writes:

> What emerged from Dew's discussion was a careful formulation of what might be described as the stand-pat position on the situation of women, a view which was characteristically - but not at all exclusively Southern.[1]

Taylor goes on to explain that Dew began by assuming certain physiological differences between men and women. Of particular historical value for Williams's plays is the following continuation of Dew's argument:

> Because the woman was weaker and because she required the protection of a stronger male for herself and for the young, she was early driven to find other means than force for exercising her will, and she soon discovered that the greatest power on earth was not the muscularity of the man but her own powers of allurement - in short her sex appeal.[2]

Taylor further points out that the articles in the Southern Literary Messenger, their tone and rhetorical value and the would-be "new southern woman to whom they are so obviously directed provide better evidence than anything else that the woman question was being widely discussed and that many Southerners were convinced that the Southern home was threatened. Taylor points out that Dew's and Tucker's insistence upon a fixed hierarchy upon the subjection of women, slave, and yeoman to the cavalier was an obvious result of their alarm at the spectacle of a society adjusting itself according to the natural capacities of its individual members. An open society such as that which they saw developing seemed to promise a change of status to everyone and there was an attempt at establishing the liberties of

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1. Williams Robert Taylor, Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character (New York, 1961), p. 17.

2. Ibid., p. 170.

women and slaves. Taylor writes, "the particular challenge posed then by women was partly the result of their inability to believe in the effectiveness of the gentleman planter".[1]

Tennessee Williams's female characters, more often than not, are concerned with a process of idealizing their selves as a means of escaping the reality of their needs. This process is prompted by their Southern background, on the one hand, and by their individual reactions to a Southern heritage on the other hand. Williams presents the relation between the women's visions of transcendence, of their selves as they misconstrue their selves; and the very base which gives rise to the need for an evasion of reality. Thus, in his plays, there is a firm connection between the woman and the artist. An artistic sensibility is sometimes internalized by the woman as an expression of her needs. Williams does, though, fruitfully present alternative cases, in which the woman and the artist are seen as having separate functions. They mutually exist in his plays as means of comment on each other and on the broader context to which they belong.

The Glass Menagerie[2] introduces the social and historical context within which the problems of identity of women and artists in Williams's plays can be understood and which contributes to the women's act of misconstruing their sexuality as a form of transcendence, and subsequently their taking on the role of the nauseated artist who cannot reconcile the ideal and realistic levels of human experience.

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1. Ibid., p. 175.

2. References are to the text of The Glass Menagerie as printed in Four Plays by Tennessee Williams (London, 1957). All subsequent page references will be incorporated within the text of the thesis after the abbreviated title.

The Glass Menagerie is a "memory play". From this fact stems the importance of the temporal framework of the play, which acts also as a formative factor in the identity of these characters because the ways in which they relate to time determine their modes of acknowledging and evading reality and illusion respectively, which in turn shapes their identity-crises, and their degree of awareness of them. To the interpreter, time becomes a question of procedure in the sense that it regulates the position of the interpreter in relation to Tom, the narrator of the "memory play", and to Tom the character in it interacting with his mother and sister in a basically domestic situation.

"Time" is one of the "tricks" Tom has in his pocket. It is one of the ways by which he acts as the "opposite of a stage magician" who will give truth "in the pleasant disguise of illusion":

> To begin with, I turn back time. I reverse it to that quaint period, the thirties, when the huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind. Their eyes had failed them, or they had failed their eyes, and so they were having their fingers pressed forcibly down on the fiery Braille alphabet of a dissolving economy.
>
> In Spain there was revolution. Here there was only shouting and confusion.
>
> In Spain, there was Guernica. Here there were disturbances of labour, sometimes pretty violent in otherwise peaceful cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, Saint Louis . . .
>
> This is the social background of the play. (GM, 2)

The encroaching effect of this social background is presented as working on the lower-middle-class population and on the Wingfields as a particular example of it, in Tennessee Williams's own stage directions to the play:

> The Wingfield apartment is in the rear of the building, one of those vast hive-like conglomerations

> of cellular living-units that flower as warty growths in overcrowded urban centres of lower middle-class population and are symptomatic of the impulse of this largest and fundamentally enslaved section of American society to avoid fluidity and differentiation and to exist and function as one interfused mass of automatism.
>
> The apartment faces an alley and is entered by a fire-escape, a structure whose name is a touch of accidental poetic truth, for all of these huge buildings are always burning with the slow and implacable fires of human desperation. The fire-escape is included in the set - that is, the landing of it and steps descending from it. (GM, 1)

The fire-escape is not the only "touch of poetic truth", for the two syllables carrying the family's name could not have been more strikingly suggestive. The Wingfields seek flight in illusion but fall back on the reality which gives rise to those very illusions.

Amanda is a frustrated and domineering mother who attempts to impose her obsolete Southern values on Tom and Laura. Her attempts to overpower her children result in a loss of their individuality. At one point, Tom complains that there is not one thing in his life that he can call his own. That is true, for even his individuality is smothered by the family trap set mainly by Amanda. Amanda refuses to acknowledge Laura's disability. She refuses to see her as crippled. Her attempts to launch Laura into a business career through sending her to a college are met with failure. Finding the atmosphere of a business college insensitive to her needs, Laura escapes to museums. She is incompatible with machines and significantly breaks down while taking a typing speed test.

"The scene is memory" and the episodes re-lived through Tom's memory centre on the attempts of Amanda to find her daughter "a gentleman caller" who would be the "alternative to eating the crust of humility" in the absence of a business career that would have provided some measure of security. Laura remains the passive

recipient of her mother's orders, living as she is with her glass animals, her father's music - one of the remnants of him apart from a photograph in the background.

Jim O'Connor, the so-called gentleman caller, arrives. He is described by Tom as an "emissary from a world of reality" (GM, 2). Although Jim, like Tom, has a job in the warehouse, he has taken up public speaking and radio-engineering as means of progress in the world. Jim appreciated the "poet" in Tom, and called him "Shakespeare" but he had never noticed that Shakespeare had a sister. He diagnoses her problem as an "inferiority complex", dances with her in an attempt to help her surmount her shyness. In the process of the dance, one of Laura's animals - a unicorn - is shattered and his horn is lost as a consequence. Jim then kisses Laura, but while leaving her suspended "at the climax of her interior life", he informs her that he is engaged to be married. Amanda feels that Tom has played a joke on them, but Tom has the excuse that "the warehouse is where I work, not where I know things about people" (GM, 61). Tom who has been "boiling" inside with a desire to join The Seamen's Merchant Union escapes the family trap and the warehouse but he is "pursued by something": it is the memory of Laura on whom the scene dissolves as she blows out her candles, for as Tom concludes, "nowadays the world is lit by lightning!" (GM, 63).

To understand the identity problem of the Wingfields is to question their awareness of their own plight, which would in turn depend on the temporal framework in which the characters consciously or unconsciously place themselves. The only objective standards the interpreter has are the attempts made by Tom to describe the social and historical contexts of the play, and Williams's attempts to underline certain social aspects through his stage directions, which

emphasize the state of "interfused mass" in which the lower-middle-class and the Wingfields as part of it existed. The identity problem is one experienced collectively and individually. One of the difficulties of approaching the play is that of separating the characters' experience of identity on an individual basis particularly when, in the language of the play, "self" and "selfishness" almost become synonymous because any attempt by Tom to realize his self is considered a betrayal of the interests of the group on the wider level: that is, his family. This becomes clear through Amanda's labelling of Tom as a "selfish dreamer" and her urging him to "overcome selfishness. Self, Self, Self, is all you ever think of", and through even Tom's inescapable use of the mother's way of seeing him as a condition for his own self-realization:

> For sixty-five dollars a month I give up all that
> I dream of doing and being ever! And you say
> self - self is all I ever think of. Why, listen,
> if self is what I thought of, Mother, I'd be
> where he is - GONE! [pointing to father's picture]
> As far as the system of transportation reaches!
> (GM, 15)

Seeing the characters collectively is not only a suggestion by Williams as to the social conditions of the time but is also explicit in the way Amanda sees the family unit. Amanda conceives of the necessity of "clinging" together as a reaction against "these trying times we live in", and an act of "Spartan endurance" (GM, 20). Amanda's concept of time is rather confused, and the interpreter must always keep in mind that Williams seems to undermine the awareness she seems to have of "these" times with her act of "clinging" frantically to another time and place.

The characters form a kind of unity through the fact that if taken individually their means of self-assertion is a form of escape. The escapist qualities are made explicit in Williams's stage-directions: Amanda's life is paranoic; therefore, she lives in her illusions.

Laura is a cripple, she lives with her animals. Tom is a poet with a job in the warehouse, which at once introduces the causes and effects of his escape.

While being an "emissary from the world of reality", Jim is himself a projection of the need to escape, thus Jim bridges the gap between illusion and reality. Jim's significance depends on the viewpoints from which the interpreter sees him: the "now" or the "past" but perhaps taking account of the "now and the past" as the temporal framework of the play might afford a more comprehensive view of him.

The phrase in which Amanda describes Jim is highly suggestive of the ways in which he offers her a means of escape into the past. He is a "gentleman caller" divested, of course, from the system of economy that went to make him so valuable in those days. He is not a planter but rather a member of the rat-race. It is ironic that the form in which Amanda sees the gentleman caller stemming in the way she names him and the ceremonious way through which she prepares to meet him are all part of the past and her illusions, the content of her vision of him is futuristic.

Insofar as Jim is a means of escape his capacity to save her would depend on the temporal framework in which she places him:

> Amanda: What does he do, I mean study?
>
> Tom: Radio engineering and public speaking!
>
> Amanda: Then he has visions of being advanced in the world! Any young man who studies public speaking is aiming to have an executive job some day!
>
> And radio engineering? A thing for the future!
>
> Both of these facts are very illuminating. Those are the sort of things that a mother should know concerning any young man who comes to call on her daughter. Seriously or - not. (GM, 29)

While Amanda cannot reconcile her past and present, she seems at least theoretically to be able to define the degree to which active interaction with time can affect the personality:

> You are the only young man that I know of who ignores the fact that the future becomes the present, the present the past, and the past turns into everlasting regret if you don't plan for it. (GM, 28)

"Plans and provisions" as Tom puts it are for "young men". She does not apply what she says, which is why Tom undermines her words with:

> I will think that over and see what I can make of it.

Amanda herself has broken with tradition. While all her callers were "gentlemen" - and among them "some of the most prominent young planters of the Mississippi Delta - planters and sons of planters!" she "picked" Mr. Wingfield. Amanda must believe that the gentleman caller will come to her daughter if she is to believe that she is still a Southern lady with Southern heritage which she can pass on to her daughter. But what she cannot seem to remember is that this is not Blue Mountain and there cannot be a "flood" of callers. For Amanda to avoid the realization that past has turned into "everlasting regret" - she must plan for the future but while on the face of it her future is done with, she can live through her children and the evidence is that she attempts to make a spectacular appearance to receive the gentleman caller. She "resurrects" a dress from the trunk - which is a dress that reminds her of her past glory. She has worn it for social occasions and worn it on Sundays for her gentleman callers. When Jim arrives on the scene she is full of "Southern behaviour" and starts off with telling him about her trials and tribulations. She describes her dress to him as historical and complains about the vestiges of gracious living having "all gone":

> I never could make a thing but angel-food cake. Well, in the South we had so many servants. Gone, gone, gone. All vestige of gracious living! Gone completely. I wasn't prepared for what the future brought me. All of my gentlemen callers were sons of planters and so of course I assumed that I would be married to one and raise my family on a large piece of land with plenty of servants. But man proposes - and woman accepts the proposal! - To vary that old, old saying a little bit - I married no planter! I married a man who worked for the telephone company! - That gallantly smiling gentleman over there! A telephone man who fell in love with long distance! (GM, 40)

Amanda is probably not aware of the fact that her act of lamenting the loss of a Southern mode of life is also an appeal to the realist in Jim to save them. By complaining to him, she articulates her experiences and insofar as Jim is "an emissary from a world of reality" her words to him serve to objectify her experience. Salvation seems to lie beyond the South. Tom must follow in his father's footsteps; Amanda must see herself against another background - a realistic one. This function of Jim is further underlined by the breaking of the unicorn's horn. Significantly, Laura's favourite glass animal is damaged not only by Jim but also by the collaborative effort of Jim and Laura to dance. Laura announces that the unicorn is now "less freakish" (GM, 54). The combined effort of Jim and Laura produces a more realistic animal who can now play with the other horses.

Amanda must live vicariously. While rebuking Laura for leaving a business career, she seems to imply that there is a danger in that not only for Laura but also for Amanda as living her past and future through her daughter.

> We won't have a business career - we've given that up because it gave us nervous indigestion! What is there left but dependency all our lives? I know so well what becomes of unmarried women who aren't prepared to occupy a position. I've seen such pitiful cases in the South - barely tolerated spinsters living upon the grudging patronage of sister's husband or brother's wife! - stuck away

> in some little mousetrap of a room - encouraged by one in-law to visit another - little birdlike women without any nest - eating the crust of humility all their life! Is that the future that we've mapped out for ourselves? I swear it is the only alternative I can think of!
> (GM, 10)

Amanda claims to live in a world of "superior things". She denounces instinct, and reads "filth" into D.H. Lawrence's novels while Tom translates instinct into loving, fighting, and hunting for adventures. Insofar as Amanda has a vision of herself as a transcendent woman, sublimating her passions and being on the board of a magazine which features the sublimations of women of letters, she is an artist whose attempt to escape to a world of superior things, of mind and spirit, probably stems from the realization that instinct - which belongs to animals - is such a threat. Mr. Wingfield's smile appealed to Amanda, the World was enchanted and the result was that she made a tragic mistake. It is almost as if that realization of the intensity of emotions led Amanda to see instinct as detrimental. Amanda uses this transcendent vision as a means of escaping her surroundings, and her self. Amanda needs to live vicariously. That she uses D.H. Lawrence's novels as a point of departure from which to build a moral stance is in itself indicative of the literary context which emerges from Williams's plays and acts as a point of reference or as some kind of authority which the characters use to accept or repudiate. Her critical stance towards Lawrence's novels represents the view of the traditional Southerners who fear change. From the point of view of Amanda, Lawrence is insane, maybe because he presents the authentic:

> I took that horrible novel back to the library - yes! That hideous book by that insane Mr. Lawrence. I cannot control the output of diseased minds or people who cater to them -. . . . But I won't allow SUCH FILTH BROUGHT INTO MY HOUSE! No, no, no, no, no!
> (GM, 13)

While Tom focuses on the financial aspect of owning the house, and as such sees no reason why if he pays the rent, he cannot have any freedom within it, Amanda feels that her moral authority gives her the right. While Tom sees himself as paying the rent and making a slave of himself, he does describe his mother as trying to make her own contribution to feather the nest and plume the bird by trying to "rope in" subscribers to one of those magazines for matrons called The Home-maker's Companion "the type of journal that features the serialized sublimations of ladies of letters who think in terms of delicate cuplike breasts, slim tapering waists, rich, creamy thighs, eyes like wood-smoke in autumn, fingers that soothe and caress like strains of music, bodies as powerful as Etruscan sculpture" (GM, 12). Her view of books is the wonderful "new serial" which is to be compared in force with Gone With the Wind, "It is the Gone With the Wind of the post-World War generation!" (GM, 12).

For as long as Amanda and her companions can gild the lily and see sensory functions in terms of elevated objects outside the rush of time like "strains of music" or "sculpture" they can afford to denounce Lawrence because he sees the "fingers" or the "bodies" for what they are, not for what they ought to be. This discrepancy between the ideal and the realistic level and the women's use of the first to transcend the second thus negating it, yet by transcending it acknowledging its power is a theme that persists in Williams. It is perhaps best articulated by Alma in Summer and Smoke, in the image of the Gothic cathedral in which every part reaches up, "everything seems to be straining for something out of the reach of stone - or human - fingers. . . . The immense stained windows, the great arched doors that are five or six times the height of the tallest man - the vaulted ceiling and all the

delicate spires - all reaching up to something beyond attainment! To me - well, that is the secret, the principle back of existence - the everlasting struggle and aspiration for more than our human limits have placed in our reach . . . ."[1] Alma cannot describe the cathedral in terms other than human. Even the doors are measured according to the height of man. Even though she uses human as a point of departure, like Amanda her moral indignation is suspect because it does not realize the interdependence of the human and the divine. Amanda and Alma and Blanche have illusions about themselves, but although Laura lives in an illusory world, she is more realistic about herself and has no illusions as such. She acknowledges the charm that Jim had earlier cast on her, remembers that this happened while both were members of a choir, acknowledges she is going to be an old maid and that she is a cripple. While she escapes to a world of glass and records, she does so because it alleviates her loneliness by showing her creatures like herself - delicate yet breakable. That this process of identification with her animals is meant to be important is signified in the associations with glass and light. She is lonely, so are they. She is lonely because like the penguins she visits in the zoo she is a flightless bird - unable to acclimatize herself because she cannot develop with the times yet must live in them. But unlike the magician's trick she cannot be a bird who can swim or who can fly. She is not a "legless creature", to borrow Williams's useful expression in Orpheus Descending. History or development seem to be inert for her, she can view it from a distance in a museum because it has meaning for her, it is made material, like her it stands outside the rush of time. Williams stresses her ethereal qualities and the fact that she "is like a piece of translucent glass

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1. Summer and Smoke, printed in Four Plays, p. 197.

touched by light". Her mode of escape offers a contrast to that of Amanda because it is built on a realistic assessment of herself and of the relations she is born into.

Tom's use of artistic escape is built on the same premise as Amanda's - a wish to live vicariously. In fact he attempts to define his self in relation to a stage-magician. For Tom, escape lies in the very base that Amanda is trying to run away from - instinct. Tom derives his identity from that very means of escape. There is a need for him to assert his self through being a "lover, a fighter, a hunter", three functions of instinct to him. It is a kind of negative identity which he must experience if he is to escape from the reified relations of the warehouse. Like Amanda, his self-image is derived from his evasion of reality. Like the magician's fascinating trick, he will try to find a trick that will turn reality into illusion, and make the reality of the warehouse disappear. He will get out of the "2 by 4" situation by a trick similar to the coffin trick in which a man got out without removing one nail. He will get out without removing one nail by using his Prospero-like art to get fired from the warehouse. He thus refrains from doing anything that will eradicate his reality but will avoid responsibility for his actions by getting fired. He uses art as a projection of a wish-fulfilment in the same way that Don Quixote will use a dream to restore valuable meanings to life in Camino Real. Then again to evade the responsibilities of having left Laura, he uses the memory play to eradicate the effects of the poem on the lid of a shoe-box. It is extremely ironic that this piece of art is written on something that represents mobility to Tom, for a shoe is only something to be worn on travellers' feet and thus the meaning of it is relative to the distance that it carries its wearer. He does not go to the moon,

he goes much further, for "time is the longest distance between two places" (GM, 62) and it is the lid of the shoe-box that turns the physical distance into an intangible world of time. Space and time are interlinked through the dimension of art but both space and time hold pain for Tom, for while the cities drop behind him he is full of remorse for leaving his sister. Williams, of course, has experienced the severance of ties with his own sister.

Tom's gesture makes him less of the rebel and more of the conformist. Even his mode of escape is contributed to by the warehouse and the lid. In the opening passage, Tom chooses times and spaces to indicate political or economic crises. While he selects one time axis, he moves in space to compare Guernica to America. His idea of relativity works along indicating the effectuality of a general scene in one place to the ineffectuality of it on the other. But while Tom's initial passage highlights the ineffectuality of the middle class in America, and the dissolving economy, in the final passage he moves to the intensely subjective experience of the futility of erasing a memory because the consequences of events are indelibly marked on the mind. Yet while the objectivity claimed in the distancing effects of his statement: "I have tricks . . ." ends on that note that very far from tantalizing the audience is a means of sentimentalizing the experience, and thus would seem to miss the effect, the subjectivity of the final passage is partly led to by Tom's being a product of that very America which he criticizes and of the social system which he dislikes.

Tom is dissatisfied with the social conditions. America falls short of Guernica, and the world is waiting for bombardments. Yet he, as an individual, is an escapist while shunning the responsibility of it on an individual and familial level. If Tom sees himself as an

escapist then he would subvert the very criticism he makes of society because he would then have to admit his complicity in whatever lack of bombardments there are in it. But the interpreter cannot argue that Tom sees himself as symptomatic, and that the escapism he embodies on an individual level reflects on the general while going to compound the fault of Americans whose eyes had failed them. Tom sees himself as an adventurer, in a way putting into practice his criticism of the lack of adventure for the masses. The movies are a form of vicarious living and the interpreter suspects that if his leaving the warehouse and the family had satisfied his yearning for adventure, he would not, as he admits in the final passage, run to the movies or a bar.

Tom is the fugitive poet and while he is alienated on several levels, and seeks cities that are torn away from the branches, there is in him enough of the critic of his times to be dissatisfied with making this "separate peace" while being unable because of his psychological inadequacies to bring this beyond the level of escape. The passages in which he criticizes the conditions in America reveal a poet who is socially aware if not committed. Tom can understand the interaction between the individual and society and knows that despite the failure of the economic system, individuals who are part of it can be responsible. Tom sees that "either their eyes had failed them or they had failed their eyes". He is aware of complexities and contradictions. The subject of his poetry is not revealed to the interpreter. But what comes between this accurately described vision in the first passage and the alienated displaced fugitive of the last on the level of a play is representative of what could have made him give up his social interest: a series of encounters with the mother, and a series of "rise and shines" inviting him to go to

his coffin-like warehouse. Between the prongs of social and familial demands, Tom is drained of all but the desire to escape.

It can, of course, be argued that insofar as The Glass Menagerie is a memory play the exposition of the social scene is Tom's way of presenting the stage directions, and the last passage his way of concluding the action. While that is true of Tom the narrator, it is not true of Tom the character and while the first and last passages are spoken by the narrator, Tom is only what he is as narrator by virtue of what he was and is as character, a detached observer who attempts to escape experience through the alienating effect of time: the "past" related in the "now" and the content of an artistic work which can be encompassed within such a framework - namely a memory play. There is a need to recognize the two viewpoints but not necessarily to see the distinction as clear-cut. Tom's position as narrator in the final passage, in relation to the "memory play" is similar to Rubek's relation as "figure" in relation to "The Day of Resurrection". Rubek only features as a "figure of remorse" by virtue of his realization of corruption as the other face of purity. He thus attempts to distance the woman for the sake of total effect and to make the artist in him present the man as in the foreground. His experiences as artist and man intermingle and he becomes what he is by virtue of experience - a figure of remorse. While the terms in which Rubek describes his art are much more oblique than Tom's and require more of an interpretive act on the part of the reader, the way Tom puts himself across is more explicit. Tom tries to put a woman in the background not because that no longer represented "life as I now see it" but more aptly to the particular situation because the world is lit by lightning and Laura as a figure is an anachronism. Tom is unable to face the situation. He must leave her in the dark.

Amanda's and Tom's modes of finding their selves through escape share in common the typicality of the Southern experience. Amanda evades the issue of her sexuality, Tom follows in the father's footsteps - and becomes a fugitive poet.

To discuss the identity problems of the woman and the artist in Williams's plays is not necessarily to examine different sets of problems. That does not arise because of a lack of specificity insofar as the problems are concerned. Rather, it is in the overlapping senses of womanhood and art in Williams's plays. The woman and artist in The Glass Menagerie share a form of escapism that masks an evasion of the consequences of a mature relation - that of the woman to her femininity and that of the artist to his artistic strivings.

In A Streetcar Named Desire,[1] the overlapping terms in which Blanche conceives of her so-called "progress" and "light" thus concealing the very wish to what would be "regress", in her own terms, make her femininity only acceptable if it becomes the means to a spiritual transcendence.

The broad outline of the play is suggestively introduced by the title itself. A Streetcar Named Desire represents the spatial, temporal, and metaphorical journey of Blanche DuBois in the illusory white woods suggested by her name, and the real demonic forests of her self and society. "Desire" is the name of the vehicle used as a means of transportation on her journey. This keyword is used in a two-fold sense. It refers to sexual desire, on the one hand.

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1. References are to the text of A Streetcar Named Desire as printed in Four Plays by Tennessee Williams (London, 1957). All subsequent page references will be incorporated within the text of the thesis after the abbreviated title.

But it also conveys a spiritual implication and can be conceived of as a persistent need to overcome loneliness; an adamant wish to live in the grand fashion according to an anachronistic chivalric code whatever the cost may be; an urge to salvage some form of reconciliation between the demands of the self, and others.

In a manner reminiscent of Ibsen, the play proceeds to uncover a causal pattern of interrelations between the past and the present. Attempting to escape a painful past connoting "loss" of home, husband, and honour, Blanche DuBois seeks refuge in her sister's house. Stella and her husband, Stanley, introduce Blanche to a base and degraded world of Gothic horror which, according to her, can only be done justice to by Edgar Allan Poe's descriptions. She sees Stanley as an ape, Stella's love for him as cheap desire, and herself as intellectually and morally superior and unwilling to condescend to their vulgar modes of life. Vividly, she relates her vision of that sub-human environment of the "Elysian Fields", and its products:

> There's even something - sub-human - something not quite to the stage of humanity yet! Yes, something - ape-like about him, like one of those pictures I've seen in - anthropological studies! Thousands and thousands of years have passed him right by, and there he is - Stanley Kowalski - survivor of the stone age! Bearing the raw meat home from the kill in the jungle! And you - <u>you</u> here - <u>waiting</u> for him! Maybe he'll strike you or maybe grunt and kiss you! . . . . <u>God</u>! Maybe we are a long way from being made in God's image, but Stella - my sister - there has been <u>some</u> progress since then! Such things as art - as poetry and music - such kinds of new light have come into the world since then! . . . . In this dark march toward whatever it is we're approaching . . . . <u>Don't</u> - <u>don't hang back with the brutes</u>! (<u>SND</u>, 104-105)

Blanche cannot fight back alone. Finding affinities with Mitch, Stanley's friend, Blanche believes that there is "God" at last. Blanche relates to Mitch the story of her effeminate-looking lover to whom she did not extend a helping hand. She failed to

understand Allen's homosexual tendencies:

> He was just a boy. When I was a very young girl. When I was sixteen, I made the discovery - love. All at once and much, much too completely. It was like you suddenly turned a blinding light, on something that had always been half in shadow, that's how it struck the world for me. But I was unlucky. Deluded. There was something different about the boy, a nervousness, a softness, and tenderness . . . . (SND, 120)

Blanche's reaction to Allen's homosexuality causes him to commit suicide by shooting himself in the head - the seat of his poetic talents. Unfortunately, old sins have long shadows and the "Furies" of the past are determined to chase Blanche, hound her, and smear the deceptive whiteness of her name. In a menacing Pinteresque manner, Stanley discloses certain facts about her past. She has been fired from her job on account of promiscuity - her door was open to any sexually hungry man, at an hotel in Laurel. Accusing Blanche of impurity and corruption, Mitch rejects her. Blanche increasingly recedes into a world of unreality. The final blow is delivered to her by Stanley who rapes her prior to sending her to an asylum.[1]

One of the basic tensions in the play is that between the world of apes and the world of poetry and music. Tennessee Williams had summed up the theme of the play in his own words: "If you don't watch out, the apes will take over".[2]

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1. The critical tendency has been directed towards attacking the play as an account of sexual aberrations, a treatment of degrading issues unworthy of drama, a subjective pessimistic portrayal of life. For representative views see Mayra Mann, "The Morbid Magic of T. Williams", The Reporter (May 19, 1955); Nancy Tischler, Tennessee Williams : Rebellious Puritan (New York, 1965); John T. von Szeliski, "Tragedy of Sensitivity", Twentieth Century Interpretations of A Streetcar Named Desire, edited by Jordan Miller (New Jersey, 1971), pp. 65-72.

2. Quoted in Nancy Tischler, Tennessee Williams : Rebellious Puritan (New York, 1965), p. 137.

The tension alluded to in Blanche's speech is reminiscent of that underlying O'Neill's The Hairy Ape. Mildred Douglas, a Blanche-like figure dressed in white, encounters animality and primitive passions in Yank Smith. By confronting him with his animality, Mildred deprives Yank of his illusory sense of belonging and integration within the social hierarchical pattern. Mildred and her class become a target of Yank's aggression, but the futility of his search for a place within the social system is turned into a form of self-annihilation. Stanley, who possesses several ape-like qualities, succeeds in breaking Blanche by directing his aggression towards her. Marked changes in social and economic circumstances in America, since Yank died, have afforded the brutes in Williams's world more power, and strength to crush the softer, moth-like refined creatures. The conflict in question has preoccupied Williams, and found expression in his poems as well as plays. It is functionally summed up in the following illustrative lines:

> A plague has stricken the moths, the moths are dying,
> their bodies are flakes of bronze on the carpets lying.
> Enemies of the delicate everywhere
> have breathed a pestilent mist into the air.[1]

It is against brutes and brutality that Blanche wages her struggle only to find that, to a large extent, the savagery she is militantly fighting against lies in her own self.

It is essential to place Blanche within the social context that has given rise to her views on "desire". Blanche DuBois belonged to the Southern tradition that went with the wind. She was forced to face the results of the disruption of the Southern culture after the Civil War, and the advent of the cheap materialism of an industrial society. The decline led to the development of a body

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1. "Lament for the Moths", In the Winter of Cities (Connecticut, 1959), p. 31.

of new values, and consequently necessitated a modification of life styles, and an adjustment on the part of individuals to the developments brought about by the dynamics of a changing environment.

Blanche DuBois has been twice-removed from her Southern culture - by historical and social factors leading to the South's disintegration, on the one hand; and by her own inability to adjust to her cultural, religious, sexual, and social heritage of the Southern tradition, on the other.

The Southern Puritanical control of impulses and desires is inconsonant with Blanche's inward smoke, and flames. Williams's treatment of Blanche's dilemma is largely shaped by Freudian ideas. Blanche's id and ego are in a continual state of conflict. To satisfy the ego, she must hush the torrential sound of the id. And if she is to gratify the wishes of the id, she would have to surrender her ego. Williams seems to be posing the following questions: What is a human being to do when forced to repress and suppress natural impulses in order to obey the norms of society? How is a human being to lead a psychologically healthy life if the channels along which her very natural impulses should flow equally in a natural way, are erected artificially by society? Therefore, the greatest threat to Blanche's identity lies in what Williams describes as the "dark roots of creation". This description of sexuality stems from Williams's refutation of stringent traditional morality and his consequent applauding of D.H. Lawrence's advocacy of sexual freedom, in the Preface to I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix:

> Lawrence felt the mystery and power of sex, as the primal life urge, and was the life-long adversary of those who wanted to keep the subject locked away in the cellars of prudery. Much of his work is chaotic and distorted by tangent obsessions, such as his insistence upon the woman's subservience to the male, but all in all

> his work is the greatest modern monument to the dark roots of creation.[1]

Blanche is faced with the problem of adjusting her needs to the dictates of society. Lacking the ability to strike a delicate balance between her needs demanding gratification and social demands needing conformity, Blanche falls into the gutter.

Blanche's inability to reconcile her deep sexual urges with the facade she puts up to the world results in a deep feeling of guilt and anxiety. Like Hedda, her life is a division of two warring principles: desire and decorum. Like Hedda, she suffers from a split between animal reality and moral appearance. Blanche tries to salvage her illusory image of herself from the lives of others. Having had an unstable past, and an equally unstable present, she feels temporary about herself and therefore reverts to her own inner world. Blanche has lost sight of the line separating reality from the illusions that were to dominate her life - gentility and success respectively. Blanche's complete loss of touch with reality leads her to insanity.

Blanche is homeless, in the physical and spiritual senses. She has lost her sense of self and suffers intensely, as a consequence. She has failed to reconcile her revulsion and compulsion towards sexual acts. Like Hedda, she has been victimized by her inability to reconcile her facade and reality. Realizing the immense implications of her loss of a sense of self, Blanche sets out with an insatiable will to conquer her loss and find compensation for it. Thus her avowed aim now is to find refuge for her split self in somebody's heart. Desperately craving an oasis in the arid desert of her psychological and social loneliness, Blanche informs Stella

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1. I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix (Connecticut, 1951), p. 3.

of her inability to endure her isolation:

> I want to be near you, got to be with somebody, I can't be alone! Because - as you must have noticed - I'm not very well. (SND, 74)

Significantly, the stressed words 'near', 'with', and 'alone' denote a measure of literal or figurative distance.

Searching intently for love, life, and relatedness that will ensure her psychological integration, Blanche is determined to win:

> I've run for protection, Stella, from under one leaky roof to another leaky roof - because it was storm - all storm, and I was - caught in the centre . . . . People don't see you - men don't - don't even admit your existence unless they are making love to you. And you've got to have your existence admitted by someone, if you're going to have someone's protection. And so the soft people have got to - shimmer and glow - but a - paper lantern over the light . . . . But I'm scared now awf'ly scared. I don't know how much longer I can turn the trick. It isn't enough to be soft. You've got to be soft and attractive. And I - I'm fading now. (SND, 109)

This key passage considerably illuminates Blanche's dilemma, the implications of which unfold to the interpreter attempting to understand Blanche. The interpreter must, though, acknowledge that part of Blanche's dilemma is her entanglement in a mass of incomprehensible drives and that as such any possibility of unravelling what might well be a deliberate obscurity on Williams's part, in his portrayal of character, must be given the benefit of the doubt. Blanche is trying to salvage some kind of identity from the ruins of her life. Her "being" is in danger of annihilation unless she discovers a net to throw over the fragments of her self. Blanche realizes that feminine charm and flirtation are synonymous with her existence. She, moreover, is fully aware of the fact that the charm on which she heavily relies will soon disappear as her "sweet bird of youth" flies away. She is painfully terrified of time implying changes, marking the face with wrinkles, and marring the soul with unpleasant experiences.

Time is the "enemy"[1] of which Tennessee Williams personally has a phobia; it continually haunts him with a sense of "impermanence".[2] In Ibsen's social plays, time was in itself a force which underlines the closely interwoven pattern of causality. Tennessee Williams conceives of time in a way that approximates Ibsen's vision in his later plays like The Master Builder or When We Dead Awaken. Solness's fear of the young, and of the corrosive effect of time is very similar to Williams's pronouncement in Sweet Bird of Youth that the "age of some people can only be calculated by the level of - level of - rot in them".[3] Approximating the idea of the permanence of art suggested in When We Dead Awaken, Williams holds that the "arrest of time" in a work of art gives it dignity and significance:

> Great sculpture often follows the lines of the human body: yet the repose of great sculpture suddenly transmutes those human lines to something that has an absoluteness, a purity, a beauty, which would not be possible in a living mobile form.[4]

Therefore, Williams shares with Ibsen the view that the purity and sacredness of a work of art are engendered by its removal from the corrupting current of time. Ibsen's view is implied in the words of Rubek to Irene in When We Dead Awaken:

> I was obsessed with the idea that if I touched you, if I desired you sensually, my mind would be profaned and I would be unable to achieve what I was striving to create.[5]

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1. See Sweet Bird of Youth, printed with The Glass Menagerie and A Streetcar Named Desire, edited by E. Martin Browne (London, 1971), p. 111.

2. "Whether or not we admit it to ourselves, we are all haunted by a truly awful sense of impermanence." See Preface to The Rose Tattoo, Five Plays by Tennessee Williams (London, 1962), 127-130 (p. 128).

3. Sweet Bird of Youth, p. 110.

4. Preface to The Rose Tattoo, p. 128.

5. When We Dead Awaken, The Oxford Ibsen, Vol. VIII, Act 5, p. 259.

Among Williams's characters only Hannah and Nonno in The Night of the Iguana are "timeless" because as artists they have managed to conquer time by arresting it through their artistic consciousness, and through transcendence to a level of artistic immortality where time ceases to exist.

In Chekhovian drama, time is a double-edged weapon. On the one hand, it is a void haunted with nothingness, inertia, and futility. On the other hand, it is dynamic in the sense that it leads to historical, cultural, and social changes that incapacitate and confuse the characters. Williams, like Chekhov, conceives of time as a catalytic force in the game of being against non-being.

In this light, it is feasible to conceive of the main threat to Blanche's identity as time, which can only be conquered by escaping the general groundwork from which it derives its meaning - reality. Therefore to immunize herself against the corrosive effect of time, Blanche transcends the world of reality and seeks to live by certain compensating ideals reminiscent of Ibsen's life-lie.[1] But does that measure ensure security, one may ask? Blanche's inner self hates the characteristics of the false self moving in an equally false illusory setting. This discrepancy between the face and the mask is correspondingly underlined even in the grammatical inconsistency of the name of the family plantation - Belle Reve - which testifies to the totality of Williams's artistic control over his subject matter. Blanche's fear of the mask also lies in the knowledge that it will always be an alien identity.

It becomes evident in the course of the action that in her desperation to find a self, Blanche disregards the fact that

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1. For a detailed discussion of the connotations of "life-lie" see Dr. Relling's and Greger's exchange of views in The Wild Duck, Act V.

illusions obscure the truth, thus becoming destructive because moral responsibility is abrogated. This is precisely why Blanche's transcendence of reality does not constitute a positive way of arresting time. It sacrifices truth and purity. The destructive illusion at the core of Blanche's nymphomania lies in her supposition that the opposite of death is desire. Her vision is symbolically conveyed as follows:

> They told me to take a streetcar named Desire,
> and then transfer to one called Cemeteries
> and ride six blocks and get off at - Elysian
> Fields! (SND, 69)

The importance of the two keywords in the title is underlined by the fact that the original title was The Poker Night. The irony inherent in Williams's use of the mythological Elysian Fields is, of course, quite explicit. It would appear that, to Blanche, death tends towards isolation and separation; desire presses towards fusion and communication. Translated into Hedda Gabler's terms, the escape from death to desire, with the respective implications of each, becomes "lust for life". But the difference between Hedda and Blanche lies in their exercising of the implications of "desire". To Hedda, escape from death, and desire for fusion, were synonymous with complete control over others. Fusion precluded surrender, submissiveness, or complementariness. To Blanche, fusion and communication mean the submerging of the self in the other in acts of sexual union. But both Hedda's, and Blanche's respective notions of fusion, and their views of the dynamics of desire meet on the grounds that desire is misconceived, in both cases, as a form of moral corruption; which links desire with death for both of them. Blanche is guilty of moral transgression but does not acknowledge her corruption, therefore her streetcar of desire leads to spiritual death.

Williams seems to imply that Blanche's search for relatedness, and for a sense of belonging that will reconstitute her identity, is doomed to failure. Blanche can never belong. Attempting to retrieve her lost self, she degenerates to a level of prostitution. Like Strindberg's Julie, her attempts to fight loneliness by sex, cause her own fall. Like Julie, Blanche is aware of overreaching the degree of conformity considered essential for the maintenance of self-esteem. Seeking love and relief from loss, Blanche is burdened with increasingly painful feelings of guilt due to her violation of moral and legal sanctions that prohibit the free expression of sexual urges. Like Julie, Blanche seeks a natural form of overcoming separateness only to realize that it merely provides a momentary partial solution to loneliness,[1] and that the recourse to natural laws for the reconstitution of a split self is an ineffectual approach in a world controlled by man-made laws of social conformity.

The task Blanche DuBois is compelled to accomplish, namely that of asserting her sense of self, is exceedingly complicated. Blanche is the battlefield for the confusion of the inner subjective and outer objective realities. The internal forces releasing her instinctual drives, and those inhibiting and controlling them powerfully tear her

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1. In Williams's plays, alcohol and sex are employed as means of evading the truth. In a poem entitled "The Soft City" (pp. 21-22) published in The Winter of Cities, Williams describes this evasion as "morphine". Cf.: Ibsen's "life-lie", O'Neill's pipe-dream, the pervasive use of fog and gloom in Ghosts, Anna Christie, Long Day's Journey into Night; Albee's creation of the illusory son in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?. Williams's poem runs as follows:

   And if there is something which is not soft in the city,
   such as a cry too hard for the soft mouth to hold,
   God puts a soft stop to it.
   Bending invisibly down, He breathes a narcosis
   over the panicky face upturned to entreat Him:
   a word as soft as morphine is the word that God uses,
   placing His soft hand over the mouth of the cryer
   before it has time to gather the force of a cry.

apart. To rise above her instinctual drives, Blanche pretends that the outer world is too corrupt for her to stoop to. It follows that she must live up to the image of a Southern belle by concealing everything that runs contrary to decorum in her life. Because she cannot, by any means, afford to acknowledge her sensual nature, Blanche pretends to denounce sensuality as brutal desire. Her professed antagonistic attitude towards instincts becomes nothing but a defence mechanism which she uses as a crutch to support herself, and her burden of confusion. Blanche brings to mind Hedda, who wishes she could love yet denounces love as a "gluttonous" act. What Blanche abuses in others becomes a projection of what she abuses in herself. Blanche envies Stella and Stanley their ability to be so open about their "animality" and uses the torrential rain of abuse as a cathartic attempt at releasing her own pent-up emotions. Attempting to conceal her obsession with sex, Blanche rejects Stella's view that "there are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark - that sort of make everything else seem unimportant" (SND, 103-104). Her outburst contains within it an abuse of herself:

> What you are talking about is brutal desire - just - Desire! - the name of that rattle-trap street-car that bangs through the Quarter.[1]
> (SND, 104)

The significance of Blanche's words can be fruitfully extended by her confession of the fact that she deliberately distorts truth:

> I'll tell you what I want. Magic! . . . .
> Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that to people.
> I misinterpret things to them. I don't tell
> truth, I tell what ought to be truth. And if
> that is sinful, then let me be damned for it!
> (SND, 136)

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1. Blanche's words serve to reveal the progression from Amanda Wingfield to Alma Winemiller through Blanche. Blanche echoes Amanda's speech to Tom (Four Plays, p. 21). In Summer and Smoke (Part II, Scene 8) Alma, before her conversion, will reiterate Blanche's views.

Blanche submerges reality for the sake of subjectivity; which implies an evasion of truth, and a distortion of reality. But the "magic" in question is not employed to bewitch people. Blanche is misinterpreting facts to her own self, and placing a film of fog over her vision to hide the smoke of her desire. She projects her derogatory view of herself onto others. By a process of free association, Blanche uses the adjective "brutal" to describe her own desire in the guise of Stella's. She will later use the noun to describe Stanley's crude ape-like behaviour. The reiteration of this image of brutality serves to underline her identification of her own animality with Stella's and Stanley's. It further underlines the rebellion of the brutal unrefined part of her against "What ought to be truth" - namely a refined lady. Her cry to Stella, "Don't, don't hang back with the brutes" is the forceful indictment of one part of her self to the other, and an attempt to bridge the dichotomy between sensuality and spirituality.

It may be useful to compare Hedda's and Blanche's reactions to couples who represent fulfilment. Like Hedda who cannot reconcile her subterranean forces and external mask, and consequently envies Thea's naturalness, openness, and spontaneity, Blanche envies Stella her lawful exercise of womanhood. Blanche envies Stanley's composure, and self-assertion, that enable him eventually to expose the shaky foundations of her own life. She envies Stella and Stanley the fruit of their sexual union in a manner reminiscent of Hedda's envy of the fruit of Thea's and Ejlert's intellectual one. But unlike Hedda, Blanche is not compelled by burning destructive tendencies to disrupt the couple's relation.

Blanche is in a dilemma. She is caught in a welter of confusion, symbolically underlined by the "lurid reflections" and "sinuous shapes"

that appear on the wall, and the wild frenzy of the "Varsouviana" (SND, 149) connected through a process of association with tension, confusion, and disaster. In Williams's words, Blanche is "broken on the rock of the world".[1] But despite the fact that Blanche is destroyed, she is not defeated. To the very end, she does not relinquish her image of herself as she "ought to be". She will use her female allure and charm to have her existence admitted even by strangers, but will not relinquish the struggle for her sense of self. Stanley can rape her physically and mentally but he cannot terminate her search for her identity - however misguided it may be.[2]

While Blanche cannot understand the guilt ensuing from her intense desires and projects animality onto Stanley and Stella, she seems to be able to understand the guilt ensuing her rejection of Allen for what she sees as a sexual perversion. By admitting the truth about her guilt to Mitch she is seeking atonement, for Allen and herself, and relief from the burden of guilt. In Blanche's view, she and Allen are guilty of shirking the issue of Allen's homosexuality. Blanche is guilty of sexual rejection of her husband, and of evading the truth about him. She also feels guilty, although there is no indication that she is aware of the causes, because she assumes the role of a disillusioned idealist nauseated by the perversions of humanity, without being able to admit her complicity.

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1. Tennessee Williams interviewed by Cecil Brown, The Partisan Review, op. cit., p. 299.

2. The play has been denounced on the grounds of Williams's ambiguity as regards the recipients of his sympathy. For examples of this either/or critical tendency see: Leonard Berkman, "The Tragic Downfall of Blanche DuBois", Modern Drama, 10 (December, 1967), 249-257 (p. 257). J.W. Krutch, Modernism in Modern Drama: A Definition and an Estimate (New York, 1962).

Blanche gradually comes to a recognition of her life for what it is, a puerile idealism that conceals destructive tendencies. By refusing to accept the responsibilities of a sexual relationship, she is relinquishing certain moral responsibilities. In a sense, her moral degradation can be seen as a form of punishment or self-annihilation. Williams describes the act of self-annihilation generally, as the "principle of atonement, the surrender of the self to violent treatment by others with the idea of thereby clearing one's self of his guilt".[1] She subjects herself to the very stringent standards of that very prudish society.

The form in which Blanche surrenders herself to guilt is one in which she will degenerate while seeing this degeneration as a way of enhancing her image of beauty. Blanche spends her time vindicating the images of purity and beauty by degenerating while all the time thinking of herself as the aesthete whose artistic tastes lie in "bold colours" that defy the evasions and ambiguities of life.

To understand this misconception of her role as artist and her role as degenerate, one would have to turn to her first experience of love which changed the balance for her - between realism and "magic". Stella's words throw light on Blanche's dilemma:

> She married a boy who wrote poetry . . . .
> He was extremely good-looking. I think
> Blanche didn't just love him but worshipped
> the ground he walked on! Adored him and
> thought him almost too fine to be human.
> But then she found out --

Stanley: What?

Stella: This beautiful and talented young man was a degenerate. (SND, 126)

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1. This idea is expounded in Williams's short story "Desire and the Black Masseur" in One Arm and Other Stories (New York, 1944).

Blanche's notion of elevation is one of poetry, art, music. She attempts to instil her students with a "reverence" for Poe, Hawthorne, and Whitman. Blanche's illusions about her purity lie in her inability to understand that purity only gains meaning when juxtaposed with impurity and thus that her so-called purity is a mask of evasion which is worn at the cost of a mature vision of human relations. She uses her so-called magic to create a stage for her own character, and thinks she can manoeuvre this role without seeing the base from which it stems. She thus distorts sexuality by not accepting it, and distorts art by making it not an end in itself but rather a means to an end, which is escape from the self. Even the literary context within which she claims to steep herself into is one of neurotic personalities, and of sin and punishment. The interpreter can, of course, only surmise certain possible explanations of the reasons for Blanche's choice of the three authors. Unlike The Glass Menagerie which clarifies Amanda's grounds for refuting Lawrence's novels, A Streetcar Named Desire lacks textual evidence as to why Blanche accepts the three authors' writings. Blanche fails to realize that her idealism stems from a reality of corruption.

By rejecting Allen's homosexuality, she is taking the stance of the very Puritanical society that has suppressed her own instincts. Unleashing her own desires becomes her means of condemning herself with a form of ostracism that stems from the stringent moral values in which she was brought up. It is hazardous to view her degeneracy as an act of oneness with Allen but since an interpretation of the play must take into account her subconscious desires, it could advance the idea.

This point about Blanche invites yet another comparison with

Hedda. Hedda's attempt to seek oneness with Løvborg emerges through the interpreter's process of associating words and images pertaining to the aesthetic and ethical stances of "beauty" and "courage". In the absence of textual evidence in A Streetcar Named Desire, the interpreter faces a greater risk of reading this attempt at oneness into Blanche's actions. There is, of course, a need to remember that Blanche does acknowledge her need to be "with somebody". That the "somebody" in question could be a dead man is not voiced by her.

Blanche's problem broaches the eternal problem of man's relation to society. To what extent is man allowed to be himself, where can he draw the line between himself and others, his "I" and his society? Williams tries to reveal personal emotional relationships within their social context. He focuses on the psychology of a woman, at the very level of her accommodation to her internal psychological environment, and external social milieu. He scrutinizes Southern culture, analyzes its influence upon Blanche, and dramatizes the latter's response to and assimilation of culture. Thus the play rises above the concern with the private lives of a limited set of characters to a concern with more general problems. Williams is trying to understand the nature of a woman, and the needs which stem from it. He examines the role of society in the development of the psychological complexities of the individual, and the causes and consequences of conflicts between human nature and society.

Blanche struggles and struggles. That she is partially defeated by a repressive society and by her own warped vision is underlined in the symbolic meaning of the birth of Stanley's child. Blanche and the culture she stands for are, like Chekhov's aristocrats, outnumbered and undone by the new potent breed that has rendered the former culture impotent.[1] The modern society - ruthless, powerful, and

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1. Williams acknowledges his debt to Chekhov. See "A Talk on Life and Style", Saturday Review, 55 (April, 1972), 25-29 (p. 29).

daring as it is - triumphs because it contains within it the seeds of its own continuity.

Williams points to the fact that cultures contain within them their own seeds of destruction which tend to sprout if these cultures do not move with the times and continually recreate their own "local" time, as a means of survival. Williams introduces the Kowalski child as a product of the vitality, potency, and continuity of all that the brutal yet down-to-earth practical Kowalski-like figures represent. The child is a product of the union between a member of the older culture, who does not oppose change; and a representative of the progressive society. However, the psychological and the social intertwine as the "progressive" in social terms is translated in Williams's play into psychological language championing the natural flow of primitive passions.[1] Williams effectively suggests the nature of the relation between the old and new by the movement of the child, so to say. The child wrapped up in a blue blanket is handed over to Stella at the moment Blanche is forced out. The implications are enriched by the ironic symbolic use of blue associated with the Elysian Fields mythologically held to be the abode of the blessed after death. The forests of superannuated psychological components have been thinned out, deprived of their natural growth, and relegated to a state of death-in-life. Both the psychological and the social intermingle again as instincts and desires are icily repressed by social norms. The streetcar named desire is fated to crash as it collides with a streetcar named death.

Blanche's final words to the doctor, "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers" (SND, 153) implicate the whole of humanity

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1. This idea brings to mind Strindberg's Preface to Miss Julie in which he holds that national forests are thinned out by the removal of decayed and superannuated trees of which the heroine is representative.

in guilt over her dilemma. The helplessness of the doctor, in his professional medical facade, recalls a similar situation at the end of Strindberg's The Father. Physicians cannot function.[1] Natural medication is needed for the wrinkles of the soul, if they are to retain vigour and life. The only effective medicine comprises a soothing reconciliation of the self with the self, and the self with others. Significantly, Blanche only leaves with the doctor when he discards his professional distancing mask and becomes personalized. Blanche indeed has uttered the truth for once: she has always depended on the kindness of strangers: gallant gentlemen worshipping her physique, love-sick boys adoring her beauty, doctors extending their help. But the stranger she has depended on most heavily so far is a mask of evasion, delusion, and illusion, distancing herself from her own "brutal" self, and from her "brutal" surroundings.

Williams carefully examines the fate of Blanche DuBois - the combination of strength and softness, dignity and degradation, humility and haughtiness. The great merit of the play resides in the fact that it is not simply "the quintessence of Freudian sexual psychology"[2] as some critics would have it. It is a work that uses "sexual psychology" as a means of making general comments on ailing divided selves, and malignant individual and social tumours.

Blanche's insanity must, Williams seems to suggest, be seen against the context of the possibilities society offers for so-called sane behaviour. Blanche derives her values from a social code of behaviour that ultimately leads to a divorce between reality and illusion. Though precipitated by an individual reaction to a

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1. The doctor's words at the end of The Father are significant: ". . . my art is useless . . . . My knowledge ends here . . .". The Pastor is now turned to for help.

2. Freud on Broadway : A History of Psycho-analysis and the American Drama (New York, 1955), pp. 376-377.

generalized code of behaviour, her problem nevertheless calls into question the very social standards she adopts.

Blanche uses art and magic as a means of distancing herself from instincts and from the horror of feeling them so powerfully at play within her. Her sexuality is powerfully linked to the land and to Southern codes of morality which restricted such instinct. It is highly significant that in Camino Real[1] women are marginal, and not associated with sexuality. There is, furthermore, emphasis on the fact that Kilroy is a man without a woman. The locale is not defined, the play is not memory, nor a projection of a desire for magic as such. It is a dream in which new meanings will be resurrected. Camino Real suggests the artistic means of escape from corruption by focusing on escape clearly as a need. There is no question of misinterpreting the need to live vicariously to the self. Don Quixote simply dreams and whether that is meant as a comment on the ability of a man to face the needs stemming from his reality because, unlike those of a Southern woman, they do not engender any guilt is a point to be considered by the interpreter of Williams's plays. Don Quixote attempts to resurrect the meanings of truth and innocence. It is not, of course, clear what the causes of escape are, though Don Quixote does refer to "meaningless chaos". Camino Real is a zone of "entry and departure" (CR, 276) giving entrance to "dead-end streets".

Camino Real defines modes of expression reminiscent of Strindberg's dramatic endeavours described in his Preface to

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1. References are to the text of Camino Real as printed (with a Foreword and Afterword by the playwright) in Four Plays by Tennessee Williams. All subsequent page references will be incorporated within the text of the thesis after the abbreviated title.

A Dream Play. In his play, Strindberg had laid the foundation for what remains experimental in the theatre. The gripping compulsion towards exorcizing his self, and reconciling his warring ambivalent roles in relation to women gives way, in A Dream Play, to the unrestrained "inconsequent yet transparently logical shape of a dream". In the Preface to Miss Julie, Strindberg had introduced his notion of characters as "split" and "fragmented". To portray these fragmented souls, Strindberg had to resort mainly to dialogue. A Dream Play evokes an image of fragmentation, and dividedness within the nature of human life, through the natural inexorbitant prerogatives of the dreamer. Strindberg states his intention as follows:

> Everything can happen, everything is possible and probable. Time and place do not exist; on an insignificant basis of reality the imagination spins, weaving new patterns; a mixture of memories, experiences, free fancies, incongruities and improvisations. The characters split, double, multiply, evaporate, condense, disperse, assemble. But one consciousness rules over them all, that of the dreamer; for him there are no secrets, no illogicalities, no scruples, no laws. He neither acquits nor condemns, but merely relates; and, just as a dream is more often painful than happy, so an undertone of melancholy and of pity for all mortal beings accompanies this flickering tale.[1]

A Chekhovian "pity for all mortal beings" is modulated, in Camino Real, through Strindbergian "dissolving and transforming images of a dream".[2] Yet, it is the flexibility of the Strindbergian mode of expression and its capacity for embodying and reflecting fluctuations of mood that Williams aims at producing:

> Fairy tales nearly always have some simple moral lesson of good and evil, but that is not the secret of their fascination any more, I hope, than the philosophical import that might be distilled from the fantasies of Camino Real is the principal element of its appeal.

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1. Preface to A Dream Play, translated by Michael Meyer (London, 1973).

2. Foreword to Camino Real, p. 231. The "Foreword" was originally published in The New York Times (15 March, 1953).

> To me the appeal of this work is its unusual degree of freedom. . . . My desire was to give these audiences my own sense of something wild and unrestricted. . . . This sort of freedom is not chaos or anarchy. On the contrary, it is the result of painstaking design.[1]

Bearing apparent Strindbergian influences, Williams's use of the dream structure serves a dual purpose. It is a functional framework for the representation of confusion and chaos. The dream affords a degree of detachment from reality thus acting as a means to an objective stance which intensifies the effect of the intellectual content. Paradoxically enough, the objectivity afforded by the "inconsequential" form of the dream is coupled by Williams's second purpose: a satiation of a subjective drive for release. The fluidity of form induces a cathartic effect, and acts as an outlet for despair:

> Camino Real served for me, and I think for a number of others who saw it during its brief run in 1953, as a spiritual purgation of that abyss of confusion and lost sense of reality that I, and those others, had somehow wandered into.[2]

Thus the play is to Williams a form of making order out of chaos.

It would be facile, for the interpreter, to attribute Williams's use of the seemingly incoherent structure of a dream to the excessive infiltration of Freudian psychology into twentieth century literature. Williams is, doubtlessly, acquainted with Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams, in the light of which it becomes plausible to interpret Camino Real as a wish-fulfilment of repressed desires. Camino Real

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1. Foreword to Camino Real, p. 231. Ironically, Williams's "freedom" evoked adverse criticism. John Barber in "Why The Tennessee Williams Play fails?", Daily Express (9 April, 1957) describes a 1957 production as "a lurid mixture of violence, sex, and corruption" (p. 7). Kenneth Tynan in "A Whale of a Week", The Observer (14 April, 1957) p. 13, comments that Williams's "garish symbols" "shriek" a message advocating retreat. Tynan considers the message suitable for diaries or autobiographies but unfitted to the theatre as a social public function.

2. Tennessee Williams, "Reflections on Revival of a Controversial Fantasy", New York Times (15 May, 1960), pp. 1, 3 (p. 1).

would thus become the exteriorization and fulfilment of humanity's ardent desire for redemption. Freudian thought, however, fails to account for the profundity of the intellectual content of the play. A Freudian interpretation presupposes the motivating impetus and ensuing result of the dream, thus negating the very freedom Williams seeks. Strindberg's A Dream Play preceded Freud, and anticipated one kind of reaction a playwright may have to despair. Camino Real is, to a certain extent, an expression of the need for freedom from despair.

The centrality of Don Quixote's role underlines Williams's striving to disengage the intellectual content from any definite conclusions. The allusions evoked by Don Quixote's romantic struggles in a "Moriomachia" are juxtaposed with the importance of the message conveyed through him in Camino Real. The effect is a bewildered query, on the interpreter's part, as to the seriousness of the intellectual content. Williams provocatively taunts the interpreter with the pervasively paradoxical nature of human life. The content cancels the form as the question cancels the answer. Life remains an unanswered question to romanticists and realists.[1]

Tennessee Williams's functional use of Don Quixote, the romanticist, is a means of delineating the enigmatic nature of human life. Don Quixote's dissociation from reality contributes to the expression of Williams's view of the mysterious painful realities. The tendency to dream and romanticize about these realities renders Don Quixote more susceptible to despair; and consequently more inclined to fight it, regardless of the means or the outcome.

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1. Williams expresses the turmoil produced by man's failure to supply answers in a poem entitled "Carrousel Tunes", in which "men" are described as "the freaks of the cosmic circus". The poem is printed in, In The Winter of Cities, op. cit., p. 91.

Unlike Beckett's tramps, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza know what to "ask" for, but the indefinitiveness of their supplication stems from suspicions as to the seriousness of their intentions. Don Quixote wants to resurrect the tainted meanings of "truth", "valour", and "devoir" crucified by the "meaningless mumble" of chaos:

> And my dream will be a pageant, a masque in which old meanings will be remembered and possibly new ones discovered, and when I wake from this sleep and this disturbing pageant of a dream, I'll choose one among its shadows to take along with me in the place of Sancho . . . . (CR, 239)

A phoenix figures prominently in Camino Real. It is lighted occasionally to enhance the interplay between imagistic elements and the controlling idea: resurrection. Beyond the Camino Real lies a Terra Incognita. The entrances to "dead-end streets" (CR. 236) evoke an image of claustrophobic void. The Terra Incognita is "a wasteland between the walled town and the distant perimeter of snow-topped mountains" (CR, 236). It can be fruitfully compared with the unknown territory Solness falls into, the sunless land Oswald's senseless senses will wander into, the darkness Rose cannot perceive. The exit from Camino Real is an "Arch of Triumph" (CR, 260).

Like Dante's allegory of life as hell, Camino Real is a search for redemption. Williams stresses the relation of his play to the controlling idea of Dante's Inferno by suggestively selecting Dantesque lines for his epigraph. The travellers on the Camino Real are effectively chosen within historical contexts belonging to several temporal and spatial backgrounds to accentuate the timelessness and universality of the search, and to establish a connection between the fantastic dream level and the realistic intellectual one. The choice of Don Quixote, Lord Byron, Jacques Cassanova, Marguerite de Gautier, among others, is part of Williams's contrivance to

construct "another world, a separate existence"[1] by rebelling against time and space and the "inflexible demands of a logician".[2] The instrumentality of these traditional figures is highlighted through their interfusion with Kilroy, or their contribution to the comprehension of his plight. Like Vladimir and Estragon, Kilroy is a tramp. Unlike Beckett's characters, he bears a specific nationality. Kilroy's name widely in vogue, in graffito, stresses his representative quality. Williams does not cancel the timeless quality of his traditional figures by creating Kilroy as an American. Kilroy becomes a symbol[3] of innocence, bringing corruption into sharp focus. He is a symbol of the new resurrected world as opposed to the old world. Like Hemingway's "innocent" Americans initiated into the corruption of Europe and symbolically scarred by a wound, Kilroy is doomed to lose his "golden" heart on the Camino Real. Like James's Americans in Europe, Kilroy is destined to clash with values alien to his own. Yet, Kilroy's ideals and inclinations towards good may redeem a world of evil. Kilroy's purity is symbolized by Williams's recurrent use of "white". Blanche, and Sebastian in Suddenly Last Summer, wear "white" as a symbol of their perverted notions of purity and innocence. Kilroy's "dungarees" are "faded white" as a result of "long wear and much washing" (CR, 249). Blanche's and Sebastian's white clothes have been washed, by Kilroy, from the stains of puerile idealism till the whiteness has faded. Kilroy is a man without a woman. Kilroy-like characters in the frontier tradition must remain without a woman. To venture into the frontier of consciousness and

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1. Foreword to Camino Real, p. 231.

2. Ibid., p. 232.

3. In the "Foreword" Tennessee Williams justifies his extensive use of symbols in Camino Real, by holding that symbols are the natural speech of drama.

away from specific locales, Kilroy cannot be a Cassanova "sweetly encumbered" with a woman. Kilroy's physical impotence, reminiscent of Jake Barnes's, is an image of the spiritual sterility of life created by man's imposed limitations. Symbolically, the "heart" that renders Kilroy physically sterile and bars him from his "real true woman", is his means of redeeming humanity from spiritual inertia, and Williams's means of suggesting a balancing of the needs of society and the individual that afflict his female characters. Kilroy does not know what "the place" is or how he arrived at it. The world represented by Camino Real is a "funny paper read backwards" (CR, 297). Funny paper refers, of course, to the American comic books. But on a deeper, more sophisticated level, this "funny paper read backwards" is reminiscent of the world of Ibsen. Only through the dynamic progress of time can meaning be gradually revealed. Williams seems to suggest that only in the present can a past be redeemed. Only in the future can a threatening promise be viewed as a promising threat. Humanity is subjected to the experimentation of "wanton Gods" with "guinea pigs". When Quixote utters the word "lonely", the "word is echoed softly by almost unseen figures huddled below the stairs and against the wall of the town" (CR, 239). In the vast void, man's expressions of loneliness are echoed, for the listener - if any - does not alleviate the sense of loneliness by responding to its sounds. On the Camino Real, "sisters" and "brothers" must huddle together to find some warmth. But the word "hermano" (brother) is inflammatory. Paradoxically enough, the absence of a pattern determining the characters' values and forming a meaningful framework of sin and punishment renders a brother into a utilitarian opportunist and infuses a semi-religious word with derogatory implications:

> The word is said in pulpits and at tables of council where its volatile essence can be contained. But on the lips of these creatures, what is it? A wanton incitement to riot, without understanding. For what is a brother to them but someone to get ahead of, to cheat, to lie to, to undersell in the market. Brother, you say to a man whose wife you sleep with! - But now, you see, the word has disturbed the people and made it necessary to invoke martial law.[1] (CR, 248)

Kilroy and Jacques suggest that in a world where values deteriorate, a search for salvation must be undertaken:

> Kilroy: Maybe that's why fate has brung us together! We're buddies under the skin.
>
> Jacques: Travellers born?
>
> Kilroy: Always looking for something!
>
> Jacques: Satisfied by nothing!
>
> Kilroy: Hopeful?
>
> Jacques: Always! (CR, 260)

Jacques and Kilroy echo Brand's demand for "all or nothing". Like Solness, they are satisfied by "nothing" less than a high church tower. Unlike Solness, they humiliatingly wait for a "Fugitivo". The Fugitivo can be fruitfully compared to Chekhov's Moscow, and Beckett's Godot. Beyond the Camino Real, Kilroy can see nothing but the manifestations of a void:

> I don't see nothing but nothing - and then more nothing. And then I see some mountains. But the mountains are covered with snow. (CR, 261)

Kilroy represents an image of humanity searching for an exit. He is a rebel who refuses to accept the status quo that only gives man vestiges of security. He attempts to derive a meaning from the overall meaning of the universe. Humanity, in Camino Real, must

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1. Edward Albee in The Zoo Story expresses the degeneration of values and the devaluation of language as a means of communication through Jerry: "If we can so misunderstand well then, why have we invented the word love in the first place". See A Zoo Story and other Plays (London, 1961), p. 132.

repress its desire to probe the nature of human life, and conceal its resentment of finiteness:

> The exchange of serious questions and ideas, especially between persons from opposite sides of the plaza, is regarded unfavourably here. You'll notice I'm talking as if I had acute laryngitis. I'm gazing into the sunset. If I should start to whistle "La Golondrina" it means we're being heard by the Guards on the terrace. (CR, 259)

Like Ibsen's "ghosts", the guards are father-figures debarring man from the sun. Knowledge remains guarded from the capacities of perception. Significantly, "golondrina" in Spanish means "swallow". In the "Prologue" birds are associated with "daybreak":

> Above the ancient wall that backs the set and the perimeter of mountains visible above the wall, are flickers of a white radiance as though daybreak were a white bird caught in a net and struggling to rise. (CR, 236)

The swallow must not see the "sun". Man is doomed to "gaze into the sunset" and wait for "night to fall". Kilroy cannot bear the silence. He must unveil the secret even momentarily. He must save his spirit by transcending a hellish existence. Kilroy's spiritual "wound" motivates his act of "separate peace":

> How do I git out? Which way do I go, which way do I get out? . . . What's the best way out, if there is any way out? I got to find one. I had enough of this place. I had too much of this place. I'm free. I'm a free man with equal rights in this world! . . . I don't like this place! . . . I see a sign that says EXIT. That's a sweet word to me, man, that's a lovely word, EXIT! That's the entrance to paradise for Kilroy! Exit, I'm coming, Exit, I'm coming! (CR, 264)

Like Vladimir and Estragon, Kilroy is sceptical about the existence of an "exit". Yet, he denounces a state of affairs that not only fails to offer answers, but also forbids questions. Dr. Stockman had to prove that the strongest man confronts social barriers with the force of his own individuality. Kilroy represents man deprived of faith,

yet forced to stand alone. He is free to desire an exit yet tied to the Camino Real for the only possibility of flight is afforded by a "non-scheduled", unpredictable flight that only operates with "orders from someone higher up"[1] (CR, 274).

In their precarious condition, human beings are like birds perching together on an unstable hold. They confuse the habitual experience of insecurity, with security. The sanctity of love is mundanely corrupted by habit:

> We're a pair of captive hawks caught in the same cage, and so we've grown used to each other.[2] (CR, 288)

"Daybreak" cannot be freed from captivity till humanity faces God. Williams seems to pose the question as to whether it must be cleansed from its corruptions before it finds the entrance to "Paradise" or the "exit" from the Camino Real. At one important point in the play, The Survivor speaks about his pony, Peeto:

> When Peeto, my pony, was born - he stood on his four legs at once, and accepted the world! -- He was wiser than I . . . .

Interrupted by a vendor selling "fritos", and Rosita selling her cheap "love", the Survivor continues:

> - When Peeto was one year old he was wiser than God! (CR, 245)

In Williams's dream world, Peeto, a representative of the instinctive irrational part of man, is wiser than the Survivor whose rational thinking prevents him from accepting an irrational world; Peeto is

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1. The idea of the Fugitivo as the saviour from a tragic dilemma is perhaps a development of Jim O'Connor in relation to Laura, in The Glass Menagerie. Jim is described as "the long delayed but always expected something that we live for" (Four Plays, p. 3).

2. In the Foreword to Camino Real, Williams uses the image of the cage to describe the effect of habit on theatre-goers: a cage represents security as well as confinement to a bird that has grown used to being in it, and when a theatrical work kicks over the traces . . . security seems challenged. See p. 233.

wiser than God for "he" accepts corruption as part of the irrationality of man. But man cannot accept himself as corrupt. He must find his way back to innocence in order to alleviate his fears:

> Are you afraid of anything at all? Afraid of your heartbeat? Or the eyes of strangers! . . . Do you wish that things could be straight and simple again as they were in your childhood? Would you like to go back to Kindy Garten?
> (CR, 252)

Like Auden's characters in The Age of Anxiety, Williams's dream of re-entering the Garden of Eden. As Gutman illuminatingly comments, the "furthest departure" is from the present self to the self as it used to be (CR, 276). Man must make a journey from corrupting disorder to redeeming order. Like the three sisters of Chekhov's play whose irretrievable "Moscow" belongs to the ordered existence of the past, Lord Byron is compellingly motivated to escape "declivity in this world". The fact that man's "luck ran out the day [he] was born" (CR, 298) forces him to sail on an eternal Odyssey in search of meaning:

> -- There is a time for departure even when there's no certain place to go!
>
> I'm going back to look for one, now. I'm sailing to Athens. At least I can look up at the Acropolis, I can stand at the foot of it and look up at broken columns on the crest of a hill - if not purity, at least its recollection . . . .
>
> I can sit quietly looking for a long, long time in absolute silence, and possibly, yes, still possibly -
>
> The old pure music will come to me again. Of course, on the other hand I may hear only the little noise of insects in the grass . . . .
>
> But I am sailing to Athens! Make voyages! - Attempt them! - there's nothing else. . . . (CR, 279)

The Acropolis evokes a feeling of nostalgia. "Once" order existed, but man cannot live in the past. He must find salvation within the present. The past can only offer a background which throws present

degeneration into sharp relief. Kilroy voices the opinion that "A man has got to hock his sweet used-to-be in order to finance his present situation" (CR, 254). Financing the present situation involves an attempt at reconstituting the conditions that are conducive to the regeneration of innocence. Salvation can only be worked out in human terms. "The deal" is "rugged" (CR, 318), but there are ways of transcending the human situation. Williams expresses faith in the healing redemptive power of love. In The Rose Tattoo, Williams had asserted through one of his characters that: People "find God in each other. And when they lose each other, they lose God and they're lost".[1] Jacques preaches the same gospel in the implicative meanings of his conviction that:

> The violets in the mountains can break the rocks if you believe in them and allow them to grow! (CR, 289)

Jacques is advocating love between man and man, or man and woman as a means of reaching out for God. Man can reconcile himself with the God of love by re-establishing the true untainted qualities of love. To that end, Williams creates Kilroy as the symbol of the new world, the saviour of humanity, and the "chosen" hero.[2] Kilroy dies yet he is resurrected by the power of love. He dies while still believing in the cause of humanity, and is eventually redeemed by La Madrecita:

> Keen for him, all maimed creatures, deformed and mutilated - his homeless ghost is your own! . . . Rise, ghost! Go! Go bird! (CR, 314)

The bird associated with daybreak frees itself from the net, and rises. La Madrecita is described as one of the "harmless dreamers", "loved by the people" (CR, 247). She is a mother-figure who responds to the

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1. The Rose Tattoo, Five Plays, p. 144.

2. In Block Sixteen, Kilroy claims to the crowd that he is the "chosen" hero.

need of humanity for help. "Mary, help a Christian" cries Kilroy. The first two syllables of her name "madre" suggest, of course, the image of a mother. "Cita" in Spanish means appointment. The interpreter may pose the question as to whether Madrecita is a female Godot who remembered the much-desired-for appointment with humanity. Love and sympathy among human beings must be accompanied by an honourable endurance of the assaults of time:

> The wounds of the vanity, the many offences
> our egos have to endure, being housed in bodies
> that age and hearts that grow tired, are better
> accepted with a tolerant smile. (CR, 319)

Don Quixote advocates an acceptance of life on its own terms. Life is a "rugged" deal to the inhabitants of the Camino Real. The Terra Incognita threatens them all with annihilation and extinction. To confront the threat with "honour" is the only way of ending the game gracefully:

> Don't! Pity! Your! Self! (CR, 319)

Self-pity negates the functional role of honour and courage in embracing life on its own terms, loving it, and accepting it. The "violets" in the "mountains" have "broken the rocks". The spring of humanity that had gone dry flows again. In the play's terms, man is redeemed. Meanings are resurrected.

The "unrestricted", "dissolving", and "transforming" images through which the image of innocence is evoked are played upon within the context of the dream in a manner that suffuses innocence with corruption. The illogical form of a dream may account for Williams's subtle underscoring of definite conclusions. Yet, the overlapping images are Williams's means of warning the interpreter against grasping any certainties on the Camino Real, or even in a dream of retrieving innocence. The fiesta meant to celebrate the symbolic fulfilment of the dream of innocence through restoring the virginity of Esmeralda

is used to signify a symbolic act of betrayal. Stifled by her unpromising existence on the Camino Real, and failing to find security, Marguerite betrays "honour", paradoxically enough, as a "defence" against betrayal. She decides to "wound" Cassanova's vanity by betraying him:

> We have to distrust each other. It is our only defence against betrayal. (CR, 288)

Because life betrays Marguerite by its elusiveness, so-called values are rendered meaningless:

> Tell the charming young man that the French lady's bored with her company tonight! Say that the French lady missed the Fugitivo and wants to forget she missed it! Oh, and reserve a room with a balcony so that I can watch your sister appear on the roof when the moonrise makes her a virgin! (CR, 290)

Restoration of honour and loss of honour co-exist. Esmeralda's virginity is restored while Jacques is coronated as the King of Cuckolds. Williams's attempt to embrace the paradoxes inherent in human life serves double, contradictory purposes. On the one hand, it deepens the effect of the intellectual content of the play and justifies Williams's assertion that the fluid form of Camino Real is the result of "painstaking design". On the other hand, it contributes to the sense of "release" aimed at by Williams, by challenging the "inflexible demands of a logician". On the Camino Real, reality and unreality, corruption and innocence, chaos and order co-exist simultaneously.

Camino Real evokes an image of a suffering humanity alienated from its self, and a broader condition from which it seeks to derive meaning. The implications of Solness's confessional "fall" from the tower of pride would seem to be played upon by Williams. Humanity must redeem itself by being aware of its sin. It has strayed a long way from "Kindy Garten", and must acknowledge its guilt. Camino Real

implies that guilt is the betrayer. In his Preface to Sweet Bird of Youth, Williams expresses his views of guilt:

> Guilt is universal. I mean a strong sense of guilt. If there exists any area in which a man can rise above his moral condition, imposed upon him at birth, and long before birth, by the nature of his breed, then I think it is only a willingness to know it, to face its existence in him, and I think that, at least below the conscious level we all face it.[1]

In The Night of the Iguana[2] guilt becomes firmly linked to Shannon's puritanical upbringing; while Hannah is free from it through an acceptance of herself and a use of her art to salvage an identity.

The Night of the Iguana is a confessional play presenting Shannon's psychological dilemmas, the resolution of which has a therapeutic effect on Shannon, and on God's image as seen by him. The play restores God's shifting images through Shannon's acknowledgement of his misinterpretation of the role of God as a consequence of stringent moral standards enhanced by Shannon's mother. A crisis of faith is interpreted in terms of a crisis of conscience as Shannon's relation to God is explained in terms of his relation to his self.

Williams's predominant thematic concern in The Night of the Iguana is not only a development of previously discussed concerns in Camino Real, but also a natural evolution of a concern with the

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1. Foreword to Sweet Bird of Youth, p. 12. Comparably, Arthur Miller explains that the central impulse for writing The Crucible (published in 1953) was the question of guilt residing in Salem which the hysteria merely "unleashed but did not create". See Introduction to the Collected Plays.

2. References are to the text of The Night of the Iguana (London, 1968). All subsequent page references will be incorporated within the text of the thesis, after the abbreviated title.

flesh-spirit duality that runs through Williams's plays, and characterizes his vision of life. Williams becomes predominantly concerned with the vision of God originating in psychological imbalance characterized by the widening unbridgeable gap between man's compulsion towards spirituality, and his revulsion of internal barriers denying his freedom of spirit and external barriers denying the freedom of his instincts. Amanda and Blanche were alienated from a tenable life within themselves and their societies, by their moral illusions of their own purity and innocence. Cat on a Hot Tin Roof broadens the effects of repression to a social level. It condemns "mendacity" and evasion of truths, in a social context, and reveals its effects in augmenting people's incomprehensibility to themselves, and to others. In such a repressive society, Brick believes he is retaining his ideals and escaping the truth of his homosexuality, by following the dictates of the moral codes of his society and disowning Skipper. To evade the social ramifications of his act, Brick transgresses against a fellow human being. He betrays a friend as Blanche had betrayed her husband by giving priorities to the fear of social condemnation over compassion and understanding.

The conflict between Brick and Big Daddy in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof over mendacity develops into a confrontation between Shannon and his congregation, and becomes a means of exteriorizing a conflict within Shannon himself regarding the truth about God. The father-son conflict thus becomes a Father-son conflict. The schism between the flesh and the spirit, and the repression exercised to bridge it become the cause and effect of a painful feeling of metaphysical guilt.

In Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Williams had expressed his desire to rise above his concern with the individual consciousness to the collective:

> The bird that I hope to catch in the net of this play is not the solution of one man's psychological problem. I'm trying to catch the true quality of experience in a group of people, that cloudy, flickering, evanescent - fiercely charged! - interplay of live human beings in the thundercloud of a common crisis.[1]

In The Night of the Iguana Williams underlines his intention of generalizing Shannon's experience by asserting that the iguana is a "caught thing standing for the human situation, and not for any character in particular".[2]

Williams effectively stresses the flesh-spirit duality by the two-fold dramatic function of the stage-setting - on both the realistic and symbolic levels. The "primitiveness" and "wildness" of the locale, against which the external action takes place, are fruitful suggestions of the primal passions and wild Strindbergian settings of the internal action. The Costa Verde represents an image of corruption and the setting against which atonement for corruption takes place. Hannah describes Shannon as "indulging" himself in "a Passion Play performance" (NI, 90). The Golgotha on which Shannon suffers for the sins of the world is a "roofed verandah" significantly raised above the stage level. The Night of the Iguana has fourteen characters analogous to the stones marking events which occurred on the journey of Jesus Christ to Golgotha. The biblical "Via Dolorosa" is represented by "a path which goes down through the rain forest to the highway and the beach" (NI, 6).

The set is surrounded by an "encroaching jungle" - a symbolic representation of the barriers confronting man's spiritual yearnings. On the figurative level, the jungle's function approximates that of the boundaries of Oswald's sunless "home", and the fiery jealousy of Hedda.

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1. Five Plays by Tennessee Williams, p. 61.
2. "Williams and the Iguana", Williams interviewed by Seymour Peck, The New York Times (24 Dec. 1961), p. X 5.

Williams suggests that the jungle is the objective correlative of the German's ruthlessness. The Fahrenkopfs are closely allied with Stanley Kowalski. Like him, they represent sub-human levels of existence, vulgarity, and violence. Hilde's crude sexuality, and Frau Fahrenkopf's interest in food and drink represent the animal functions of the group. Herr Fahrenkopf, the tank manufacturer, idolizes militarism. Williams describes the Germans as "splendidly physical" (NI, 12) for they represent the tyrannical grip of the physical over the spiritual. This battle between the physical and spiritual is fought externally between Hannah and Shannon, and internally within Shannon himself. Williams further describes them as "baroque cupids" (NI, 12), a phrase which suggests their grotesque qualities. The Fahrenkopfs with their blaring radio broaden the context of individual conflict. Williams's choice of these sensual characters to represent a war metaphor within the individual and without him is highly effective. It gives the play a distancing detached quality. The effect of the war in the distance is like that of the dream in Camino Real. It gives the play a touch of universality. The way Hannah visualizes hurricanes could well apply to these distancing effects:

> Sometimes outside disturbances like that
> are an almost welcome distraction from
> inside disturbances, aren't they? (NI, 39)

Furthermore, Williams's choice of the year 1940, and of the Germans in America, is highly suggestive. America in 1940 had not yet entered the war, but like Shannon swinging in the hammock, like the iguana in its captivity, America was on the edge of impending doom. However, Williams does not choose America or the Germans to state political facts, or to manifest an interest in history. Like Arthur Miller, in The Crucible, Williams makes use of history as a means to an end.

That Williams is not interested in the geographical locations of wars but only in their implicative meanings is suggested by Shannon's description of Mexico as a "continent" (NI, 24). The war being fought beyond America, and beyond the immediate setting of the play is Williams's way of pointing to the fact that the war taking place in tangible parts of the globe is less important than that militantly taking place in man's mysterious relations to God or to his self. The Fahrenkopfs as conquerors of the world throw into sharp focus the excessively arduous task of conquering the spirit and restraining its desire for knowledge. The Germans exteriorize the belligerently aggressive parts of Shannon's nature that are yet to be tamed and moderated.

Hannah Jelkes is the antithesis to the "baroque" vulgarity of the Germans. Her spirituality aspires to the most elevated heights as a Gothic spire points towards the sky. Hannah, unlike Solness, has climbed church towers with the selfless dedication to transforming an individual experience into a collective one. She defies God by her spiritual attainment, not by giddy pride. Hannah does not commit the sin of becoming the "sol". Yet she transcends mundane levels of experience to a state of otherworldliness that was Amanda's and Blanche's "life-lie". Hannah resembles Alma before the latter's conversion. She is an Alma who maintains her belief in "the principle back of existence - the everlasting struggle and aspiration for more than our human limits have placed in our reach". Williams's stage directions stress Hannah's "ethereal" qualities:

> She suggests a Gothic cathedral image of medieval saint, but animated. She could be thirty, she could be forty: she is totally feminine and yet androgynous-looking - almost timeless. (NI, 17-18)

To stress her sexless femininity, Williams describes her as wearing the costume of a Kabuki actor. The Kabuki popular theatre in Japan

was, of course, initiated by a priestess whose performance first took the name Onna (Woman) Kabuki. Significantly, "Words of Women" - the popular song played by the marimba band will gently dominate the internal and external action. Hannah's name may have been suggested by the flower-ways of the Kabukis - Hanna-michi -- and Nonno's name by sounds from "Onna" and "Hanna". It is highly significant that the Germans "troop" in through the jungle path, whereas Hannah appears "below the verandah steps" where "shrubs with vivid trumpet-shaped flowers and a few cactus plants" can be seen. Hannah's entrance through the flower-way coincides with Shannon's act of "pounding his fist against [the wall] with a sobbing sound in his throat" (NI, 17). The iguana and its saviour collaborate in a battle for the survival of the fittest, most feasible morality. Like the arrivals and departures in Chekhov's world, Hannah's arrival intensifies Shannon's realization of his plight. Yet, this realization in The Night of the Iguana, unlike that in Three Sisters, leads to Moscow:

> They are like two actors in a play which is about to fold on the road, preparing gravely for a performance which may be the last one.
> (NI, 48)

Hannah functions as a catalytic force reconciling Shannon to his self and to his God. Like La Madrecita, Hannah possesses the power of resurrecting the hero. Hannah introduces selfless love to Shannon and to his self-projected God.

The external action of The Night of the Iguana takes place in a Mexican hotel, the proprietress of which is Maxine - a "rapaciously lusty", recently widowed shrew. Maxine's sexual desire for Shannon is obvious; it throws into sharp relief Hannah's spiritual desire to save him. Like Maggie, Maxine is a "cat on a hot tin roof", determined to satiate her desire for Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon. Shannon attempts to reconcile his divine mission towards God with

a mission towards his instincts, approaching a Lawrencean fiery worship of life for life's sake. Shannon's Christian name, Lawrence, is a deliberate provocative allusion to the flesh-spirit duality underlining the main thematic concerns of Lawrence and Williams; and resulting in repression and "prudery".

Shannon conducts travels for Blake Tours. He wanders in God's countries - not illustrating sketches for the Divine Comedy but roasting in a Dantesque inferno, and desperately needing a Beatrice to guide him. Shannon craves "songs of innocence" but discovers within himself corruption. The Night of the Iguana concerns "a man of God, on vacation" (NI, 62) not a man of "God on vacation". In The Night of the Iguana Hannah helps Shannon to know God. The sterility of his loveless self is alleviated by a woman who is timeless and sexless, but time-bound in so far as she possesses a realistic solution to a problem that has so far remained on the abstract "fantastic" level. Shannon has been "locked out" of his church as a result of two accusations - "fornication" and "heresy" (NI, 50). Significantly these transgressions enhance the interaction between the flesh and the spirit, the mundane and the sublime. To add meaningful extensions to Shannon's offence, Williams places them in an historical context of sin and punishment by referring to the "gold-hungry Conquistadors that bore the flag of the Inquisition along with the Cross of Christ" (NI, 53), and to the head-dress of Montezuma. The Inquisition establishes the idea of the detection and punishment of heresy, and Montezuma suggests the severity of legal codes of punishment, and sacrificial religions.

In terms of the text, Shannon's unorthodox, heretical judgement of God appears as the cause and effect of a repressed desire for "fornication". Defying the conventional view of God, however,

differs drastically from denying the existence of God. Shannon does not preach "atheistic" sermons. He is compelled by a need to exonerate God from the condemnation of man by justifying God's way to man in the light of man's way to God. Shannon is forcefully driven by an impulse to shake the "smug" complacent so-called Christians into a realization of the "mendacity" and "hypocrisy" characterizing their traditional hereditary beliefs which pass on into the realm of the abstract, and fail to move dynamically with man's changing concepts of God in view of his own developing experiences:

> I had a prepared sermon - meek, apologetic - I threw it away, tossed it into the chancel. Look here, I said, I shouted, I'm tired of conducting services in praise and worship of a senile delinquent - yeah, that's what I said, I shouted! All your Western theologies, the whole mythology of them, are based on the concept of God as a <u>senile delinquent</u> and, by God, I will not and cannot continue to conduct services in praise and worship of this, this . . . this . . .
> (<u>NI</u>, 51)

The phrase is too painful for Shannon to reiterate. It rouses his own feeling of guilt ensuing a misinterpretation of God's role. Yet, like Dr. Stockmann, he will stand "alone" to prove the poignancy of his convictions however high the emotional price may be:

> Yeah, this angry, petulant old man. I mean He's represented like a bad-tempered childish old, old, sick, peevish man - I mean like the sort of old man in a nursing-home that's putting together a jigsaw puzzle and can't put it together and gets furious at it and kicks over the table. Yes, I tell you they <u>do</u> that, all our theologies do it - accuse God of being a cruel, senile delinquent, blaming the world and brutally punishing all He created for his own faults in construction.
> (<u>NI</u>, 51-52)

Shannon's overwhelming need to exonerate God from the charge of being a "senile delinquent" stems from his personal need to expiate his sin of visualizing God as a "senile delinquent" who "brutally" punishes all His creations. Thus Shannon's confrontation of people with the

truth about God offers his own guilt a cathartic release. Significantly, Shannon's psychological and religious crimes are largely determined by his childhood direct experience of a mother-figure and indirect experience of God through his mother's experience of Southern morality. Shannon's familial background has shaped his vision of pleasure and spontaneity as sins. He is the "son of a minister and grandson of a bishop, and the direct descendant of two colonial governors" (NI, 79). The morality typified by these staunch supporters of rigidity, and exemplified by the smug complacency of his congregation, have been related to Shannon through his mother. Shannon's crisis of faith originates in this conception of the creator as a vengeful God denying man pleasure. His compulsion to sins of the flesh has always been followed by guilt, and a self-annihilating need for punishment. The implications of Williams's presentation of Shannon's psychological dilemma invites the use of Freudian language. His super-ego, harshly shaped by his mother, his real father, and God is fiercely admonishing. God becomes his rival not only to his pleasure but also to his mother. Shannon's intense guilt grounded in a childhood neurosis is explained by Maxine who had overheard Shannon's past semi-therapeutic sessions with Fred:

> Mama, your Mama, used to send you to bed before you was ready to sleep - so you practised the little boy's vice, you amused yourself with yourself. And once she caught you at it and whaled your backside with the backside of a hairbrush for it because it made God mad as much as it did Mama, and she had to punish you for it so God wouldn't punish you for it harder than she would. (NI, 75)

Maxine further explains that Shannon has taken revenge on God by preaching atheistical sermons, and revenge on his mother by seducing young girls. A woman to him is a "Medea" used to take vengeance.

But both forms of aggression towards external objects violate his sense of self as the subject of God's and his mother's love. Shannon sees God as repressive. He can, though, make a compromise with life largely because he will be brought to an acceptance of his self and God through a woman who exonerates Shannon's mother, his God perceived mainly through a mother, and his subsequent internalized aggression with his self.

Williams effectively makes the implications of Shannon's "heresy" unfold fully in the light of the associations attached to a "senile delinquent". The conditions, under which Shannon's infantile equation of pleasure and punishment was created, are recreated in the incident of "fornication" thus providing him with the pleasures of instinctual fulfilment and self-annihilating punishment:

> Yeah, the fornication came first, preceded the heresy by several days. A very young Sunday-school teacher asked to see me privately in my study. A pretty little thing - no chance in the world - only child, and both of her parents were spinsters, almost identical spinsters wearing clothes of the opposite sexes. Fooling some of the people some of the time, but not me - none of the time. . . . [He is pacing the verandah with gathering agitation, and the all-inclusive mockery that his guilt produces.] Well, she declared herself to me - wildly. (NI, 50)

The adult in Shannon sees the attraction as natural; the child in him conceives of this attraction as unnatural:

> The natural, or unnatural, attraction of one . . . lunatic for . . . another . . . that's all it was. I was the god dammedest prig in those days that even you could imagine. I said, let's kneel down together and pray, and we did; we knelt down, but all of a sudden the kneeling position turned to a reclining position on the rug of my study and . . . . When we got up? I struck her. Yes, I did, I struck her in the face and called her a damned little tramp. So she ran home. I heard the next day she'd cut herself with her father's straight-blade razor. Yeah, the paternal spinster shaved. (NI, 50-51)

Like Shannon, the Sunday-school teacher has been brought up in a repressive atmosphere, by "sexless" parents. Her upbringing, like Shannon's, obviously precluded the gratification of sexual instincts; hence Shannon's and the teacher's rebellion against instinctual deprivation implies a rebellion against God. Denying sexuality is equated with acknowledging the God of repression. Significantly, their acknowledgement of the sexual in their nature synchronizes with an attempt to acknowledge God by praying, thus Williams's timing implies Shannon's denial of the God of repression, and a Lawrencean worship of a God of spontaneity. For Shannon to deny the God of repression is to confess to human frailty and exonerate God from the charge of heaping unjustifiable suffering on the world. Therefore, the interpreter can see Shannon's defence of God against this false accusation as an accusation of man's use of God's cruelty as a defence mechanism against his own weakness. By freeing his sexual inhibitions, Shannon frees the external God of his childhood, and internalizes His harsh admonishing orders. He embodies the qualities of a repressive senile delinquent by gratifying the needs of the "id", and enjoying the torment of the built-in superego. His continual proof of his weakness entails a continual justification of God. To protect God from his resentment, Shannon becomes the admonishing senile delinquent punishing himself, after every act of what he views as weakness. Shannon uses his flesh to enjoy the torment of the spirit. Williams suggests this point through the account Maxine gives of her husband's death. The interpreter can meaningfully see that account as extending Williams's thematic concern with the flesh-spirit duality. At one point, Maxine refers to her dead husband, Fred, who like the absent Captain Alving, General Gabler, and Mr. Wingfield, provides

meaningful extensions to the action. Fred's dying wish was to be dropped in the sea: "So now old Freddie the Fisherman is feeding the fish - fishes' revenge on old Freddie" (NI, 41). Fish had constituted Fred's livelihood as a "fisherman" in the same way that God constitutes Shannon's as a clergyman. Shannon feeds God his tormented soul by submitting himself to a process of slow decay thus allowing God to take revenge on him. The decaying Shannon becomes himself a "senile delinquent" suffering "crack-ups" instead of "cerebral incidents", and wasting his "youth" in tropical countries. Williams underlines Shannon's self-annihilating process of exonerating God by punishing himself for a childhood resentment and proving that he is a senile delinquent, through disrupting the chronological sense of time in the play and deliberately confusing images of birth and youth with death and old age.

The age of the young Lawrence Shannon is determined, as it is for Chance Wayne, by the degree of "rot" in him. Thus the "still young Mr. T. Lawrence Shannon" can, through a "rapid-slow" process, age to become a senile delinquent gratifying his self by "seducing a lady or two", proving his weakness. Williams associates Shannon with the "paternal spinster", the senile delinquent, through an act of shaving (NI, 20). The disruption of time; and the consequent possibility of viewing time as relative, and a young clergyman as a senile delinquent are further stressed by the jocular reference to Nonno's age as "ninety-seven years young" (NI, 30). Nonno, unlike Shannon, has not yet relinquished his ties with life, he wards off decay by the exercise of his poetic powers. Paradoxically enough, this old-young poet, reminiscent of Beckett's ageless characters, has a death-like surname: Coffin. Furthermore, Nonno envisages the sea as "the cradle of life" (NI, 28) while the dramatic

events present the sea as Fred's "coffin".

The senile delinquent of Shannon's infantile vision suffers an infantile regression. Infancy and senility are deliberately confused. Shannon wishes to regress to childhood to atone for his sinful vengeance against God, yet must embody characteristics of the God of childhood to punish the living child in the man. This intricate welter of confusion characterizing Shannon's conscious and unconscious relations to his self and God is explained by Nonno's equation of infancy and senility, and by implication the respective roles allotted to pleasure and punishment in the two stages respectively, and in each of them individually:

> And tell the manager . . . the, uh, lady . . .
> that I know some hotels don't want to take dogs,
> cats, or monkeys and some don't even solicit
> the patronage of infants in their late nineties
> who arrive in perambulators with flowers instead
> of rattles . . . . (NI, 31)

The inner turmoil characterizing Shannon's aggressive relation to his self, and to the God he protects from his self, precipitates a feeling of guilt verbally expressed as the "spook". The spook exteriorizes Shannon's fear of, and desire for punishment. Like Hilde to Solness, the spook is a threat to Shannon. Whereas Hilde was "tanned by the sun" (MB, 375), Shannon's spook is an "after-sundown" product (NI, 15): the disparity is indicative of the symbolic associations given to the sun by Ibsen and Williams respectively. The sun, in bleak Norway, is a saving grace for Oswald and thus associated with creativity and truth. But in a "tropical" country the sun is synonymous with decay, and thus becomes a curse to Shannon, which can only be lifted at "night"; hence the centrality of the image of "night" in Williams's play in a manner comparable to the centrality of the sun in Ghosts. Night brings salvation, and freedom to Williams's iguana as the liberating sun had pointed the road of salvation to Mrs. Alving.

As in Ghosts, symbols in The Night of the Iguana are not merely used for inference, or induction. They effectively create a useful guide for the interpreter as to the meaning of the play.

The therapeutic effect of Hannah on Shannon's agonized consciousness, and her dramatic function of unfolding Williams's themes are implied in a seemingly disconnected yet highly suggestive dialogue:

> Hannah: We pay our way as we go by my grandfather's recitations and the sale of my water colours and quick sketches in charcoal or pastel.
>
> Shannon [to himself]: I have fever. (NI, 34)

From the interpreter's association of the "touch" of charcoal with Hannah's sketching and Shannon's fever emerge the implications of the character sketch Hannah, the visionary artist, will draw of Shannon thus alleviating the heat of consciousness. Charcoal is the medicine and the disease, as God is Shannon's medicine and his disease, and as a woman is the medicine and the disease.

Hannah has experienced the "spook" herself, yet has triumphed over him by endurance:

> Endurance is something that spooks and blue devils respect. And they respect all the tricks that panicky people use to outlast and outwit their panic. (NI, 97)

She proposes to take Shannon on a long night's journey into the night:

> And I don't mean just travels about the world, the earth's surface. I mean . . . subterranean travels, the . . . the journeys that the spooked and bedevilled people are forced to take through the . . . the unlighted sides of their natures. (NI, 97)

The journey must be a nocturnal one, for everything has a "shadowy side to it except the sun" (NI, 98). Thus the "storm at sunset" will bring about a transformation in Shannon's vision of God as "thunder and lightning". Thunder and lightning are significantly products of a storm - as the transformed Shannon will be. Shannon

will be re-born by a God of love incorporated in Hannah:

> Hannah: . . . . There's going to be a lovely, stormy sunset in a few minutes.
>
> Nonno [from within]: Coming!
>
> Hannah: So is Christmas, Nonno.
>
> Nonno: So is the Fourth of July!
>
> Hannah: We're past the Fourth of July. Hallowe'en comes next and then Thanksgiving. I hope you'll come forth sooner. [She lifts the gauze net over his cubicle door.] Here's your suit, I've pressed it. [She enters the cubicle.]
>
> Nonno: It's mighty dark in here, Hannah.
>
> Hannah: I'll turn the light on for you. (NI, 48)

The association of days signifying the birth of Jesus Christ, and that of America, with the act of "coming" signify Shannon's re-birth. Shannon's transformation is further underlined symbolically by reference to his "dehydration under the tropic of cancer" (NI, 32) and the suggestive therapeutic effect of the "leaky roof" of Hannah's cubicle (NI, 36).

The implications of Hannah's guidance of Shannon can only be fully grasped in the perspective of the professed aims of his journey:

> The whole world . . . God's world, has been the range of my travels. I haven't stuck to the schedules of the brochures and I've always allowed the ones that were willing to see, to see! - the underworlds of all places, and if they had hearts to be touched, feelings to feel with, I gave them a priceless chance to feel and be touched. And none will ever forget it, none of them, ever, never! (NI, 83)

Shannon's journey is one of his cyclical attempts to prove to others and to himself man's base nature, his corruption, and subsequent need for punishment. The "underworld" would justify God's act of inflicting violent punishment on the world. Thus Shannon's view of God as

lightning and thunder[1] would prove that God is not respressively immoral but justly moral, distributing punishments in accordance with sins.

The destination of Hannah's journey is self-knowledge and understanding of the evil in man's nature. Thus while Shannon is preoccupied with evil as an irremediable fact of human life and with atonement as a continually arising concomitant of that evil, Hannah emphasizes a causal pattern in the universe and conceives of evil as the consequence of specific nuances in the soul that can be modulated towards the good. This discrepancy between Shannon's and Hannah's views of the possibilities of salvation or damnation stems from their extreme and compromising stances respectively. Shannon's subjective experience compels him to "suffer and atone for the sins of himself and the world" (NI, 89) because only by indulging himself and the world in the pleasures of corruption can he exonerate his God from the pains of condemnation. Shannon is in conflict within himself and with his God. His fragmentary self cannot sustain him; his God cannot be referred to for solace, for Shannon must save God from himself. Hannah perceives the possibility of solving the crisis of faith without recourse to divinity. The object of faith, under scrutiny, is not the "impossible". Shannon's quest involves a pattern of belief thatwill alleviate his sense of moral isolation and end the state of spiritual and sensual drifting. He must believe in a kind, forgiving divinity, unlike the violent God of the "electric storm" implying a German-like violence by a process of association with electric bulbs.[2] Thus Shannon's voracious craving for bridging the

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1. Shannon's concept of God as lightning has implications similar to Sebastian's God created in the image of devouring carnivorous birds resembling his Strindbergian mother. See Suddenly Last Summer, Scene I, Five Plays, p. 243.

2. See p. 57 and p. 72.

chasm between the reality of his needs, and the needs dictated by his reality, is satiable in terms of compassionate acceptance of the naturally diverging directions of both realistic needs, and needs of reality. The "fantastic" level cannot be lived on, for that would lead to a Blanche-like insanity in a world of "strangers".

Hannah's remedy for Shannon's guilt and state of drifting is a variation of the solution Don Quixote's dream has unveiled. Like Camino Real, The Night of the Iguana attempts to restore the value of honour, and the power of love. The ethical content of Kilroy's experience of "ideals" and "love" is dynamically developed as a pragmatic approach to the problem of man's lost innocence. Kilroy has been resurrected through the power of love; Hannah incorporates this power and applies it on a realistic level. Jacques Cassanova, and Marguerite de Gautier have undergone a series of frictions over the nature of love, but Hannah resurrects its meaning by incorporating it practically not only verbally. To Hannah, the word "hermano" can mean something again by the strong faith of each brother in "broken gates between people so they can reach each other even if it's just for one night only" (NI, 96). Williams, however, accentuates the spiritual nature of communication as opposed to the physical implications, pervading his earlier plays, and typified by Maxine in The Night of the Iguana:

Shannon: One-night stands, huh?

Hannah: One night . . . communication between them on a verandah outside their . . . separate cubicles, Mr. Shannon.

Shannon: You don't mean physically, do you?

Hannah: No.

Shannon: I didn't think so. Then what?

Hannah: A little understanding exchanged between them, a wanting to help each other through nights like this.[1] (NI, 96)

Hannah's artistic inclinations and moral tendencies compel her towards a creative involvement with others. Unlike the rigid, fruitless morality imposed on Shannon by his mother, Hannah's is an authentically personal approach to the world. Hannah perceives that the ulterior motives for man's sins are rooted in loneliness and a need for human contact. Her faith in the ultimate good lying within man prompts her to exhaust all the moral possibilities for reforming Shannon's stance towards himself and his God. Hannah reconciles Shannon to himself by bringing him to an acceptance of the evil in his nature. She frees him from his view that gratifying the needs of the flesh is an act of denying the spirit; and a cause for punishment. Her sexual encounters in the East largely testify to the possibility of harmonizing the sexual and the spiritual through acceptance of the inseparability of both, as facets of human contact. "Accept whatever situation you cannot improve" (NI, 106) is the cornerstone of Hannah's philosophy. A sexual experience can transcend its immediate implications and gain spiritual dimensions; by accepting its naturalness, Hannah releases Shannon from his continual categorization of experiences in terms of sin and punishment. The only sins to Hannah are "violence" and "unkindness". Thus like Shannon's view of God, Hannah's view of sin is unconventional, yet realistic in human terms. Hannah brings Shannon to terms with his desires. He is one of "God's creatures", and as such his acceptance of his frailties becomes an acceptance of God not as a punishing fierce power but as a benign forgiving deity expressing Himself through his creations. Formerly, Shannon had viewed his relation

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1. The therapeutic effect of Hannah on Shannon in their relatively brief encounter is reminiscent of a similarly brief yet effective relation in Hemingway's For Whom the Bell Tolls.

to Maxine with a contempt dictated by his "vocation" and false image of himself and God. Persisting in living on the "fantastic" level, Shannon cannot accept Maxine's realistic proposals:

> Maxine: We've both reached a point where we've got to settle for something that works for us in our lives - even if it isn't on the highest kind of level.
>
> Shannon: I don't want to rot. (NI, 75)

In actual fact, Shannon "wants" to rot but will not admit this desire for fear of relinquishing his image of himself as a repressive senile delinquent, and that of his God as justifiably punishing. Thus his final decision, precipitated by Hannah's gentle influence, to stay with Maxine is motivated by an acceptance of his nature, and a desire to end the process of self-annihilation. Shannon's stance becomes a positive assertion of his limitations as man.[1]

Shannon's discovery of his true image and of God as seen through his image is underlined by Williams's use of light effects, gestures, and the associative links of colours. Scenes between Hannah and Shannon are mainly lit by the tender light of matches as opposed to the "electric light bulbs" associated with the Germans. Williams had made use of a similar contrast in The Glass Menagerie, of which Tom's final statement is suggestive: "nowadays the world is lit by lightning! Blow out your candles, Laura - and so goodbye. . . ."[2] As the condensed meaning of Hannah's effect on Shannon unfolds, the play becomes gradually suffused with silver lights and objects as opposed to the earlier pervasive "gold". When Shannon describes his vision of God, he points to "a majestic apocalypse of gold light,

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1. Arthur Miller's After the Fall (1964) will develop an autobiographical strain into a debate about man's potential for evil and his acceptance of this nature. Hannah's message will be reiterated by Quentin: "a human being has to forgive himself!".

2. See p. 139

shafting the sky as the sun drops into the Pacific" (NI, 53) and holds that that is God. Yet, when it storms the lightning is not gold but "pure white" revealing "Hannah and Nonno against the wall, behind Shannon" (NI, 72). The relation between "white" and Nonno dressed in immaculate white is, of course, clear. A fine "silver sheet" of rain falls, and like Hannah's leaky roof has a cooling effect on Shannon who symbolically spreads his arms with a willingness to embrace the "silver" rain on the way to "still waters" (NI, 53). The storm cancels the effect of an "electric globe", a symbol of violence.[1] Like the fire in Ghosts, the storm has a cleansing effect. In the scene following the storm, "everything is drenched" with "garish silver" (NI, 73) - the colour of Nonno's "mane" and the associative link with the creativity of the artist. At one point, Nonno asks Hannah if she has been rewarded for her sketches: "Did they cross your palm with silver . . .?" (NI, 59). Hannah crosses Shannon's palm with "silver" purifying water. She redeems him by her fertile creative ideas and practice of love. Significantly, Hannah is presented by Williams as reconciling the gold and silver:

> Her pale gold hair catches the soft light. She has let it down and still holds the silver-backed brush with which she was brushing it. (NI, 85)

The silver brush is connected with a mother-figure in a manner similar to its connection with Shannon's mother. Through its associative links with silver Hannah's brush is figuratively used to redeem Shannon instead of beating him. Hannah has taken Shannon beyond the edge of despair.[2] Like the "tree" of Nonno's final creative contribution,

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1. See p. 57.

2. In an interview, Williams asserts that The Night of the Iguana is "a play whose theme as closely as I can put it, is how to live beyond despair and still live". See "Williams on Williams", interview by Lewis Funke and J. Booth, Theatre Arts, 46 (Jan. 1962), 17-19, 72 (p. 72).

Shannon's life undergoes a change. "A second history" commences:

> A chronicle no longer gold,
> A bargaining with mist and mould,
> And finally the broken stem
> The plummeting to earth; and then
>
> An intercourse not well designed
> For beings of a golden kind
> Whose native green must arch above
> The earth's obscene, corrupting love. (NI, 114)

The "unlighted" parts of Shannon's soul cease to be "misty" as the chronicle moves from gold to silver, and as courage to face the self through knowledge and love "arches" above the green of the Costa Verde, the wild spot, dominated by Germans decked with "garlands of pale green seaweed" (NI, 42).

God visits the "obscene" earth through acts of grace, love, and kindness. The iguana "trying to go on past the end of its goddam rope? Like you! Like me! Like Grampa with his last poem!" (NI, 111) is released. God becomes the people, and the people function as a God of mercy and love:

> Now Shannon is going to go down there with his
> machette and cut the damn lizard loose so it
> can run back to its bushes because God won't
> do it and we are going to play God here.
> (NI, 114)

God will not "do" it but He functions through the good incorporated in people - thus restoring the "honour" which Don Quixote's dream seeks and making the "violets" break the "rocks".

Hannah Jelkes's creative relation to Shannon overcomes the effects of social repression by confronting them within the self thus restoring the relation between man and God, and leading to the formulation of individual codes of conduct that become usefully functional within the web of social relationships. Unlike Mrs. Alving, Hannah is unintimidated by social interpretations of "duty". She does not conform to a morality imposed by a Western declining culture lacking

spirituality.[1] Hannah forges her own morality, the content of which is largely derived from Oriental spirituality encountered in her travels. Her personal conception of duty is unconventional. To her, duty involves allegiance to kindness and compassion. Hannah's understanding of social strictures prompts her to reconcile Shannon's compulsion and revulsion in the sex drive.

Shannon's continual attempts at self-annihilation stem from the irreconcileability of a heretical view of God rooted in a conventionally repressive upbringing, and a powerful desire for sensual gratification. Like Strindberg's "father", Shannon sees women as "Omphales" depriving him of his strength, yet paradoxically uses women as the means of punishing himself, by acting out a Strindbergian "Passion Play performance". Shannon views women as "taking pleasure in [his] tied-up condition" (NI, 90) because he has used them to entangle and disentangle the web of guilt enmeshing him. Ironically enough, Shannon's reconciliation to his self is induced by compassion typified on the theoretical level by Hannah, and implemented on the practical level by the Strindbergian vampire - Maxine.

Hannah's art acts as an "occupational therapy" (NI, 99) to her self and to the humanity to which she belongs. Art has furthered Hannah's understanding of her own needs and enlightened her to the meaning of suffering. Her "timeless" quality can be attributed to the transcendence art requires. Symbolically presented as a Kabuki actor, Hannah is detached from any connotations attached to a particular sex. Hannah's ethereal qualities ascribed to the immortality of her artistic mission are reminiscent of Rubek's voicing of the view of the artist's stance towards his subject. Hannah's spirituality is acquired through an act of prostituting

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1. See The Night of the Iguana, p. 30.

her art, which enables her to descend to the infernos of entangled iguanas. Her experiences include encounters with psychological imbalance, social repression, and religious crises. She utilizes these experiences to fight her own "spook" and to liberate others from theirs. By comprehending the function of art, and using it to release love and compassion, Hannah unfetters the potential inherent in the relation between art and identity. Hannah's spirituality does not dissociate her from a realistic approach to life and the living. The "decline" of the West, as Nonno puts it, has probably created a desire, on her part, to imbue its materialism with her own vision of spirituality, embracing kindness as the saving grace of life.[1] Hannah's horror of the sordidness of the human situation is overcome in Shanghai, in The House of the Dying. Witnessing the actual disintegration of human beings enlightens her to the possible fruitfulness of the "helping hand" of art. Thus she manages to give "little comforts" to a suffering humanity through her art. Hannah envisages suffering as "beautiful". "Suffering", to her, possesses an aesthetic sense, but is also used as the ethical content of art in so far as it is released and comprehended within an aesthetic framework. Hedda had exploited the "beautiful" as a form of finding her own self. Hannah subsequently generalizes the use of the "beautiful". Her application of an artistic perception to Shannon's dilemma elevates art from the aesthetic level of portraying suffering to the ethical level of re-constituting Shannon's own identity. Williams's articulation of the basic premise of his own view of the role of art meaningfully suggests Hannah's own conception of that role:

> Every artist has a basic premise pervading his whole life, and that premise can provide the impulse to everything he creates. For me the

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1. See The Night of the Iguana, p. 30.

> dominating premise has been the need for understanding and tenderness and fortitude among individuals trapped by circumstance.[1]

The textual associations of the "beautiful" in The Night of the Iguana include "suffering", as the form and content of art, subsumed within the second "beautiful" object: Nonno's poem. Both forms of the beautiful are implicitly linked with the release of the captive iguana. The release consequently enables it to "scramble home" (NI, 116). The courageous act of combatting despair, practically carried out by Shannon, is highlighted in Nonno's poem. The "release" of the poem marks Nonno's final artistic statement which fruitfully articulates the insoluble conflict dramatized in The Night of the Iguana, and underlines the function of art in creating possibilities for defining the needs of the self, in view of the expanding awareness evolved through art of the antinomies inherent in the human situation; and in the self and society as projections of the response to the human situation, within limited contexts:

> How calmly does the orange branch
> Observe the sky begin to blanch
> Without a cry, without a prayer,
> With no betrayal of despair.
>
> Sometime while night obscures the tree
> The zenith of its life will be
> Gone past forever, and from thence
> A second history will commence.
>
> A chronicle no longer gold,
> A bargaining with mist and mould,
> And finally the broken stem
> The plummeting to earth; and then
>
> An intercourse not well designed
> For beings of a golden kind
> Whose native green must arch above
> The earth's obscene, corrupting love.
>
> And still the ripe fruit and the branch
> Observe the sky begin to blanch
> Without a cry, without a prayer,
> With no betrayal of despair.

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1. Quoted in Lincoln Barnett, "Tennessee Williams", Life (16 February, 1948), p. 119.

O Courage, could you not as well
Select a second place to dwell,
Not only in that golden tree
But in the frightened heart of me? (NI, 114-115)

The problems of identity as experienced by the woman and the artist in Williams's plays are largely caused by the Southern background. Hannah Jelkes is continually on the move. Her sexuality is not emphasized, by Williams, as it is in the case of Amanda and Blanche; and her art is actually elevated not vicariously lived or superficially imposed. In Camino Real there is no definable locale, Kilroy is a "man without a woman", and the whole play revolves round an escape from the reality that gives rise to corruption, through a dream pattern.

Williams's women as artists are displaced. They try to use their past to recreate a present on their own terms. With the exception of Hannah, they live on fantastic levels resulting from their inability to reconcile the demands of different social backdrops. Hannah is free from the process of self-delusion that characterizes Amanda and Blanche because she can accept corruption as one face of purity.

The interpreter of Williams's plays has to attempt to separate the illusory from the realistic in relation to the woman's interpretation of the meaning of her experience. This process is facilitated by the presence of male characters like Jim O'Connor who helps to objectify Laura's and Amanda's experiences. In Camino Real the dream pattern is a form of embodying some of the problems that afflict Williams's producers. While the play stems from a subjective need on Williams's part for freedom, it serves to exteriorize many of the problems.

CHAPTER III

PROBLEMS OF IDENTITY, AS EXPERIENCED BY THE PRODUCER, IN THREE PLAYS BY ARTHUR MILLER

Problems of identity have been a major concern of Arthur Miller. His exposition of the problems in his plays is different from that of Williams and Ibsen in the sense that the main emphasis in his plays is on the producer as breadwinner. Although Ibsen's artists were dependent on a market to receive their works, their problems did not stem from an economic crisis. Solness approximates to Miller's characters insofar as he attempts to exploit a lesser artist and in that sense places himself in the competitive market of the rising "young". But Ibsen stresses Solness's art as an expression of his self-image, and makes the incident with Brovik subsidiary to that. While Tom Wingfield and Jim O'Connor represent different ways of coping with the demands of the social backdrop which is not dissimilar in its effects from that afflicting Miller's breadwinners, Williams is more interested in the relation between the Southern background and the problems of identity that afflict the producers in his plays. The breadwinner's identity, in Miller's plays, is dependent on his economic function. To a certain extent, like Nora or Mrs. Alving, he has to be bought into an institution. The price in both cases is conformity. But a man, in Miller's plays, unlike the woman in Ibsen's, seems to have the choice of joining the rat-race or using more creative functions. The choice however becomes almost non-existent as it is governed by necessity.

In All My Sons, Death of a Salesman, and A View from the Bridge, the intricate relations between conformity and the breadwinner's terms for his creativity are explored and related to his identity crises.

In All My Sons,[1] Miller examines the principles which govern men's relations to institutions and define their natural duties. All My Sons scrutinizes the individual's relation to his immediate society and to humanity at large. The title itself is functionally suggestive, for it embodies Miller's views regarding the inextricable links binding the individual to "all" the "sons" of the universe, thus heightening the tension inherent in adherence to social dictates. Keller is motivated by an inborn need to "belong", and to overcome the overwhelming fear of separateness from social norms. All My Sons is an ironic comment on the possibilities of belonging, and on the twisted ways afforded to an individual in a capitalistic society.

Miller seeks to explain the present in terms of the past. The action of All My Sons begins some time after the end of the Second World War. To abide by the terms of a war-time contract, Joe Keller, a manufacturer, arranges for defective cylinder heads of airplane motors to be shipped to the Air Force. Thus he indirectly causes the death of twenty-one young pilots who crash to their deaths. When the cause of the damage is traced back to Keller's plant, he pleads innocence and lays the blame on his partner Steve Deever. While Deever suffers in prison, Joe successfully rebuilds his business. Larry, Keller's son, has been missing. His mother is sustained by the hope of his return. Having survived the war, the second son,

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1. References are to the text of All My Sons as printed in Arthur Miller's Collected Plays (with an introduction by the playwright) (London, 1974). All subsequent page references will be incorporated within the text of the thesis, after the abbreviated title.

Chris, enters his father's business, and becomes engaged to Ann Deever, Larry's ex-fiancée and Steve's daughter.

Keller is not made fully conscious of the impact of his deed, nor does he begin to accept it until he is forcefully confronted by Chris. Chris has for a long time suppressed his suspicions regarding his father's crime, because he cannot face its consequences. Chris is haunted by uncertainty through Kate's comment on Keller's health. Miller makes the plot hinge to a great extent on a slip of the tongue. The full truth dawns on Chris in a conversation with George Deever. Dramatic emphasis is now placed on father and son. The confrontation between them devastatingly erupts into a forceful conflict with far-reaching social and familial implications.

Keller's struggle in society takes place within the context of the family, as does his search for a niche within the "whole goddam country". Joe Keller conceives of the family as the only entity to which he owes exclusive allegiance. Of paramount importance to him is the justification of his capacities as a breadwinner in the family. Keller is oblivious to the fact that the family is only part of a whole, and that a wider humanity lies beyond his garden fence. Miller's use of functional stage directions, that contain within them the roots of the expressionism later to be exploited more fully in Death of a Salesman, suggests this integration between form and content:

> The stage is hedged on right and left by tall closely planted poplars which lend the yard a secluded atmosphere. (AMS, 58)

The stage of Keller's thoughts is closely hedged by family loyalties. He fails to perceive that a public transgression will eventually cause a private one. The link between the private and public worlds is completely blurred in his vision. His short-sightedness is partly

accounted for by the irreconcileable demands which a social milieu imposes on the individual. Living in a society that measures the soundness of values by dollars and in which material success takes precedence over any other issues, Joe Keller is harassed by a fear of his failure to keep pace with the rat-race. Keller's very being is dependent on and conditioned by his competence, efficiency, and power, in the business world. These, in turn, are subject to his fulfilment of a war-time contract. Joe Keller is fully aware of the fact that the materialistic society hardly takes account of the individual as such. It regards him as a functional element whose fate will be determined by his productivity. Consequently, business failures will be subjected to the worst fate in an inhuman society, and success becomes the end regardless of the means because it is the only viable connection between the individual and society. It seems to secure an illusion of belonging to collective trends. Therefore, to Keller, success means a preservation of self and family. Keller's intention to preserve the family is not purely altruistic. It verges on the egotistical in that the family is viewed by him as an entity where human values and relations are retained, in the face of the impossibility of this retention in the outer race course. The family is his own refuge from social failure.[1]

Keller's visualization of the function of the family is directly opposed by Chris. Miller vividly counterbalances the father's and son's views. Joe Keller appeals to his son for an understanding of his own pragmatic motives:

> You're a boy, what could I do! I'm in business,
> a man is in business; a hundred and twenty

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1. W. J. Newman illuminatingly discusses the relation between the American family and society. See "Arthur Miller's Collected Plays", Twentieth Century, 154 (Nov., 1958), 491-496 (p. 493).

> cracked you're out of business; you got a process, the process don't work you're out of business; you don't know how to operate, your stuff is no good; they close you up, they tear up your contracts, what the hell's it to them? You lay forty years into a business and they knock you out in five minutes, what could I do, let them take forty years, let them take my life away? (AMS, 115)

Through Keller's words, Miller is forging a forceful indictment of a capitalistic society where the individual is moulded by the demands of the economic and social structure. Given the choice of surrendering a business synonymous with his name, or violating ethical codes, Joe Keller chooses the latter. His business, which is synonymous with his identity, takes precedence over the lives of twenty-one young pilots.

Directly opposed to his father's attitude, Chris fails to comprehend his father's means of self-assertion. When the father explains that his actions have been prompted by his familial loyalty, and by his desire to establish a business for the sons, Chris's convictions remain firm. With a combination of idealism and rejection, he exclaims:

> For me! Where do you live, where have you come from? For me! - I was dying every day and you were killing my boys and you did it for me? What the hell do you think I was thinking of, the Goddam business? Is that as far as your mind can see, the business? What is that, the world - the business? What the hell do you mean, you did it for me? Don't you have a country? Don't you live in the world? What the hell are you? You're not even an animal, no animal kills his own, what are you? What must I do to you? I ought to tear the tongue out of your mouth, what must I do? With his fist he pounds down upon his father's shoulder. He stumbles away, covering his face as he weeps. What must I do, Jesus God, what must I do?
> (AMS, 115-116)

The questions are uttered by an individual torn between his two conflicting roles: as a loving son of Joe Keller, and as a human

being with duties towards a wider community. Chris's image of the idealized father has been deflated:

> I know you're no worse than most men but I thought you were better. I never saw you as a man. I saw you as my father. (AMS, 125)

Chris who has always idealized his father recognizes in him now an imperfect specimen of humanity.[1]

So far, Keller is not yet fully aware of the enormity of his act. Light is beginning to dawn on him but he cannot yet comprehend the full implications of his deed. Unlike Joe, Kate can understand Chris's point of view. She can see that "there's something bigger than the family to him" - a truth Joe fails to acknowledge, for he replies:

> I'm his father and he's my son, and if there's something bigger than that I'll put a bullet in my head! (AMS, 120)

The awareness of his responsibility to "something bigger" than the family is brought home to Keller in Larry's letter, rather unconvincingly produced by Ann. Larry has committed suicide to atone for his father's sins. The letter drives home to Keller the knowledge that exclusive family loyalty is a fallacy. It is Chris who articulates this view:

> Once and for all you can know there's a universe of people outside and you're responsible for it, and unless you know that, you threw away your son because that's why he died. (AMS, 126-127)

With the realization that all members of humanity are Larry's brothers, Keller seeks atonement for his crime in death. Keller cannot bear a smear on his name. He has failed his business and his sons. There is only one honourable exit left for him: suicide.

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1. W. David Sievers points out that "Chris' hero-worship of his father must not be tampered with, because unconsciously rooted in it lies all of his conscious ideals and humanitarianism. The final love that man can have for man is the love of father and son." See Freud on Broadway: A History of Psycho-analysis and the American Drama, op. cit., p. 390.

Through the implications of the debate between father and son, Miller highlights the incongruity between the needs of the individual and the claims of the world extraneous to him. Keller's practical viewpoint is played against Chris's idealistic one. Miller suggests that any achievement of harmony within the self implies a renunciation of social mores, but adherence to the latter involves a transgression against universal standards of morality.

In the text of the play, the blame seems to shift from the individual to society. Chris voices the view that society at large is responsible. By demanding a certain set of business ethics, society is by the very nature of its operative networks a jungle imposing on its members the necessity of a savage battle for the survival of the fittest in terms of dollars and dimes. Therefore, individual transgressions are seen as a result of the infiltration of corrupt social and economic necessities. Chris expresses his resentful attitude towards society:

> This is the land of the great big dogs, you don't love a man here, you eat him! That's the principle; the only one we live by - it just happened to kill a few people this time, that's all. The world's that way, how can I take it out on him? What sense does that make? This is a zoo, a zoo. (AMS, 124)

Viewing the experience of the characters, the interpreter can judge the causes of Keller's destruction as lying in society's sense of its relation to the individual. His society stresses the need for economic success but calls for the nullification of this very principle in the service of national abstractions. Keller attaches himself to images which his society has manufactured and labelled as "ideal". The business ethic places financial and social success first; the result being the individual's alienation from his intrinsic self. This very business ethic corrupts Keller's view

of fatherhood. However, his commitment to the economic delusion known as the American dream does not only distort his concept of fatherhood, but also his integrity. Miller highlights the corrosive effect of society upon the individual, demonstrates the way the organization imposes an ethic of conformity on its members, and underlines the individual's fear of losing his position hence identity in a pattern of efficiency.

For the interpreter to unfold the implications of the individual's confrontation of his society, and his family members as part of it, is to point out to what appears to be a moral diffusion in the play. The question that presents itself is: is Miller affirming family loyalties or social loyalties? Miller commits himself to both sides of the contest at the same time. Keller is brought to an acceptance of Chris's ideal of brotherhood of man. Yet Miller makes a case for private values. Clear though his dramatic intent is, as implied in the title, his dramatic realization does not concur with it. This diffusion seems to reflect a conflict between Miller's emotional and intellectual response to Keller's dilemma. Keller's character is delineated with a considerable degree of compassion and understanding.[1] Furthermore, Keller's self-defence is convincingly put forward:

> Who worked for nothin' in that war? When they work for nothin', I'll work for nothin'. Did they ship a gun or a truck outa Detroit before they got their price? Is that clean? It's dollars and cents, nickels and dimes; war and peace, it's nickels and dimes, what's clean? Half the Goddam country is gotta go if I go![2]
> (AMS, 125)

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1. Dennis Welland points out that Joe is "too pleasant for the part he has to play". See Arthur Miller (Edinburgh, 1970), p. 37.

2. Keller's argument approaches Barbara Undershaft's in Shaw's Major Barbara. Like Keller, Barbara reaches the conclusion that all money is dirty. See Major Barbara, Act III.

Keller's guilt is only part of a larger guilt which the whole society must bear. He has been permeated by a money-oriented society. While supposedly condemning Keller's principles, Miller is making a case for them at the same time.

Chris offers a case in point, as far as the moral diffusion is concerned. He is a young idealist who has witnessed men dying for each other, enacting the message of brotherhood and responsibility. Chris drives his father to a culminating point of guilt and subsequent suicide thus making him a scapegoat for his own guilt. In seeking his father's punishment, Chris is actually atoning for his own sins. He views his silence regarding his suspicions about his father as a transgression against society, and a disavowal of responsibility to his "brothers". Early in the play, he relates his war experiences to Ann:

> Everything was being destroyed, see, but it seemed to me that one new thing was made. A kind of - responsibility. Man for man. You understand me? - To show that, to bring that onto the earth again like some kind of a monument and everyone would feel it standing there, behind him, and it would make a difference to him. Pause. And then I came home and it was incredible. I - there was no meaning in it here; the whole thing to them was a kind of a - bus accident. I went to work with Dad, and that rat-race again. I felt - what you said - ashamed somehow. Because nobody was changed at all. It seemed to make suckers out of a lot of guys. I felt wrong to be alive, to open the bank-book, to drive the new car, to see the new refrigerator.
> (AMS, 85)

Chris enters his father's business - a business built over his men's dead bodies. He partakes of the very profit he has denounced. The "aliveness" in question means that Chris will open the bank-book. He expresses views similar to his father's with regard to the family: "I want to build something I can give myself to".

What appears on the surface to be a moral diffusion is not an indication of an artistic flaw in the play nor an equivocal vision on Miller's part. Rather this diffusion is an attempt to designate a specific relation between art and life, which in turn, becomes suggestive of the ways in which general social trends act upon the individual.

Keller's final acknowledgement of a "universe outside" does not resolve the contradiction in question between the demands of a system and those of brotherhood. Although it would appear that the conflict is resolved within the character of Joe Keller, that is in fact not the case if the interpreter examines the social issues giving rise to it in the play. Lacking eloquence, but not conviction, Keller's final words lead the reader with his preconceived notions of good and evil, and of crime and punishment, to focus on Keller's words "all my sons". While not denying the fact that the words of the title embody the central message of what Miller describes as a "prophetic play",[1] the interpreter must not overlook the criterion by which Keller finally judges his actions and the relation in which it stands to his socially induced values. To see the play as a revelation of the consequences of an anti-social act on an individual is to minimize the impact of the process by which this act is brought about, and the consequences of it on a social level. In other words, the interpreter must comprehend the impact of the deed on Joe, on his family, and on the very idea of continuous relations embodied in the "sons" of the title.

Keller is finally brought to realize that:

> I think <u>to him</u> they were all my sons and
> I guess they were. (<u>Italics mine</u>
> <u>AMS</u>, 126)

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1. Introduction to the <u>Collected Plays</u>, p. 16.

It is Larry's standards that finally prevail. To Larry, a deed performed as an act of economic individualism is transformed into a crime. The war is the context within which an otherwise legitimate form of belonging to the rat-race becomes a crime that incurs punishment. Larry has the dramatic power of the absent father-figure in Ibsen's plays, in the sense that he highlights a process inherent in the continuity of life: past and present, action and consequence. With strong resonances of Mrs. Alving's "we are all ghosts", Keller admits that they were "all my sons". While Mrs. Alving's words are an admission of her complicity in the evils of society, Keller's are not expressive of the same relation, or responsibility. The responsibility Keller is brought to admit through the catalytic force of the morality Larry typifies which is not fully expressed in Larry's letter but in Chris's description of the same kind of experience of a similar social group: "man for man" does not substitute, in Keller's vision, that of system for man or man for system. Keller's act of suicide is a clear illustration of the fact that recognizing the importance of the broader responsibility does not nullify responsibility to a system but the demands of each are so contrasted in the capitalistic modes of relations as to appear mutually exclusive. To place man by man in a state of equality as far as duties to a community from which the self ultimately derives value are concerned is to encompass the responsibility entailed by the relation of the individual and society. Keller had previously believed in a negative kind of equality summed up in the words "when they work for nothin', I'll work for nothin'" and of course from the premise of working for "nothing" or something, the individual derives meaning and selfhood within that specific society. Yet while Keller criticizes the society

as being one of nickels and dimes, these very values placed on money are mediated through him. His reification of the pilots is a clear example. He translates the soldiers into monetary values when he implies that if Chris were to dispose of the money gained through the business the crime would cease to be one. Once separated from its context - the war - it becomes lawful gain. The same idea is interestingly presented by Kate who reasons that the war is over and therefore that Larry's indictment is out of context. Economic necessity has eroded personal identity. The connection between crime and context reminds the interpreter of A Doll's House. Nora is translated into money too. When the promissory note arrives she becomes Helmer's property, in a 'double sense'. Keller offers Chris a means of erasing the effects of his father's crime:

> If you can't get used to it then throw it away. You hear me? Take every cent and give it to charity, throw it in the sewer. Does that settle it? In the sewer that's all. (AMS, 124)

When Keller admits that the pilots were all his sons he transforms the object back to a subject. Through the emphasis on "my" a sense of ownership is retained which comes to replace the earlier owning of the process. It also places emphasis on the hereditary relations given rise to in the play and suggested by the emphasis on sons, for instance, instead of what could have been all his brothers. This raises the question of the value of Miller's comment in the Introduction to the Collected Plays:

> Joe Keller's trouble in a word, is not that he cannot tell right from wrong but that his cast of mind cannot admit that he personally has any viable connection with his world, his universe or society. He is not a partner in society but an incorporated member, so to speak, and you cannot sue personally the offers of a corporation. I hasten to make clear here that I am not merely speaking of a literal corporation but the concept of a man becoming a function of production or

> distribution to the point where his personality becomes divorced from the action it propels.

In the light of the foregoing discussion, it would appear that Keller finally, by transforming the soldiers into human beings, overcomes the alienation implicit in Miller's words. But one must remember that the connection made is a consequence of Larry's standards not those of economic gain, therefore Miller's statement becomes realized dramatically within the text. Miller seems to be offering this mode of overcoming separateness and will later develop it in Incident at Vichy and After the Fall, which do not lie within the scope of the present argument. Through irony Miller underlines a social point. Chris the "son" is asked by his mother not to take it on himself but to "live". Implicit in her words is the contradiction symptomatic of the time, and furthered through Chris. The question that presents itself to the interpreter is: "Who should take it on himself?". If Keller's only legacy to his son in that society can be a "business for you" and if the foundations of the business are shaky then who will have inherited the business along with the crime - society or Chris? The interpreter examining Chris's description of his war experience to Ann can see the process continued: Chris translates "aliveness" into "opening a bank-book", using a new car and refrigerator, having a family; and to reconcile the needs of the family with that form of "aliveness" is to inherit natural inclinations and needs for destructive economic relations. If Chris goes on working within that system he will produce and reproduce his father's crime which does not lie in the shipping of defective cylinder heads but rather, as Miller puts it, in "a particular relation of the individual to society which if embodied means a jungle existence for all of us no matter how high

our buildings soar".[1] The economic necessity is going to remain a problem. Following Keller's admission, Kate's words suggest that a cycle of cause and effect starts all over again for the individual, and a cycle of arbitrary demands starts for society. To conceive of Chris as running the business cleanly or of the fact that the "play suggests an ethical stance for the capitalistic society" is not a convincing argument on Miller's part. Chris's realization that this is a zoo and that conformity means animality does not make him turn against the system. In his words, he is "practical" now and belongs to something. Thus the context for discussing ethics is not as Miller has it the ethics of the capitalistic society. It is not the breadwinner's departure from the modes of capitalist production that is at issue; rather it is his compliance with its demands - which is to say the system appears as unethical. It is not clean, and half "the Goddam country's gotta go if I go". That the ethics in question are not purely economic or social is substantiated by the fact that Chris's final realization of practicality is accompanied by the description of it as a zoo. The point brought into question by All My Sons is not the ethics of that society or that system of economy inasmuch as it is one of what every individual makes of ethics and how this individual derivation of meaning forms his personal identity in the face of an all-pervasive animality. It is the point that has been raised earlier by Ibsen in Enemy of the People. Miller, however, seems to suggest that there are as many enemies as there are people to see them because although the common enemy is one and the same - the system, there are different ways of reacting to that conformity and different ways in which that one enemy provokes an identity-crisis. Miller was later to voice

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1. Introduction to the Collected Plays, p. 19.

this idea on a more general level in Incident at Vichy:

> Part of knowing who we are is knowing we are not someone else. And Jew is only the name we give to that stranger, that agony we cannot feel, that death we look at like cold abstraction. Each man has his Jew; it is the other. And the Jews have their Jews.[1]

Chris appeals to his parents to be "better": but his use of this comparative form leaves the interpreter to speculate on the references of "better": better than whom or what? Of course, better assumes a basis of good, but good, evil and morality are blurred through the contradictory demands leading to the necessity of relative standards. "You can be better", says Chris. The interpreter would, however, have to obtrude with the question: Yes, but how? The answer is implicit in Chris's words: "Then what was Larry to you? A stone that fell into the water? It's not enough for you to be sorry." (AMS, 266). The inert stone lying in the water suggests the need to see that the interaction between the individual and a universe outside must be more than just one of otherwise unchanging objects. It must be a lesson for improvement, but is it possible to attain that ideal state when the "better" in question also implies a process of living in a society that confuses, contradicts without contextualizing itself within the very humanity that forms it, because humanity nullifies money and exploitation?

In Death of a Salesman[2] Miller further explores the implications of the impact of the system on the breadwinner, his fears of being

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1. Incident at Vichy, as printed in Four American Plays (London, 1965), p. 200.

2. References are to the text of Death of a Salesman as printed in Arthur Miller's Collected Plays.
All subsequent page references will be incorporated within the text of the thesis, after the abbreviated title.

thrown out of the system, of ceasing to be because he ceases to have. Willy Loman does not commit a crime thus he is less of a misfit in human terms, but he is a producer and as such he must have standardized responses to the system, to be in W.H. Auden's words "an ideal citizen".

Death of a Salesman grapples with the problems caused by the individual's maladjustment to social demands, and his failure to achieve a minimal degree of integration between individual and collective concerns. Like All My Sons, Death of a Salesman sets the struggle within society against the background of the family. While All My Sons places primary emphasis on the social and universal implications of Joe Keller's transgression against specific ethical codes of conduct, the later play delineates the psychological implications of Willy Loman's transgression against social codes of conduct.

Willy Loman embarks on a quest for his self. Willy fails, however, to recognize the fact that finding one's self involves not only social integration but also accurate psychological insight. Death of a Salesman focuses on the tragic consequences of social conformity, and the fatal results of inauthenticity. Willy shares basic affinities with Mrs. Alving. Like her, Willy fails to coin the metal in himself, and subsequently renounces his real authentic being in favour of a mask. Mrs. Alving had donned the mask of a dutiful housewife; Willy Loman wears that of a "number one" man. To Mrs. Alving and Willy, masks are the only means of maintaining an identity in the social masquerade, and of eliminating their fear of separateness. Masks may be identified with identity. Like Mrs. Alving, Willy's life is built on a lie. In fact, the idea of a life-lie that features prominently in Ghosts and Pillars of Society, and lies at the very core of The Wild Duck, is vividly dramatized by Miller. Life is a "pipe-dream" - to borrow O'Neill's

condensation of the expression - and a "pipe-dream" renders life more endurable.

Willy Loman appears on the scene performing his final staggering steps in life - a life of continual stumbling mistaken by him for a glide on the smooth road of success.

The method of the play is suggested in the subtitle "Certain Private Conversations in Two Acts and a Requiem". These private conversations, with resonances of Strindberg's intimate theatre, are held between Willy and himself, and Willy and his audience. For a considerable part of the play, the stage is set in Willy's head where the past finds its way into the present of this decaying dreamer. Arthur Miller holds that the original title of the play was The Inside of His Head, and that the nucleus of the play's creation resided in an image "of an enormous face the height of the proscenium arch which would appear and then open up, and we would see the inside of a man's head".[1] In contrast to the Ibsenesque retrospective structure employed in All My Sons, Death of a Salesman evolves its meaning through the gradual unfolding of simultaneously existing experiences in Willy's "head".[2] Miller contends that:

> The Salesman image was from the beginning absorbed with the concept that nothing in life comes "next" but that everything exists together and at the same time within us; that there is no past to be "brought forward" in a human being, but that he is his past at every moment and that the present is merely that which his past is capable of noticing and smelling and reacting to.[3]

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1. Introduction to the Collected Plays, p. 23.

2. Esther Merle Jackson describes the development in the play, as "aesthetic rather than logical". See "Death of a Salesman: Tragic Myth in the Modern Theatre", College Language Association Journal, Part 7 (Sept. 1963), 63-76 (p. 73).

3. Introduction to the Collected Plays, p. 23.

The "inside" of Willy's head is indeed the stage of many incidents demonstrating his severance from any connections or compromising stances with reality.

Miller attempts to relate his expressionistic method to Willy's psychology. The playwright manages to achieve a high degree of integration between his form and content, but that integration in itself makes it increasingly difficult for the interpreter to define a stance for himself. As the temporal framework of the play fluctuates, and as Willy's awareness of his problem varies from scene to scene, the analysis of the play invites an intrusion on the part of the interpreter which would at best attempt to take into account Miller's integration of form and content. The interpreter's attempt to articulate experiences that leave Willy either literally or metaphorically inarticulate necessitates very often an act of reading into Willy's actions.

Miller delineates Willy's inner world, both musically and scenically through his description of the physical setting. The setting of Death of a Salesman is described as such:

> A melody is heard, played upon a flute. It is small and fine, telling of grass and trees and the horizon. The curtain rises.
>
> Before us is the SALESMAN'S house. We are aware of towering, angular shapes behind it, surrounding it on all sides. Only the blue light of the sky falls upon the house and fore-stage; the surrounding area shows an angry glow of orange. As more light appears, we see a solid vault of apartment houses around the small, fragile-seeming home. An air of the dream clings to the place, a dream rising out of reality. (DS, 130)

These stage directions suggest the contrast drawn in the play between the actual world with its claustrophobic depressing buildings which are symptomatic of the commercial and artificial world, and the elemental dream world of the flute. It is for this bygone world

of simple tunes escaping from the flute that Willy yearns - a world not yet corrupted by machine-produced sounds. Willy's dilemma stems partially from his failure to acknowledge his estrangement from the urban culture to which he has committed himself. Miller articulates Willy's mental excursions by impregnating words, objects, and gestures with meaning. Willy's persistence in inhabiting a world of dreams makes him lack focus on reality. This predicament is suggested in Willy's words to Linda:

> I was driving along, you understand? And I was fine. I was even observing the scenery. You can imagine, me looking at scenery, on the road every week of my life. But it's so beautiful up there, Linda, the trees are so thick, and the sun is warm. I opened the windshield and just let the warm air bathe over me. And then all of a sudden I'm goin' off the road! I'm tellin' ya, I absolutely forgot I was driving. If I'd've gone the other way over the white line I might've killed somebody. So I went on again -- and five minutes later I'm dreamin' again, and I nearly -- <u>He presses two fingers against his eyes</u>. I have such thoughts, I have such strange thoughts. (<u>DS</u>, 132)

Willy presses his eyes. They are sore because of what they can see or perhaps not see. To evade the sterile present, Willy constantly lives in the past:

> The street is lined with cars. There's not a breath of fresh air in the neighborhood. The grass don't grow any more, you can't raise a carrot in the back yard. They should've had a law against apartment houses. Remember those two beautiful elm trees out there? (<u>DS</u>, 134-135)

The open spaces and natural expanses Willy yearns for contrast with the stifling effect of a social context. This point about Willy brings to mind a useful comparison with Oswald. Willy is, in a way, re-stating the dichotomy Oswald Alving draws between home and abroad. In Willy's case, it is home divided within itself: home as it was and home as it is. The claustrophobic fear of being stifled by the present, engendered in Oswald, similarly torments

Willy. Both Oswald and Willy seek creativity; yet both are doomed to impotence. Willy is a talented craftsman. Miller holds that the nature of salesmanship requires "ingenuity and individualism", and adds that a salesman is a creative person because he has to "conceive of a plan of attack and use kinds of ingenuity".[1] It is, however, clearly the creativity stemming from the use of his own hands that Willy possesses.

Willy's great dreams of success do not only centre on himself, but they also embrace his sons, Biff and Happy. A stickler for the "cult of personality", he pours the following advice into their ears: "Be liked and you will never want" (DS, 146).

Death of a Salesman dramatizes the decay of a man forced to witness his own social failure, the deflation of his dreams, and the disintegration of his own family. The title embodies the social aspect of Willy's failure. However, the play is as much concerned with the death of a father as with that of a salesman. Any interpretation of the play must take into consideration the fact that Willy's shortcomings as a salesman and as a father are inextricably linked. Willy's search for a secure position within the family is inseparable from his search for a definite one in the "success" system. On both fronts, he fails drastically.

Willy Loman confesses to being "temporary" about himself. To take the stance of the capitalistic society in which Willy is responsible to a productive pattern, Willy is alienated from society. He does not fit into a pattern of efficiency. Miller highlights the loneliness Willy suffers from in the course of his search for identity. The disorientation of Willy's relations with the wider society is reflected in a confusion, and imbalance within his family,

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1. "Morality and Modern Drama" (Transcript of Radio Interview by Phillip Gelb), Educational Theatre Journal, 10 (1958), 190-202 (p. 198).

and in his own estrangement from it. Basic to the play is the situation where the father is separated from his sons and the mother from sons and father, in an attempt to reconcile them.

The causes of the splintered familial relations are revealed in the course of the play as lying in the rather private act of Willy's infidelity. Destructive in its effect, it creates a friction between father and son, which is incomprehensible to Linda and Happy. Biff's discovery of his "hero" in a Boston hotel with a mistress has a shattering effect on him. Consequently, Biff refuses to go to college, and leads a reckless existence. Biff views his father's act as unpardonable. Like Chris Keller, Biff Loman is disillusioned with his father. "You fake! You phony little fake! You fake!" (DS, 208) is by no means a condemnation any father would like to hear particularly when he knows it is well-deserved. Willy is a "fake" in two interrelated ways. He fails to live up to Biff's set standards of a father by committing himself to a false set of social values. Throughout his life, Willy is unaware of the fact that what he really craves is simple fulfilment as a father. His warped vision has confused his ideals of fatherhood with the idea of success in a social sphere.

By observing his father's mode of life, Biff gradually realizes that he cannot tolerate living in a materialistic society. Biff tries to break through Willy's maze of dreams, and force upon Willy the realization of his own limitations. Once more, father and son face each other, thus recalling similar confrontations between Joe and Chris Keller, and anticipating the conflict between Williams's Big Daddy and Brick in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. Biff explains that he is not the great son of Willy's dreams, and that his failure is grafted in Willy's failure as a father. He resentfully refers to

the destructive effect of his knowledge of Willy's adultery:

> You know why I had no address for three months? I stole a suit in Kansas City and I was in jail. (DS, 216)

Biff becomes aware of his position in society. He does not want to be, like his father, a man in the wrong place, at the wrong time. Referring to an unsuccessful business interview, Biff voices his rejection of business life and his desire to be what he "is" and not what he "should" be:

> And in the middle of that office building, do you hear this? I stopped in the middle of that building and I saw - the sky. I saw the things that I love in this world. The work and the food and time to sit and smoke . . . . Why am I trying to become what I don't want to be? What am I doing in an office, making a contemptuous, begging fool of myself, when all I want is out there, waiting for me the minute I say I know who I am! (DS, 217)

Unfortunately, Willy has no answer for Biff's probing questions. If he had but the semblance of an answer, he would not have become a "fake", and a failure. Throughout his life, Willy has compensated for his social failure by dreams of personal success and popularity. In fact, Biff makes the most accurate judgement of his father's flaw, and pinpoints the source of his dilemma in the words "He [Willy] had the wrong dreams" (DS, 221). Willy is misled by the great American dream. Underlying his view of life is the false assumption that the secret of success lies in being "well-liked". His inability to perceive the multi-facetedness of social demands accounts largely for his problem. Willy Loman, in fact, embodies the absurdity and triviality of a society that places faith in appearances. Willy could have been a good craftsman, but he misguidedly pursued that kind of success which would bring him social recognition, and "comradeship". The moment of illumination is now over for Biff;

he pierces further through his father's gauze of dreams:

> I am not a leader of men, Willy, and neither are you. You were never anything but a hard-working drummer who landed in the ash can like all the rest of them! I'm one dollar an hour, Willy! I tried seven states and couldn't raise it. A buck an hour! Do you gather my meaning? I'm not bringing home any prizes any more, and you're going to stop waiting for me to bring them home. (DS, 217)

Finally, Biff breaks down after this highly charged scene, and sobs in Willy's arms. Movingly, he pleads:

> Will you take that phony dream and burn it before something happens? (DS, 217)

Willy realizes that Biff loves him after all. This knowledge overwhelms him, and exacerbates his feeling of guilt for not deserving this love. His main concern centres subsequently on finding a way to rewardingly reciprocate this undeserved love. At one point, when the past is being merged with the present, Willy pathetically expresses his elation at this discovery of Biff's love to his brother, Ben:

> Oh, Ben, I always knew one way or another we were gonna make it, Biff and I! (DS, 219)

Ben functions as a bridge connecting Willy with the bygone world of the flute. Willy's conversations with Ben heighten the former's failure both as son and brother. It is Ben who had ventured independently into the world. Ben is a living reminder to Willy of what he might have been. Ben has discovered his own resources, and advantageously worked on them.

Having been confronted with a revelation of his son's love, Willy meanders down the paths of his mind to discuss with Ben a proposition of his own suicide. Willy maintains his false ideals to the very end. By committing suicide, he will raise twenty thousand dollars for his beloved "Adonis". He thus intends to

pay for Biff's love. Moreover, Willy probably regards the idea of suicide as a kind of atonement for, and relief from, the intolerable guilt he feels for his failure as a salesman and a father. Willy had always viewed his children as his future life. Miller states that one of the images the play grew from was "the image of a need greater than hunger or sex or thirst, a need to leave a thumbprint somewhere on the world. A need for immortality, and by admitting it, the knowing that one has carefully inscribed one's name on a cake of ice on a hot July day."[1] Willy's "future" life was annihilated since his infidelity had been discovered. From that point in time, he had tried to arouse his family's pity and attention by contemplating unsuccessful suicidal acts.

Willy Loman dies a lonely man. His is not the death of his ideal salesman Dave Singleman. It is rather the death of a "single" man alienated from self, family, and society, and accompanied only by burdens of guilt, and needs of atonement. The only exit Willy can see is suicide.

In "The Requiem", only the people closest to Willy surround his grave. Contrary to Willy's lifetime expectations, salesmen from various states fail to attend his funeral. Willy is doomed to loneliness in life and in death. Charley penetratingly justifies the salesman's suicide:

> Nobody dast blame this man. You don't understand: Willy was a salesman. And for a salesman, there is no rock bottom to the life. He don't put a bolt to a nut, he don't tell you the law or give you medicine. He's a man way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a shoeshine. And when they start not smiling back -- that's an earthquake. And then you get yourself a couple of spots

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1. Introduction to the Collected Plays, p. 29. Willy's view of children as means of asserting identity is comparable to those of Strindberg's "Captain" in The Father.

> on your hat, and you're finished. Nobody dast blame this man. A salesman is got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory. (DS, 221-222)

Despite the fact that Charley is a successful businessman, he is presented as a decent character in the play. If Arthur Miller aims at a criticism of the capitalistic society, he certainly mitigates its evil by making Charley represent it.[1] Contrasted to Charley is Howard who represents the mechanized society. Howard appears on the scene, fiddling with his tape-recorder, which is significantly emitting the voices of his family members. Howard's character is highlighted in the scene between him and Willy, where the latter asks him for a job that would not involve travelling. Willy approaches Howard, his former employer's son, in the name of friendship. His approach is outdated: in a materialistic society, people focus their energies on temporal matters. Howard is more interested in his tape-recorder than in Willy. Thus the pervasive quality of the mechanistic society prevents Willy from achieving any form of efficacy. When the busy businessman dismisses Willy, the latter exclaims:

> There were promises made across this desk! You mustn't tell me you've got people to see -- I put thirty-four years into this firm, Howard, and now I can't pay my insurance! You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away -- a man is not a piece of fruit! (DS, 181)

Willy appeals to the whole ruthless social system.[2] When fired by Howard, Willy cannot understand that it is material values that count now, and that no poundage accrues to spiritual values. Charley

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1. Miller's sympathetic presentation of representatives of social oppression gives rise to Eric Bentley's argument that the play does not define itself as a social drama or a tragedy. See In Search of a Theatre (New York, 1953), p. 85.

2. Death of a Salesman strikes a similar note to Elmer Rice's Adding Machine (1923) where a clerk of twenty-five years' service is to be replaced by an adding machine.

sympathetically but firmly reprimands Willy for the latter's persistence in living in a world of dreams:

> Willy, when're you gonna realize that them things don't mean anything? You named him Howard, but you can't sell that. The only thing you got in this world is what you can sell. And the funny thing is that you're a salesman, and you don't know that. (DS, 192)

In such passages, Miller broaches questions of social status and social honour, and criticizes the social and moral standards of contemporary America. In his essay "On Social Plays", Miller holds that a person in an industrialized society has value "as he fits into the pattern of efficiency and for that alone". He further explains that "the absolute value of the individual human being is believed in only as a secondary value; it stands well below the needs of efficient production".[1] Miller's theory throws light on Howard's words:

> It's a business, kid, and everybody's gotta pull his own weight. (DS, 180)

When the individual fails to "pull his own weight"; when the orange is eaten and the "peel" is thrown away, all that remains for the peel to do is retreat further and further into an illusory world, rather than accept its place in the social garbage-can.

Willy lives within a context of economic and social analyses which suggest some of the play's intellectual affiliations. "Babbittry" is the key malady of Willy, and his society. The worship of success is seen as a form of social acceptance of the breadwinner, so much so that success becomes a prison, and a way of life. Like Babbitt, the salient characteristic of Willy Loman is his lack of originality, which demonstrates the sterilizing

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1. "On Social Plays", Introduction to the one-act version of A View from the Bridge (New York, 1955), 1-15 (p. 10).

effect of the mechanistic society on its members. Because the machine process inculcates standardization, it weakens originality and augments conformity.[1] Miller is presenting the case of an individual caught in the web of a society that puts a premium on mechanization, and never ceases to manufacture false dreams and ideas. Death of a Salesman examines the nature of the individual's relation to society, the degree of infiltration of social concepts into the individual, and their corrosive effects on him.

Willy's sense of honesty and integrity is completely distorted. He attempts to feed Biff and Happy his own misconceptions of the philosophy of success. Unlike Biff, Happy is corrupted by his father's ideas. He lives in the dream of surpassing his present self, and becoming important. As a result of his warped teachings, Willy's sons are alienated from each other.

Willy has been assisted in this misguided vision of life by his wife, Linda, who further contributes to the act of family disintegration. Miller introduces Linda in the following terms:

> Most often jovial, she has developed an iron repression of her exceptions to Willy's behaviour - she more than loves him, she admires him, as though his mercurial nature, his temper, his massive dreams and little cruelties, served her only as sharp reminders of the turbulent longings within him, longings which she shares but lacks the temperament to utter and follow to their end.
> (DS, 131)

Linda encourages Willy's dreams despite her awareness of the discrepancy

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1. Commenting on the philosophy of success, Colin Wilson unjustifiably assumes that Arthur Miller should have presented ultimate solutions to the social problem in Death of a Salesman. "Willy is an 'other-directed' man. The play is about an organization man and his defeat . . . . It is a gloomy indictment of the Protestant ethic of success, of the idea of society as hero. But Miller's weakness lies in his lack of imaginative vision. He can condemn the Protestant ethic, but he has nothing to put in its place." See The Stature of Man (Connecticut, 1972), pp. 47-48.

between these dreams and the realities in which they are rooted. Her blind devotion contributes to Willy's fall. However, the interpreter can see that Linda whether knowingly or unknowingly tries to offer Willy a source of solace in an indifferent society. Linda inflates Willy's false conception of himself, and of the social world around him. She tries to protect Willy, but never to improve his state. Linda is constantly bickering with Happy and Biff for their behaviour towards Willy. For all her love, she fails to alleviate his sense of loneliness and give him the companionship and comradeship he so compellingly craves. Therefore, Willy cannot find in her a home; he cannot find in the social world a home; he cannot find in himself a home.

Linda's final words in "The Requiem" reveal her misunderstanding of Willy in life and death:

> Forgive me, dear. I can't cry. I don't know what it is, but I can't cry. I don't understand it. Why did you ever do that? Help me, Willy, I can't cry. It seems to me that you're just on another trip. I keep expecting you. Willy, dear, I can't cry. Why did you do it? I search and search and I search, and I can't understand it, Willy. I made the last payment on the house today. Today, dear. And there'll be nobody home. A sob rises in her throat. We're free and clear. Sobbing more fully, released. We're free. Biff comes closely toward her. We're free . . . . We're free . . . . (DS, 222)

The Lomans are free from a dream that was Willy - a man who "never knew who he was" (DS, 221) - to borrow a son's critical summation of a salesman's life.

A question that presents itself at this point, to the interpreter, relates to the reasons underlying Willy's inability to reconcile himself to himself, to his familial situation, and to his social and cultural context. Probing these reasons necessitates an understanding of the main sources from which Willy derives his values.

Willy Loman is a melting pot for several sources of values. Basic to these is American tradition. It is possible to term it as "Americanism": the awareness and meaning of being an American. As a direct consequence of Americanism, another source of values presents itself; namely, the frontier tradition. The third source of values is the city, which by virtue of its encroachment upon the individual, and vital function in the livelihood of its inhabitants figures prominently in the American consciousness.

It is most vital to note that these historical, cultural, social, psychological, and economic sources of values are given spatial equivalents in the play. American history and traditions are all-pervasive and cover the entire spatial development of the play; the frontier tradition is given three spatial equivalents; namely, Alaska, Africa, and New England; the city in question is obviously New York.

Among these sources of values the frontier tradition is predominant in Willy's consciousness. It is partly his inability to reach a form of reconciliation between the demands of the frontier tradition and those of modern social life that leads to his loss of a sense of social identity. The predominance of the frontier tradition in Willy's consciousness can be traced to his childhood, generally, and to his relation with his dead father, particularly. Miller's implicit indications to Willy, as a son, should not be underestimated. The interpreter can deduce the fact that Willy Loman never had sufficient direct knowledge of his father and that consequently his desire to know his father through learning "about" him was insatiable. The stories he heard about this "adventurous" pioneer inflated the father into a hero in Willy's consciousness, and transformed Willy's relation to him into a case

of idealization and hero-worship. Willy's ardent longing to know his father resulted in a frantic search for him. But as this search could obviously not be for his real father, it was, by necessity, a search for an abstract form, embodied in attributes of the father. Willy's inaccessibility to a father has made him fantasize about this missing figure, and identify himself with those attributes that could act as a substitute for the father; namely, a spirit of adventurous pioneering. That Willy yearns for his father is substantiated by his specific mental excursions to the world of Ben:

> Please tell about Dad. I want my boys to hear. I want them to know the kind of stock they spring from. All I remember is a man with a big beard, and I was in Mamma's lap, sitting round a fire, and some kind of high music. (DS, 157)

Willy has been deprived of male influence in his life. His recourse to Ben whenever the need arises to construct meaning in Willy's present life is an exteriorization of the need for a father-figure:

> Can't you stay a few days? You're just what I need, Ben, because I -- I have a fine position here, but I -- well, Dad left when I was such a baby and I never had a chance to talk to him and I still feel -- kind of temporary about myself. (DS, 159)

Ben informs him that:

> Father was a very great and a very wild-hearted man. We would start in Boston, and he'd toss the whole family into the wagon, and then he'd drive the team across the country; through Ohio, and Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, and all the Western states. And we'd stop in the towns and sell the flutes that he'd made on the way. Great inventor, Father. With one gadget he made more in a week than a man like you could make in a lifetime. (DS, 157)

To grasp some form of identity by relating to his roots, Willy tries to adopt a streak of "self-reliance" and individualism in his daily life. For him, venturing into the world of salesmanship in New

England approximates to an identification with his father. That salesmanship is synonymous, in Willy's mind, to venturing into unknown territories is given substantial evidence in his words:

> My father lived many years in Alaska. He was an adventurous man. We've got quite a little streak of self-reliance in our family. I thought I'd go out with my older brother and try to locate him, and maybe settle in the North with the old man. And I was almost decided to go, when I met a salesman in the Parker House. His name was Dave Singleman. And he was eighty-four years old, and he'd drummed merchandise in thirty-one states. And old Dave, he'd go up to his room, y'understand, put on his green velvet slippers -- I'll never forget -- and pick up his phone and call the buyers, and without ever leaving his room, at the age of eighty-four, he made his living. And when I saw that, I realized that selling was the greatest career a man could want. (DS, 180)

Willy's implied identification of himself, as a salesman, with his father, as a pioneer, explains the impetus of the salesman's suicidal thoughts when his father's principles are rendered inapplicable in New England. Willy envisages New England as a means of maintaining ties with a long-lost, yet much-needed father representing roots, home, and identity. Willy's painful realization that New England has ceased to be the land of the father aggravates his feeling of alienation, and separateness. New England does not only represent a link with Willy's own father, it also figures as a version of uncorrupted America where the codes of polite behaviour were exceedingly important. New England pertains to his father's time, and to his world of optimism and pioneering. The frontier, to his father, was a line between civilization and nature, but to Willy it meant the vast possibilities of an uncreated future. Because the frontier has represented an exteriorization of his father's individualism, and pioneering qualities, Willy's pioneering

journey into it is a projection of his desire to satisfy the father by being like him a "wild-hearted" pioneer, driving "across the country" as a pedlar. The interpreter can put forward the suggestion that the frontier, to Willy, represents not only a fertile space but also fertile possibilities.

Unfortunately, Willy's quixotic beliefs have to militate against the windmills of a society that threatens to stifle the individual by opposing any values other than those of imposed mechanization. Willy applies his own standards to life in a metropolitan centre like New York. It is only obvious that the city is not the conducive locale for Willy's outmoded codes that were applicable in a less competitive age. Willy is alienated from the only centre of gravity that has attracted him to life: his belief in being, like his father, a pedlar and a pioneer.

Living in a no man's land that lies between the lands of fathers and sons, past and present, natural resources and standardized ones, afflicts not only Willy but also Biff. Like Willy, Biff drifts for some time between his own desires and those standards of behaviour passed on to him by his father:

> I've had twenty or thirty different kinds of jobs since I left home before the war, and it always turns out the same. I just realized it lately. In Nebraska when I herded cattle and the Dakotas, and Arizona, and now in Texas. It's why I came home now, I guess, because I realized it. This farm I work on, it's spring there now, see? and they've got about fifteen new colts. There's nothing more inspiring or -- beautiful than the sight of a mare and a new colt. And it's cool there now, see? Texas is cool now, and it's spring. And whenever spring comes to where I am, I suddenly get the feeling, my God, I'm not gettin' anywhere! What the hell am I doing, playing around with horses, twenty-eight dollars a week! I'm thirty-four years old, I oughta be makin' my future. That's when I come running home. And now, I get here, and I don't know what to do with myself. (DS, 138-139)

Like Willy, Biff feels quite "temporary" about himself, but unlike Willy he realizes his errors and tries to rectify his way of life. Biff's and Willy's conflicting values are resolved in what may be compared to an Ibsenesque version of the frontier; individualism, authenticity to the self and to desires. "I know who I am" (DS, 222) is not only Biff's final statement. It acts as a resumé of a younger generation's struggle against an older one. It is a result of Biff's metaphorical killing of the father. Biff Loman makes his "separate peace", as it were, and leaves a society that has grown repulsive to him.

Death of a Salesman dramatizes the contradictions inherent in the individual's relation to society. For the interpreter to explain this contradiction is to use the example of father and son - that is of the particular example of Willy and Biff. In their respective struggles against society, Willy and Biff seem to suggest that their problems stem from a polarization of society and the individual. Willy himself fails to see that a salesman's code and his failure lie largely in that society's sense of its relation to the individual. Similarly, Biff seems to see his father's problem and his own as stemming from their respective stances towards society rather than society's stance towards them. While his "I" makes a demand on him for self-definition, Biff sees it as deriving a value from the very social values he despises. Therefore, his experience of social encroachment is not as polarized as he would have it. "I'm a dollar an hour" - becomes his form of self-definition.

Miller's method emphasizes the co-existence of past and present, and of various objects and incidents all at once. But in addition to this flux of experience, suggested by the expressionistic method, is a further implication - namely that there are no such clear-cut

boundaries between the individual and society. Relativism is of the very essence of understanding Willy's experience. Willy's experience is not only conditioned by the social stance towards a salesman's code, but also by the stance the interpreter takes towards Willy as a character. In other words, the viewpoint of the interpreter is of vital importance so is the temporal stance from which any judgements are made, difficult to maintain though that is. This is not to say that an interpreter of the play as such need be biased as this very bias would defeat the purpose of the play, which is to highlight the contingency of Willy's experience. Miller himself gives an example of the ways in which the interpretation of the play is distorted when the impact of Willy's dilemma on the general and the particular levels is toned down to exonerate the social, and maximize the individual's responsibility by making him insane. That society's relation to the individual bears on the latter's experience is not a desired effect.

Alternatively, to see the social as constituted by individual experiencesand to label those experiences as "insane" is ultimately to say that insanity, or loss of touch with reality, is both a cause and effect of the social encroachment on the individual, and of the individual's constitution of the more general social experience. But Miller emphasizes that it was in the interest of the media to "get society off the hook". Therefore, at one stage when Death of a Salesman was being filmed, Willy is presented as a pathological case.

> Now why did they do that? I have here a proof which is interesting. At that time the United States was entering the Cold War. It was just at the point - 1950 - where things began to get very tight.

Miller goes on to explain that along with this film, they made a

"twenty-minute short" to be shown at all cinemas in conjunction with Death of a Salesman. "That short," explains Miller, showed that in reality, salesmen were "one of the most secure, honoured groups in society . . . . They couldn't bear the thought that a normal man in the society might be driven to these extremes; he had to be crazy to start with." This form of dissociating the characters from the audience stems, according to Miller, from "fear that a sane Willy would, in effect, shake society".[1]

Miller's explanation of the reasons why he eventually forbade the circulation of the "short" is consistent with his conception of individual and social relations as built on cause and effect which are inseparable from seeing the individual as trapped by his social experiences and at the same time providing society with the means it uses to remain locked in this vicious circle. Death of a Salesman dramatizes the contradictions given rise to in All My Sons, in Chris's need to "live" in that society and run a business. In A View from the Bridge, Miller remains faithful to this conception, but focuses more fully on the particular problem of Eddie Carbone.

Like Joe Keller and Willy Loman, Eddie Carbone is compelled by an inherent need to evaluate himself justly. As in All My Sons, Miller, in A View from the Bridge,[2] stresses the fact that total commitment to personal inviolability can, in extreme cases, threaten the complementary allegiance: responsibility to others in a world where private and public conscience should be interchangeable.

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1. See Richard I. Evans, Psychology and Arthur Miller (New York, 1968), pp. 43-47.

2. References are to the text of the two-act version of A View from the Bridge as printed in Arthur Miller's Collected Plays. All subsequent page references will be incorporated within the text of the thesis, after the abbreviated title.

A View from the Bridge marks a departure from the earlier plays. Unlike Keller's transgression against an abstract concept of community implied in the title "All My Sons", Eddie's is directed towards a precise and identifiable communal code. In Death of a Salesman, Willy's problems of identity are mainly caused by a blind desire for social recognition in an industrialized society, and an inability to harmonize his own needs with the demands of that acceleratingly developing society. In A View from the Bridge, Eddie's problem is mainly caused by a fatal sexual desire in a primitive, localized community. That these causes are unknown to him is, the interpreter can point out, a separate issue.

A constructive point of departure for the examination of A View from the Bridge would be the significant implications of the title. Dennis Welland offers two explanations of the keyword "bridge":

> This play is "a view from the bridge" not only because its setting is Brooklyn, but more importantly because it tries to show all sides of the situation from the detached eminence of the external observer. Alfieri is essential to the play because he is the bridge from which it is seen.[1]

"Bridge" can be conceived of as a link between modern Brooklyn and traditional Sicily - a bridge between the past and the present.

Miller juxtaposes his two worlds. He effectively distinguishes between these by his characters' names: Eddie and Catherine are supposedly Americans. According to natural laws, they belong to Sicily, and are emotionally linked to it. According to man-made laws, they are American subjects. Rodolpho and Marco, as their names denote, are the Italian immigrants who belong naturally to Sicily but wish to belong formally to the American society, for

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1. Dennis Welland, Arthur Miller, Writers and Critics Series (Edinburgh, 1970), p. 105.

economic reasons. Beatrice is the bridge between the American and Sicilian sides, for the immigrants are her blood relations. Her name can, of course, be pronounced in both American and Italian ways; the second carrying resonances of Dante's Beatrice, for Miller's Beatrice does serve as a power illuminating the dark corners of Eddie's fatally frustrating desire.

Alfieri, the commentator, functions as a Greek chorus by typifying common sense and reason. He is, moreover, Eddie's confidant, and Miller's mask of objectivity and shield from subjectivity. It is possible, for the interpreter, to view Alfieri as the rational part of Eddie, trying to compromise his irrational needs with external realities. Thus, he functions as a "listener" in a dramatic monologue. Alfieri's initial address to the audience clarifies the play's presentation of the individual's relation to secular law in this Sicilian community:

> . . . In this neighborhood to meet a lawyer or a priest on the street is unlucky. We're only thought of in connection with disasters, and they'd rather not get too close.
>
> I often think that behind that suspicious little nod of theirs lie three thousand years of distrust. A lawyer means the law, and in Sicily, from where their fathers came, the law has not been a friendly idea since the Greeks were beaten. (VFB, 379)

Justice is exceedingly important in this society. However, the extent of physical danger has diminished. The Sicilian immigrants, affirms Alfieri, are now "quite civilized, quite American". They "settle for half" (VFB, 379). The irony of Alfieri's statement will be fully revealed in due course. Eddie refuses to compromise his primitive passions with the demands of the external world. His primitive passions are associated with the Sicilian world. Repeatedly in the play, Alfieri stresses the inevitability of impending disaster, and his own inability to avert it.

Eddie's incestuous love for his niece is presented in the play's terms, as heralding his own disaster. It is quite obvious, at the outset, that Eddie's interest in Catherine trespasses beyond the healthy grounds circumscribing a normal, uncle-niece relation. He pays excessive attention to her physical appearance.[1] In every way, Eddie strives to keep Catherine under his control. Eddie's possessive attitude towards Catherine defines especially the area of her interest in other men. He constantly disguises his sexual attraction, even from himself because this attraction to his niece arouses in him a feeling of guilt which is too painful. To evade his guilt, Eddie constantly convinces himself that he, like any loving guardian, is acting for Catherine's good:

> Katie, I promised your mother on her deathbed. I'm responsible for you. You're a baby, you don't understand these things. (VFB, 381)

Dreading the thought of being dispossessed of Catherine, Eddie erects obstacles to prevent her from becoming independent.

Miller underlines his approach in the preface to the original one-act version of A View from the Bridge:

> It is wide open for a totally subjective treatment, involving, as it does, several elements which fashion has permitted us to consider down to the last detail. There are, after all, an incestuous motif, homosexuality and, as I shall no doubt soon discover, eleven other neurotic patterns hidden within it, as well as the question of codes. It would be ripe for a slowly evolving drama through which the hero's antecedent life forces might, one by one, be brought to life, until we know his relationships to his parents, his uncle, his grandmother, and the incident in his life which, when revealed toward the end of the second act, is clearly what drove him inevitably to his disaster.[2]

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1. For an example, see pp. 380-381.

2. An excerpt from the preface Arthur Miller wrote for A Memory of Two Mondays and A View from the Bridge, as printed in Theatre Arts (September, 1956), 31-32 (p. 32).

To claim the possibility of a subjective treatment is certainly a significant departure for Miller who has always emphasized the fruitfulness of objectivity. Miller further explains that A View from the Bridge reveals:

> . . . the awesomeness of a passion which, despite its contradicting the self-interest of the individual it inhabits, despite every kind of warning, despite even its destruction of the moral beliefs of the individual, proceeds to magnify its power over him until it destroys him.[1]

Miller, however, stresses the fact that his interest in irrational drives in the individual, and in the shady areas of his subjective life, differs from that expressed by other modern dramatists in so far as it is not an end in itself. Miller adamantly rejects the approach to psychology for psychology's sake, for that would envisage man, according to Miller, as a pathetic victim of inner compulsions. It would minimize or in some cases completely negate the tragic view of man. To save himself from confinement to purely psychological subjective drama, Miller treats his theme in a Greek framework. He announces this intention, in an essay, as follows:

> The new social drama will be Greek in that it will face man as a social animal and yet without the partisanship of so much past drama. It will be Greek in that the "men" dealt with in its scenes -- the psychology and characterizations -- will be more than ends in themselves and once again parts of a whole, a whole that is social, a whole that is Man.[2]

To produce the part and the whole, Arthur Miller moves from the narrower presentation of a specific economic and social structure in Death of a Salesman, and the wider arena of humanity presented in All My Sons, to a pre-Christian Greek ethos, and a new cultural

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1. Introduction to the Collected Plays, p. 48.

2. "On Social Plays", op. cit., pp. 14-15.

and historical background of a particular ethnic group. The introduction of the Sicilian community to an American setting serves Miller multi-purposes. The duality of cultures affords him the possibility of investigating the consequences of the clash of the two cultures, the impact of culture on man, and its conditioning of his responses to life. Furthermore, this duality enables him to underline the theme of the play by incisively exhibiting the destructive power of primitive passions that militate against culture, deny any allegiance to ethnic groups, sever any threads binding man to a social milieu, and set him adrift in an agonizing state of isolation that is only alleviated by an act of self-annihilation performed to satiate passion. To steep his play further in the Greek tradition, Miller announces that A View from the Bridge is a "vendetta story, which is the basis of so much Greek drama. They are people who have a blood debt that they have to pay."[1] An earlier essay by Miller explains the meaning of the debt: it is owed to "the existence of the community, a solidarity that may be primitive but which finally administers a self-preserving blow against its violators".[2]

Miller holds that he deliberately provokes a specific emotional reaction, on the audience's part, to Eddie's fate:

> I wanted the audience to feel toward it [the story] as I had on hearing it for the first time . . . not so much with heart-wringing sympathy as with wonder. For when it was told to me I knew its ending a few minutes after the feller had begun to speak. I wanted to create suspense but not by withholding information. It must be suspenseful because one knew too well how it would come out, so that the basic feeling would be the

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1. Quoted in Robert Martin and Richard Meyer, "Arthur Miller on Plays and Playwrighting", Modern Drama, 19 (1976), 375-384 (p. 378).

2. Arthur Miller, "What Makes Plays Endure", The New York Times, Section 2 (10 August, 1952), 1 and 3 (p. 1).

> desire to stop this man and tell him what he was really doing to his life.[1]

The incest taboo emerges - in the play - as an integrated part of the family structure, and exercises powerful psychological and social effects on the development of the individual members and their community. In creating Eddie, Miller is probably following the prototype of literary incest - Oedipus. But the difference between Sophocles and Miller lies in the representation of the motif of incest, and in the presentation of the unconscious and conscious perpetration of incest, as well as the subconscious incest wish in all its more or less concealed variations. The first two forms are to be found in Greek mythology. Unconscious incest has its model in Aeschylus's and Sophocles's Oedipus, but the occurrence in dramatic literature of the subconscious incest wish is purely a discovery of psychoanalysis. It is essential to point out, however, that Arthur Miller does not give form to the results of psychoanalytic investigations. He is merely depicting one area of psychosexual experience: the subconscious motivations of human behaviour and their total destructive tendencies in relation to the individual and his community.

Ironically enough, Eddie's precautionary measures which are taken to imprison Catherine in his own nest prove ineffectual. Two outsiders knock on Eddie's door to precipitate both the external action within the social world of the play, and the internal psychological world of Eddie. Rodolpho and his brother Marco, Italian immigrants illegally smuggled into the country, seek shelter under this Italian-American longshoreman's roof. Eddie's jealousy and blind passion of their rivalry will turn him into an informant

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1. Arthur Miller, Introduction to a version of A View from the Bridge (New York, 1960), p. vii.

against them. The brothers do not only constitute threats to the familial structure, generally; and to the relation between uncle and niece, specifically. Rodolpho is a menacing threat to Eddie in relation to the latter's own self because he can possibly goad Eddie to exteriorize his incestuous feelings, and acknowledge them to himself.

Early in the play, Eddie relates the story of Vinny Bolzano who has betrayed his uncle to the Immigration Authorities. Consequently Vinny was ostracized. Eddie's response to Beatrice's description of the Bolzanos' reaction to this betrayal is highly significant:

> You'll never see him no more, a guy do a thing like that? How's he gonna show his face? . . . Just remember, kid, you can quicker get back a million dollars that was stole than a word that you gave away.
> (VFB, 389)

Ironically, Eddie's words will retrospectively serve as a suitable comment on his own forthcoming betrayal of a communal code. Underlying Eddie's statement is his own subconscious intimation of possible betrayal. He is exceedingly harassed by the fear of his own desire to break the code of the poleis in order to preserve a status quo. Through the story of Vinny Bolzano, Miller establishes the attitude of the Italian immigrants towards an informer. To them, informing is a sin to be punished by ostracism.

However, social ostracism is a lesser evil than sexual evasion. Fierce passion and jealousy fester in Eddie as he begins to recognize the impact of Catherine's and Rodolpho's growing love. Hence Eddie fearfully regards Rodolpho as an outsider breaking the sanctity of his family relations, and as a thief stealing his possessions. Contributing to the theme, the song "Paper Doll" throws light on Eddie's dilemma:

I'll tell you boys it's tough to be alone
And it's tough to love a doll that's not your own.
I'm through with all of them,
I'll never fall again,
Hey, boy, what you gonna do?
I'm gonna buy a paper doll that I can call my own,
A doll that other fellows cannot steal.
Eddie rises and moves upstage.
And then those flirty, flirty guys
With their flirty, flirty eyes
Will have to flirt with dollies that are real.[1]
(VFB, 396)

An effectively manipulated device, the song is highly functional. Its theme states the singer's intention to buy a paper doll, which can be possessed to the exclusion of rivalry and theft. Catherine is Eddie's paper doll. That the singer wants to buy a paper doll parallels Eddie's insistence on his rights to control Catherine's actions, due to the fatherly sacrifices he has made to raise her.

Blinded by his passion for his niece, Eddie is hostile towards Rodolpho. Eddie actually transfers his guilt engendered by his unlawful passion for Catherine to an implicit reference to Rodolpho's homosexuality.[2] He, moreover, denounces the prospect of Catherine's marriage to Rodolpho on the grounds that the latter is using Catherine to become an American citizen himself.

Eddie's encounters with Alfieri illuminate, to the interpreter, the longshoreman's subjective fragmented interior. Alfieri acts as a bridge between the viewers of the play, and the inarticulate Eddie, and serves as a means of exteriorizing Eddie's innermost feelings. Eddie resorts to Alfieri to seek a way to prevent Catherine's and Rodolpho's marriage. To cover his guilt for his unlawful, sensual love for Catherine, and his consequent jealousy of Rodolpho, he appeals to Alfieri in the voice of a grieved parent whose precious daughter is being stolen from him:

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1. The song is an extract from Johnny Black's "Paper Doll".
2. See p. 408.

> I worked like a dog twenty years so a punk could have her, so that's what I done. I mean, in the worst times, in the worst, when there wasn't a ship comin' in the harbor, I didn't stand around lookin' for relief -- I hustled. When there was empty piers in Brooklyn I went to Hoboken, Staten Island, the West Side, Jersey, all over -- because I made a promise. I took out of my own mouth to give to her. I took out of my wife's mouth. I walked hungry plenty days in this city! It begins to break through. And now I gotta sit in my own house and look at a son-of-a-bitch punk like that -- which he came out of nowhere! I give him my house to sleep! I take the blankets off my bed for him, and he takes and puts his dirty filthy hands on her like a goddam thief! (VFB, 409-410)

Eddie still cannot acknowledge in himself the incestuous drive that will later cause him to report Marco and Rodolpho to the Immigration Authorities. Alfieri, however, realizes the locus of Eddie's dilemma. He sensibly warns him of the destructive, devouring marshlands of this passion:

> You know, sometimes God mixes up the people. We all love somebody, the wife, the kids -- every man's got somebody that he loves, heh? But sometimes . . . there's too much. You know? There's too much, and it goes where it mustn't. A man works hard, he brings up a child, sometimes it's a niece, sometimes even a daughter, and he never realizes it, but through the years -- there is too much love for the daughter, there is too much love for the niece. Do you understand what I'm saying to you? (VFB, 409)

Eddie fails to grasp the full implications of Alfieri's words. He cannot regard his passion as unlawful, and tries to justify it as a paternally protective love. Furthermore, Eddie does not want to believe that the man-made law does not defend his case. Alfieri can foresee disaster. He is aware of his inability to impede the turbulent progression of events:

> There are times when you want to spread an alarm, but nothing has happened. I knew, I knew then and there -- I could have finished the whole story that afternoon. It wasn't as though there was a mystery to unravel. I could see every

> step coming, step after step, like a dark figure walking down a hall toward a certain door. I knew where he was heading for, I knew where he was going to end. And I sat here many afternoons asking myself why, being an intelligent man, I was so powerless to stop it. (VFB, 410)

Alfieri's worst fears are confirmed. Frustratingly helpless, the viewer from the bridge experiences the events flowing to their inevitable conclusion. The gushing stream of passion rushes along, sweeping with its current all obstacles. In an attempt to remove the obstacle built between him and the object of his passion, Eddie gives away Rodolpho and Marco to the authorities. Thus he commits, what constitutes in the eyes of his Sicilian community, an unpardonable transgression.

Eddie owes allegiance to three sets of laws. As a citizen, he is bound by American laws; in this case immigration laws. The second set of laws, to which he must supposedly adhere, is that of the Sicilian community: the polis. Thirdly, Eddie compellingly owes allegiance to the natural law that justifies incest as a primitive impulse. Eddie violates the second set of laws. He betrays responsibility to his polis. In order to preserve his family ties intact, he betrays the community. By this single act of betrayal, Eddie has signed his death warrant. He has set himself adrift from the social context. He is ostracized, deprived of his name, and his identity. The punishment he receives is executed by Marco. Marco accuses Eddie of betrayal, thus tainting the latter's good name. Like Eddie, Marco is a representative of primitive justice. He will not settle for half. Eddie and Marco find law inadequate to their needs. Eddie cannot find a law to prevent Catherine's and Rodolpho's forthcoming marriage from taking place - the marriage constituting an event which threatens to shatter

his very being. Marco, on the other hand, cannot find solace in a law that will punish Eddie for degrading Rodolpho, and the community. Like Eddie, Marco seeks Alfieri's help:

> MARCO: gesturing with his hand - this is a new idea: Then what is done with such a man?
>
> ALFIERI: Nothing. If he obeys the law, he lives. That's all.
>
> MARCO: rises, turns to Alfieri: The law? All the law is not in a book.
>
> ALFIERI: Yes. In a book. There is no other law.
>
> MARCO, his anger rising: He degraded my brother. My blood. He robbed my children, he mocks my work. I work to come here, mister!
>
> ALFIERI: I know, Marco --
>
> MARCO: There is no law for that? Where is the law for that?
>
> ALFIERI: There is none. (VFB, 434)

Since books contain no laws to serve Marco's or Eddie's purposes, each falls back on his own primitive laws. Marco soils Eddie's name. Echoing John Proctor, Eddie cries:

> I want my name! . . . Marco's got my name -- to Rodolpho: and you can run tell him, kid, that he's gonna give it back to me in front of this neighborhood, or we have it out. (VFB, 437)

In this light, Eddie's final claim for his name involves questions of identity, integrity, and dignity. It is a plea for belonging to society, and for re-claiming his place in it. For Eddie, his name becomes a means of connection with his fellow men. By regaining his name and his integrity, Eddie will belong again. He will associate himself once more with the society he severs himself from by an act of betrayal.

Marco's and Eddie's attempts to exploit natural laws and man-made laws respectively and to suit these laws to their own purposes

underline a focal concern of the play implied by the questions: How can the individual bridge the tormenting gap emerging from the dichotomization of these laws? Will impulses and imperatives ever find a form of reconciliation? The contradictory nature of laws, and the individual's reaction to them - as presented in A View from the Bridge - recall a similar dichotomy of laws and a similar refusal to be reconciled to them dramatized in O'Neill's The Hairy Ape. In both cases, man-made laws impinge on natural laws. Like Yank, Eddie carries out a self-annihilating search for his name. The catalyst, in the case of Yank, is Mildred. By executing the capitalistic man-made law of distinction between worker and employer, Mildred deprives Yank of the sanctity of a natural law according to which the worker gains his natural rights of belonging through his productive labour. Thus a man-made law impinges on a natural one and the final result is loss, dissociation, and social and spiritual drifting. In Eddie's case, Rodolpho and Marco act as catalysts. The man-made law legislating Rodolpho's and Catherine's marriage impinges on a natural law; namely Eddie's incestuous desire for Catherine. To find their ways back to their selves, Yank and Eddie have recourse to natural laws and man-made laws respectively. Yank seeks his roots in a caged gorilla which is related to him through the natural laws of evolution. His final act is suicidal yet destructive only to himself. Eddie seeks the protection of a man-made law to maintain his hold over Catherine but, ironically enough, he loses himself in the process. Having lost his name in life, Eddie retrieves it through death, for there can be no life without a name.[1]

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1. Eddie's death is objected to by Henry Hewes who argues that "given Eddie's character and the credibility of his development his death is not organic but merely heroically conventional". See Henry Hewes, "Broadway Postscript: Death of a Longshoreman", Saturday Review of Literature (Oct. 15, 1955), 25-26 (p. 26).

It is Eddie's last phrase preceding his death that is slightly unsettling. It gives rise to an ambiguity regarding the extent of awareness Eddie achieves of his plight and of the question of his identity, before death. Miller has Eddie cry "My B!" (VFB, 439); the exclamation mark denoting a rise in tone. It suggests Eddie's bewilderment as to the final outcome of events. It deletes the possibility of a repentant, falling tone asking forgiveness. Yet, one may question why he calls her "my" B. Has he renounced "his" Catherine?[1] His final cry remains equivocal. It could be considered indicative of his realization of the lethal effect of his misplaced passion and his ultimate resort to the one creature whom he can finally call his own; his name and his Catherine having been lost. It would be hazardous to reach any definite conclusion, for the ambiguity is inherent in the play. Quite aptly, it cannot be resolved, but can only be profitably pointed at. The ambiguity is provocative, and affords the fertile possibilities of speculation. One way of explaining the ambiguity is by realizing that Eddie was incomprehensible even to himself. The interpreter can see that Eddie is carried away by a wave of passion, that he could not understand his motives. In this light, the ambiguity of the last cry would seem consonant with his character. Incomprehensible to himself, his conduct remains largely incomprehensible to the audience. Miller's inarticulate heroes, Willy and Eddie, leave a great deal unspoken thus suggesting a substrata of meanings.

Alfieri has the final word. Appealing for an understanding of Eddie's plight Alfieri holds that Eddie has acted out his impulses

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1. In the original one-act version, Eddie is described at the moment of his death as seeming "puzzled, questioning, betrayed". His final words are: "Catherine -- Why?". Therefore, Miller's stress in the two-act version, on "My B" is indicative. See A View from the Bridge, printed with A Memory of Two Mondays (New York, 1955), p. 159.

and was true to the hidden forces of his passions. In stilted language, Alfieri formulates an epitaph to Eddie's career, which functions in a manner similar to Charley's words about Willy, in the Requiem:

> Most of the time now we settle for half and
> I like it better. But the truth is holy,
> and even as I know how wrong he was, and
> his death useless, I tremble, for I confess
> that something perversely pure calls to me
> from his memory -- not purely good, but
> himself purely, for he allowed himself to
> be wholly known and for that I think I will
> love him more than all my sensible clients.
> And yet, it is better to settle for half,
> it must be! And so I mourn him -- I admit
> it -- with a certain . . . alarm. (VFB, 439)

Alfieri's words "he allowed himself to be wholly known" should be taken with reservation. Eddie allows himself to be "wholly" known, only in so far as his irrational impulses are concerned. Like Joe Keller, and Willy Loman, Eddie Carbone is determined to follow the path to his name and integrity - as he subjectively sees it - however misguided this vision may be. It is this avowed determination that stamps Miller's characters with his own unmistakeable unswerving concern. Like Biff, Eddie decides to make a breach with communal codes. Biff renounces the city; he rejects the teachings of his father, in favour of a more authentic outlet to his desires. Eddie renounces the communal codes of his Italian forefathers in favour of a true overwhelming compulsive need to give vent to his desires. In Ibsen's terms, both Biff and Eddie have coined the metals in themselves; but their success remains to be questioned. Eddie is largely inexplicable in so far as his rational functions are concerned. His mental world remains largely in the dark.

Miller is concerned with the social and the psychological in man. Eddie's inner crisis is inextricably welded with his external

repressive surroundings.[1] A View from the Bridge explores the individual's search for a place within his own self, his family, and society. In the process of his search, Eddie has committed many transgressions. At the core of the play, lies an unhealthy family situation. His first transgression is against the family, for his incestuous passion estranges him from his wife. "When am I gonna be a wife again?" (VFB, 399) demands Beatrice. Eddie is the victim of a conflict. Miller suggests that Eddie is in the grip of a "repetition-compulsion" which implies that Eddie is reliving through Catherine an Oedipal situation. This is substantiated by evidence from the play. For example, Eddie in several encounters with Catherine is described as "a lost boy", or as having a "childish" emotion.[2] Inasmuch as Catherine's role is that of a daughter within the family, his sexual desire for his niece has the function of an incestual fixation.

Unlike Eddie, who is in the grip of strong passions, and is consequently blind to any recognition of his plight, Beatrice is more perceptive. She opposes Eddie's fixation. In fact, Beatrice plays the role of the two sets of sons in the earlier discussed Miller plays, in that she throws light on the pitfalls in the path Eddie follows. "You can never have her" (VFB, 347) says Beatrice - a statement with deep implications if no forceful style. This creates tension within the family. Catherine is caught in this web. Although Miller does not grant Catherine's character comprehensive treatment, it is clear that she is pulled by two forces:

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1. Eric Bentley and John Gassner unjustifiably point to a lack of synthesis in A View from the Bridge, between the incest motif and the theme of betrayal. See Eric Bentley, "A View from the Bridge", New Republic (Dec. 19, 1953), pp. 21-22; and John Gassner, Theatre at Crossroads: Play and Playwrights of the Twentieth Century American Stage (New York, 1960).

2. See pages 402, and 390 respectively.

her desire for independence manifested in her insistence on seeking a job, and gradually breaking away from the family; and her natural affection for Eddie. When Catherine gets involved with Rodolpho, her desire for independence from family ties proves stronger than her affection for Eddie.

Miller interestingly maintains that Eddie's social position and status limit his range of choices and action, which is a further indication of the relatedness of social and psychological questions. Interviewed by John Wayne, Miller contends that:

> You can see how differently the play would have turned out if the central character had been, say, a professor instead of a dock labourer. The difference in psychology would be enormous. The labouring man has so few choices open to him. His life hems him in among his circumstances far more effectively than an educated man can be hemmed in.[1]

Miller's view is textually evidenced. Richard Barksdale further explains the close relation between the social and psychological factors. He interestingly broadens the social question to include two sets of values - those of the smaller Sicilian polis, and those of the larger community:

> Marco kills Eddie because Eddie's action has condemned Marco's family to economic slavery, and poverty. Admittedly, some kind of Sicilian code of honour is involved and there is a question of the social and moral reputation of both Marco and Eddie, but the final determination of the action Marco takes is basically economic . . . [Marco and Rodolpho] are the victims of a grim economic determination. Again there is a quality of the inevitability of the plot action. Eddie's only weapon against Rodolpho is betryal, and Marco's only response in terms of Sicilian ethics and the economic imperative under which he lives is death to the betrayer.[2]

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1. Quoted in Sheila Huftel, Arthur Miller, The Burning Glass (London, 1965), p. 156.

2. Richard Barksdale, "Social Background in the Plays of Miller and Williams", College Language Association Journal, 6 (March, 1963), 161-169 (p. 166).

A View from the Bridge highlights the individual's disharmony with his self, his family, and society. A similar disharmony pervaded All My Sons and Death of a Salesman, but the individual's maladjustment to social necessity is extended, in A View from the Bridge, by a maladjustment to sexual necessity. Like the earlier plays, A View from the Bridge stresses the relations between private and public transgressions, and the wide-reaching effects of these transgressions. It reiterates the theme of the individual's preservation of name and integrity.

A View from the Bridge dramatizes the individual's rebellion against a society that has, through repressing his desires, severed him from any creative connection with it; and against a self that has betrayed him.

The act of interpreting A View from the Bridge must take into consideration the fact that insofar as Eddie disguises his desire from himself, and sees Rodolpho as dispossessing the breadwinner in him of someone he has fed, housed, and clothed, his destruction of Rodolpho becomes an act of exploitation in which he makes use of his connection with the world of power, so to say, to gain power over his self and the object to which he has affixed it. That his act of disguising his motives is successful is evidenced by the way Marco sees him as exploiting them. The crime which Marco describes to Alfieri is one in which "betrayal" of "blood" is extended by "robbing" the immigrants' children and "mocking" their work and livelihood. It is vital to see the connection between the solidarity of a Sicilian community and the needs of the rat-race, which Eddie uses to his own ends. It is highly ironic that this longshoreman who possesses less economic power than a Joe Keller or even a faltering salesman, can within a specific context

derive power from that system that intimidated Joe and Willy. Notwithstanding the fact that Immigration Authorities to which he resorts are not the same as a "business" or salesmanship yet they are comparable to them in so far as their meaning derives from the perspective from which they are seen and the context - wider or smaller against which they are placed. This is not to imply that the relation of the breadwinners to systems outside them can be seen as simplistic. Granted the fact that Eddie betrays his own community and conforms - for whichever reasons - to a wider one, betrayal and conformity are linked, in one way or another to his position as breadwinner. It is the demands for productivity and financial gain that has prompted Rodolpho and Marco to immigrate to America; and that heightens the need of the Sicilian community to be a cohesive unit. Yet ironically, the cohesion is broken once more from within the community. This is where the effectiveness of explaining one set of values in terms of another becomes evident. The demands of a rat-race highlight the solidarity of a Sicilian community and solidarity becomes once more threatened by material relations. Unlike <u>All My Sons</u>, the material relations are not only gains and profits. While it is clear that the lives of twenty-one pilots were at issue, it is clear in the course of the play that they were seen, by Keller, in terms of money which could be burnt; the lives implicitly restored; and the crime forgotten. Catherine is, to Eddie, a possession, the importance of which comes sharply into being when two contexts impinge on each other as it were. But the interpreter can see that she is a sexual object, to Eddie, no matter how he sees her as financially dependent on him. Yet, it is ironic that from the point of view of a financially insecure immigrant she becomes not only a sexual object but also a means to an end which is belonging

to America,and stability within it.

While the focal point in the three foregoing plays is the problem of identity of the breadwinner, it is clear that Miller aims at encompassing a vision of relations that extend beyond those of the breadwinner to his immediate environment. To the extent to which the war in All My Sons, the frontier tradition in Death of a Salesman, and the Sicilian community in A View from the Bridge, precipitate the problems of the breadwinner by revealing the inefficacy of the rat-race, and the savagery of a competitive economy whether seen as reality or as a mask for one, it becomes important for the interpreter to explain the ways in which Miller conceives of the relation between the producer and a specific mode of production in the light of other related disciplines.

The foregoing textual analysis of All My Sons, Death of a Salesman, and A View from the Bridge has mainly focused on the identity-crises of the breadwinner in the capitalistic society, in the case of the former two, and of a longshoreman in a working-class environment characterized by the same ties of exploitation that Keller and Loman had to suffer from and conform to, though in the case of Eddie Carbone it has been shown how the question of economic loss or gain was a mask for an incestuous desire and as such is an exteriorization of a neurotic pattern of behaviour in the play. Keller, Loman, and Carbone have reacted in different ways to the question of economic pressures and as such constitute different ways of impinging on the solidarity of their respective communities. Willy, of course, has the narrowest context to impinge upon; namely, his immediate family.

Keller, Loman, and Eddie are driven to conform to various images which their respective communities label as good. That the essence of "good" is contradictory to the practical possibilities is not a matter to debate at this point. In "The Shadows of the Gods", Miller speaks about "the powers of economic crisis and political imperatives which had twisted, torn, eroded, and marked everyone I laid eyes on". Miller further argues that man has a "native personality" and that the "world" is capable of changing that. At this point of his argument, he does not specify the boundaries of that "world" but one suspects that he implies the economic because it is the only external power that man can be deprived of, and his prosperity dependent on:

> Out there were the big gods, the ones whose disfavour could turn a proud and prosperous and dignified man into a frightened shell of a man whatever he thought of himself, and whatever he decided or didn't decide to do.[1]

In the same essay, Miller points out the need for a new set of laws to conform to, not dissimilar to Ibsen's call for a coinage of the metal within one's self: "conformity to those laws which decree his human nature". In the case of Miller though one must point out that the so-called laws are not purely psychological but only relatively so and are perhaps related to the tracking of impulse and causation from the individual to society and back. What borders on solipsism in the case of Ibsen or "egocentric" desire is tempered by the needs of the community in Miller's case.

That the effect of politics or economics on the individual (I am using the term individual as opposed to Miller's use of man) is corrosive yet in a way inescapably linked to the laws which decree

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1. "The Shadows of the Gods", Harper's (August, 1958), 35-43 (p. 36).

human nature is further evidenced by Miller's assertion that while a certain system (and he refers in this particular instance to politics) can tear an individual from his chosen image, it is at the same time needed as a civilizing act to create social life and civilization. The conflict between man-made laws and natural laws which underlies the action of A View from the Bridge is thus expressed by Miller:

> Politics concerns me as a citizen because politics is the way we regulate our destructive instincts. Without politics we would be at each other's throats more than we are. But as a dramatist, politics is one very important expression of the human dilemma which I'm interested in . . . the impulses that create political conflicts are my business. They are the human impulses, the human contradictions and those are the ones, I think, a drama has to deal with.[1]

In his plays, politics or economics are not, of course, used in such a narrow and specific sense and are made to intertwine or often be represented as part of the same corrosive discipline. In Incident at Vichy, he discusses the various emphases placed, more often theoretically than not, by the Nazi Movement on nationalism, socialism, Germanism, and the working-class and the reality of it as a German kind of Fascism in which individual rights are continually thwarted and subordinated to the needs of the state and the demands for blind obedience. Through his characters, he describes Nazism in terms of decadence, and oppression that makes a character like Bayard have to escape being a Yank-like ape by living on a "borrowed personality" till he finds his spirit "in the future, in the day when the working class is master of the world". The Nazis, to him, are not working-class but he does admit that "with enough propaganda you can confuse anybody". Although these extracts from Incident at Vichy are

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1. Arthur Miller (interviewed by John Russell Taylor) in The Playwrights Speak, edited by Walter Wager (London, 1967), p. 13.

seemingly out of the context of a fuller discussion of the play, their significance emerges when seen against the context of the present discussion which stresses the fact that to Miller politics or economics are intertwined and that even when he separates them in terminology he is driving at one and the same thing, namely their corrosive effect on the individual for, to him, they are both systems that make demands, thus oppress. That the underlying structure of these systems is his primary concern is further evidenced by his description of the Nazi movement as the turning point of the age not only in the social but also in the political sense and in the whole attitude of man towards himself. In The Playwrights Speak, Miller similarly refers to the effects of the McCarthy Movement on the American personality. In "The Shadows of the Gods", Miller had pointed out that the "Great Depression" had taught him how to see beyond the immediately apparent contexts:

> You can't understand anything unless you understand its relation to its context. It was necessary to feel beyond the edges of things.[1]

It is this conviction that Miller brings to bear continually on his work, and that makes one hesitate accepting any categorization of his works or thoughts even when he, at the cost of oversimplification, does so.

The conformity which Keller, Loman, and Carbone suffer from can be seen within the context of history in situations that are not solely dependent on a context of economic exploitation or competition. Miller argues that one draws inspiration from one kind or another of political power and that that determines the extensions of one's personality:

> I lived through the McCarthy time when one saw personalities shifting and changing before one's

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1. "Shadows of the Gods", p. 36.

> eyes as a direct result of a political situation which had it gone on, we would have gotten a whole new American personality which in part we have.[1]

In the Introduction to his Collected Plays, Miller explains that social "compliance" is a result "of a sense of guilt which individuals strive to conceal by complying".[2] Although the aim here is not to digress into a discussion of guilt in Miller's plays, the example that Miller relates to prove his point about the erosion of personality as a result of the continual process of conformity is quite illuminating; and central not only to an understanding of an incident in 1692 the parallel of which Miller found nearly three centuries later but also to the whole of Miller's output:

> I wondered, at first, whether it must be that self-preservation and the need to hold on to opportunity, the thought of being exiled and put out, was what the fear was feeding on, for there were people who had had only the remotest connection with the left who were quite as terrified as those who had been closer. I knew of one man who had been summoned to the office of a network executive and, on explaining that he had no Left connections at all, despite the then current attacks upon him, was told that this precisely was the trouble; "You have nothing to give them," he was told, meaning he had no confession to make, and so he was fired from his job and for more than a year could not recover the will to leave his house.[3]

In a more recent statement made in 1976, Miller extends this analogy with McCarthyism and its effects in eroding the personality:

> This doesn't have to be a New England situation. It just happens that I'm presently reading a biography of Joseph Stalin. A lot of people were killed by him in the thirties. It wasn't infrequent that somebody cooperated with the Secret Police in condemning their friends whom they knew to be perfectly innocent of anything.

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1. Writers at Work, p. 217.

2. Introduction to Collected Plays, p. 40.

3. Ibid.

> As repayment for their services, they were given some extra favour. Then they shot themselves after they had gotten what they had bargained for.[1]

Similarly, the Nazi movement in Miller's view has led to an immense social pressure to conform and to an erosion of what used to be called an autonomous personality:

> So with the movement of history you had created a nation of people who could be said to have given up or been robbed of what had been their nature.[2]

This general process of erosion which is broken down into its component parts on the American side in many respects is countered by a protagonist who in the context of the whole of Miller's work becomes the highly conscious individual - typical, representative and

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1. Robert Martin and Richard Meyer, "On Plays and Playwriting", Modern Drama, Vol. 19 (375-385), p. 376.
David Pownall's Master Class (first performed at the Haymarket Theatre, Leicester, in January, 1983) discusses this question of compliance though in the context of an artistic debate in which Stalin tries to force his doctrine of social realism on Prokofiev and Shostakovich, and in which the problems of the Soviet artist are expounded. Not only does the play offer a striking illustration of the very point that Miller was trying to make: Andrei Zhdanov, Stalin's spokesman on Cultural Policy was killed, but also in the sense that the debate following the accusation of the musicians for not adhering to formalism though not so clear cut in the plays of Arthur Miller emerges as a result of his persistence in searching for a form that would "pry up the well-worn inevitable surfaces of experience behind which swarm the living thoughts and feelings whose expression is the essential purpose of art. I have stood squarely in conventional realism; I have tried to expand it with an imposition of various forms in order to speak more directly even more abruptly and nakedly of what has moved me behind the visible facade of life.
The whole of Miller's drama is dedicated to finding a form for suffering and the consciousness of it within a social context. One recalls Stalin's attempt in the play to compose music about the suffering of the people. It is important in this connection that Miller while on the one hand rejecting the alienated vision of a playwright towards reality and attempting to relate the structure of society to the significant movements of history and to the individuals as concrete examples of the meeting of these forces acting upon them and to their reaction to history and society, has written an article condemning the interference between art and politics in the Soviet Union (in a way expressing the line of thought of the two musicians in Master Class) and that the American Committee for Cultural Freedom was against that.
2. The Playwrights Speak, p. 10.

embodying the kind of progressive attitude which could combat the process of erosion caused by conformity, and which is symbolically presented by the pregnancy of Proctor's wife at the end of the play believing in his "goodness". That the children are supposed to go on carrying the message of the father's goodness and unwillingness to "comply" is suggested by Proctor's words:

> I have three children -- how may I teach them to walk like men in the world and I sold my friends.

Thus although Miller sees in Proctor a "conscious hero", the playwright does not only use this potential historical moment to create this specific play but also to present a process of throwing off the determinism which prevails in all the above-mentioned contexts but becomes more focused and sharply distinguished in the action of a historical figure. In that sense, Proctor more so than Willy is the "one" who becomes the "many", though the emphasis placed in this context is on the individual as opposed to what Miller seems to stress in the Introduction to his Collected Plays when he writes that he aimed to make the one the many in Death of a Salesman so that "society is a power and a mystery of custom and inside the man and surrounding him, as the fish is in the sea and the sea inside the fish, his birthplace and burial ground, promise and threat".[1]

The general movement of history acting on particular societies, then affecting the individual members is not seen by Miller as a haphazard event. He resorts to this pattern because he sees in it a systematic design in which cause and effect are linked, and in which causation plays a primary role for him in understanding the "one", the "many" and history, and the "concept of relations"

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1. Introduction to the Collected Plays, p. 30.

among them which is central to the problems of identity as expounded by Miller. It underlines his search for forms to embody this causation. In the context of one of his many statements about the relations between forms and the movements of history, Miller points out that the theatre of the absurd is a kind of moral insanity, and he states the reasons for his views:

> For when a senator, waving empty file cards in his hands could strike terror into the highest government officials, how could one relish Absurdity, how could one simply stop there and merely report in a play, that life had turned out to be utterly senseless? The Absurd was something one had to be able to afford. The abrogation of cause and effect was entertaining so long as one had never felt the effects.[1]

The extent to which cause and effect are abrogated in the theatre of the absurd is not a point at issue at the moment, but Miller rightly stresses the fact that in the absurd there is no reality beyond the self and that objective reality, and historical meaning are ineffectual and consequently the very kind of dialectical relation between the inner and outer worlds, which his plays attempt to present, would be chaotic, and chaos by Miller's definition is "life lived oblivious to history".[2]

In Miller's development of the question of the individual's identity in relation to the movement of history, there is a stress on the idea of process. One could argue that history is so vital because it offers Miller a model of determinism in the sense that it has happened and that as such it provides a pattern of relations into which the individual is born and which he inherits, in the same way though in a much more general sense, that Ibsen's characters inherit their ghosts. Yet on the other hand, what

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1. "What Makes Plays Endure", The New York Times (August 15, 1965), 1-4 (p. 1).

2. "The Shadows of the Gods", p. 37.

would invalidate this rather simplistic view of history is the fact that Miller does not see it as coming to a halt at the point at which the action of his plays starts. His characters become embodiments of the historical and carry it forth in so far as history to them means human self-development which Miller terms as "a history of man" and describes being as "a ceaseless process of overthrowing one determinism to make way for another more faithful to life's changing relations". Determinism and man's will co-exist in a kind of stasis only within a given context of time like syntagmatic relations in a language which are disrupted and substituted by the replacement of one element in the stasis by another making room for a paradigmatic relation, a new expression of will and a change in the hitherto existing relationship:

> Any determinism is only that stasis, that seemingly endless pause, before the application of man's will administering a new insight into causation.[1]

What Miller describes as the "history of man", and the history in the more general sense work on an intermediate kind of circle - the family - which while representing a unit in itself, is also inseparable from the wider circles both in Miller's textual analysis and in his essays. Like history, the family constitutes a set of pre-existing relations that start conflicting with the need for revised notions of what and who an individual should be. The stasis is represented by the fathers, while the sons overthrow that kind of authority thus making room for a new concept of relations that are not only meaningful within the family but also come to represent the clash between the individual and society - which is central to the question of identity. All My Sons, Death

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1. Introduction to Collected Plays, p. 54.

of a Salesman, and A View from the Bridge reveal a process in which the sons dispossess the fathers of a status quo thus bringing in their own notions to bear on an inherited standard. There are of course two modifications to this statement: the first being that A View from the Bridge, of course, centres on Catherine as a daughter in so far as Eddie's Oedipal situation is concerned, and that although she personally does not aim to dispossess Eddie, her marriage to Rodolpho, which Eddie sees as robbing him of the very security he tried to give Catherine in material terms is an act of dispossession which brings new ideas to the concept of solidarity in the community. The second needed modification is related to Willy as son, who cannot bring himself to fully accept or refute his father's frontier tradition because he feels "temporary" about himself.

In a discussion of A View from the Bridge, Miller points out that the family is "the nursery of all of our neuroses"[1] The membership of the individual within his family is described by him as an act of role-playing in which he distinguishes between father and salesman for instance on the basis of primary and secondary roles. But Miller does not dwell on the subjective elements and will only accept the validity of family relations in drama when they open up to social questions and when they are used by the dramatist to lift a play out of the merely "particular toward the fate of the generality of men" which is why Miller praises Williams's treatment of Blanche's dilemma in A Streetcar Named Desire and of Brick in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof because, according to him, "we are witnessing a social fact".

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1. "On Plays and Playwrighting", p. 383.

This intermediate circle of the family (which Miller describes as the "matrix of civilization"), the many is related according to Miller to the movement of history insofar as he sees its central importance within modern American drama. It was absent from European drama, argues Miller, because the turbulent history of Europe since the end of the eighteenth century has made relations to society more central, whereas the stability of the American society has made it possible to focus on the family:

> One possibility might be that Europe has gone through periodic revolutions ever since the end of the 18th century. As a result the idea of man living in relation - not to his family so much - but in relation to his society which was unstable, which was being overturned all the time, with the money being changed and property relations being changed, would eventually have its effect. We live in the oldest continuous society in the world, even perhaps including Britain, where there have been more revolutionary developments in a similar period vis-a-vis the class structure.[1]

Miller's treatment of the family in the American society takes account of the friction caused between the individual interest and the economic one. His foregoing statement is extended by his underlining of the relation between the fate of an individual in a European society to a political system and that his fate is a direct consequence of political decisions, and is firmly linked to social, and political sources of power. While one can accept the relation Miller tries to make between the family and other interrelated fields into which it expresses itself and from which it derives its meaning, as valid conceptually, one cannot see it as true of Miller's plays in which the very relations he underlines between the individual and society in the European family are highlighted. Miller does point out to one exception to the relative

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1. "On Plays and Playwriting", p. 383.

stability of government of society in America - the thirties in which prolific writing was done about the relation between the individual and society.

Miller's plays take place against the background of social, political, and economic forces but throw up a new concept of society and become an indication of the need for change. Thus in themselves the father-son relations encompass the changes outside the family and among its individual members by presenting in the father the kind of moral authority, to borrow Miller's terms, which was exteriorized in terms of the Nazi and the McCarthyite movements, and which prompt the sons' reactions. The conflict reaches a climax in what Raymond Williams vividly describes as a "transforming consciousness", exemplified by Biff and Chris. Miller dramatizes the problems of a modern society in which production is taken out of the family and into a factory or a world of salesmanship. The family relations in Miller's plays take place within an ethos of consuming, selling or producing goods. Thus the family relations become indistinguishable from the factory or the market-place. The stasis that Miller would have in relation to the history of the family is overthrown from the inside, not necessarily from external social forces (that were to Miller important in the history of Europe) because visionaries in the shape of sons refuse to see that social demands can distort the individual's insistence on the primacy of his individuality and humanity as opposed to the social, historical, political or economic liquidation of this humanity. Miller further dramatizes the ways by which the father-son relation is threatened by the transference of the function of the father to a salesman who "sells himself" among his goods thus weakens the function of the family as a mediator between the individual and society in which

the "primary role" of the father becomes threatened by the demands of the state, of the secondary role, and which consequently threatens the idealism that a son builds on that very primary role. This idea is perhaps best expressed by Chris's resentful cry: "I never saw you as a man, I saw you as my father". The discrepancy between the man and the father, and the deterioration of the moral authority it entails makes it impossible to separate the private and the public world no matter how stable the public one is in terms of political or social systems.

The interaction between the private and public worlds is the informing principle of Miller's dramatic treatment of the question of identity. It leads to new concepts of the individual of himself and society. Miller points out that

> A new poem on the stage is a new concept of relations between the one and the many and the many and history and to create it requires greater attention not less to the inexorable, common, pervasive conditions of existence in this time and this hour.[1]

The continual presence of a balance between the general and the particular and the "tracking of impulse and causation" from one to the other accounts for a kind of social realism in which the typical and the general both in the social and historical senses combine to create a process that becomes analytical and descriptive of the general movement of life. Raymond Williams usefully explains the meaning of this social realism, its relations to pre-existing forms and contents, and the consequent emergence of Arthur Miller, in his view, as a dramatist who has brought back "the drama of social questions":

> The key to social realism in these terms lies in a particular conception of the relationship

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1. Introduction to the Collected Plays, p. 53.

> of the individual to society, in which neither is the individual seen as a unit nor the society as an aggregate, but both are seen as belonging to a continuous and in real terms inseparable process.[1]

Williams argues that the drama of social questions had been rejected in England in the late nineteen-forties on account of two sets of factors; the first being a particular phase of consciousness in which social questioning was rejected; and the second which is connected with the first in a kind of cause and effect relation was the total inadequacy of the forms which had hitherto embodied social thinking. Williams further explains that there came a time when drama reached a deadlock imposed by the existence of the naturalistic play, the self-conscious problem play and the post-expressionist revue. Williams carries his insight to its logical conclusion, namely that breaking out of the deadlock needed a thorough probing into the reasons behind the inadequacy of these forms, an effective experimentation, and a "revival of the social thinking". Williams argues that Arthur Miller was the most important agent in this breakthrough because the intensity of his social thinking underlies his experimentation with forms thus producing "a new or newly recovered way of social thinking". Raymond Williams develops his argument in Modern Tragedy and seeks to expound the relation between the general and the particular, and between the content of Arthur Miller's thinking and the forms of expressing it. In the course of his discussion of liberal tragedy, and of an elaborate tracing of its development in the works of Ibsen, Williams explains that the liberal consciousness disintegrates because of the knowledge that the self leads away from fulfilment and to its own breakdown. The individual liberator or the self against society had previously

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1. Raymond Williams, "The Realism of Arthur Miller", The Critical Quarterly, Vol. I (1959), 140-149 (p. 141).

formed the basic conflict underlying the dramatic movement in liberal tragedy. Guilt and aspiration become internal as the action moves to an enclosed solipsistic self and the internal is the only general fact. Williams stresses the need to move past Ibsen's social consciousness to discover in its roots the same individual consciousness. He points to two ways out of this deadlock of the private consciousness, the first of which is, according to Williams, almost ineffectual for it entails an acknowledgement of despair. The second way lies in a movement to common desire, common aspiration, which politically is socialism. Williams views Arthur Miller's work as representing a "late revival of liberal tragedy on the edge of its transformation to socialism". He argues his case by referring to the cases of Joe Keller, Willy Loman, Eddie Carbone, John Proctor, and Quentin, and explaining the ways these individual characters become expressions of social forces. He does point out though that the boundaries, as it were, of this external general condition vary from one play to the other: for example Joe Keller's crime though seen in a basically domestic situation becomes an expression of the social fact. Willy and Eddie are "disconnected individuals", thus while their death constitutes an expression of the condition of their societies, in the ultimate analysis it is the self divided against the self that leads to the final destruction. The wider implication of a social fact that existed in All My Sons is absent from the later two plays. The Crucible dramatizes the social position of Proctor as a liberal martyr, but this is mitigated by the sense of personal guilt. In After the Fall, the self embodies all the destructive tendencies that existed in the general condition and in the false society faced by the protagonist in the earlier plays.

The problem of the particular and the general and the relation between them leading to new concepts of each as they provide the context of the struggle between the individual and the social is of the very essence of Williams's thought, expounded, on a theoretical basis, in The Long Revolution in which the individual and society are seen as embodying "particular interpretations of experience to which they refer - interpretations which gained meanings at a particular point in history and which have established themselves in our minds as absolutes. Because the terms are tied to actual experience there is a need to resolve the tension between actual experience and descriptions by seeking for new descriptions not so much as a matter of theory but literally as a matter of behaviour."[1]

The tension inherent in the implications of the absolute meanings of society and the individual and the particular meanings seen by the characters as relevant to their situations informs the social-individual interaction and colours the way a producer sees himself as relative to the social reality yet absolute and unquestionable to a familial one. Translated in terms of the plays, the problem of the absolute and the relative which emerges from the different ways of perceiving the interaction between common aspiration and private needs becomes a conflict between ideals and realities. The ideals, however, are revealed as emerging out of the reality of a situation and back into that same reality. Thus Chris, for instance can call for a notion of solidarity in which private enterprise is nullified but no sooner does he establish this as a kind of an ideal than it becomes a life-lie, a way of temporarily anaesthetizing reality but not altering it for he will have to live in that same society in which private enterprise nullifies solidarity once more. Biff Loman

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1. The Long Revolution (London, 1961), p. 89.

resents his father, for never knowing "who" he was. Yet when he has to express his needs to find his self in his own terms, he can find none other than a description of what he is: "I'm one dollar an hour". His ideals of "who" and "what" he ought to be clash with the reality of who he can be, an individual deriving a meaning from an inescapable social world. Similarly, Eddie has to seek a kind of law which translated into his own experience is, relatively speaking, an ideal state. Alfieri and the law he represents are in a way ideal in so far as they objectify Eddie's passions thus remove them from the mainstream of time and place, but it is this very kind of analytical law that Eddie uses as a reality of destruction.

To Arthur Miller the only touchstone of a truth, an absolute, a generality, a right is its applicability to a certain situation but the paradox is that, as such, truth becomes truths thus the absolute is only a matter of its own time and place. He expresses this idea in his adaptation of Ibsen's Enemy of the People:

> The majority is only right when it does right.

To be and to do are two separate issues. Yet in one of his essays, Miller implies that without a general consensus of what is right there can be no relative departures from it, which is precisely the problem his producers suffer from. Throughout his plays, he implies that there are at least two "rights" and two "wrongs". Although in "Tragedy and the Common Man", he implies that the liberal consciousness (to borrow Williams's terms) encounters a "wrong" or a "right" in his environment, the problems in Miller's plays stem from a loss of connection between the relative and absolute meaning of right.[1] In Plays and Playwriting, Miller explains the difference between

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1. See "Tragedy and the Common Man".

the way a playwright sees things and the way he has been acculterated to see them:

> I think there is a life-long tension between that monomania and a concurrent second set of eyes, which never forgets that after all there is some kind of objective reality in the sense that the majority of people see things a certain way. If you lose that, I think you lose a necessary tension between your own vision and the common one. Therefore, you have no comparative line of evaluation between the two and you are liable to get completely out of sight as far as communicating anything. They're both necessary, in short.[1]

In "Tragedy and the Common Man", Miller had defined the right and wrong in either/or terms:

> The tragic right is a condition of life, a condition in which the human personality is able to flower and realize itself. The wrong is the condition which suppresses man, perverts the flowing out of his love and creative instinct.[2]

The comparative line of evaluation extends to the way a particular audience terms right and wrong and the way a particular social, economic or political system colours it. When questioned by the House Committee on Un-American Activities about his relation to the Communist party, the reply to which was "I will protect my sense of myself", Miller made a distinction between a Marxist and a non-Marxist on the grounds of adherence to truth yet the truth he refers to in this particular instance is absolute, unconditioned by social demands - the truth that science would see objectively and remorselessly. Miller cites <u>All My Sons</u> as an example of a play in which he sought to present the truth not truths demanded by particular parties yet which varied according to the vision projected onto it - a vision conditioned by a particular time and a particular political

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1. p. 380.

2. "Tragedy and the Common Man", <u>Theatre Arts</u>, Vol. 35 (March, 1951), 48-50, (p. 50).

reality; Miller's statement is quite important, therefore must be quoted in full:

> . . . great art like science attempts to see the present remorselessly and truthfully; that, if Marxism is what it claims to be, a science of society, that it must be devoted to the objective facts more than all the philosophies that it attacks as being untruthful; therefore, the first job of a Marxist writer is to tell the truth, and, if the truth is opposed to what he thinks it ought to be, he must tell it because that is the stretching and the straining that every science and every art that is worth its salt must go through.

Miller further explains that this was an idealistic position because the Marxist writer would turn round facts to fit the line and that he was unable to distort truth:

> I wrote a play called All My Sons which was attacked as a communist play . . . . I started that play when the war was on. The Communist line during the war was that capitalists were the salt of the earth just like workers, that there would never be a strike again, that we were going to go hand in hand down the road in the future. . . . what happened was that the war ended before I could get the play produced. The play was produced. The Communist line changed back to an attack on capitalists and here I am being praised by the Communist press as having written a perfectly fine Communist play. Had the play opened when it was supposed to have opened; that is, if I could have sold it that fast, it would have been attacked as an anti-Communist play.[1]

Even the absolute truth Miller seeks is conditioned by the reality and thus, as he phrases it, "the absolutes are not absolute".

The concept of relations between the one, the many, and history affirms the possibilities inherent within the individual to rise above the confines imposed by social demands. Although this act is often performed too late the degree of consciousness of the causes of the

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1. Quoted in Sheila Huftel, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

faulty relation between the individual and boundaries external to his self is passed on. Although Miller perceives the state of dehumanization that an individual very often has to face whether as an "integer" failing to fit into a pattern of efficiency or as a victim of Salem witchcrafts or their parallels in history, he never loses sight of the individual's indomitable spirit and his powerful thrust for dignity. In Incident at Vichy and After the Fall, he advances a kind of positive approach which seems to answer the needs of a Willy, or a Joe or an Eddie: it is an awareness of the self as being its own enemy yet even this admission of complicity in evil, a consciousness of the fact that conscience is a betrayer and that guilt is the "most real of our illusions" is not viewed as a psychological one. For Miller responsibility is the antidote to guilt. In After the Fall, the concentration camp stands as an image of human abandonment, and as such the seemingly subjective division of self within self, or what Williams saw as representing the end of liberal tragedy in its own deadlock, is more of a self versus selves division in which each self embodies the concept of relations between the one, many, and history. That Miller intended such a general frame of reference is pointed out in Writers at Work:

> I have always felt that concentration camps, though they're a phenomenon of totalitarian states, are also the logical conclusion of contemporary life. If you complain of people being shot in the streets, of the absence of communication or social responsibility, of the rise of everyday violence which people have become accustomed to, and the dehumanization of feelings, then the ultimate development on an organized social level is the concentration camp. . . . The concentration camp is the final expression of human separateness and its ultimate consequence.[1]

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1. Arthur Miller (interviewed by Olga Carlisle and Rose Styron) in Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interview, Third Series, edited by George Plimpton (New York, 1967), 197-230 (p. 226).

Miller's attempt to conceive of all the interrelated areas of experience pertaining to the individual, the social, the familial, and the historical is, whether consciously or not, maintained in the very terms with which he discusses the question of identity. To start with, Miller makes no distinction between "man" and "individual" and uses them almost interchangeably. He uses personality and humanity interchangeably; if a protagonist is intent upon claiming his whole due "as a personality and if this struggle must be total and without reservation then it automatically states the indestructible will of man to achieve his humanity".[1] In the same essay, he refers to the fear of being displaced, "torn away from our chosen image of who and what we are". As his plays prove, the choice of image is never exercised in isolated contexts. When he does, on another occasion, use the term identity, Miller equates it with being, and refers to it as a lost state which antedates social alienation.[2]

In Miller's presentation of the problems of identity of the breadwinner, within the context of relations in which he is entrapped, women seem to be relegated to the background. Women are represented as extensions of the male's dreams. Linda Loman, for instance, is in the background of the action of Death of a Salesman. She is given the curtain line and as such the pathos implied in her inability to understand Willy but her claims that attention must be paid to him become a comment on the dilemma of the breadwinner in a competitive society in which women fail to understand the nature of relations with which a man has to wrestle.

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1. "Tragedy and the Common Man", p. 50.

2. See "The Family in Modern Drama", in Modern Drama: Essays in Criticism, edited by Travis Bogard and William I. Oliver (Oxford, 1965), 219-233 (pp. 223-224). The article was originally published in Atlantic Monthly, 197 (April, 1956), pp. 35-41.

That Miller sees a connection between the centrality of women and the nature of productive relations with which men, to which they are attached in various ways, have to contend is evidenced by Miller's progressive movement in his later plays towards emphasizing the role of women and de-emphasizing that of men. This process is, of course, carried out in a context of relations that are not primarily economic or competitive. In The Creation of the World and Other Business (1973), Miller places Eve at the centre of the story of creation.

His most powerful expression of the link between a woman's role and the context of relations with which she contends is in a screenplay entitled Playing for Time (1981). The screenplay does not only highlight a woman's role but also the ineradicable power of art. It is highly significant that art and womanhood that were stifled in his earlier plays, so to say, and relegated to the background are given full play in a context in which human life is at stake - a life that does not even have the alternative of reification. It is survival at its starkest, oppression at, what is to Miller, a highly significant element in the relation between the "one", the "many", and "history". While in All My Sons, Death of a Salesman, and A View from the Bridge Kate, Linda, and Beatrice offer solace if no salvation, Catherine points to salvation to Rodolpho but becomes like Abigail in The Crucible a focal point for contention and disintegration. Fania Fenelon, caught in the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp, 1944-45 becomes, so to say, a saviour through the power of her music. Miller, throughout, stresses the separation of Fania from any commitments other than humane ones. She becomes a member of the Women's Orchestra and "plays" for "time" - to appease the Nazis and save her life. While highly suspicious of the meaning her artistic integrity is forced to take

on, she prostitutes her art in the name of beauty. Miller makes one of the characters describe her as "someone to trust", and to see the cause as "maybe it's that you have no ideology, you're satisfied just to be a person".[1]

Yet she, like Willy or Joe becomes in effect an integer if not within a rat-race, then within an oppressive historical context. That Miller sees parallels and convergences between the historical and the economic "determinisms" has been clarified. But where he makes a significant departure from the earlier plays is in his demonstration of the act of living beyond the edges of that context. What life, the interpreter can ask, if a musician has to play when she is ordered to and because she is ordered to. She is thus forced to conform. But the life Miller emphasizes is, ironically, a vicarious one contained in the sustaining power of art. Miller, of course, had seen sustenance and immortality, through the father's eyes, in their sons. But it is now the creativity that Willy denied, the sound of the flute that returns to Miller's subject-matter. While he had implied that Chris would have to re-live contradictions, that Willy feels temporary about himself, and that Biff's romantic aspirations cannot counter a definition of his self in terms of "a dollar an hour", Fania Fenelon plays for time and with time by transcending ugliness, horror and contradiction through art. This is not to say that she does not realize the contingency of experience. There is a scene in which she uses her position as a talented musician to, as it were, run the Nazis' orchestra by dictating her own demands which lie in saving a friend. She refuses to join unless her friend " 346991" is admitted.[2] Fania realizes

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1. Playing for Time: A Screenplay (Based on the book by Fania Fenelon) (U.S.A., 1981).

2. See p. 26.

that "being human" is a "problem". When she looks out of the window, which, it is suggested, overlooks the horror the Nazis have created, she feels she cannot play for them. But she does realize that "we are the same species", that we are "ghosts", to borrow Ibsen's phrasing of the same idea.

Time for Fania is not evaluated in monetary terms. It is not represented by a son, but there is a reference in the screenplay to the fact that she had "married" her art. But her standards are jeopardized and her calls for her name take the form of, "what will be left of me?" - that is of course if the "me" in question refuses to see the ravishing effects of war and concedes with another member of the orchestra that

> . . . you will have to be an artist and only an artist. You will have to concentrate on one thing only - to create all the beauty you are capable of . . .[1]

While a fuller discussion of Playing for Time is beyond the scope of the present thesis, it has offered a highly significant comment on the role of women and art - both decentralized in the context of primarily economic relations.

In All My Sons, Kate is referred to as Mother, and there is the implication that though she, like Linda, is emotional rather than analytical, her maternal instincts are the remedy, temporary and ineffectual though that may be to an inhuman attitude towards the breadwinner. In A View from the Bridge, Eddie's final words are "My B.". Therefore the women are either given curtain lines or are themselves subjects of curtain lines. This, in itself is an attempt on Miller's part to centralize the function of a woman while decentralizing her actual role. He seems to imply that

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1. p. 74.

women are bearers of an aristocracy of mind and spirit in a way not dissimilar from Ibsen's explicit statements. As Peer Gynt finally finds his self in Solveig's faith and love in the heights of mountains, the man in Miller's plays finally falls back on the woman. Linda's simplistic notion of "freedom" and Kate's urgent message that Chris should "live" may isolate society verbally but the interpreter is left to observe the ironic implications of life and freedom for a Chris or a Biff.

CONCLUSION

The formulation of the problems of identity by the producers within the plays varies according to their view of their selves, and of their social contexts. Thus the producers' response to a problem largely decides its degree of definition. That in itself is further conditioned by the ways in which the producers in the plays conceive of possibilities of generating a meaning for their selves, and the degree to which they allow social imperatives to become obtrusive. For the interpreter, it is possible despite variations in the woman's, the artist's, and the breadwinner's stances towards their problems to distil the general features of them. However, certain areas of the producers' experiences of their problems are meant to remain obscure. Thus, if awareness of a problem is to be considered one dimension in judging it, and if the interpreter is to take account of deliberate obscurities on the playwrights' parts related to the producers' confused grasp of reality and of what constitutes a self, then it would be facile for the interpreter to declare that all aspects of the problem are clear. The only clarity stems from the realization that awareness cannot be absolute and that in the contingency of all aspects of the problem lies an approximation to the truth.

The problems of identity, as experienced by the producers in the foregoing plays, have as their central concern a process whereby the woman, the artist, and the breadwinner are demoralized in their pursuit of a concept of the self. Invariably, society makes demands

on this concept which lead to its distortion. This is not to imply that there is by definition a tailored concept of the self which the producer would have of his self or alternatively which society would have of it. Rather, it is to indicate the very nuances of the meaning of a self which lacks definition, and which can be most appropriately described through the very fragmentary meaning of it.

The problems of identity mainly revolve round the role of women, artistic integrity, and professional ethics. While it is perhaps arbitrary to draw lines between these three problematical areas, because they often converge in meaning and act as the causes and effects of each other, it is important for the sake of clarity to draw some lines. The term "professional ethics" should perhaps be reserved for Miller's breadwinners, despite the fact that it could with a fairly high degree of precision describe the problems of Ibsen's artists. My emphasis on "ethics" stems from the implication within Miller's plays of the breadwinner's impingement on ethical codes of conduct as a result of the demands of a wider context. The term would seem to be self-contradictory, though, in the light of the implications of "ethics", in Miller's plays and the ways in which the very profession, so to say, would seem to exclude an ethical code of conduct. The question as to whether society or the individual, or both, provide the standards of what is ethical presents itself; the interpreter of Miller's plays becomes entangled in the contingent aspects of the problem, which is the crux of the problem and as such must be seen for what it is and not artificially resolved in favour of a simplistic notion of individual and social relations.

I am aware of the fact that "artistic integrity" is again partly dictated by the standards that the artist has of himself. I would

like to point out that by integrity I am indicating a certain stance which takes into account the artist's righteousness as to the distortion of that integrity by society in the absence of any other view of the problems of the artists but that presented subjectively by the artist himself. When artistic integrity becomes a woman's self-inflicted problem in Williams's plays, it is of course - by objective standards - a distortion of integrity. I must emphasize, however, that my focal points have been problems of identity as experienced by the producer, and that as such it is the artist's vision of his self and the problem that becomes predominant.

For Ibsen and Miller, women's role is largely dictated by the position of the men to whom they are affixed. But the position of men is in turn dictated by the demands of a market on their creativity. The nature of the relations in both markets is, of course, different; so are the implications for creativity. Furthermore, the term "market" suggests an emphasis on the economic functions of the individuals concerned and thus would seem to rule out the question of the audience's demands on the artist which are primarily related to its tastes. Yet, the term is justified in so far as Ibsen does imply that the audience's taste is inseparable from the promotion of the sales of his product. Yet there is also the implication that it is when the artist has to take into consideration the economic aspect that his art is prostituted. Ejlert Løvborg provides an example, as does Arnold Rubek, whose double-dealing works of art are a lucrative business. Solness must remove the element of competition if he is to build homes for the people.

Ibsen and Miller, more than Williams, seem to stress the interdependence between the male and female worlds; yet at the same time they indicate that these two worlds can be mutually exclusive. The

predominance of the male would seem to depreciate the status of the female and make her marginal, in Miller's plays, and the male artist and the female would seem to obliterate each other's identity while seemingly engaged in a process of using each other as means of reconstituting an identity which society itself has smothered.

In Williams's plays, the interplay between the male and female worlds and its implicit or explicit effects would seem to be absent. However, it exists to the extent to which the female internalizes the principles of a father-figure only to rebel against it, or to the extent to which the female is dependent on the male for the expression of her desires or needs for security. Thus the woman's role in Williams's plays is dictated by an absent father-figure. She is ensconced in her own needs and desires. Society perceptibly works on a primary level of relation - that of the woman to her sexuality. Artistic integrity emerges as highly suspect, in Williams's plays, and is related to the woman's illusions about her self and about her position in society because that immediate society has shifted through a movement of history, leaving the woman unable to accommodate herself to a process of change, with the result of her retreat from a world of apes; this world comes to represent the dreaded change and dreaded yet desired sexual fulfilment. This feeling of displacement within different contexts underlies the problems of Miller's breadwinner. It manifests itself in ways that are basically different. Willy's and Eddie's problems stem from the fact that they bring different contexts from the past to bear on their present experiences. The direction of this act of impingement are basically different: Willy brings the past to bear on the definition of the present, Eddie brings the present to eradicate a context of relations which is formed by the past. In Ibsen, the past

figures in the form of an absent father-figure but the cultural change is only suggested by Hedda's reaction to the manuscript. The other plays involve an absent father but the absence seems to operate predominantly on the familial level.

The dramatists seek different ways of making the interactions among the producers within the plays a form of the social expressing itself. Ibsen stresses throughout the plays the relation of the woman to the artist; but he emphasizes that that in itself, particular to the two producers as it seems to be, is suggestive of the degree of social encroachment on the individual. It is highly ironic that the woman uses the artist as a means of escaping her immediate surroundings while the artist himself is thwarted within the confines of that society, and that in cases where he finds complete or partial self-fulfilment through the medium of his art, he needs either a literal spatial extension (being "abroad"), or its metaphorical equivalent. Examples are the heights to which Solness ascends or the idealizing process whereby Rubek can remove a woman from the mainstream of time and make her pure and untainted, or the escape by Løvborg into the future. The aesthete in Helmer must, of course, see his woman as a creature to be protected. This is a furtherance of the desired exploitation of the woman, and a perpetuation of a state of affairs that would make it possible for a male world to remain dominant. Williams centres on the relation between a woman's problems and her social background. Yet, while in The Glass Menagerie and A Streetcar Named Desire a woman is his focal point, the plays act as comments on the ineffectuality both of a typically Southern approach to a world lit by lightning, and of the mechanical qualities of a Northern society. In Camino Real and The Night of the Iguana, the producers are in flight from their realistic surroundings, which acts

as a comment on their confinement. Miller relegates the woman and the artist to the background of his plays. Women act as extensions of the protagonist's dreams. The stress on their maternal qualities is a sharp contrast to the father-dominated societies in which even fatherhood is misconstrued as a monetary value.

Ibsen, Williams, and Miller seem to concur on thinking that problems of identity arise when conformity becomes both a highly desirable state on the producers' parts while at the same time the conformity in question is contrary to the producers' needs for self-expression. The plays present the outcome of conformity in both its negative and positive aspects, and dramatize either the producers' adherence to it or departures from it. In some cases, identity becomes a model which seems to be attained through forms that are a direct result of conformity. For Ibsen, this contradiction is embodied in the relation of the woman to the artist and in the implications of the threat and the promise inherent in their relation. The child is the context for the battle of wills between them. Ibsen, however, does not centre on the child of the flesh. Significantly, in plays like A Doll's House and Ghosts the child is a problem but is not used as a threat or a promise. Oswald is simply sent away. Nora leaves the children behind thus does not place them in jeopardy for the sake of her own pursuit of identity. It is when the maternal in a woman ceases to be an end in itself that impotence becomes important in these plays. The woman consequently seeks realization through the child of the intellect or of art. Miller uses the child of the flesh to embody this continuing process of conformity and rebellion against it. The child is idealized by the father; as such, it gains the dimensions of Ibsen's artistic child but at the same time it is part of a process that makes a father pass on to the

child the very values he is inwardly in rebellion against. Thus the process of inheritance continues. To Williams, the ideal does not lie in objects outside the self. Rather, it is in the duplicity of the woman's approach to reality by which she becomes an ideal while inwardly in flight from it.

The three dramatists, in varying degrees, conceive of art as an expression of identity. I am not only referring to the content of the artistic vision as embodied by the artist-figure in these plays, but also to that vision as it emerges from the reference to art within the plays and which in turn becomes a point of reference for the producers within the plays and without them from which to construct a useful point of departure for the examination of their identity crises. This can, with a greater degree of accuracy, describe Ibsen's and Williams's plays. The degree of sophistication in the artistic vision of the possibilities of art varies. The implications of art in a play like Death of a Salesman are, of course, not sophisticated. Art is a reference to creativity and to handicrafts as an expression of it. In Incident at Vichy, art is discussed on a higher level. Miller makes Von Berg discuss the relation between the Nazis' vulgarity and an otherwise pervasive refinement on the part of the Germans in their appreciation of art. Perhaps there is too much of the Olympian Miller in all the plays to convey any other message of art but that of the plays themselves. Ibsen and Williams present a more sophisticated notion of art - the former's being distilled from the vision of the artist-figure in the plays and the latter's suggested by the literary contexts to which his characters refer. In Miller, creativity becomes an alternative to the jungle existence and an antidote to conformity. Art, in Ibsen, is a way of conformity sometimes; at other times it is a means to

authenticity. Throughout Ibsen's plays, the artist conceives of art as a means of self-expression. The double stance of the artist in relation to his needs and to the social requirements of his art lies at the root of the artist's problems. In the later plays; namely, The Master Builder and When We Dead Awaken, part of the problem of identity for the artist is in the reconciliation of the two images of himself - that presented by his art and that dictated by his own needs. Through working on his art, Rubek comes to the realization of the coexistence of purity and corruption, and to a knowledge of his self in that light. That the subject of his art is partly related to a woman is a point to bear in mind. However, his experience of the corruption in his self prompts him to see the world as a constitutive part of that corruption, and as a projection of his own corruption onto the world as well.

In Williams, the literary context mainly referred to is that formed by the works of Poe, Whitman, and Hawthorne, on the one hand; and by D. H. Lawrence on the other. Blanche's stance towards the American authors is, as she puts it, one of reverence, while Amanda's stance towards Lawrence is one of contempt. How far their stances towards these literary figures can be considered to be built on a profound assimilation of the authors and whether they understood them in parts or whole is a matter to question. In so far as Blanche and Amanda delude themselves into being what they are not, it is hard to take their words as bearing an absolute authority.

Whereas, in the ultimate analysis, the producers attempt to solve their problems on individual bases, their attempts carry an implication on the more general level with which they interact. I am referring, in particular, to the plays of Ibsen and Miller. The producer, in Ibsen's plays, seeks an exit through suicide. It is, of course,

arguable that Nora's exit is a form of suicide or that Mrs. Alving's giving or withholding the helping hand is equally so. The producers' modes of seeking suicide are in turn suggestive. Miller's breadwinners seek fulfilment finally in suicide. Williams's producers retreat into a world of insanity or dreams, thus their ultimate destinations become expressive of the characteristic approaches they have maintained towards reality as opposed to Miller's and to Ibsen's presentation of their producers' impingement on reality and search for a name.

The three dramatists present cases within the plays of individuals who are capable of reconciling social and individual demands on them. Thea, Stella, and Happy provide a few examples. Furthermore, the dramatists seem to suggest that while social values are often corrupt and corrupting, the producers in some cases are embodiments of what could be an alternative to the present encroaching society.

What must be questioned at this stage is the degree of access the interpreter has to the problems of identity and the ways in which this access is helped or hindered by a set of elements both within and without the plays, that mutually exist, extending the dimensions of the problems, not necessarily by formulating them but by possibly negating them through negating either their causes or effects or altering the boundaries of the context within which they could be seen.

The problems of identity faced by the producers in these plays involve a high degree of perplexity in the relation of the woman and the artist or breadwinner to one another and to a wider context. The interpreter is, of course, involved in this difficulty but becomes more aware than the other producers of the implications of the problems of identity. This awareness is created and substantiated by the

different ways in which the dramatists make use of dialogue in their plays. The function of dialogue to an interpreter who is able to reconstruct the producers' experiences from a useful vantage point which is the end of the action and seeming completeness of the play can be enhanced through the various demands that different texts by different dramatists make on the act of interpretation through what is said by the characters explicitly or implicitly or very often what is not said. Thus the curtain line in All My Sons would, as it were, functionally act as a useful point of departure for the construction of another play in which the irony embodied within Kate's potent word "live" could open up a new dramatic experience of what life can be for a given Chris, in a given society. The quality of the son's life and the sum that would go to annihilate it or redeem it would most probably act as an extension of the father's life or a repetition of the sets of relations that are brought to bear on it. But it is the kind of repetition or extension that would, despite its gloomy prospects in the play itself, hold the promise of change if the individual can eventually, through attempts at resolving his problems of identity, minimize the effects of the impinging outer context, or alternatively if the boundaries of that context change through the pressurizing demands of time for inevitable progress. The point at issue is, however, that the access of the interpreter to the dimensions of Chris's problem (or, indeed, of his father's) involves a positive act of contextualizing the play, so to say, in the vast body of material produced by Miller on the problems of the "integer" in an industrialized society; in a body of plays produced by Americans on America at a specific time, and of course in notions extraneous to drama on the possibilities afforded to an individual under particular economic systems. This is not to say that Kate's word cannot be seen

at a simpler level as a plea to Chris, not to "take it" on himself or possibly not to commit suicide out of shame. One must not, of course, ignore the fact that the play in itself contains a description of the stifling conditions within which "life" would become virtually impossible. But the poignancy of the problems of the son and the father is, I believe, sharpened by an objective external level brought to bear on the play.

The interpreter's access to the problems of identity in Ibsen's plays offers the interpreter quite a different range of possibilities. Ibsen's texts provide a tight pattern of words and images and often silences which work together to affirm the implications of a problem or falsify that which they have seemingly affirmed, thus the problematical area would seem to shift, and the contingent aspects of a producer's problems to alter. In my analysis of A Doll's House, I have pointed out that Nora Helmer shuns suicide on the possible grounds of its "ugliness". I have also quoted a passage to the effect that the aesthete and the man in Helmer see Nora not only as his wife but also as his child and property. He, as it were, teaches her the tricks of a trade whereby a wife performs the lines of a theatrical piece, so to say, which he composes. Nora's determination to live beyond the confines of the play-pen is carried out with an eye on beauty, which excludes suicide and with an extremely effective exit which Helmer could have devised in keeping with the "effective" exit which he describes to Mrs. Linde. This is not to diminish the other implications of Nora's thrust for freedom and attempts to fulfil her duty to her "self". Nor is it to point to a contradiction in Nora's stance towards her self or Ibsen's stance towards the impact of her problem. Rather, it is to indicate that a problem of identity can become a problem or interpretation or vice

versa depending on whether or not an interpreter can see the usefulness of what would appear to be a peripheral element in the play; and indeed it does remain peripheral until an interpreter is prepared to contextualize it in the play and see how it enhances the meaning of the play by underlining its focal point: the problems of identity of a woman in a man's world. Her problems arise from her being a woman, and from a desire to find her self while at times being oblivious to the fact that for her problem to have been created or solved she must acknowledge the power of the majority - men - and that even when trying to find out who is right "society or me", she cannot altogether negate the power of a man even to determine the way she makes an exit. That is one possibility of interpretation that becomes open, if it is allowed to, but the male-female opposition would still remain apparent through other approaches. What, I believe, to be useful and legitimate about the enquiry I have posed is its pointing out the inescapable yardstick in the lives of Ibsen's female characters against which they seem to be measured and indeed to measure their selves - which is a male standard. This is the very crux of the problem of identity which is examined again and again in Ibsen and which can be detected in a very fine use of language on his part to unfold a wide area of male and female relations, of which Mrs. Alving's verbal distinctions between 'wishing' and 'saying' testifies to the intimidating effects of law and order on what a woman would say but not on what she would wish. However, it is this unfulfilled wish, vehement and powerful, that provides the underlying cause and effect of the woman's problem of identity. She wishes, is frustrated, can voice the wish but cannot do anything about it, and where it would appear that she does something about it, the voice of an admonishing middle-class Norwegian states that "people don't do things like that".

It is a society where males would rather have females tolerate conditions that could be escaped via Hedda's route, allow themselves the power of language to threaten and taunt while denying the female the right to put her verbal beliefs of what is "courageous" into action. It is highly significant that in The Master Builder and When We Dead Awaken, in which the social background seems to recede, the opposition between men and women is expressed on a verbal level. Women seem to "talk" more and to bank on the power of the words. They have moved away from accepting what Helmer would have described as "incredible talk" from a woman. Hilde and Irene have left their families behind and presumably their immediate societies. What Solness and Rubek offer them is an intense experience of their womanhood which would seem to negate it. But one must remember that the two men are artists, and that womanhood to them involves heights of idealization which would seem to make demands on women or concessions for them. As Irene puts it, Rubek is a "poet" and there is something in the word that draws a veil over all human frailties - the frailties of a doll in a doll's house, one might add, or of a man without a doll.

Williams's texts provide examples of subjectivity as part of their material, and this subjectivity renders the problems of his female characters explicable in their own terms. They project the reality of their selves which lies in their illusions about their selves. While the interpreter can more fully extend the implications of the problem of a Southern belle, with reference to conditions in the South, these women provide the interpreter with the possibilities of perceiving mainly its effects in forming a divided self.

Thus the interpreter's access to the problems of Williams's women is more facile and less open to negation or contradiction because it is the nature of their problems that invites narrower

dimensions to bear on it. Even Amanda's and Blanche's aversion to or reverence of certain literary figures are open to various interpretations.

I have mainly tried to highlight the problems of identity, as experienced by the producers in the plays I have discussed. I have sought, through analysis of the plays, to offer the groundwork for extricating from these particular cases of individuals afflicted by their relations, a study that could place its emphasis on contexts that literally lie beyond a play or the output of a dramatist. That is a possibility that could change the dimensions of a problem of identity in the same way that different interpretations of a problem in a play potentially can. Part of the process of building an interpretation is the dissolving of it. The producers in the plays face the contingency of their experience. If the experience of interpreting a play is to be seen, as should be the case, as an interaction between text and interpreter, it would only do justice to the rich world of drama and to the human experience it embodies to consider that contingency as part of one's own experiences and to see a specific interpretation as introducing what it is seemingly now concluding.

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