A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE PLAYS OF HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER

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PREFACE

Much has been written on Granville-Barker as a theatrical producer, and a Shakespearean critic, but he has not received sufficient attention as a playwright. This study is an attempt to examine his major plays in some detail and to assess his importance as a modern dramatist. The Introductory chapter on Granville-Barker as actor, theatrical producer and Shakespearean critic is intended to serve as a background to Barker as a playwright.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Granville-Barker Man of the Theatre and Critic

Granville-Barker enjoys a wide reputation as a theatrical producer, and Shakespearean critic. As a producer, Barker revolutionized stage production by evolving at the Court Theatre a less flamboyant and more realistic style of acting seeking an over-all effect in theatrical representation, and by his innovative stage techniques and ideas in Shakespeare productions. Of the actor, Barker demanded not only fluency of speech and subtlety of gesture; but also an alertness and adroitness of intellect. "Unlike many stage reformers", says Geoffrey Whitworth, Granville-Barker did not project himself into the theatre from outside."[1] He learnt these valuable lessons in the practical school of experience. His mother was a professional reciter, and at the age of thirteen (in 1891) Barker was sent to Sarah Thorne's dramatic school of the Theatrical Royal Margate to prepare for a stage career.[2] After getting intensive professional training, he had several engagements with touring companies in

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1. Harley Granville-Barker, 1948, p.7.
2. The facts presented in this section are taken from the surveys of modern drama, from standard reference works, from biographical accounts of Barker and from journals. Whereever possible sources are indicated.

the provinces. On May 19, 1892, he made his first appearance on the London stage at the Comedy Theatre in Charles Brookfield's musical piece, The Poet and the Puppets. In Ben Greet's Shakespeare's company as also in other stock companies in which he played, Barker was required to emphasize the professional tricks and broad effects rather than a true understanding and interpretation of the play and one's part. Such experiences in the various companies appear to have been responsible for Barker's later distrust of any approach but an intellectual one to the problems of acting and production. His Richard II in 1899 under William Poel in a production of the Elizabethan Stage Society was a landmark in his acting career; as this performance, coupled with another of Marlowe's Edward II, established his reputation as an actor.

Barker's association with the Stage Society (formed in 1899) brought him to the notice of the promoters of the intellectual drama. Shaw was among the first to recognize the young actor's genius. Barker's contact with Shaw turned out to be a major formative influence in Barker's life. Shaw and the young actor joined forces in an actor-producer and writer combination. There have been many comments on this union; but critics agree on its importance in the history of English drama. In 1900 in the Stage Society's production of Shaw's Candida, Barker's performance of Eugene Marchbanks was outstanding. Of this performance Shaw says: "His performance of this part - a very difficult one to cast - was humanly speaking, perfect."[3] Desmond McCarthy was highly impressed

3. "Granville-Barker: Some Particulars," Drama, Winter, 1946.

by Barker's representation of intellectual emotions in the part of Marchbanks.[4] "He was the best Marchbanks I have ever seen", says Max Beerbohm.[5]

At the Court Theatre, apart from playing the Henchman in Euripede's Hippolytus, Pierrot in his own Prunella, Edward Voysey in The Voysey Inheritance, Barker appeared in many productions of Shaw's plays, namely, Marchbanks in Candida, Keegan in John Bull's Other Island, Valentine in You Never Can Tell, John Tanner in Man and Superman, and Cusins in Major Barbara. Barker's performances as the Messenger in Hippolytus, Marchbanks in Candida and John Tanner in Man and Superman, won him the appreciation of dramatic critics. Praising Barker in his impersonation of Tanner, A.B.Walkley comments:

> Never was playwright so lucky in finding a born interpreter of his talent than Mr.Shaw in the case of Mr. Granville-Barker. He is so alert, so exuberant, so 'brainy', so engagingly impudent, so voluble in his patter.[6]

With all his spirit, however, there was a low-toned, poetic, almost subtle quality about his acting. His acting was not of the athletic type; hence his greater successes were in roles such as Marchbanks, Father Keegan, Cusins and Dubedat. Galsworthy's plays and his own also provided media for Barker's under-toned,

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4. The Court Theatre, 1904-1907, pp.71-72.
5. The Lost Leader, p.4.
6. Review of Man and Superman, Drama and Life, p.232.

and under-playing style of acting.

It was in the new style of acting - untheatrical, and realistic - that Barker was recognized as masterful. By the time he acted the part of Trebell in his own tragedy Waste, "his acting style, had fully matured, and his sense of character was unfailing".[7] Barker was, in fact, the ideal actor for the "New" drama.

II

Granville-Barker the Producer

In the last decade of the 19th century there were some intellectuals who were dissatisfied with the theatrical fare provided in the commercial theatres. They wanted to free the theatre from the trammels of commercialism, and to encourage the production of good and serious plays. Granville-Barker belongs to this band of enthusiasts associated with "new" drama.

As a producer, Barker made his most momentous contribution during the Vedrenne Barker management of the Court Theatre (Oct.18, 1904 to Jan.29, 1907), which is recognized as a unique event in the history of the English stage. In February 1904, J.E. Vedrenne of the Court Theatre asked Barker to assist in the production of The Two Gentlemen of Verona. Barker agreed on the condition that Vedrenne would allow him to present six

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7. Geoffrey Whitworth, Harley Granville-Barker, pp.8-9.

matinees of Candida. Vedrenne accepted the proposal and out of this arrangement began the historic Vedrenne-Barker partnership. The Court venture was a grand success. Thirty two plays byseventeen authors were given for a total of 988 performances; of these 701 were performances of eleven plays of Shaw. All the plays presented by the Court Theatre management between 1904 and 1907 other than those of Shaw were produced by Barker. Barker produced some of the greatest masterpieces from Euripedes to Galsworthy. Greek drama for the first time was made practicable for modern audiences in the verse translations of Gilbert Murray.

The aim of the Court Theatre was freedom from the domination of the actor-manager; and from the domination of the bonds of romantic comedy and melodrama. The object of the management was truth as opposed to effect; and this was Barker's aim too. Elaborate scenery was abolished, every character part was considered important, and the star system had no place. "I am," said Barker, "for the theatre, the play, the commonwealth of effect."[8] In acting as in production, truth rather than stage effects occupied Barker. He was all for the true interpretation of character, and a unified over-all effect in theatrical presentation.

As a theatrical producer, Barker set a high standard of acting and production that has not often been surpassed. Barker insisted on intelligent acting and stressed that each actor should see the character he was portraying as part of the whole play. He

8. Quoted by Downer, "Harley Granville-Barker", p.628.

believed that the player should know the character he is portraying intimately, and that he should not just learn his part and recite the lines. The company was intensely drilled during the rehearsals; and like Shaw, Barker too spent long periods in the stalls listening to what was going on and saying very little. But when the time was opportune, he would go on the stage and demonstrate what he wanted. Naturally, he attached great importance to team-work. He demanded on the part of the actor an ability to play well with the other members of the cast, a close cooperation with others, which actor-managers had seldom demanded from their casts.

The Court Theatre performances became recognized for their unity and "commonwealth of effect", for their taste and appeal to intelligence. "There was never", says Purdom "any thing mechanical or brittle, or merely clever in any of his (Barker's) productions. He was always able to get from his players acting that had life and interest, even when the play had a trivial theme, but he was limited by the theme, never seeking to transcend it." [9]

The programmes given by the Court followed the method of the repertory movement. Each new play was performed for a brief period, then taken off in favour of another play, and then revived at intervals. The range and variety of the Court productions were amazing. As far as Barker was concerned, Court was a place for the production of a play that had genuine art about it. The

9. _Harley Granville-Barker_, p.68.

Court Theatre experiment was a great artistic success. It was the most momentous event of the period, and in its course the most important happening in the history of the London stage.

The artistic success of the Court Theatre venture warrented a transfer by the management to a more centrally located theatre - the Savoy, where Shaw's Caesar and Cleopatra, The Devil's Disciple, Arms and the Man, and Galsworthy's Joy were produced. Unfortunately, the Savoy venture was a flop, as the performances did not reach the artistic standard set at the Court. J.M. Barrie persuaded Charles Frohman, an American manager, to attempt repertory at the Savoy Theatre; and on February 21, 1910, Barker managed a seventeen week repertory season at the Duke of York's Theatre, during which among the plays produced were Galsworthy's Justice, Barker's The Madras House, Shaw's Misalliance, and Elizabeth Baker's Chains. The Court Theatre had offered what was really a compromise between the theatre a cote and the actor-managed theatre. Barker produced his first real repertory at the Duke of York's. A number of plays were always ready for the boards with no more preparations than a mere "run through" rehearsal. These plays were to be presented alternately so that three, four and even five different plays might be given in a week. New plays were to be added, and all successful plays might be presented as many as a hundred times in the course of a season. Financially the repertory season at the Duke of York's was not a success; but the high standards established at the Court were maintained. By now Barker was convinced, as he later suggested

in The National Theatre, that only in a tax-free municipal theatre could repertory pay its way.[10]

Barker's success as a Shakespearean producer was equally remarkable. He and Lillah McCarthy in a joint management offered in 1912 three Shakespearean revivals at the Savoy Theatre - The Winter's Tale, Twelfth Night and A Midsummer Night's Dream. Instead of the richly upholstered and spectacular Shakespeare productions of his immediate predecessors (e.g. Henry Irving and Herbert Tree), Barker's presentations were distinguished by fidelity to the text, speed and rapid delivery of the lines. His innovative stage techniques, e.g. lighting from the balcony instead of footlights and the use of the apron stage, helped to preserve continuous stage action, and the quick delivery of the verse. Realism was not attempted, but everything that might convey a mood, a meaning, was included. Barker was for realism as much as any other playwright; but he believed that Shakespeare could not be done realistically. In his productions of The Winter's Tale and Twelfth Night Barker "brings us more nearly in touch with the spirit of their author than any yet seen in Modern London", says John Palmer.[11] Barker's productions of Shakespeare were so designed that long pauses for change of setting were eliminated, and thus the original play could be fully given.

The production of A Midsummer Night's Dream (February 6, 1914) evoked mixed reception from the critics; some hailed it with

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10. The National Theatre, 11.
11. Twelfth Night, Saturday Review, Vol. cxLV, Nov. 2, 1912, pp. 637-638.

gusto, others called it odd and irritating. The factor which placed this revival apart from other productions of the play was the golden fairies, and this novel feature aroused a great controversy. In his presentation of the fairies, Barker reacted violently to the actor-manager's conception of the fairy folk (girls with wings and wreaths), and in particular, to the lavish production of the play by Maxbeerbohm Tree in 1911. Barker wanted to convey to the audience that the fairies were not of ordinary mortal subsance. Again, a harmonious effect was created by presenting superbly the world of the fairies, of the "rude mechanicals", and the more dandified humans. However, the quick delivery of the verse caused sometimes the loss of poetic beauty. Nevertheless, their presentation put Barker in an impregnable position as "a great artist and craftsman of the theatre whose equal did not exist on the London stage.[12]

Barker's Shakespeare productions, as could be expected, had an impact on later revivals of Shakespeare. In the productions by Fagan at the Court, Greet and Atkins at the Old Vic, and W. Bridges Adams at Stratford, Barker's innovative stage techniques and ideas were used. The simple setting, quick delivery of the lines, continuity of action, reliance on teamwork, and unabridged text bore witness to the growing acceptance of his ideas. Barker's influence still continues to be felt. Palmer rightly believes that Barker did more than any other modern producer to popularize the fourth Wall, and the apron stage.[13]

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12. C.B.Purdom, Harley Granville-Barker, p.150.
13. The Future of the Theatre, 1913, p.68.

Hardy's The Dynasts was produced by Barker on November 25, 1914. Barker gave unity to the play by selecting the episodes of England's greatness, gallantry and glory. The simple setting was in harmony with the spirit of the play.

In 1915 Barker with his company went to America, and under the auspices of the New York Stage Society, presented Anatole France's The Man Who married a Dumb Wife, Shaw's Androcles and the Lion and A Midsummer Night's Dream. Barker's stage methods, which were in contrast to those of David Belasco, the then greatest producer of America, created a stir in theatrical circles. After presenting these productions in New York, Barker produced Iphigenia in Tauris on March 15, 1915 at the Yale Bowl, this play and The Trojen Women at the Harvard stadium, and both these plays at Pennsylvania University, closing on June 12 at Princeton. In Iphigenia the setting and costume were vivid and colourful, though essentially simple. In The Trojen Women an interesting piece of stage-craft which Barker initiated was the grouping of the chorus.

After the season in America the First World War interrupted Barker's career in the theatre. During the early months of World War II John Gielgud persuaded Barker to produce a revival of King Lear. Barker had not produced any play for about twenty years; but his production of King Lear convinced the spectators that he had not lost the qualities which made him illustrious at the Court Theatre. Commenting on Barker's staging of King Lear, Allan S.Downer says:

> There was no sense of staleness or the old-fashioned about his work. His approach was fresh, vigorous, and as experimental as it had been at the old Court.[14]

It is clear that in several ways Barker was perhaps "the greatest producer of his time in England".[15]

III

Granville-Barker the Critic

After his retirement from active work in the theatre, Barker wrote only two plays, The Secret Life and His Majesty; but he built up a new reputation as one of the greatest Shakespearean critics, and as an authority on drama. Barker's comments on Shakespeare, on the drama in general, acting and playwriting, and on individual playwrights and their works are of great value; for they are the comments of a man of wide practical experience in the theatre, and not those of a mere theorist.

Barker's conception of the art is the same as Shaw's. "For art's sake alone", says Shaw, "I would not face the toil of writing a single sentence." Art is not only for the selected few. It is necessary for the people to enable them to judiciously

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14. "Harley Granville-Barker", p. 644.
15. Hasketh Pearson, Modern Men and Mummers, 1921, p.176.

select those few who will practise statecraft, to distinguish between the true and pinchback statecraft, between folly and wisdom.[16] "For art is a microcosm of life, and the ultimate standards in each are the same."[17] Neither Shaw nor Barker could conceive of the drama as a mere entertainment, since both were endowed with a social conscience, and realized that art can have no justification unless it edifies. Barker believes that art is a moral exercise". It is an ennobling experience for the artist himself, and by implications, for others:

> It gives a man poise, a point of view, sets up for him a general standard of quality. It helps refine his faculties, mature his perceptions, gives balance to his judgement.[18]

Of all the arts drama by its very nature can play this role in a more significant manner than any other art.

"Drama", says Barker, "It Everyman's art; it is the direct and living reflection of life itself,"[19] and when fully developed in the form of the acted play, it is the working out...not of the self-realization of the individual, but of society itself.[20] The art of the drama fulfils this function by its emphasis on cooperation between the dramatist, the actor and the audience. The audience is emotionally involved in the dramatic experience. The drama contributes to the civilization of man by refining his

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16. See The Use of the Drama, 1946, p.29.
17. Ibid., p. 28.
18. Ibid., pp. 27-28.
19. Ibid., p. 29.
20. The Exemplary Theatre, 1922, p.46.

sensibility, training his imagination and emotions and increasing his understanding of the community. Further, because of drama's concern with human beings in their relations with one another in society, and with verities of life, Barker believes that the drama has an immense educational value. The theme of the importance of drama in education reccurs in Barker's critical writings - The Exemplary Theatre (1922), The Study of Drama (a lecture given at Cambridge University in 1934), and The Use of Drama (three lectures given at Princeton University in 1944, published in 1946). In The Exemplary Theatre, Barker visualizes a theatre School which would have students of two categories - those who aim at making a living by working in the theatre, and those who want to study drama for its educational value. In The Use of the Drama , Barker goes a step further, and emphasizes the importance of making the drama an integral part of the educational programme in schools. In England the drama has become a part of the educational plan in schools, and probably the procedure somewhat like the one Barker advocates is employed in most of the schools.

It is apparent that the qualities which Barker demands of the playwright, actor, and audience (i.e. the tripartite cooperation between them) are not the qualities which are commonly found in the commercial theatre. These are the ideals which the exemplary theatre would strive for. Barker had a vision of a national theatre, and worked for its establishment in England. In 1904, in collaboration with William Archer, he prepared a comprehensive scheme

for a national theatre. In 1930 Archer died, and Barker revised the original scheme. Barker's plan unfortunately did not materialize, because of lack of financial support from the government.

Barker's views on the art and nature of acting and his experience as producer are clearly reflected in the formulation of his critical theory of drama. He believes that there are two methods of playwriting - the explicit and the implicit. In the former the playwright's meaning is communicated in words and action; in the latter much of the meaning is indirectly conveyed. Marlowe's plays are wholly explicit. So are Shakespeare's earlier plays, and his method, in general, remains throughout as explicit as the nature of the play or the character will allow. Shaw is explicit too. But modern drama, generally speaking, says Barker, makes much use of the implicit method - Ibsen, Chekhov, Maeterlinck and W.B.Yates, for example (and one may add Barker himself). Chekho's plays, Barker calls as "masterpieces of their kind, and of a very noble kind, "but they, more than any other, call for the cooperation of actor", because of their great sublety. Ibsen's Rosmersholm, Barker says, is an example of the drama becoming "in the hands of its masters, one of the choicest vehicles for inward revelation, and thanks to the familiarity of its human medium, the most convincing."[22]

It is for this reason that Barker regards character as the basis of drama, and he believes that "the outward clashing of

22. The Use of the Drama, p.48

character with character is poor material beside ferment in the spirit of a man". Hence also his preference for what he calls the drama of "being rather than that of doing". Ibsen's plays provide an example of this drama, which, with the help of retrospective stagecroft, absorbs action into the revelation of character.[23] In fact, Ibsen's greatness lies in the fact that he is able to harmonize the essential qualities of the drama of 'doing' and the drama of 'being'.

No wonder he inveighs against Scribe's rules of "the well-made play" with its emphasis on plot construction, the scene a faire, and elements of surprise and suspense. A dramatist, Barker, insists, must not be so bound by rules that he cannot portray life as it is. The drama must be subject to no other "artistic principles other than those innate in the structure of the theatre; and the material that is to be rendered there in the form of dramatic action. The best way to treat a theme is "innate in the theme, and should be proper and peculiar to the theme."[24] The only form that the dramatist should adopt is a "question of harmony mainly of just proportions, significant emphasis, congruities and arresting contrasts, of ultimate integrity."[25]

The same breadth and catholocity distinguishes his dramatic criticism.

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23. See On Dramatic Method, p. 183.
24. Ibid., p.158.
25. Ibid., p.160.

IV

Shakespeare Criticism

Prefaces to Shakespeare

Barker's Shakespearean criticism stems from his total experience, and is of a piece with his other critical writings. His Prefaces to The Winter's Tale and Twelfth Night are only the "elaborated notes of the producer, who must consider the play, first and last, as in action and on the stage."

The Prefaces to The Players' Shakespeare, published between 1923 and 1925 together with the six plays they cover, insist, as the two earlier Prefaces do, that the plays should be performed as Shakespeare wrote them for the kind of stage for which they were intended. The venture of The Players' Shakespeare was expensive and hence was abandoned. Barker, however, went on with his work which expanded enormously. The Prefaces to Shakespeare were originally published in five series (1927-1946), and were finally combined in a two-volume American edition embodying some revisions (1947). The Prefaces cover the plays: Love's Labour Lost, Julius Caesar, King Lear, Romeo and Juliet, The Merchant of Venice, Antony and Cleopatra, Cymbeline, Hamlet, Othello, Cariolanus.

Barker's attitude towards Shakespeare is that he is a master playwright who wrote for a specific kind of theatre, the conditions of which determined, to a large extent, the way in which he wrote. Barker, therefore, attempts to examine the plays

and Shakespeare's artistry in terms of the Elizabethan theatre, to re-create for us the productions as they were in their original presentation. He praises the reforms of William Poel who "showed us the Elizabethan stage, with Antony and Cleopatra Troilus and Cressida, in their ruffs and farthingales as for Shakespeare's audiences they lived";[26] and in the process helped to clear the modern Shakespearean stage of belief in realistic illusion. The plain fact, observes Allan S.Downer, "is that very few of the modern commentators have been concerned with the plays as plays, and hence very few are useful to him."[27] Barker brings to bear on the Prefaces not only his extensive Shakespearean erudition, but also his wide experience of the theatre; and it is his approach to the plays as first of all works meant to be performed by actors in a theatre that gives special importance to the Prefaces. Barker's own statement of purpose is as under:

> These Prefaces are an attempt to profit by this new scholarship and to contribute to it some research into Shakespeare's stagecraft, by examining the plays, one after another, in the light of the interpretation he designed for them, so far as this can be deduced; to discover, if possible, the production he would have desired for them, all merely incidental circumstances apart.[28]

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26. Prefaces to Shakespeare, first Series, Introduction, p.XII.
27. "Harley Granville-Barker", The Sewanee Review, Vol.55, 1947, p.644.
28. Prefaces to Shakespeare, p.XIII.

To Barker the closet drama is an anomaly, and he reiterates that a play is not fully realized but in its presentation by actors upon the stage. "The text of a play is a score awaiting performance...", he maintains. To Barker, King Lear, the most difficult to stage of all the plays, is first of all a play. Shakespeare certainly meant it to be acted; it was acted; and it can be acted. Barker begins the Preface to Lear by quoting Lamb's verdict "Lear is essentially impossible to be represented on the stage";[29] and adds "my chief business in this Preface will be to justify, if I can, its title there". Barker's plea is that Lamb's view of the unactability of the play does not take into account the Elizabethan stage-craft whose strength lay in the comprehensive use of poetry. Shakespeare's is not a realistic method of presentation, he was forced to conform to the limitations of the theatre, but these limitations were turned by him to an advantage. The storm scenes in Lear cannot be successfully presented in a realistic fashion. No sane actor, says Barker, would try to act the scenes realistically. Through the medium of his poetry, Shakespeare gives us two Lears in one- "The old man pathetic by contrast with the elements, yet terribly great in our immediate sense of his identity with them."[30] Shakespeare identifies the storm with Lear. The actor impersonates both Lear and the storm reflected in him, and thus comes closer

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29. Prefaces, First Series, 1947, p. 133.
30. Ibid., p. 270.

to Shakespeare's conception. Barker presents his argument in a persuasive manner; and with the weight of his theatrical experience and knowledge of Elizabethan stagecraft behind it, it carries conviction.

Barker establishes the probability of certain scenes hitherto regarded improbable by conventional criticism; for example, the "banishment" scene, which some critics think is preposterous. Barker's revaluation of the Fool, however, seems to be unconvincing. The Fool "etherealized by the higher criticism" he regards as of incidental, of decorative importance to the scheme of the play,"[31] not as he unmistakably is of vital importance; but he is right against steeping him "in extraneous sentiment". In the course of explaining the stagecraft of the play, Barker dwells at length on the characters and their interplay, and makes a spirited defence of the play's vitality and greatness. One would agree with Allan S. Downer who considers the _Preface_ to _King Lear_ "Perhaps the most remarkable of the _Prefaces_, understanding, informative, and suggestive, and always controlled."[32]

Barker shows how the medium of poetry enables Shakespeare to shape the action, develop character, create environment and arouse thought and emotion. He deplores that modern realistic, scenic productions have tended to make the technique of the spoken word, of rhetoric and poetry absurd. Another convention of the Elizabethan theatre, which Barker discusses in its effect on Shakespeare's work, is the acting of women's parts by boys. Here again, Barker points out, Shakespeare does not find this a limitation, but an advantage. He does not present scenes of

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31. Ibid., p.200.
32. "Harley Granville-Barker, p. 643.

physical love-making either in Romeo and Juliet or in Antony and Cleopatra, but rather raises the love scenes to an intellectual and spiritual plane, which adds to their power, and results in the splendid portrayal of women. Romeo and Juliet, for instance, are seldom alone together; never for long except in the balcony scene. Antony and Cleopatra is a tragedy of sex without a single scene of sex appeal. Instead of exploiting sex attraction, as modern dramatists would, Shakespeare, by the limitation of the theatre, was helped "to discover that the true stuff of tragedy and of the liveliest comedy lies beyond sensual bounds."

Barker shows that Shakespeare does not localize the scenes, which he indicates by bold phrases. The result is that properly presented, it is the characters not the settings which capture the attention of the audience. The Elizabethan stage being unlocalized, Shakespeare is able to make the most of the contrasts between characters and scenes. Indeed, for Shakespeare no locales had any reality of their own. "They existed for the convenience of the actors, whose touch gave them life, neglected, they existed no longer."[33]

In the long discussion in the Othello Preface on the "ambiguity in time" in the play Barker states that to Shakespeare it is only "dramatic time" that matters, not clock or calender time. The "ambiguity of time" in Othello is essential

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33. Prefaces I., p. 11.

for the dramatic effect. In order to make the story dramatically viable, the mainspring of the action is excessively compressed. The precipitating of the action, explains Barker, is necessary, for, if Othello were left time for reflection, or questioning of any one but Iago, he would have discovered the fraud. Yet Shakespeare adopts devices whereby he creates the feeling that much more time has elapsed since the marriage. He makes the best of both calenders; and the significant point is that "When it is acted we notice nothing unusual, and neither story nor characters appear false in retrospect.[34]

As Barker goes through each of the plays, he makes suggestions to actors as to how certain scenes are to be done, and certain lines spoken. Shakespeare's drama depends largely on its actors, emphasizes Barker. In fact, it "concentrates, and inevitably, upon opportunity for the actor."[35] Barker gives hints that can help the actor to create the desired effect, help the producer to produce a play effectively, and should help the reader to imagine the action. The speed of presentation, and the elimination of unnecessary breaks are what he stresses. This speed in modern productions could be achieved by simplicity in staging, and by quickness in speaking the verse - not by cutting Shakespeare's lines. He, however, suggests that some gross jests, should they offend modern taste, can be omitted; and that some obscure topical allusions can likewise be cut.

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34. Preface to Othello, Fourth Series, p. 30.
35. Prefaces, First Series, Introduction, p. XXIV.

In his comments on the language of the plays Barker manifests a great understanding of the effects created through melody of the verse, but makes almost no comments on imagery. His concern with poetry is not as an image-analyst, but as an actor. He is concerned with what the actor can convey to the audience, and his comments naturally take that line.[36] As for costuming and scenery, Barker's view is that the decoration must not distract the attention of the spectators from the performance; it must never compete with the actors, who are "the sole interpreters Shakespeare has licensed."

In his analysis of characters Barker does not accept conventional interpretations unless they are consistent with his ideal of fidelity to the text. He regards Hamlet as "a tragedy of inaction," and thinks that Hamlet suffers tremendously from indecision and inaction. This assessment is in accord with the text. In his interpretation of the character of Othello, Barker drifts from much traditional assessment, and calls Othello a "savage monster" in whom "evil works but unquestioned." "Othello's is a story of blindness and folly, of a man run mad",[37] says Barker. He recognizes that Shakespeare's greatness lies in the fact that his many characters come to life. In one of his critical writings Barker says:

> It was Shakespeare's passionate interest in human beings which carried him to supremacy as a dramatist...in each

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36. Allan S. Downer, "Harley Granville-Barker", p. 644.
37. Preface to Othello Fourth Series, p. 183.

> new play we find him freer from his examplars and from his own self-conceit, and nearer to the creating of characters who will seem to live and move by the laws of their own being.[38]

Barker is not an idolater of the great genius of Shakespeare. He makes no attempt to gloss over the drawbacks in plot-structure, characterization, and dialogue of the plays. He indicates at various places that Shakespeare might have done better than he has. For example, he says that Shakespeare might have given us: "as with Othello, much more of the man, and so rather less of the alien and his gifts."[39] "Claudius does not come quite unquestionably to life."[40] And Hamlet is "the tragic product" of Shakespeare's failure "to reconcile the creature of his imagination with the figure of the borrowed story."[41] Coriolanus, Barker remarks, is "curt, even to friends and equals, self-conscious, and incapable of the least appeal to the populace he despises."[42] Barker's over-all estimate of Shakespeare, is, nevertheless, high; and it is an estimate based on Shakespeare as a dramatist.

Barker's Prefaces, written over a period of nearly twenty years, did not win unqualified recognition. The critics, who firmly believed in the visual illusion of the stage could not understand Barker's plea for simple scenery and uncut texts;

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38. On Dramatic Method, p.70.
39. Prefaces, I, p. 353.
40. Ibid., p.223.
41. Ibid., p.231.
42. Preface to Coriolanus, Fifth Series, p.2.

and argued that the plays contain much that is spectacular, and that nothing is left to be imagined that can conveniently be shown.[43] The majority of critics, however, saw the merits of these Prefaces, and recognised them as a work of tremendous theatrical and critical importance. Dover Wilson remarks that these Prefaces begin a "fresh epoch in Shakespearean criticism". Undoubtedly, they are original, searching, imaginative and poetic; and both from the literary and practical point of view, they are in the front rank of Shakespearean criticism. They have been consulted and have influenced modern productions of Shakespeare plays. We know from John Gielgud that Harcourt Williams as director of the Old Vic Theatre, based four productions during the 1929-30. seasons on Barker's Prefaces to Romeo Juliet, Antony and Cleopatra Lear and The Merchant of Venice. Gielgud says:

> ...his prefaces give a wonderfully composite picture of his many brilliant gifts. There are pages for every one - the ordinary reader, the theatre expert, the actor and the scholar.[44]

The great merit of the commentaries lies in their aim to appreciate the plays in their acted form. He regards the plays as works for the stage rather than as literary works at the mercy of academic criticism. A reviewer says: "Barker was the first to lock the study door and lead his reader to the stalls, the gallery, the greenroom and the stage".[45] Indeed, the Prefaces

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43. The Times Literary Supplement, July 5, 1928.
 See also Margaret Webster, New York Times, Jan.6,1947.
44. "Granville-Barker's Shakespeare", Theatre Arts Monthly, Vol.XXXI, Oct., 1947.
45. George Rylands, Review of Prefaces to Shakespeare, fifth Series, New Statesman and Nation , Feb.21, 1948.

mark a new departure in Shakespeare criticism, and are the outcome of a "lifetime of study and experience by an artist of the theatre of great insight and craftmanship."[46]

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Barker rightly calls art as a microcosm of life. He projects in his plays political, social, economic and moral problems of his times. Like Shaw and Galsworthy, Barker uses the theatre as a platform for the presentation of contemporary problems. His plays create in us not only an awareness of the social maladies afflicting the Edwardian society, but they also elevate and edify.

His predominant interest is, therefore, not in the ordering of the action, but in the depiction of the theme and character. William Archer is justified in saying that Barker is more concerned about "the living tissues of a play than about its articulations, its skeleton."[47] His practice is quite in consonance with his critical preference for the "drama of being rather than doing".

Barker attaches greater importance to the inner conflict, which is a very important feature of the drama of being, than to the external conflict in drama. In his plays there is greater concentration on the depiction of the inner drama of his protagonists than on their outer conflict. He, therefore, often makes use of symbolism and the technique of indirection. Naturally, he finds "the well-made play" inadequate, and pleads for a free exercise of dramatic talents and the resources of the theatre.

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46. C.B.Purdom, Harley Granville-Barker, p.218.
47. The Old Drama and the New, p.362.

CHAPTER II

THE MARRYING OF ANN LEETE

In Ann Leete Granville-Barker made his first serious bid for wide recognition. The three early plays, The Family of the Oldroyds (1895-96), The Weather Hen (1897) and Our Visitor to Work-a-Day (1899), written by Barker in collaboration with Berte Thomas, are "records of the struggle of man, as well as of the artist: to free himself of staginess and outworn techniques, from the weakness of sentimentality, morbidity and impotent despair."[1] And the two early plays, Agnes Colander (1900-1) and A Miracle (1902) of which Barker is the sole author, can only be called 'promising tentatives'.[2] Barker himself calls Agnes Colander "An Experiment". "Ann Leete registers on his (Barker's) part", observes an eminent critic, "a serious and sincere effort to 'find himself' - to discover an inevitable medium in dramatic expression which would remain permanently associated with his name."[3] The play had, as could be expected, a mixed reception. It was highly commended in some quarters, and severely criticized in others. Shaw describes it as "really an exquisite play."[4]

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1. Margery M.Morgan and Frederick May, "The Early Plays of Harley Granville-Barker", Modern Language Review, Vol.51, 1956, p.338.
2. Archibald Henderson, European Dramatists, 1914,p.380.
3. Ibid., p.380.
4. Quoted by C.B.Purdom, Harley Granville-Barker, 1955, p.15.

C.B.Purdom praises it as "indeed a very engaging work, fresh, intelligent, sensitive, the product of a mind of unusual quality."[5] Arthur Symons, after witnessing the Stage Society's performance of the play in 1902, comments:

> He brings his people off and on with an unconventionality which comes of knowing the resources of the theatre, and of bing unfettered by the traditions of its technique.[6]

In Barker's view a serious dramatist must not be so bound by rules that he cannot portray life as it is. In The Study of Drama he points out: "The rules of the 'well-made' play may once and for all be transgressed - once you know what they are."[7] A.B.Walkley, however, complains that the play lacks coherence. It appeares that he ignores the significant fact that events in the play arise from the complex of attitudes of the characters, and refuse to be controlled mechanically.

The setting of the play is the late eighteenth century, but there is little to suggest that Ann belongs to any particular age. "The Marrying of Ann Leete, says Ludwig Lewisohn, is an attempt to carry a specifically modern kind of psychology into the eighteenth century."[8] In fact, Anne is "presented romantically in the half-light where illusion is built up of creatures who embody, not the particular ache of this generation or that, but

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5. Harley Granville-Barker, p.16.
6. Plays, Acting and Music, 1903, pp.127-28.
7. The Study of Drama, 1934, p.60.
8. The Modern Drama: an Essay in Interpretation, 1915, p.206

the common burden of all men and women."[9] She is fearless, self-confident and independent. As such, in her character is reflected the profound change in the status and psychology of women, which takes place towards the close of the nineteenth century.

The Marrying of Ann Leete has a perfect theatrical opening. It is four in the morning. The voices of Ann and Lord John are heard from the darkness of the garden of Markswayde, the house of Carnaby Lette. Lord John kisses Ann (for a bet he had made with Daniel Tatton) at which the young girl utters a scream.It immediately arrests the attention of the audience.

The act of kissing is an assault on Ann's honour, and she protests to Lord John: "But is wasn't fair."[10] However, it produces in her a most unexpected reaction at the deeper level. She wonders: "What do two people mean by behaving so...in the dark?"[11]

Ann's scream attracts the attention of Carnaby,her father, George, her brother and Sarah, the sister, who rush to the spot, and their conversation turns on the initial situation which is a most significant moment in the play.

The central theme of the play is the revolt of Ann against the rigid and stifling social conventions in regard to marriage. As the action progresses, the problem (which is the central theme)

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9. John Palmer, The Future of the Theatre, 1913, p.176.
10. Granville-Barker, The Marrying of Ann Leete, 1909, p.2.
11. Ibid., p.11.

the heroine is to confront is suggested. Carnaby, a turncoat politician, has deserted the Whigs, and is now wooing the Tories in the hope of securing a key position in the Party. He is therefore endeavouring to arrange the marriage of Ann with Lord John whose father is an influential Tory. He regards the personal lives of his children as legitimately at the service of his political ambition. Sarah's marriage with Sir Charles Cottesham, a Whig, was politically motivated. While Sarah countenances the match between John and Ann, George expresses his disapproval of it. To him "The whole matter's ridiculous!"[12] At the end of Act 1 Carnaby picks a quarrel with John, accuses him of compromising his daughter's honour, and challenges him to a duel which is subtly designed by him as a subterfuge for apparently counteracting the attack on Ann's honour.

At the beginning of Act II we come to know that the duel has taken place at 12 noon, and that Carnaby has been wounded. Sarah and Ann are amazed, the former thinking that the duel may have some motive behind it, but the latter is quite unsuspecting and says: "I should like to be told just what the game has been."[13] We are introduced to Tetgeen, a lawyer, who has brought Charles Cottesham's proposal for a legal separation from Sarah whose conventional marriage has brought nothing but misery and soul-barrenness. A complete estrangement exists between them. They are on the war-path, suspecting each other of

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12. Ibid., p.9.
13. Ibid., p.24.

infidelity. Sarah reacts sharply to the proposal, and would "rather be divorced."[14]

Scorning the convention-ridden, sophisticated world in which he has been brought up, George, by marrying Dolly, farmer Crowe's daughter, shocks his father and other members of the family by this revolutionary step. Urging Ann not to surrender like their sister to the parental tyranny, and not to allow herself to become "the instrument of political destiny"[15] of their father, George counsels her: "Ann, you marry-when you marry-to please yourself."[16]

Then comes Lord John to woo Ann; it is an attempt at a political alliance. He implores her to marry him, but she tells him frankly that she does not love him. However, she secretly fears that circumstances may prove too strong for her. She feels suffocated, almost helpless, and cries for help:

Ann. I'm growing up. (Then with a sudden tremor) Sally, don't let me be forced to marry.

George. Force of circumstances, my dear Ann.

Ann. Outside things. Why couldn't I run away from this garden and over the hills. I suppose there's something on the other side of the hills.

Sarah. You'd find yourself there... and circumstances.

Ann. So I'm trapped as well as that Lord John.[17]

15., p.24.
16., p.25.
17., p.37.

Ann has an urge to jump the barriers of social convention, and attain freedom ("something on the other side of the hills") that lies beyond these barriers. George's unconventional marriage serves as an inevitable incentive, and, hating as she does, the marriage of convenience, she prefers to follow the dictates of her heart. From George, who admires her courage to follow her own way, she deservedly wins the title of the "new woman".

George questions Abud about his former interest in Dolly and advises him in Ann's presence that he should marry some decent woman - "we want gardeners". Ann, too, evinces an interest in Abud's marrying. At the end of Act II, Abud bursts in with the news that Dolly has given birth to twins. By showing the marriage of George and Dolly as prosperous in terms of their mutual love and happiness, as also the birth of the twins, the playwright shows his approval of such an alliance that is based on instinct rather than on calculated social considerations, which govern the alliance of Sarah and Sir Charles Cottesham. Such an alliance results in sterility and failure.

At the beginning of Act III, in a conversation with George, Carnaby, nevertheless, expresses his concern at the birth of the twins. "Nature's an encumbrance to us",[18] wails he. The twins given birth to by a peasant's daughter are regarded by him as a gross insult to the Leete family. George's rebelliousness has delivered a stunning blow to him, and he curses him:

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18. Ibid., p.46.

"The begetting of you, sir, was a waste of time."[19]

The contest, the central conflict, so far appears to be between nature and social convention. Nature's triumph in the case of George appears to presage success in the case of Ann too, if she be courageous enough. What is necessary for man to liberate himself from the inhibiting social taboos, and artificial distinctions of class and rank, is the courage of his convictions, and the sense of his own entity and happiness.

Carnaby has been feverishly trying to win the favour of the Duke, John's father, by marrying Ann to John, and thus to advance his personal ambition with the Tories. His subtle game arouses curiosity, the excitement of following a trail; it also generates dramatic tension, and the play gains in momentum and intensity. Sarah, who has hitherto been conniving at her father's political intrigues, suggests to her father that the game be revealed to her sister. But he is too clever to accept the suggestion. The conversation then switches to the severance of conjugal relations between Sir Charles Cottesham and Sarah. Sarah tells her father that she feels insulted at the proposal for a legal separation, and that she has resolved to leave her husband. She is disgusted with the polite world, and longs for an escape. She says: "I'm tired of that world...which goes on and on, and there's no dying."[20]

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19. Ibid., p. 48.
20. Ibid., p. 54.

The politically motivated marriage of Sarah is dramatically significant in that it sounds a note of warning to Ann to beware of the evil design of her father. The misery and hardship, in which the alliance results, open the heroine's eyes.

The action reaches its climax at the end of Act III, when spurning the brilliant match arranged for her, and flouting the parental wishes, Ann proposes to Abud, the gardener, to marry him in the presence of her father and sister. Carnaby is stunned, and Sarah petrified. Reeling under the shock, he falls, and is carried indoors by Abud. The heroine's proposal to the family gardener is a symbolic presentation of woman's liberation from the crippling social conventions, and the false and outmoded values of this society, and the carrying away of the frustrated Carnaby by Abud symbolizes the beginning of the end of the imbecile polite society. As Act III closes, Ann realizes that she has broken with the past in order to ensure her future: "Such a long day it has been... now ending."

It is difficult to concur with the views of J.W.Marriott, Nicoll, and Camillo Pellizzi, who characterize Ann's action as abrupt, and attribute her decision only to the operation, in her heart, of the "Life-force". J.W.Marriott says:

> One might say that the two young people (Ann and Abud) snapped their fingers at the rules of good behaviour of people prescribed by their class, or that they were carried away by the life-force.[21]

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21. J.W.Marriott, Modern Drama, 1935.

Allardyce Nicoll observes:

> What happens no body can tell, but light flashes into Ann's heart, and, forgetful of the eminently desirable Lord John Carp, forgetful of parental wishes, she scandalizes every one by requesting the gardener to marry her.[22]

Camillo Pellizzi states:

> Ann Leete decides on her strange marriage almost through a revelation, when the gardener brings the news that her rustic sister-in-law has had a baby son.[23]

Ann's decision to marry Abud is apparently sudden, and is is indeed dictated by her instincts. But there are other factors which contribute to her decision; and which seem to have been missed by these critics. Her assertiveness ("Sally, don't let me be forced to marry"), George's following his own will by marrying beneath his rank, and the birth of twins symbolizing the success and fruitfulness of his marriage, as compared with the soul-killing barrenness of that of Sarah, are the chief of these factors. The preparation for Ann's marriage to Abud is skilfully made, though the finger posts are not obstrusive.

The family, with its emphasis on filial duty, and the subservience of women, was, towards the close of the nineteenth century, in a process of disintegration. Young men and women, impatient of the blind worship of respectability and decorum

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22. Allardyce Nicoll, <u>British Drama</u>, 1947, p.373.
23. Camillo Pellizzi, <u>British Drama</u>, 1935, p.112.

of the family fold, were no longer content to allow their parents to mould their ppinions and arrange their personal affairs. This spirit of revolt is effectively dramatized in this play.

In Act IV Barker presents the wedding scene in which the marriage of Ann and Abud is solemnized. This is the first of Barker's scenes depicting family groups with great vividness and ironic humour. At the marriage are present the grand-parents, Sir George and Lady Leete, Carnaby, George, Sarah, Dolly, Crowe and Mrs. Crowe, and Prestige and Mrs. Prestige, the farming folk. Tozer, the Chaplain to Lady Leete, presides as the lord of misrule. Indignity, hatred, jealousy, recrimination, and disorder reign supreme. The scene brings home to the audience the intense hatred existing between the upper and lower classes. The mes-alliance, by conventional standards, makes Sir George exclaim:

> That such a damnable coupling as this should be permitted by God Almighty...or that the law shouldn't interfere.[24]

Carnaby ironically suggests to his father to "regard the marriage with a wise eye..as an amusing little episode", and "to forget its oddity";[25] and when Ann goes to Carnaby to bid good-bye, he says, "I can do without you." However, on the eve of the departure of the couple, he is compelled to recognize the

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24. Ibid., p. 67.
25. Ibid., p. 66.

importance of what has happened and remarks: "There has started the new century."[26]

Characteristically enough, Carnaby takes the mesalliance in a mood of cynical acceptance . His remarks reveal the vast gulf which divides him from Ann and George as also his own parents, Sir George and Lady Leete. He is the least emotional of them all; and to that extent the least human. No wonder, what is strictly natural, appears to him to be odd and amusing. And yet he is aware, howsover reluctantly, of the new forces of history operating in the life of the community and ushering in a new era.

Attending the wedding at the invitation of Sarah, Arthur Carp displays deep-seated contempt for the lower classes when he says, "I object to feeding with the lower classes"![27] And when the type of courtesy, customary with the upper classes, is not shown by Abud to Sir George, as he is coming out of the dining-room, he explodes: "Damn you..stand in the presence of your grandfather-in-law".[28]

Discovering that her father's overtures will be rejected by the Tories, Sarah thinks of quitting the 'overcivilized' world, decides not to go back to her husband, and is prepared to accept the termination of her marriage. Her decision is prompted partly by her father's failure with the Tories, but largely by the failure of her marriage which proves to be

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27. Ibid., p. 64.
28. Ibid., p. 66.

loveless and barren. There is a new ferment in evidence, and women are thinking and acting in a more radical fashion.

The final scene of Act IV shows Abud and Ann embarking on a new life. They are aware of the significance of the exciting experiment of their unconventional alliance. In such a venture even failure would be preferable to the suffocation which throttles Ann in the sophisticated world. She rejects the polite, soulless world of calculations and bargain, where people are used as mere pawns in the game of vanity and power. The devitalizing influence of convention has been swept away, and nature has won. Ann has asserted her independence. In the new radiant world she feels happy and contented. It is a compelling scene in its simplicity, in its suggestion of domestic duties to be performed, in its glimmer of hope for the future.

II

Unlike Shaw whose characters merely act as his mouthpieces, Galsworthy and Barker try to maintain a detached attitude. They allow their characters to speak and act according to their own feelings, thoughts and beliefs. Barker's characters are alive and complex, and reveal his keen power of observation, splendid artistry and insight into human nature.

The Leete family is depicted with great skill and penetration; every member of the family is individualized and infused with vitality. There is a special charm and dynamism

about Ann, the heroine, who struggles hard for self-realization. Emerging from the ignorance about the political game played by her father against her, Ann asserts herself, rejects John's overtures and obeying her impulse, casts all decorum to the winds by proposing to Abud in the presenee of her father and sister. Sarah's conventional marriage contrasts sharply with Ann's eugenic marriage. Ann embodies the spirit of revolt against upper class respectability.

Carnaby is a crafty politician whose actions are dictated by his political ambitions. Actuated by political motives, he arranged the marriage of Sarah with Sir Charles Cottesham, and tries to arrange the marriage of Ann with Lord John again to grind his own political axe. Sir George aptly remarks about him: "....You came into this world without a conscience. That explains you and it's all that does."[29] The lip-service, paid to the ideals of the polite world by this unscrupulous politician, is indicated in his resolve to exploit 'honour' by challenging to a duel John for compromising his daughter: "You will value that kiss when you've paid for it."[30] His pretensions to honour are again laid bare in his conversation with Sarah who knows her only too well:

Carnaby. Fight for your honour.

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29. Ibid., pp.66-67.
30. Ibid., p. 20.

Sarah. You surprise me sometimes by breaking out into cant phrases.

Carnaby. What is more useful in the world than honour?

Sarah. I think we never had any ..we![31]

An egoist as he is, Carnaby relentlessly pursues his game of currying favour with the Whigs or the Tories for self-aggrandizement by commercializing the marriage of his children. He is prepared to employ means however unfair to achieve his ends. Being a domineering father, he expects his children to carry out his wishes. When George expresses his resentment at John's kissing of Ann, he silences him by saying, "Hold your tongue, George";[32] and on Sarah's refusal accept his proppsal 'to force Charles into court', he dubs her as a 'coward'.

Ann's disobedience, her flouting of the propriety in marrying beneath her rank, and consequently Arthur Carp's flat refusal to support Carnaby's cause give a shattering blow to Carnaby's political manoeuvring. Ousted from the political world, frustrated and humiliated, he bemoans his sad lot: "Lately, one by one, opinions and desires have been failing me...a flicker and then extinction."[33]

In Carnaby, the playwright has created a tortuous politician, who plays the game of politics for his own advancement

31. Ibid., p.52.
32. Ibid., pp.6.
33. Ibid., p.66.

without any regard for party loyalties or honour.

George is presented as a youth who, impatient of parental coercion, of the stifling artificiality of the world in which he has been reared, of the subservience of women in the family fold and of the blind adoration of decorum, steps down from this 'big world' and, following his instinct and will, weds Dolly, the daughter of a peasant, named Crowe, in the teeth of opposition from his father and other relations, and thereby incurs their displeasure.

There is a marked parallelism between the George story and the Ann story: the former augmenting and cementing the latter. Both George and Ann strive for self-direction, revolt against the false conception of marriage, the iniquitous obligations it imposes on the fair sex, and the hypocrisies and insincerities which deaden the soul.

The name Lady Cottesham (based on cot, cottage and sham) suggests the nature of the elder daughter of Carnaby, and the dramatic function the playwright wants her to fulfil. Her character has been moulded by the sophisticated world in which she has been brought up; she has assimilated the pretensions, the falsities and the shams which characterizes this world.

The protracted conversation between Tetgeen and Sarah underscores the hypocritical aspect of her character. The people of the polite world know lies to be lies,and choose them to save their face.

Sarah is a willing instrument of her father's political

destiny, and her illicit love-affair with Lord Arthur Carp is governed by an ulterior consideration. The 'duty-torn' Sarah does her best for the family, and when she finds that Arthur is unwilling to help her father to secure a position in the Tory Government, she declares: "It's time for me to vanish from this world because I've nothing left to sell."[34] This shows Sarah's utter disgust with life. She compromises her honour with Lord Arthur, but fails to achieve her purpose. She is clear-headed enough now to see the flaw in the Leet situation. "If we...this house I'm speaking of..", she says, "had made friends where we've only made tools and fools we shouldn't now be cursed as we are."[35] Her marriage is a miserable failure; she is disillusioned and frustrated. There can be no spiritual health in a relationship from which love, truth, fidelity and honour have departed.

The Sarah experience, however, serves as a necessary foil to the Ann experience; the marriage of convenience throws into sharp relief the unconventional marriage. At first, there is connivance on Sarah's part at her father's subtle game of entrapping Ann and John. Discovering her sister's coldness to the wooer, she asserts:

> It would have been most advantageous for us to have formed an alliance with Lord John Carp, who stood

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34. Ibid., p.62.
35. Ibid., p.62.

> here for his father and his father's party...now in opposition.[36]

But later on her attitude undergoes a change. Exceedingly concerned about her father's persistent efforts to yoke Ann with John in order to cement his deal with the Tories; she urges him to win the favour of the Duke (John's father) by other means, but to keep his hands off both of them:

> And I say: Do you get on the right side of the Duke again, - that's what we've worked for - and leave these two alone.[37]

The important dramatic function that Sarah performs is to see that her sister does not make the marriage of convenience as she had done. On her part, Ann vigilantly watches the crisis developing in the marriage of her sister, which serves as an eye-opener to her, and she decides to live her own life. In a categorical manner characteristic of Ann, she tells Sarah:

> ...and I think, Sally, you'd have cursed your present self. I could become all that you are and more..but I don't choose.[38]

The decrepit, snuff-taking, prudish Sir George Leete and the blind and deaf Lady Leete, Ann's grand parents, are certainly not striking characters, and if they have any dramatic significance at all, they may be regarded as the last representatives

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36. Ibid., p.24.
37. Ibid., p.49.
38. Ibid., pp.55-56.

of the old aristocracy which, Barker thinks, is tottering on its last legs. Unlike his son, who is self-possessed, Sir George is extremely irritable and excitable. When Crowe remarks that Abud, who has married Ann, was rejected by him, Sir George explodes: "...Damn you and yours and damn them..and damn you again for the worse disgrace."[39]

Barker has dramatized the history of the Leete family. It is a 'cold-blooded' family which, as Sarah asserts, has made tools and fools of others instead of friends. George contemptuously observes: "No one lives in the polite world", and his observation contains a substantial element of truth. Not only does he strongly feel, but also stoutly believes that, the polite world is an artificial world, whose atmosphere is so suffocating and unnatural, the people, who live, move and have their being in it exist, but do not live in it. Convention has sapped its vitality. He cuts himself adrift from it by marrying a peasant's daughter; Sarah ultimately gets sick of it, and yearns for an escape; Ann feels suffocated, and eventually escapes from the deadening atmosphere. In depicting the life of a family towards the close of the 18th century decadent society, the dramatist exposes the degenerate aristocracy of his day.

Abud is presented as an honest, clean, hard and fine-looking youngman whose motto is: "The less a man wants, Miss, the better."[40]

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39. Ibid., p. 70.
40. Ibid., p. 42.

He is the natural man pursuing his calling with devotion and earnestness, unconscious of and indifferent to the activities of the people who walk and talk in the garden, and the political game that goes on around him. He marries because he needs a wife to keep his house for him, and to bear and rear his children. Frustration in love does not make him bitter. He is genuinely concerned about his former love, Dolly, prior to the time of the delivery, and is overjoyed on hearing that she has given birth to twins. The heroine, who regards gardening a good profession, feels drawn towards the 'common' gardener. She says encouragingly to him: "But it's great to be a gardener..to sow seeds and to watch flowers grow and to cut away dead things"[41] Ann's offer of marriage amazes and elates Abud, and,by taking it seriously, he shows that he is as little afraid of social conventions as Ann. He acts according to his will, and consents to become Ann's husband.

The characters of Tatton, Tozer and Dr.Remnant are slightly sketched. Tatton, Carnaby's neighbour, goes through life in a happy-go-lucky fashion, deriving what ever pleasure is possible out of it. He is a simple sportsman, inquisitive, not very intelligent, and not degenerate. He shows persistence in finding out whether Ann got frightened so much as to scream when kissed by Lord John, but the subtle political game is beyond him. Dr. Remnant, sober, polished, dignified and self-restrained is

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41. Ibid., p.42.

contrasted with the contemptible Tozer, the boon-companion of Sir George and Lady Leete, and the chaplain to the latter. Tozer is unscrupulous, dissolute, degenerate, and is brutalized by unbridled indulgence. His grace is 'Damn you all'. On Tozer's claiming to be 'a gen'elman',[42] Sir George snubs him, "Lie down..you dog."[43] When the tipsy chaplain dogmatically avers: "Marriage means enjoyment !",[44] Dr. Remnant in a dignified tone retorts: "I repeat that I have found in my own copy of the prayer book no insistence upon a romantic passion."[45] In Tozer , Barker has drawn a satirical picture of a corrupt chaplain. In him can be seen:

> the underside of an intellectual culture, from which the veneer of manners has been removed; but he also indicates the state man is reduced to, when he equates animal and natural, appetite and love.[46]

The type of relationship that develops between Ann and Abud is beyond Tozer's comprehension. He is too gross for it. Abud, unspoiled by any intellectual culture, retains all reverence for love and its place in conjugal life; and imparts a new zest and vigour to this most intimate of human relationships.

Barker employs some significant symbols to express his ideas in the play. He describes symbolism as "the only way of saying too much in little." The bet between Lord John and Tatton,

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42. Ibid., p.69.
43. Ibid., p.69.
44. Ibid., p.69.
45. Ibid., p.70
46. Margery M.Morgan, A Drama of Political Man, 1961, p.74.

engineered by Carnaby, which is the starting point of the action; and the use of words 'pay' and 'sport' associated with the game of cards suggest the trickery of Carnaby, who is dexterously 'stacking the cards' for his own advancement. At the climax of the play, when his political game boomerangs on him, his tortured mind cries for rain, "Take me in ..but not out of the rain",[47] indicating his desire for some soothing relief. His parched soul shows a relish for the refreshing shower, but alas too late. Nature could be of little help to his twisted and tangled spirit.

The garden of Markswayde, with a fountain containing stagnant water, and the centrepiece having the figure of a nymph somewhat cracked, and the dead branches of the trees, represents the decaying aristocracy and its degenerate culture. In Act IV, the announcement of Carnaby, that 'Markswayde is to let' signifies the bankruptcy of the artificial and soulless culture of the times.

Ann's proposal of marriage to the gardener at the climax in Act III symbolizes her break-away from social conventions. And the emergence of Abud from the background, where he has been working almost unobserved, and his carrying the sick Carnaby to the house is equally symbolic of the decadence of the polite society, and the emergence of a more human and natural order to take its place.

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47. Granville-Barker, The Marrying of Ann Leete, p. 56.

The wedding scene in Act IV, which is a sequel to Ann's decision to marry the family gardener, is at once the scene of jubilation and obsequies. The jealousy, pride, class-hatred, greed, ambition, discord, iconoclasm (Carnaby pointing his pistol at Abud), and disorder are symptomatic of the confusions and bewilderments of a disintegrating polite society. The forces of youth and nature win a signal victory over those of decrepit age and convention.

In the final scene, Abud's raising the candle to light Ann up the stairs is symbolic of a new way of life. In contracting an unconventional alliance, Abud and Ann have accepted a bold challenge, but are uncertain of the form it will take. "I'll do my part," says Ann, "something will come of it."[48] It is a resolution: an opening out of life to new possibilities, but possibilities yet to be realized.

III

The problem of sex, as presented in modern drama, reflects partly the movement for the emancipation of women towards the close of the 19th century, and partly a revolt of youth against the false notions of marriage. Tolstoy, Strindberg, Ibsen, Shaw, Barker, St. John Ervine, Stanley Houghton have all treated the problems of sex and marriage. The interplay of entrenched social

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48. Ibid., p. 79.

conventions and moral codes of society, and the aspirations and motives of characters, having an urge towards self-realization and liberation, produce many a grim and tragic situation in the plays of these dramatists. By exposing the inadequacy of the conventional view about the institution of marriage, and by tearing the veil of hyprocrisy and sham, the modern realistic drama has contributed considerably to the amelioration of the position of women.

The central theme of The Marrying of Ann Leete is the revolt of Ann against the rigid and stifling social conventions in regard to marriage. The play projects her struggle for self-realization, the struggle between nature and sophistication, between nature and social convention. She refuses to be hemmed in by the evil customs of her society, and to sacrifice her happiness at the altar of comfort, money, and social position. Like Ibsen, Barker advocates free choice, and exposes the stupidity and evil of social customs. The play is an indictment of the upper middle-class notions of respectability and decorum.

There are obvious thematic resemblances, between Ann Leete, and some modern realistic plays. In Ibsen's Ghosts and Barker's play the individual will is in conflict with the will of society. Both plays are an assault on marriage as a sacred institution, and the conventional concept of the family ideal. In Ibsen's play Mrs. Alving revolts against her husband's life of dissipation, and infidelity, leaves the house, goes to Pastor Manders who sends her back home telling her that she has to do her wifely

duties to the man to whom she is bound in 'Holy Matrimony'. It is the story of a Nora who does not leave and is forced to conform to the ethical code of society. Nora in A Doll's House, is another of Ibsen's heroines, who sacrifices her happiness and freedom for the sake of preserving the outward form of respectability. But her sudden realization, that she "has been living for eight years with a stranger,"[49] and that she has been denied her dignity as a woman, makes her leave her home and rebel against society. The play is a trenchant criticism of the conventional marriage.

Ann Leete, like Ann Whitefield in Shaw's Man and Superman, whom she resembles more closely than she does either Mrs. Alving or Nora, resents parental domination, does not succumb to the intimidation of the deeply entrenched forces of social custom, and rejects the suitor she does not love.

There is again a similarity of theme between Strindberg's Miss Julie and Ann Leete. Julie, the heroine, is also an aristocrat who stoops to love Jean, the family valet. She is instinctively drawn towards Jean, and allows herself to be seduced by him. In the case of Ann her impulse and volition drive her to marry a person beneath her station. In the preface to Miss Julie, Strindberg states that the heroine's fall serves a purpose. She is "a relic of the old warrior nobility"[50] who must make way for jean, the valet, "the creator of the new order."

49. Six Plays by Henrik Ibsen, A Doll's House, p.80.
50. Six Plays of Strindberg, Miss Julie, p.66.

In Barker's play Carnaby, the representative of the old aristocracy, makes way for Ann, "the new woman", who stands for the new social order.

In respect of theme, technique, atmosphere, and symbolism, Ann Leete may be compared to The Cherry Orchard, in particular. The garden of Markswayde and the cherry orchard are symbolic representation of a social system in decline. Just as Carnaby's declaration, "Markswayde is to let" is symbolic of the disintegration of the effete aristocracy, the sale of the cherry orchard represents the wiping out of the serfdom in Russia. Chekhov looks upon "the appearance as an apparent reality which hides the true nature of the individual."[51] He works indirectly through appearance to reality; "his dramaturgy is atonce oblique and inferential in its nature."[52] Barker too employs the technique of indirection in some scenes of Ann Leete. There is a contrast between outward appearance and the inner essence in the scene in Act II where Sarah, discussing the proposal of a legal separation with Tetgeen, professes love for her husband, and protests against the suggestion of a scandal. The truth of the matter is that she does not love her husband and compromises her honour with Lord Arthur Carp.

Chekhov's symbols are always concrete, and are interwoven into the texture of the play. They have an organic quality, and

51. Robert W.Corrigan, "Some Aspects of Chekhov's Dramaturgy", Educational Theatre Journal, Vol.VII, No.2, 1955, p.107.

52. Ibid., p.114.

deepen and enhance the play's meaning. The cherry orchard is an 'overarching' symbol woven into the texture of the play; it is a part of the life of the characters, and is organic to the meaning of the play. Barker too uses symbols and imagery to convey a depth of meaning, and to create the necessary atmosphere that a predominantly realistic theatre denied him. The imagery of darkness and light has a profound relevance to Ann's personal drama, and to the social theme of the play.

In spite of such marked resemblance between Chekhov's Cherry Orchard and The Marrying of Ann Leete with regard to theme, technique, atmosphere and symbolism, there is no clear evidence of any direct influence of the Russian dramatist on Barker's play. A.C. Ward rightly points out that, The Marrying of Ann Leete (1899), his first play, appeared "before the influence of the Russian dramatist Chekhov had reached England. Yet it is propably the most Chekhovian play in English."[53] However, it is interesting how the two great writers belonging to two different types of society were seized of almost identical problems, and sought to handle them in a similar fashion.

Palmer is justified in saying that Ann Leete was as "rich in promise" in 1901 as Love's Labour's Lost in 1591. He comments on the importance of Barker's play:

> Ann Leete, lighted to her room in the fall of her wedding day, is for the English theatre, a more precious and more significant figure than Nora

53. Twentieth Century Literature, 1928, pp.121-122.

> Helmer slamming the door upon A Doll's House. She is the woman of the future stage, who has found the world, in succession to the perturbing Helmers, who have lost it. She is the younger generation.[54]

With the publication of Ann Leete, Barker occupied his place with the group of "new" dramatists at the beginning of the twentieth century; and gave indications of becoming one of the most important of these dramatists in intellectual content and dramatic skill.

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54. Future of the Theatre, p. 176.

CHAPTER III

THE VOYSEY INHERITANCE

The Voysey Inheritance was begun in 1903, completed in 1905, and performed at the Court Theatre on Nov.7, 1905, and in accordance with the practice at the Court theatre, for five more matinees. Having attained a considerable measure of success, it was given evening performances for three weeks, commencing from Feb.12, 1906. It was revived at the Kingsway Theatre on Sept.21, 1912, where it ran for two months. It was performed again on May 3, 1934 at the Sadler's Well Theatre, and later at the Shaftesbury Theatre, where it enjoyed a limited run. For these performances the revised version of 1934 was used.

Commenting on *The Voysey Inheritance*, William Archer neatly sums up the great qualities of the play, namely, rich conception and consummate execution of the plot, the variety and reality of its characters, and the depth of human conflicts presented in it. Archer observes:

> Imagine my delight...when, at the end, I realized that here was a great play, a play conceived and composed with original mastery, and presenting on its spacious canvas a greater wealth of observation, character and essential drama than was to be found in any other play of our time.[1]

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1. William Archer, *The Old Drama and the New*, 1926, p.358.

In plot-construction, dialogue and characterization, The Voysey Inheritance is a considerable improvement on The Marrying of Ann Leete. In Ann Leete, though the progression of the action is subtly designed, events arise from the complex of attitudes of the characters, and refuse to be controlled mechanically. Moreover, the characters in this play are less subtle and complex than in those of The Voysey Inheritance. Although, broadly speaking, the subject is fundamentally the same - the individual's right of self-direction, and his endeavours for self-realization - it is superior to Ann Leete in craftsmanship, life-likeness, dialogue, and realism. The dialogue is made as exact a referent to life as possible. In both the plays, however, ideas are projected through the characters and fused into the action.

The Voysey Inheritance has a clear-cut design, and reveals mastery of conception and execution. It deals with the problem of moral obliquity in business which is the central theme of the play. The Voysey inheritance is an inheritance of fraud. From the very beginning of Act I, Barker engages our attention and promises significant developments. The opening dialogue between the old Voysey and Peacey, the head-clerk, is a matter-of-fact morning talk about the condition of the stock market, and takes us right inside a solicitor's office in Lincoln's Inn. As soon as the appropriate atmosphere of Voysey's office has been established, the playwright loses no time in plunging into the central problem of the Voysey inheritance. The inheritance

is a legacy of embezzlement and swindling, and the situation that the hero has to confront is revealed through a conversation between Voysey and Edward: for over thirty years the elder Voysey has been juggling with the clients' money by reinvesting it in other concerns, transfering part of their capital to his own account, financing himself and his family, paying the clients the interest regularly, but pocketing the profits himself. The newly-made partner, Edward, is extremely worried over the tampering with the accounts of Mrs.Murberry and Hatherley (by Voysey, his father). Mrs. Murberry's Fretworthy bonds are mentioned, but the name of the bank is not specified. When asked about this irregularity, the father replies that the bonds have been transferred to his own bank named Stukeley's. Another serious irregularity is about Hatherley Trust, whose eighteen thousand pounds were invested in Consols; Hatherley is credited with the Consol interest, but there is no record about the rest of the capital. Questioned to explain these gross irregularities, Voysey confesses that the most of Hatherley's Consol capital is put out on mortgage at four and a half and five percent, some of the mortgages being in his own name. Shocked at this 'playing Rebinhood' with the clients' funds, the son asks Voysey as to what prompted him to start this dangerous game. The father explains his conduct by saying that,in fact,it had been started by his (Voysey's) father and not by him. When he took up the burden of the inheritance, he continues, he discovered that it had been based on fraud.

Like a dutiful son, he accepted the inevitalbe, and threw himself heart and soul into the task of setting the business straight by replacing the stolen funds. The damage was considerable, but in a few years he was able to make good the deficit. He played a difficult and perilous game, but in so doing acquired a taste for the ingenious manipulation of funds. He discovered that he had a genius for finance, and began swindling on his own account on an extensive scale. He was concerned about the future of his large family to which he was devoted. He soon found that he could not provide handsomely for it, except by manipulating the clients' money. Thus by swindling he ministered to both his financial genius and his parental feelings.

Voysey speaks of his exploits with considerable relish and even pride, but the young idealist Edward is shocked and stunned by these revelations. Having a high sense of honour, and a set of lofty principles, he shrinks back in horror from the prospect of deception and sham that will be required of him as a partner, and declines to shoulder the burden of the Voysey business.

In a fervent speech Voysey urges Edward, whom he considers to be an intellectual prig, to overcome his scruples, and have a practical commonsense view of the situation. He declares:

> Here's a great edifice built up by years of labour and devotion and self-sacrifice..a great arch you may call it..a bridge which is to carry our firm to safety with honour. (<u>This variation of Disraeli passes unnoticed</u>)

My work! And now, as I near the end of my life, it still lacks the key-stone... Do you think I shouldn't be proud of you, Edward..that I shouldn't bless you from - wherever I may be, when you completed my life's work.[2]

The opening scene is thus skilfully contrived: it provides the necessary background information for understanding the subsequent action. It also provides the mental conflict in Edward generated by his father's attempt to impose the Voysey inheritance on him. Further, it establishes the proper atmosphere and prepares the ground for the future development of events. The main problem of the Voysey inheritance of fraud is introduced within a few minutes of the rising of the curtain; and the gravity of Voysey's position is brought home to us through the reactions of his idealistic son. We listen with rapt attention to the argument between the father and the son, in which both of them put forth their position effectively. The predicament in which Edward finds himself appals him.

The concept of the mask and the face underlines Act I. There is a great contrast between the outward appearance and the inner essence as depicted in this scene. The imposing facade of the soliciter's office contrasts sharply with the fraudulent contrivances operating behind it.

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2. Granville-Barker, The Voysey Inheritance, 1905, p.97.

In Act II we are introduced to the Voysey family assembled in its dining room at Chislehurst. In the initial description, Barker shows that he knows as much about this middle-class stronghold as he does about a solicitor's office. Each member of the Voysey family is portrayed with consummate skill; and it is through speech and actions alone that they reveal themselves. The picture of the Voysey circle, which the playwright obviously regards as typical of all English middle-class families, is vivid and convincing. For the first half of this Act, we have to content ourselves with the casual and leisured conversation of a group of people. Major Booth advocates conscription and bewails the lack of chest (physical strength) and discipline in the country. Colpus, the vicar, refers to a meeting at the parish in which Hugh criticized war, capitalism and religion. This reference provokes George Booth to stating that young people are always questioning the validity of things. "Criticism starts in the cradle now-a-days"[3], he groans and advises Edward:

> Surely when you're young you can ask the advice of your elders and when you grow up you find laws...lots of laws divine and human laid down for our guidance. (Well in possession of the conversation he spreads his little self.) I look back over a fairly long life and ...perhaps I should say by Heaven's help...I find

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3. Ibid., p. 107.

> nothing that I can honestly reproach myself with. And yet I don't think I ever took more than five minutes to come to a decision upon any important point.[4]

On the surface it would appear that this casual conversation has little or no connection with Voysey's startling disclosure and the hero's reactions to it in Act I; but as we examine it carefully, we find that it has a direct bearing on the main theme. As George Booth speaks out his mind to Edward, we know that the protagonist has already rejected the advice of his father to take up the crooked burden of the inheritance, and that George Booth, a life-long friend of Voysey, is also a victim of his cheating, though he thinks that his 'capital is still intact'. There are thus obvious overtones of irony in George Booth's speech which link it with the main issue.

Even stray utterances, which would appear to be nothing more than casual post-dinner remarks, turn out, on examination, to be relavant to the theme as Barker develops it. Colpus, who utters only a few sentences in this Act, significantly says:

> Ah...I try to keep myself free from the disturbing influence of modern thought.[5]

The first half of Act II gathers momentum by a restless movement of characters, and their entrances and exits. Major Booth hunts for the Ramon Allones (cigars), and tries to fix the library ventilator with a brilliard cue. Ethel and Tregoning

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4. Ibid., p.108.
5. Ibid., p.108.

leave to play the billiards. Honor looks for the blue silk for sewing, Beatrice departs to finish her letter, Voysey and George Booth play billiards, and Alice leaves to hand over 'Notes and Queries' to Mrs.Voysey. The grown-up children indulge in bickerings, and are controlled as if they were still in the nursery. To the general din prevailing in the house, Major Booth contributes largely. "This is a most unrestful house", remarks Alice, and Beatrice concurs with her, saying:

> I believe I could write important business letters upon an island in the middle of Fleet Street. But while Booth is poking at a ventilator with a billiard cue..no,I can't.[6]

The 'children's tea-fight' which Colpus is to talk over with Mrs.Voysey is a comic comment on the scene. In this brilliantly constructed episode, the playwright affords us an insight into the trivialities and dullness of English middle class family life.

In the second half of Act II, Barker continues with the central theme, first indirectly in an ominous conversation between Voysey and George Booth, then directly.

When urged by George Booth to reinvest the money, should the value of his shares in Alguazils decline, the old swindler advises the 'old gambler' to reinvest on his own, for he has practically got control of all he has in the world, adding, "I might be playing old Harry with it for all you know".[7] But

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6. Ibid., p. 117.
7. Ibid., p. 122.

Voysey's heaviest investor has such implicit faith in him that he does not for a moment, doubt his integrity. We, however, know it only too well that he has played 'Robinhood' with his funds.

In a short, tense scene with Voysey, the dramatist shows that Edward is shocked, not so much by Voysey's having chosen the course of standing by his father in his fraudulent activities, as by the realization that, even after having put the matters straight, he had preferred to carry on the monstrous game. He is agonized to discover that the expenditure incurred on the education of Voyseys' children, and the lavish provision made for the family, have been stolen from the clients' accounts. In fact, no attempt has ever been made by Voysey to put things right. In view of this painful discovery, Edward tells Voysey that he would stay in the firm, should every endeavour be made to straighten the accounts.

At the end of Act II, Voysey develops a slight temperature and a chill. Our curiosity is roused, and we eagerly await to see how Edward would handle the lop-sided inheritance, if his father dies.

Act III, in which the action reaches the crisis, opens as the personages return from Voysey's funeral. After the funeral, Edward chooses this solemn moment to reveal the truth about the Voysey business to all the members of the family. He tells them unflinchingly the brutal truth about their father's nefariousness:

Edward. I'll come straight to the point which concerns you. Our father's will gives certain sums to you all..the gross amount

something over a hundred thousand pounds. There will be no money.

He can get no further than the bare statement, which is received only with varying looks of bewilderment, until Mrs. Voysey, discovering nothing from their faces, breaks this second silence.

Mrs. Voysey. I didn't hear.

Hugh. (in his mother's ear) Edward says there's no money.

Trenchard. (precisely) I think you said ...'will be'.

Booth. (in a tone of mitigated thunder) Why will there be no money?

Edward. (letting himself go) Because every penny by right belongs to those clients whom our father spent his life in defrauding. When I say defrauding, I mean it in its worst sense.. swindling.. thieving...And therefore I mean to collect every penny, any money that you can give me; put the firm into bankruptcy; pay back all these people that we can. I'll stand my trial..it'll come to that with me..and as soon as possible. (he pauses, partly for breath, and glares at them all.) Are none of you going to speak? Quite right, what is there to be said! (Then with a gentle afterthought) I'm sorry to hurt you mother.[8]

Such a situation is fraught with dramatic potentialities; it is 'good theatre', as the actors say. Both in conception and execution, the scene is the work of a master. Life has its big moments, but they often come out of the blue. In a well-structured play they fit as a keystone into the arch.

8. Ibid., pp.139-140.

The Voysey family is shocked by the disclosure (except for the deaf Mrs. Voysey who already knows something of the truth). Edward earnestly points out that it is their duty to surrender their legacies (one hundred thousand pounds) and that, should they accept his suggestion, he could pay back to the clients ten shillings instead of seven in the pound. His suggestion, as could be expected, does not find favour with them. The comments of the various members of the family are highly revealing. Trenchard thinks there is no legal or moral obligation for surrendering the legacies. Mrs. Voysey maintains that her estate cannot be touched, as it has been kept quite separate by the creation of a trust. Major Booth shows more concern for the family honour which will receive a great blow from the public exposure than for the clients' fate.

The demolition, by Edward, of the magnificent facade of Voysey's business, with the immense secret speculation of the clients funds going on behind it, is one of the most effective scenes in modern English drama. The struggle of the members of the family between honesty and self-interest, reverence for the departed and righteous indignation against his deeds, deep concern for the family honour and coldness to Edward's request to help him with their legacies to lessen the disgrace, appreciation for Voysey's financial exploits, and anxiety for the investors who have been exploited,[9] is a masterpiece of grim

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9. Ibid., "..how shall we ever look old Booth in the face again?" "Old Booth breaking down by the grave..Colpus reading the service.." pp.147-148.

ironic comedy. This serio-comic tension is achieved mainly through the ironic-comic dialogue; and slightly through the association of the trappings and figures of grief- the black-clad weeping maids, Mrs. Voysey in her widow's weeds, the heart-broken Honour and the scared Christopher.

Finding the members of the family appalled, but not prepared to part with their purses to help him in his task, Edward resolves to declare the firm insolvent. This step will involve the ruin of a large number of creditors, as also the probability of his imprisonment; but it will rid him of the fraudulent business. His decision to publicly expose the fraud is, however, stoutly opposed by Alice, who urges him to accept the challenge and carry on the business. The hero is on the horns of a dilemma. He is confronted with the choice between an honest course of action which may, nonetheless, harm the clients, or continuing the illegal course involving all sorts of lying and shuffling; but not without a possibility of rescuing the humbler victims of his father's swindling. In the face of the stark realities of the situation, the theoric idealist accepts a position of compromise - a workable proposition rather than an immutable abstract principle.

The first scene of Act IV is laid in the Voysey's office, now lacking the brilliance which the old man's occupation of it appeared to have given it. Edward, as he walks into the office, is but a pale copy of his father's masterful presence.

Edward is confronted by Peacey with a demand for two hundred pounds which he used to receive from the old Voysey at Christmas for his son's education. Declining to pay this allowance, which he regards as hush-money, Edward tells him that after his father's death, the trust business of the firm has been conducted on different lines, and that no illegal profits are made out of the clients' funds. He learns from Peacey (who in his turn knew from his father) that Voysey had set things right once, but had soon relapsed into dishonesty. Outside the family circle, Peacey is the one man who, if ignored, can divulge the secret of the firm. He threatens:

> ... I hope I may not be tempted to make use of the power I possess. But if I am driven to proceed to extremities...[10]

The Peacey episode makes us realize the danger of the hero's position. But Edward is not afraid of imprisonment, for by this time he has been able to put right some of the smaller accounts. From this moment on our interest in him is intensified. We eagerly look forward to the way he will face the future.

Hugh's episode with Edward, which was substantially revised in the 1934 edition, projects the desire of the artist to reform the outworn civilization of the day. The stern indictment of social evils made by Hugh in a flamboyant manner has a bearing on the central theme. His criticism of the 'Laws, Money-market

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10. Ibid., p.166.

and Respectability'[11] gives a frame of reference to the values earlier dwelt upon in the first Act, and influences the protagonist's course of action.

Genuinely concerned about the Herculean task Edward has been handling, Hugh inquires of him as to when he will 'be quit of the beastly business'.[12] Edward sadly answers that society refuses to be reformed in its own best interest, and that it takes its toll of any one, who, in the ardent pursuit of his ideals, strives against it:

> ...The world that you talk about so finely is using me up. A little wantonly..a little needlessly, I do think. But she knows her own damn business.. or so she says, if you try to teach it her. And why should I trouble to fit myself for better work than she has given me to do .. nursing fools' money?[13]

The climax reaches in the last scene of Act IV, when George Booth comes to withdraw his funds, discovers the deplorable state of affairs, and threatens prosecution. He tells Edward that he has no confidence in his ability, and hence would withdraw the whole amount. At this dramatic development, Edward, however, feels relieved; for by this time he has been able to pull out of the fire the humbler clients.

With Act V the play returns to the Voysey home at Chislehurst.

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11. Ibid., p.168.
12. Ibid., p.170.
13. Ibid., p.171.

George Booth, who has revealed the elder Voysey's dishonest conduct to Colpus, arrives to inform Edward about his decision not to prosecute him; but demands that the balance of his capital be returned immediately,and that the rest of the capital be paid back to him out of the firm's earnings gradually year by year. This exacting demand is greeted by Edward with a hysterical outburst of fury and is rejected:

> I'm giving my soul and body to restoring you and the rest of you to your precious money bags..and you will wring me dry. Won't you ? Wont't you ?[14]

A gentle irony is injected into the grim situation as Honor presents Booth with a basket of Chrismas gifts (for it is Christmas Eve). Disappointed, he suddenly leaves and we hear nothing further of him. This leaves us in a hushed suspense as to what he would do further. Edward feels that the smash has come, and expects every moment to be arrested for fraud. However, fortified by the awareness that he has been able to pull the small investors out of the fire, he faces the future with a brave heart.

At this stage the playwright introduces the question of the Hugh-Beatrice prospective separation to provide the much needed relief to the mounting tension. It also gives him an opportunity to discuss the issue of marriage, and the middle-class family ideal. This issue is not an isolated one, it brings us back to the main

14. Ibid., p.185.

theme. Major Booth believes that Edward wisely undertook the disagreeable task which the members of the family felt to be his duty. This prompts Beatrice to put forward an interesting defence for Voysey who, she says, became a criminal, as he had to find an avenue for his financial ability. He looked down upon the opulent clients living snugly on their 'unearned' incomes, and put their money to the best use he could.

In the final scene, Alice, who had held aloof from Edward so long as she thought him only 'a well-principled prig', agrees to marry him. If he must go to prison, he will go there strong and proud in the consciousness that he has done all that was possible to set matters right, and that his sweetheart is proud of him. By undertaking the 'beastly' job involving service and sacrifice, and by directing his instinct for self-realization into the channel of altruism, Edward attains the freedom of his soul for which the loss of bodily freedom (should it come) seems a small price to pay. The Voysey inheritance has indeed been a blessing in disguise. It enables him to discover his potentialities in a world of harsh realities. It makes a man of him.

Barker has sometimes been criticised for his pursuit for what some critics regard as loose ends in the play. P.P. Howe observes:

> With Hugh Voysey's conversational fireworks in the fourth Act and with Hugh Voysey's divorce in the fifth, the play of ideas takes two steps into the play of

> ideas. The dreadful danger of the play of ideas is that the ideas may exist for their own sake, and thus become nothing but loose ends.[15]

A.B.Walkey's criticism is even more detailed and more devastating:

> Mr. Barker should remember the French proverb:- Qui trop embrasse mal etreint. He sets out to tell not one story but several - the story of old Voysey's rascality, of Edward Voysey's trials, of Hugh Voysey's matrimonial experiences. He sketches for us a round dozen of Voyseys or people allied to the Voysey family by marriage. This is a scheme of almost Balzacian dimensions, a little Comedie Humaine. Even with the liberal allowance of five acts and three hours it is hardly possible to handle so much matter without crowding, diffuseness, lack of perspective. At times you can hardly see the wood for the tree.[16]

Both these critics seem to have missed the real links, and failed to appreciate the skill with which Barker handles this wealth of material. He presents in the play a vivid and convincing - all the more convincing for its variegated details - of a sordid segment of the middle-class English life, covered under the facade of sham respectability and brilliance.

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15. P.P. Howe, Dramatic Portraits, 1913, p. 198.
16. A.B.Walkley, The Times Literary Supplement, Nov.10, 1905.

Things, which may seem apparently disconnected, assume a relevance when we discover the hidden springs behind the ideals of respectability and family obligations.

In Act I the central issue of the inheritance of dishonesty is revealed through Edward's searching questions to his father. As already pointed out, the casual conversations of the characters in Act II are interspersed with ideas which have a direct bearing on the central theme. Act III is very well-controlled and nicely managed. The playwright presents the reactions of the members of the Voysey family to the unpleasant revelation made by Edward. The set of attitudes so revealed not only puts the problems in its social and historical context; but also reveals the complexities of human nature, which seeks evasions of difficulties and harsh realities in a manner, which, though highly selfish and personal, is posed as broadly philosophical, even moral. In this episode the moral decay of the various members of the Voysey family is nicely shown. This helps the audience to realize the immensity of Edward's problem; and the magnificence of his idealism, as also the crushing dimensions of his responsibility, and heroic fortitude. Similarly, the conversation between Edward and Hugh in Act IV on the social abuses of the day has an important bearing on the main theme. The values debated significantly affect the protagonist's course of action. This episode marks the thematic climax of the play. Hugh sees poverty, squalor and misery around him, and his condemnation of social injustice done by Voysey

with his large-scale robbing of his clients. Hugh's tirade against unearned money, in fact, intensifies Edward's resolve to do as much good as possible to the small investors by regulating the funds of the heavy investors. But the playwright indicates that this is not the end but only the beginning of Edward's problems, when George Booth bursts in clamouring for his funds. Similarly, in Act V the discussion about the intended separation of Hugh and Beatrice is, in fact, crucial to the central issue; and reveals the new strains to which the Victorian ideal of the family life, for which Voysey had sacrificed all other considerations, is being put to.

II

The great merit of the Voysey Inheritance lies in its variety and reality of vividly drawn characters. Each character is sharply and firmly individualized. Barker allows his characters to reveal themselves through their speech and actions. As a result, he achieves a large measure of objectivity.

The elder Voysey, who is presented as a prosperous and respectable solicitor, a generous father, is, in truth, a thief; for over thirty years he had been juggling with the clients' money by speculating with it, though regularly paying them their interest.

Having straightened the business of his father based on fraud,

the fascination for cheating the clients proved irresistible to Voysey. (We have Peacey's evidence supporting this statement. Peacey is the clerk of Voysey and Son) After the deficit had been made good, he found in the situation a challenge to his financial genius; and soon developed a taste for the power which money brings. No doubt, it was a dangerous game he had been playing - a game requiring intelligence, nerve and tact. Only once there was a danger of his being exposed, but the imperturbable buccaneer, by rising equal to the occasion, saved the situation, as Mrs. Voysey tells her son:

> We never discussed it. There was once a great danger..when you were all younger..of his being found out. But we never discussed it.[17]

As a matter of fact, Voysey has no scruples of conscience for the course he had adopted; he rather prided himself on the financial skill which enabled him to build up "a great edifice", "a bridge which is to carry our firm to safety with honour".[18] A pragmatist as he is, means, fair or foul, do not bother him. What really matters to him is the ends.

There was a time when Voysey was bitter and peevish as if he had a grievance against the world; but as time rolled on, with the power and exhilaration wealth gave him, he grew pleasant to every one. He was affectionate to his deaf wife.

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17. Ibid., p.140.
18. Ibid., p.97.

His double-dealing and unscrupulous daring sometimes involved heavy losses; but he put up a bold front to the world. Hugh really marvels at his father's ability to keep up appearances for years:

> ...Quite apart from the rights and wrongs of this, only a very able man could have kept a straight face to the world all these years, as the Pater did.[19]

In any judgement of character its moral aspect is an important ingredient. Both Hugh and Booth would ignore this aspect judging their father, who though a criminal, is not thought so by them, partly out of self-interest and partly out of respect for the deceased. Their judgement about Voysey is therefore warped.

When assigning a reason for the withdrawl of his capital from the firm, George Booth pays a compliment to Voysey's ability as a financier, which inspired confidence in the clients:

> ... My reason is straightforward and simple and well considered. I think you must know, Edward, I have never been able to feel that implicit confidence in your ability which I had in your father's ... Men like your father are few and far between.[20]

The spirit of Voysey seems to haunt the play even after his

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19. Ibid., p. 148.
20. Ibid., pp. 173-174.

death, as from Act III to Act V, he continues to dominate over the feelings and thoughts of the other characters. He has left them an inheritance with which they must grapple till the very end of the play. Through, what various characters in the play think of Voysey and of his conduct, we obtain a gradual knowledge.

Barker here adopts the well-known Ibsenite method of retrospection for delineation of character. In the conclave scene (Act III), the dramatist vividly depicts the reactions of different characters to Edward's startling disclosure of the inheritance of fraud, and to his suggestion for the surrender of legacies. Trenchard regards his father as a criminal, but contends that there is no legal or moral obligation for surrendering the legacies. For both Major Booth and Hugh, he was an ideal father who gave them good education and left them comfortably settled. Edward alone is convinced that his father is a criminal. In defending their dead father, the sons are throughout revealing themselves as well.

Edward's conditional acceptance of the inheritance, and his keeping himself at the ugly job, seem to please the spirit of the dead father, as his portrait smiles on him at the close of the play. The smiling portrait is a part of stage illusion, a symbolic mode of suggesting the triumph of the spirit of Voysey - which is also the spirit of the times - over the idealism of Edward, who is compelled to accept a compromise, much against his judgement.

The old Voysey recalls to the mind Carnaby Leet in <u>Ann Leete</u>,

another remarkable creation of Barker. Both are pragmatic, unscrupulous, egoistical, imperious and subtle. Both are feverishly engaged in a specific game: Carnaby in manoeuvring for the accomplishment of his political aspirations; and Voysey in the manipulation of the clients' money to serve his own interests. Carnaby is, however, intellectually more subtle than Voysey; but he lacks the geniality of Voysey's temperament, and his love and solicitude for his children.

William Archer rightly calls Voysey: "a modern edition of Ben Jonson's Volpone...reduced to human proportions and docked of his monstrous vices".[21] For the achievement of their ends, Volpone and Voysey adopt crooked means, and in making money both rejoice in the exercise of their intelligence, and relish the power money brings. Volpone relishes, even more than money, his gulling of the clever, ravenous rogues, the inheritance-hunters - Voltore, Corvino and Corbaccio. In Act I, Scene 1 in the preliminary conversation with Mosca, his parasite, Volpone says:

> Yet I glory
> More in the cunning purchase of my wealth,
> than in the glad possession, since I gain
> No common way.[22]

Similarly Voysey, with surprising complacence, reveals the secret of his success as a solicitor to Edward:

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21. William Archer, The Old Drama and the New, p. 129.
22. Ben Jonson, The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson, 1910, Vol. I. p. 405.

> My dear boy, you evidently haven't begun to grasp the A.B.C. of my position. What has carried me to victory? The confidence of my clients, What has earned that confidence? A decent life, my integrity, my brains? No, my reputation for wealth..that, and nothing else.[23]

But unlike Voysey, Volpone is a type who represents the universal lust for gold. He not only tantalizes the hopes of the legacy - hunters, but also torments them. Both, nevertheless, consider themselves superior to their dupes.

Beatrice rightly points out to Edward that Voysey "didn't possess that innate sense of the sacredness of property," and that his "freedom from prejudice was tampered by a taste for Power and Display."[24] She teasingly equates Edward with Voysey in this respect. Both, she thinks, are thieves: Voysey is an unscrupulous thief, Edward is an honest one. The difference between the two is that, while the father robbed the clients to gratify his love for power which money gives; the son juggled with the funds for the benefit of the poorer investors. However, the antithesis between Voysey, the opportunist and Edward, the idealist, is central to the dramatic structure. The grand criminality of the father is thrown into sharp contrast by the idealism of the son.

Although Edward at first refuses to shoulder the burden of the loathsome inheritance, Voysey's passionate appeal generates

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23. Granville-Barker, The Voysey Inheritance, p.127.
24. Ibid., p. 127.

in him an inner conclict as to whether he should desert his father, whom he loves, or perpetuate the corrupt Voysey business, and become possibly a scapegoat for his father's treachery. This mental conclict, which is admirably conducted by Barker, is temporarily resolved by the protagonist's conditional acceptance of the inheritance:

> ... The condition I wish to make is that we should really do what we have pretended to be doing..try and put the accounts straight.[25]

No fresh irregularities are committed since Edward's acceptance of the business, and his attempts are directed to preventing the affairs of the firm from deteriorating. Borne down by the overpowering burden which falls on his shoulders at the death of his father, he despises the vicious business. His instinct for extricating himself from the net of fraudulence and the serious complications generated by it, urges him to declare the firm bankrupt; pay back all the clients what he can, and court imprisonment. He makes a desperate bid to be honest at all costs, and asks the Voyseys to surrender their ill-gotten legacies. Edward is confronted with a problem similar to the one which confronts Vivie Warren in Shaw's Mrs.Warren's Profession. How can honest people accept money which has been made dishonourably? Vivie's mother practises the most degrading profession to which a woman can stoop: she is the head of a syndicate that organizes international brothels under the name

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25. Harley Granville-Barker, The Voysey Inheritance, p.125.

of hotels. She is a procuress for wealthy libertines, and by earning her livelihood by this degrading profession, she helps to fill the social cesspit. Vivie has been brought up without the knowledge of her mother's profession, but when she learns the truth, she is appalled. She decides that she will accept no more money from her.

Shaw almost repeats the above situation in another of his play, Major Barbara. Like Edward, Major Barbara Undershaft, is idealistic and conscientious. She joins the Salvation Army thinking she could cut herself off from the world in which profits are obtained from sources engaged in anti-social activities such as the manufacture of liquor and armaments. Shaw confronts the members of the Salvation Army with the dilemma of accepting, for their work among the destitute, money from Lord Saxmundham, a distiller, and Andrew Undershaft, an armament manufacturer, or letting that work cease for want of funds. The acceptance of the donations by the Salvation Army from those very sources which Barbara calls 'Drunkenness and Murder', gives a great shock to her conscience. She tells her father: "I stood on the rock I thought eternal; and without a word of warning it reeled and crumbled under me"[26] She cannot reconcile herself to taking 'tainted money', and severs her connection with the Salvation Army. The dilemma of both these protagonists makes a true dramatic problem, which, in their social context, becomes more than personal.

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26. Bernard Shaw, Major Barbara, 1961, p. 145.

Edwanrd's decision to continue the inheritance of dishonesty and thus to gradually rescue the money of the poorer investors is made at the instance of Alice. The exigencies of the situation compel the hero to adjust his moral principles, and to combine in himself the contradictory values of idealism and pragmatism. From this point onward there is a greater concentration on the inner drama of his conversion. Having been subjected to the soul-testing ordeal, he is shown as maturing in understanding, sympathy and wisdom under its powerful impact. And when the crash comes, it is Alice again who pleads with him to bargain with the old Booth in order to keep the firm going. She counsels:

> My dear, the world must be put tidy. That's the work which splendid criminals..and others leave about for us poor commonplace people to do.[27]

In his moment of greatest crisis Edward finds great comfort and moral support in Alice, whom he loves. She had, so far, held herself apart from him. But she is deeply moved by Edward's inner strength in the face of almost insurmountable difficulties, and comes forward with the declaration:

> We shall be married. And nothing is broken..except our pride and righteousness..and several other things we're better without.[28]

In the development of the hero's character, Alice thus plays a significant role. She possesses great commonsense like Shakespeare's heroines, such as Rosalind, and inspires Edward to overcome

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27. Ibid., p.209.
28. Ibid., p.208.

his bookish scruples, and confront the stern realities of life. The hero's idealism to become an instrument of good needs to be tampered by her faminine commonsense.

Barker thus portrays in Edward a life-like character, who grows in moral vision as the play advances. Indeed, the real interest of the play lies in depicting the hero's development under the stress of most trying circumstances. The Observer made this point, when, after witnessing the 1912 revival of the play he observed:

> Here, from the first moment of Edward Voysey's entrance you have authentic comedy, witty and profound, that does not ask to be given your polite attention but takes strong hold of you, and does not let you go until that last scene where you see Edward Voysey developed from a youth of principles and nerves into a man, grown to his full stature. The greatness of the play lies in the way Mr.Granville-Barker shows you the fellow's growth by making him grapple with life at it's blackest. At first Edward is timid and afraid, sheltering himself behind his own little theories from all reality. Then he shoulders his inheritance of dishonesty, and goes into the thick of life helped by the trust Alice puts in him. At the moment when he thinks the thing has crushed him he finds that only the husk of himself - the cowardice,

the priggishness, the selfishness that held him back has been crushed, and that, free of it, he has become a man.[29]

Alice Maitland is assigned an important dramatic function, and represents the "practical ideal". She calls Edward "a perfect little pocket-guide to life"[30], mocks at his principles and says: "I prefer my plan, I always do what I know I want to do."[31] She brings home to Edward the significant truth that every action of his need not be governed by principles, that it is unnecessary to expose the fraud on principle, and that he must not escape his responsibility on that count. When Edward is assailed by doubts and fear, she completely identifies herself with him; and thereby convinces him how foolish it is to be cowed down by any amorphous and uninformed criticism. She informs him that his hesitation to face the reality squarely was nothing but a sort of selfishness. Incapacitated by his own theoretical scruples, the great reality, which Edward himself could never comprehend, she brings home to him with a startling revelation - the intention is far more important than the deed itself. The situation in which he finds himself is not of his making, so his worrying over much about it, as a reflection on his own character and conduct, is thus superfluous. Her love and trust provide the necessary moral support and insight, and inspire him to accept the inevitable with a good heart. Alice observes:

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29. Sept. 8. 1912.
30. Granville-Barker, <u>The Voysey Inheritance</u>, pp. 115-116.
31. Ibid., 116

> ... You see, you had something to hope or fear from Mr.Booth.. You hoped in your heart he'd end your trouble. But when you've conquered that last little atom of selfishness which gets in one's way, I think you'll find you can do what you wish with these selfish men. (and she adds fervently.) Oh, it's a power so seldom used. But the man who is able, and cares deeply, and yet has nothing to hope or fear is all powerful ..even in little things.[32]

Barker's greatness lies in showing how the hero grows in moral stature till finally he attains spiritual freedom; and this transformation could be achieved only with the help of a woman like Alice. Replace her with any of Shaw's heroines and the results will be disappointing. In Act III she not only speaks commensense to him, but also shows that she can ply the love trade. When her approval is sought for his decision to salvage the humbler investors,she sets her seal on it by putting out her hand to him. And in Act V when, after acquitting himself well in the task he had undertaken, the hero feels solitary and cries out for friendship and love,her assurance: "While I live..where I am will be Home";[33] is both warm and passionate. So there is not only a dramatic portrayal of moral enthusiasm, but also genuine love, though this passion lacks outward fervour. It is a love well controlled by an intellect which is clear and humane.

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32. Ibid., p. 208.
33. Ibid., p. 206.

Barker does not slavishly copy Shaw in intellectualizing the passion of love. Perhaps his own dislike of depicting too emotional a lover, male or female, on the stage is responsible for making Alice what she is.

Like the Edward of Act I, Hugh is idealistic and declines to enter the struggle of life. Alice pinpoints this characteristic of Hugh (his idealism) in the final episode of the play when she says to Edward: "You love to think idly...just as Hugh does. You do it quite well, too".[34] Like Edward, Hugh is sick of the hypocrisy of the middle-class, and the sad condition of the lower classes. Deep down in the heart of the hero, there is resentment and bitterness of social injustice, which blaze forth openly from the lips of Hugh. He criticizes the civilization and the country where the streets and children are dirty, where people are educated to believe in the laws and the money-market and respectability. He exclaims:

> Oh, every man and woman I met was muddy-eyed! They'd joined the great conspiracy which we call our civilization. They'v been educated! They believe in the Laws and the Money-market and Respectability.[35]

Impatient of the outmoded social system, his only answer to the prevalent state of affairs is destruction:

> I want a machine gun planted in Regent Street..and one in the Haymarket..and one in Leicester Square

34. Ibid., p.204.
35. Ibid., p.168.

> and one in Strand..and a dozen in the city.An earthquake will be simpler. Or why not a nice clean tidal wave? [36]

This is an expression of socialist ideas which Barker had imbibed. Through Hugh, Barker denounces the values cherished by the contemporary society. "We all want a lesson in value", Hugh insists. "We're never taught what is worth having and what isn't.[37] Hugh attacks the English middle-class ideals. That one should respect one's parents, live and think with them and grow like them is what makes the family "dull, cubbish, uneducated, hopelessly middle-class..that is, hopelessly out of date."[38] Parental tyranny and husband's domination make life in the middle-class homes miserable. Hugh rightly says of Trenchard, who broke with the family completely, that he escaped "From tyranny! .. from hypocrisy!..from boredom..from his Happy English Home!"[39]

In Beatrice, the dramatist creates a woman who embodies the idea of independent womanhood. She is the 'New Woman' who does not believe in the necessity of decorum which fenced in the Victorian woman. She married Hugh for money (did not marry him with her eyes open), and discovered in him an idealist, a theoretical person. Ideological differences cropped up between them. She found that he is a wearisome companion, and hence both decide

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36. Ibid., pp.167-168.
37. Ibid., p.171.
38. Ibid., p.195.
39. Ibid., p.195.

to separate. The issue of the separation of Hugh and his wife is a challenge to the accepted notion of the age.

Bold, spirited, aggressive, morally courageous and acutely conscious of her rights ("we weren't sparrows or lilies of the field").[40] Beatrice has been struggling to achieve intellectual and economic independence. She succeeds in becoming self-supporting by writing books; and would 'walk off' from her husband as soon as she is sure of a handsome income. But in her struggle to achieve liberty, she has to pay a heavy price. Society has its own revenge upon her and her soul is seared. No woman of the nineteenth century was supposed to have the right to desert her family. Her resolve to separate therefore shocks Major Booth. He threatens her that, if she deserts her husband, she would be isolated from the family.

There are thematic similarities between The Voysey Inheritance, Ibsen's Ghosts (1881), and Shaw's Mrs. Warren's Profession (1893) and Candida (1894). Ghosts is a trenchant indictment of the Victorian ideal of marriage. Under the pressure of social conventions, Mrs. Alving is compelled to sink her individuality; and remain with her dissolute husband to carry out her wifely duties. Thus her happiness and freedom are sacrificed at the alter of soulless respectability. The tragedy of Mrs. Alving and Oswald may primarily be attributed to the tyranny of social conventions.

Like Ibsen, Shaw launches an assault on the institution of marriage, supports the principle of the equality of the sexes,

40. Ibid., p.198.

and advocates the social and economic independence of women. Most of his heroines embody the ideal of independent womanhood. Vivie in Mrs. Warren's Profession is independent in spirit and morally courageous. She personifies the right of younger generation to self-expression; and represents the idea of female independence.

Endowed with good sense and humanity, Candida is really a good wife, though quite different from the Victorian conventional ideal of a good wife. She is governed by commonsense not by emotion; and is morally strong enough to sustain James Morell and Marchbanks, instead of being protected or supported by them.

The idealism of Hugh and the practicality of Beatrice act as foils to the hero, who first chooses to escape from the realities of life, but later on accepts its challenge. The idealism and practicality which they represent set off the synthesis which Edward achieves by confronting the situation and accepting his painful destiny.

Wordiness seems to be part of the inheritance of Hugh and Major Booth from the Old Voysey . They take after their father in the talkativeness which is their striking characteristic. Hugh admits to Edward that he talks 'a lot of rot'. Voysey fears the family will have "a devil of time" with Booth after his death. When Beatrice asks Emily as to how she manages the Major she says: "It's best to allow him to talk himself out".[41] His booming voice

41. Ibid., p.199.

sounds above all other conversation. But attempts at bullying by this pompous and self-dramatizing man are rendered innocuous by his stupidity. The submissive Emily accepts his bullying, secure in the knowledge that she can manage him as if he were a baby under her care.

Major Booth is one of those characters, who, ignorant or worldly-wise, prefer to keep to their smug little world. He will not change either his ideas or his methods. Life shapes itself around him, and when there is any trouble, he makes facts fit in with his preconceived notions. Though he places honour above money, he refuses to surrender his legacy to help Edward. Booth's assurance to Edward, "Do you suppose I should touch or allow to be touched the money which father has left us till every client's claim was satisfied?"[42] is merely rhetorical.

Like his father, the Major is domineering and conventional, an upholder of respectability. He believes that the married couple have to abide by the proprieties of matrimony. He has no sympathy with rebels like Hugh and Beatrice, who run their heads against convention. His is a typically Victorian attitude.

Trenchard is too self-respecting and bold to tolerate the domineering temperament of his father. He is the personification of legality divorced from moral values. He stands for rigorous vindication of the law, while the old Voysey is for stepping outside the letter of the law. "Oh..why is it so hard for a man to see clearly beyond the letter of the law!" exclaims Voysey,

42. Ibid., p.152.
43. Ibid., p. 94.

when Edward condemns his behaviour as incorrect. Trenchard would never subscribe to such a view of the law. Edward's appeal to the Voyseys to surrender their legacies is met with stout opposition by Trenchard on legal grounds:

> Nonsense, my dear Edward. The lawwill take any thing it has a right to and all it can; you needn't be afraid. There's no obligation, legal or moral, for us to throw our pounds into the wreck that they may become pence.[44]

Of all the Voyseys, Trenchard has the least affection for his father, and is thus farthest removed from him 'No heart, y'know ! Great brain!'[45] is the Major's comment on him.

Perhaps the neatest piece of minor characterization is Mrs. Voysey's. The preliminary description shows us how impartial Barker's realism could be. He observed the good and bad features of a middle-class family, and portrays them faithfully:

> ... Mrs. Voysey is carrying her Notes and Queries. This is a dear old lady, looking older too than probably she is. Placid describes her. She has had a life of little joys and cares, has never measured herself against the world, never even questioned the shape and size of the little corner of it in which she lives. She has loved an indulgent husband and borne eight children, six of them surviving,

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44. Ibid., p. 143.
45. Ibid., p. 147.

healthy. That is her history.[46]

Having given this graphic portrait of the old, pleasant, inconsiderable, Mrs. Voysey, it is fitting that Barker should make her talk about Cromwell and the first umbrella maker; we feel it right that after Voysey's funeral, her grief should be natural and genuine; we feel it right that she should dismiss her husband's dishonesty of which she has been aware for years, but obviously it has never troubled her:

> We never discussed it. There was once a great danger when you were all younger..of his being found out. But we never discussed.[47]

As could be expected, separation after marriage is inconceivable to Mrs. Voysey. It is unnatural. She says to Hugh and Beatrice who are planning separation:

> But if you two foolish young people think you want to separate ... try it. You'll soon come back to each other and be glad to. People can't fight against Nature for long. And marriage is a natural state .. once you're married.[48]

Mrs. Voysey believes that matrimony is a natural and permanent institution; she has no patience with the wild notions of young people like Hugh and Beatrice. Barker significantly makes Mrs. Voysey deaf. This completes her insularity and makes her complacency perfect. She does not talk of the practices of her husband, nor does she hear what others say of him. She is

46. Ibid., p.130.
47. Ibid., p.140.
48. Ibid., p.194.

an image of self-satisfied domesticity.

Our heart goes out in sympathy to Honour who is a helpless victim of the intolerance of parents towards her sex. While considerable money was spent on the sons' education, she was grudged schooling. She has been the bottle-washer to her brothers, and the mender of their clothes. She was christened Honor, "... What do we call her? asks Hugh, "Mother's right hand! I wonder they bothered to give her a name."[49] Affectionate, meek and dutiful, she works incessantly in her tiny world, doing ungrudgingly the domestic chores.

How is it that Honor is allowed to remain in this pitiable state? Virtually a glorified housekeeper, she is at the back and call of the Voyseys who have little consideration for her. Her personality has been so much subdued that the presence or absence of affection makes little difference to her. .There is profound irony connected with her name, Honor. Honour in the Voysey family is at a discount. For all his pretensions to honour, Booth would not surrender his legacy, and the old Voysey had never had any notion of it.

Ethel, "the baby of the family", and Tregoning's fiancee, tender and aggressive, seeks means for self-expression in her passionate love for her fiance. By the time Ethel was born, her parents were tired of training children, hence she escaped the rigorous middle-class upbringing.

Peacey's pull over the firm is an inheritance from his father, who was aware of the fraudulent practices of the old Voysey and

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49. Ibid., p. 196.

was his tacit accomplice. His demand for two hundred pounds as his son's allowance is cold-shouldered by Edward. He is presented as the criminal that society breeds, the blackmailer, ready to exploit his knowledge of the malpractices of Voysey and Son.

There is sub-acid humour in the incisive portrait of George Booth, who finds in money his chief pleasure and consuming interest. His sole purpose in life is to enjoy himself, and, as the playwright sarcastically remarks in the preliminary description of him, with that object in view, he has even remained a bachelor. It is he who attaches to money an absolute value. Wealth has enabled him to live in comfort, it has made him an egoist, and, by prevalent standards, a gentleman. Mammon-worshipper as he is, there is no other value of life which attracts him so much as that of money. His life-long frienship with Voysey is based not on any true affection or regard for him; but on the collection of prints. The awful disclosure of the corrupt practices scandalizes Old Booth ("this will go near to killing me");[50] and he shows his unchristian behaviour in seeking to extort the last penny of his money from Edward, and this on the first Christmas-Eve after the death of his dearest friend.

Yet another is the caustic portrait of Colpus, who speaks only a few sentences in Act II, and then is seen no more. His characteristic utterance: "Ah .. I try to keep myself free from the disturbing influences of modern thought"[51] reveals his

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50. Ibid., p.181.
51. Ibid., p.108.

complacency, and unconcern about the social trends of the day. By a broad stroke, the real nature of Colpus' Christianity is laid bare: "What will Colpus .. what will all the other Christian gentlemen demand? Pounds of flesh ! Pounds of flesh!"[52]

Barker renders his minor characters as perfectly as he does the major characters: both catagories of personages are sharply individualized, and there is a sureness of touch which is amazing. Speaking about the English middle-class family life of the Edwardian period, as presented by Barker in this play, Gerald Weals rightly observes:

> No picture of English middle-class family life of the period is as complete and as damning as the one that Granville-Barker gives in this play.[53]

In the play Barker portrays both the pleasant and seamy aspects of the English middle-class family life of his times. The Voysey family scenes exhibit affection among the members. The elder Voysey is immensely attached to the family and is concerned about its future. He loves his deaf wife and she reciprocates his love. In spite of his father's trespasses against the ethics of his profession, Edward loves him and so do the other members of the family. For all their attachment for one another, the Voyseys, except for Edward and Hugh who are concerned about the welfare of others, are selfish and insular. Major Booth is narrow-minded, self-seeking, and indifferent to the interests of others. Mrs. Voysey lives in her tiny world shut out from the world around her. In fact,

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52. Ibid., p.185.
53. Gerald Weals, "The Edwardian Theatre and the Shadow of Shaw", Edwardians and Late Victorians, 1959, p.175.

the Voyseys prefer to keep to their own comfortable little worlds which they have built for themselves, and exhibit little concern for others.

The family scenes, nevertheless, show how each member is a victim of the Voysey domination. Respectability holds the Voyseys in its iron grip. Perhaps in no other play of Barker is the tyranny of domestic life better displayed.

III

The Voysey Inheritance projects a satirical picture of hypocrisy, greed and treachery, and emphasizes the need for honesty in facing up to the problems of life: honesty in public affairs and private life. This moral point is made against a background of several forms of dishonesty, ranging from Voysey's embezzlement of his clients' funds to the hypocrisy of his sons and friends, George Booth and Colpus, who preach Christian charity but practise selfishness and greed.

The old Voysey's attitude to his inheritance is a part of his heredity as well. The Old Voysey inherits the strain of dishonesty from his father, and the Voyseys inherit from their father this trait of lack of uprightness and scrupulousness in the conduct of public affairs. The old Voysey's system is divorced from moral values, his approach to Edward for accepting the inheritance is an example of moral sophistry. Nowhere does he show any moral compunction. Edward is identified with the

paradox of the honest cheat; he involves himself in the Voysey business, though with a noble end in view. Trenchard, Booth, and Hugh also have the poison of dishonesty in their blood. One would feel inclined to concur with Edward:

> ... Oh, listen to this! First Trenchard..and now you! You've the poison in your blood, every one of you. Who am I to talk? I daresay so have I.[54]

The Voysey inheritance of corruption, however, makes the hero see what the world is really like: hard, selfish and cunning, and it makes George Booth realize that the dearest things in his life have been built on the shifting sands of his bosom friend's confidence trick. The play is indeed a powerful denunciation of middle-class morality. Essentially a moralist, Barker upholds moral greatness, and decries dishonesty as one of the greatest social sins. He exposes the Voyseys to a withering analysis, striping them spiritually naked. In the fierce condemnation by Edward and George Booth, of Voysey's malpractices, the dramatist reveals unscrupulous money-making as a poison which saps the conscience. As a matter of fact, the whole social order appears to be rotten and hideous to Barker, who, with Ibsen's 'implacability', disparages the middle-class values and contributes his mite to their disintegration.

In this play there is a veiled attack on capitalism which

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54. Granville-Barker, The Voysey Inheritance, p.150.

has Shavian echoes. That capitalism is no more than legalized theft is brought out in Voysey's explanation of his system to Edward at the start of the play. What Voysey explains in his justification is the actual method by which the capitalist makes his money - the difference between what he has to pay out and the actual profit. Edward's handling of the inheritance reveals that the economics of capitalism does not preclude the economics of gambling; and that the crimes of fraud and theft in the acquistive society are only extensions of the legitimate activities of money-making.

Granville-Barker is "a strict realist and the figures in his plays, depicted with extraordinary subtlety, reveal the minds and thoughts and manners of genuinely living people."[55] Realism in subject-matter, in setting, characterization and dialogue in Barker's plays shows the influence of the realism, which had been growing in the novel as well as in the drama towards the close of the 19th century. The Voysey Inheritance itself is an inflence towards the vogue in the contemporary drama of treating life realistically rather than romantically. The realistic style in The Voysey Inheritance is apparent from the very first description by the dramatist in Act 1:

> The office of Voysey and Son is in the best part of Lincoln's Inn. Its panalled rooms give out a sense of grand-motherly comfort and security, very

55. A.E. Wilson, "Granville-Barker", Edwardian Theatre,1951,p.186.

> grateful at first to the hesitating investor, the dubious litigant. Mr.Voysey's own room into which he walks about twenty past ten of a morning radiates enterprise besides.[56]

Barker's realistic treatment of setting assists in creating an illusion of reality.

As in the setting, there is an air of reality in the characters and the situations. The play is a veracious representation of certain phases of middle-class English life. It is a page from the great book of life, and the playwright shows truth and artistry in the delineation of characters. The elder Voysey, who has brought up his family in 'luxurious' respectability by perpetuating his father's system of swindling his clients, is a realistic study of a genial social pirate. Barker portrays the figure of this financial wizard without exaggeration or distortion, without even a trace of theatricality. The moral dilemma of Edward, who finds himself virtually compelled to continue the burden of the inheritance, the reactions of the other members of the family to the disclosure by Edward of Voysey's dishonest practices, and the final outcome, are depicted in a realistic fashion. The women characters also are sketched with admirable verisimilitude. In fact, the entire Voysey circle pulsates with life. The convincing reality of the presentation of the Voysey group is recognized by almost all critics. The dialogue of the

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56. Granville-Barker, The Voysey Inheritance, p. 83.

play is realistic (with the exception of the Shavian speeches of Alice and Hugh). It approximates the effect of actual conversation, and creates an illusion of reality. There is nothing theatrical about it.

Despite his attention to realistic detail, Barker, a true artist as he is, is not a mere photographer or recorder of real life. Every detail serves a purpose either in the portrayal of an individual, or in the presentation of a group, or in the creation of atmosphere, although not all critics have recognized this fact.

The publication of The Voysey Inheritance is a landmark in modern realistic drama. Apart from theatrical effectiveness, it has inherent reality and essential truth without which art must perish.

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CHAPTER IV

WASTE

Waste was written in 1906-1907; a private performance of the play was given by the Stage Society at the Imperial Theatre on Nov.24, 1907, and it was published in 1909. It was performed at the Savoy Theatre in 1908. It was revised in 1926, and produced at the Westminster Theatre in 1936. As the play refers to an illegal operation, it was banned by the Lord Chamberlain in 1907. The ban was, however, a contributory cause to the investigation of the censorship by a joint committee of the two Houses of Parliament in 1909, and Barker, by writing this play, incidentaly did an unintentional service to the theatre; since some modifications were made in the censorship as a result of the report of this joint committee. Barker's play has some historical importance in the battle for liberating the theatre from arbitrary censorship, and in widening the range of subject matter available for theatrical presentation.

As in *The Marrying of Ann Leete*, Barker dramatizes the theme of nature in conflict with social convention. But, while *Ann Leete* ends on a note of hope for the future of Ann and Abud, *Waste* ends on a tragic note. A brilliant politician, Trebell has an affair with Amy, an attractive young woman. Amy O'Connell

becomes pregnant, and unable to bear the brunt of maternity, consults a quack for an abortion. The illegal operation proves fatal both to herself and the child. The scandal it gave rise to destroys Trebell's political plans. And he puts an end to his life by shooting himself.

The scandal in the life of an eminent politician, and his subsequent loss of power reminds one of the cases of Charles Parnell, who, because of his love affair with Mrs.Katie O'Shea, lost his leadership of the Irish Party in 1890; and of Sir Charles Dilke, an eminent Gladsonian Liberal, who in 1885 was cited as a co-respondent in a divorce case by Donald Crawford. Though these two cases furnish some basis in actuality for Barker's theme, the dramatist creates in Waste characters which are original and a situation which fundamentally differs from either of these historical episodes.

Waste is a problem play. The problem is whether the transgression of a social convention should demand the sacrifice of a man of outstanding ability and his work. The play concerns itself with the waste of a politician of brilliant parts, because he violates the social convention which demands that scandal must not touch one who aspires to public honours. Like The Voysey Inheritance, Waste has a coherent plot structure. The private problems of the hero - Amy's pregnancy, her unwillingness to bear their child, the illegal operation which proves fatal and the consequent scandal - are artistically fused with the larger political problems. It has been rightly observed by

an eminent reviewer that the play deals with "some of the most fundamental facts of human life with unflinching truthfulness, and yet at the same time blends these facts with...great social and political questions."[1]

Waste opens on a Sunday evening in summer at a week-end party at a country house in Shapters, a London suburb. Lady Julia Ferrant, the hostess, has been playing Chopin's Prelude opus 28, number 20, to her guests. As in The Voysey Inheritance, Barker plunges into realistic dialogue which gives us the necessary background information about the political situation in the country; and about Trebell, the key figure in the situation, who has the Tory Party's ball at his feet. One is struck by the shrewd restraint and felicity, by which the main theme of sex and politics is introduced. To give a group impression, every character is skilfully composed, type balanced against type. Lady Julia Farrant at her piano,Lucy Davenport with her book of German philosophy open on her lap; Amy O'Connell lounging on the sofa, Lady Mortimer in a low armchair, "It is the ancient trick of the Flamish Painter to represent each saint with his symbol."[2] Amy is presented as an attractive Edwardian society woman without the support of birth or wealth to lend her prestige. She lost her parents when she was two years old, married Justin O'Connell, an Irishman at the age of seventeen. But when her husband turned Sim Fein, she left him and returned to England.

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1. The Times. Nov.27, 1907.
2. Margaret Haskell, "G-B as Dramatist", Drama May, 1918.

Lady Julia invites her with the specific purpose of amusing Blackborough, and because "A house-party needs just a dash of...her sort of thing."[3] Lady Julia presides over the political salon, and these well-informed women discuss party politics, the prospects of the Tory victory over the Lib-Labour government in the coming General Election, and the possibility of Prime Minister, Horsham, making an offer of a Cabinet seat to Trebell for piloting the Disestablishment Bill.

For all her charms Amy is not liked by the women characters. She is not much interested in politics; and frankly admits that she has no knowledge of Bagehot and Bach. She obviously doe not belong to the aristocratic set. As she listens to the distinguished coterie, she wistfully observes:

> But if I'd been sent to Cambridge instead...
> and been lectured at by Frances, perhaps on mathematics
> and morals...what a different woman I should be!
> More like Lucy...though never so nice. Or I might
> have gone in for politics and been a power in the
> land...a power behind the throne...like Julia.
> But, of course, never so powerful.[4]

With Lady Julia's observations about Blackborough whom she considers to be greedy and selfish, and about Trebell's contempt for women, the exposition is complete. We learn about the relations of different characters and some of their important

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3. Waste, p. 15.
4. Granville-Barker, Waste, 1907, p.4.

traits. Barker also succeeds in suggesting the pivotal theme of the play,and in establishing the atmosphere of a social group.

The love scene at the end of Act I furnishes a sharp contrast to the opening scene in which the discussion on the political situation and party politics predominates, Barker manages the transition from politics to sex very skilfully. Trebell and Amy do not have any real love for each other. Perhaps the key to their attraction for each other lies in the egotism of Trebell. He finds opportunity for the first time to test qualities, which have given him prominence in politics, with a woman. What begins as a mere sport soon turns into something quite serious, and dalliance results in Trebell and Amy succumbing to their passion. It would not be correct to describe it as a "seduction" scene. Barker seems to suggest that neither side is the offender against the other, as both succumb to the natural impulse beyond their control. The representation of the working of passion is skilfully handled and the expression is admirably restrained. Chandler, in fact, compares the love scene to the episode of the hero's fall in Meredith's The Ordeal of Richard Feveral.[5] In Act I the two major strands of the play, politics and sex, are closely knit together, and the stage is firmly set for the further development of action inherent in the initial situation.

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5. Aspects of Modern Drama, 1914, p. 312.

In Act II in the meeting between Dr.Wedgecroft and Trebell, Barker returns to the political scene. The conversation between them enlightens us further on the political situation which had only been hinted in the opening scene. The vital importance of the Disestablishment Bill ("the little darling" of the hero) is appropriately stressed. Two governments have shirked introducing the Bill, though there has been throughout a progressive realization that something drastic should be done to vitalize the church. The Prime Minister has offered a Cabinet seat to Trebell. Trebell is confident of seeing the Bill first through the Cabinet and then through Parliament. The Bill, if passed, will be a feather in the cap of the Tory Government.

Trebell's victory in the General Election and Horsham's offer of a Cabinet seat do not thrill the hero. Nor does the potential opposition to the Disestablishment Bill ruffles him. Wedgecroft's comment: "I've never seen you thrilled or rattled,"[6] prepares us for the pivotal episode of the play- Trebell's interview with Amy.

In the scene in which Amy confronts Trebell, the latter is preoccupied with his vision of his 'darling' (the Disestablishment Bill). The affair of two months before is a closed chapter as far as he is concerned; he looks back on it as he would on a fit of drunkenness. Amy tells Trebell that she is to bear his child, and pleads for some show of love: "If only you still loved

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6. Waste, p.40

me a little it would help!"[7] Amy is fretful because Trebell does not say he loves her, he admits he never has. Although Trebell is unsympathetic to her pleadings of some display of affection, he is considerate, and does offer to help her in her piteous state. He offers to take care of the child if she won't. But Amy is determined she will not go through with the child; not because of any fear of scandal but because she simply dreads the thought of bearing a child. In vain, Trebell reasons with her to go through with the child, to obey the great natural law, and take her share in human growth. He pleads with her to be courageous enough and cheerfully pay the price:

> We choose and think we've chosen wisely...then by some grace we blunder on a better thing. Then comes the test. Have we a sense of it...and the faith to go into the unknown?...My dear, my dear...beauty or brains, what are they worth...if we've not enough life in us to pay life on demand?[8]

Disappointed, Amy is obliged to withdraw because of Trebell's scheduled talk with Cantilupe. The hero asks Amy to wait, but she leaves, sees a quack, has an unlawful abortion which proves fatal

This scene is an exceedingly powerful one. It presents a set of opposed attitudes to sex. Amy hates bearing children, and shudders at the very thought of motherhood. Trebell wants

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7. Ibid., p. 42.
8. Ibid., p. 46.

Amy to do Nature's work by bearing the child which shall be his link that he will be adding to Nature's endless chain of life. However, Amy's dread of motherhood adds to the complexity of the situation, and to the authenticity of the episode, and precipitates the catastrophe. It leads to the desperate step which brings her life and the unborn child's to an end. Thus Amy's fear of motherhood becomes dramatically significant and fateful.

In the last scene of Act II, Trebell and Lord Charles Cantilupe are presented by Barker in a lively discussion on religion and education. The Disestablishment, Trebell assures the High churchman, will in no way lead to the destruction of the Church. The Disestablishment Bill only seeks to use the property of the Church for endowing a system of education atonce religious and democratic. Trebell believes that neither the supernatural nor the Christian doctrine is essential to religion. To him education itself is religion. He has magnificent vision of the Church of the future, the secular church. He visualizes:

> Cathedral cloisters busy with dispute. And...every parson in the country turned scholar and schoolmaster...with his soul really set upon eternal things.[9]

The teachers (or priests) must swear to learn all they can, teach what they know without fear of the future or favour to the past. Trebell perceives in the hunger for knowledge a new

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9. Ibid., pp.56-57.

birth in the mind of man, one which the church must recognize or lose its power over men's minds. A new order of men and women, he tells Cantilupe, will serve God by teaching His children. The teachers themselves will be learners, always striving for truth. Here is a noble conception of the teacher as the priest of the future, and the dramatist contrives to give an air of reality to the hero's political and educational plan by piling detail upon detail.

During his discussion with Cantilupe, Trebell does not appear to betray any fear of Amy's course of action. But his search for her the moment Cantilupe departs suggests a subconscious awareness of it. His search for her does reveal his solicitude and anxiety for her. Ath the end of Act II Trebell is seen writing a note to Amy. The happiness of Lucy and Walter (Trebell's secretary), who intends to marry her, intensifies,by contrast, the gloom that has descended upon the hero's mind since his interview with Amy. The note serves the dramatic purpose of keeping the conflict between the personal and the political concerns of the hero at the centre of the play. In Act II Barker is able to ingeniously integrate Trebell's private problems withthe political concerns in which he is involved.

In Act III the members of Horsham's shadow Cabinet are assembled in his drawing room listening, in consternation, to the woeful story Dr.Wedgecroft tells them about Amy O'Connell's death. As in Act I, the interest is dispersed over the whole

group, and the dialogue ingeniously designed. The informal Cabinet meeting seene is as skilfully done as the family conclave in The Voysey Inheritance; and each of the figures is depicted with the same consummate skill as are the Voyseys at Chislehurst . There is an ebb and flow of feeling and thought expressed in the dialogue which holds one's interest.

The vital question before the Cabinet is whether O'Connell, who has been summoned by Horsham, will hold his tongue or disclose names at the inquest on his dead wife. When O'Connell comes, each member pleads with the Irishman not to complicate the situation by exposing Trebell at the inquest. The Prime Minister tells O'Connell that they have no right to ask for his forgiveness for the sinful man; but fervently pleads with him not to wreck the reputation of Trebell, the statesman. Farrant thinks that telling a lie to the coroner in a good cause won't endanger the soul of the Irishman; and appeals to him not to precipitate matters by saying something at the inquest which will compromise Trebell. Even Cantilupe, the High Churchman, advocates Trebell's forgiveness, hinting in a subtle manner to O'Connell, that the public will insist on punishing the wrong-doer. He says:

> ...after God's forgiveness...he will need yours
> And if you forgive him you will know better than
> we whether you should then save him from such
> clumsy vengeance as this world takes.[10]

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10. Ibid., p. 72.

Cantilupe, who, like O'Connell, dissociates himself from his age and its political and religious trends, is the only person with whom the Irishman can have an intellectual and emotional contact. He makes little attempt to disguise his contempt for the morals or politics of British politicians. He makes it perfectly clear that he is unconcerned with the results of his decision whatever it may be. "This clever fellow with his clever scheme!", O'Connell exclaims, and asks "Is the fate of the two of them worth a lie? For your time breeds such...and will...till its corruption bursts."[11] He looks down upon the British political system in which "the jealous and ignorant mob" is the master.

At the cold indifference of O'Connell, the members begin to fear that the Irishman can ruin Trebell's political career, and strangle the Cabinet at its very birth. There is suspense and tension mounts. Then Trebell bursts in and confronts O'Connell. Barker uses their confrontation to its full dramatic advantage. Up till then Cantilupe is the only man O'Connell does not dislike. With Trebell, however, O'Connell finds three things in common. Each has been injured by the same woman; each has the courage of his own convictions and each has contempt for public opinion. Yet, when O'Connell says that they are brothers in misfortune, Trebell, one would feel, is not sympathetic to the remark. The hero's problem is rather a complex one, nor is

11. Ibid., p.75.

it, he thinks anyone's business but his own. Trebell urges O'Connell:

> What she was to you...you know. Tell the truth of it tomorrow. She has had to die to trap me. I'll tell the truth of that if need be.[12]

Yet to the surprise of every one the promise the Irishman promptly gives is at variance with what the hero has just demanded: "I shall say nothing tomorrow that will compromise Mr.Trebell".[13]

The meeting between Trebell and O'Connell which has been superbly dramatized is "one of the most dramatic encounters on the contemporary stage."[14] It is fascinating to watch the two brilliant men confronting each other under such peculiar circumstances. The playwright creates his effect by contrasting them with the manoeuvring politicians.

O'Connell's 'magnamious' promise apparently puts an end to the dramatic suspense. But with the fierce onslaught of Blackborough on the Disestablishment Bill which he has never liked; and his assertion that it was impossible to check the scandal, and the defection of Cantilupe, the situation takes a grave turn. The discussion brings out the personal animosities, likes and dislikes which underline the British party system. It is clear that Trebell is dished-whether O'Connell speaks out or keeps silent at the inquest will hardly make any difference to

12. Ibid., p. 76.
13. Ibid., p. 77.
14. McCarthy, The New Statesman and the Nation, Dec.12,1936,p.977.

his doom. O'Connell, who has been listening to the debate, is shrewd enough to guess all this and sarcastically remarks:

> No, sir, you were right...I can do nothing for you. And had revenge been what I wanted...could I be leaving my interests in better hands.[15]

O'Connell sees the political game and leaves.

It is not the Irishman who brings about Trebell's ruin; but the differences among the politicians of his own party which spell his downfall. Cantilupe throws the first bombshell: he will not sit with an 'adulterer'. Blackborough, who despises both Trebell and the Bill, looks upon the situation as a golden opportunity to get rid of an opponent. He unleashes the compaign against Trebell and the Bill with renewed vigour; and gloats over Farrant's disclosure: "If Trebell doesn't come in,Brampton won't".[16] For what better could Blackborough desire than such a disintegration of the Cabinet, and the overthrow of the measure which he hates. With malicious contemt he suggests to Horsham:

> ...in my opinion...you'll drop him and let him go to the Bar for a bit...or put him on the Bench. You've a reputation for a cynic. The Divorce Court ought to be vacant soon.[17]

The tables are turned on Trebell. His political enemies fully exploit the scandal; and finally prevent him from joining

15. Waste, p.80.
16. Ibid., p.85.
17. Ibid., p.87.

the Cabinet. Horsham's attempts to hold his colleagues to Trebell and the Bill prove abortive; and the Prime Minister's decision that Trebell must go leads to the crisis. Unfortunately, Horsham is not strong enough not to be unduly influenced by Blackborough. The Prime Minister thinks Blackborough cannot be trusted to keep the scandal a secret. Horsham, therefore, abandons his plan for the inclusion of Trebell in the Cabinet partly with regret and partly with relief. Ironically enough, we learn later that Horsham's father had been involved some years ago in a situation somewhat similar to Trebell. Horsham's father had illicit relations with Cantilupe's mother; and attempts had been made by the Prime Minister to hush up the matter. With grim irony the dramatist hints that, while the scandal involving the hero is punished, the scandal affecting Cantilupe's mother was hushed up.

In Act III Barker shows the same skill in devetailing Trebell's personal problem with the political concerns relating to him. However, the protracted political discussion on the Disestablishment Bill becomes too heavy for the real problem with which the hero is confronted. Trebell's problem at this stage is whether his colleagues will maintain perfect secrecy about the scandal and will stand solidly behind him. This vital issue tends to be submerged in petty disagreement and cavil.

The opening scene in Act IV between Trebell and Wedgecroft subtly suggests the approaching tragedy in that the hero has

a premonition that he might be thrown over by Horsham. The larger part of the final Act is a scene between Trebell and his sister Frances, in which it becomes increasingly clear to her that her brother may take his own life. This scene is emotionally more moving than any heretofore composed by Barker. The conversation between Trebell and Frances reveals many things: her devotion to him, his recognition of the fact that his sister has had a difficult life with him; his identification with his work; his contempt and anger for the weak Amy who has involved him in ruin; his feeling for the unborn child whose loss has destroyed his aspiration of doing some good to his country; "his faith that life consists in surrendering to a selfless impulse";[18] and his refusal to live on a superficial plane.

The moments immediately after the opening of the morning mail, the mail which contains Horsham's note of regret, are exceedingly moving. "Horsham will have no use for me in his Government,"[19] says Trebell to Frances. The full extent of the catastrophe now dawns on her. In vain, Frances tries to take her brother's mind off his grief - his brooding over Amy's lot - by condemning her ("what was she but a bit of base pleasure to you?"),[20] and by comforting him that she sees 'fifty futures' for him still. When Frances leaves him, she clutches at his arm asking him to hold out a promise that he will not do any rash thing, but in spite of his assurance to her, he shoots himself.

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18. Desmond McCarthy, The New Statesman and Nation, p.977.
19. Waste, p. 102.
20. Ibid., p. 106.

The short epilogue which follows the suicide of Trebell is like "the patter of rain after the thunderclap". To the young Walter Kent, Trebell's secretary, is given Barker's indictment of a ruthless convention-ridden society:

> I'd like to go through the streets and shout that he's dead...that they've lost him and wasted him, damn them! With his work all undone! Who's to do it? Much they care...oh,the waste of him...oh, the waste...the waste![21]

II

As in Ann Leete and The Voysey Inheritance, the characters in Waste are vivid, vital and life-like.

Trebell has set before himself certain ideals in which he has unflinching faith; and in whose pursuit he harnesses all his energies. He shares with his creator an indomitable will and his creed is "belief in the thing done...well and truly done as a means to the next."[22] His commitment to the Bill for the Disestablishment of the Church of England absorbs all his being; and he means to make "an honest Act of Parliament of the little darling."[23] The hero's idealism is, however, tampered by rationalism. Ashley Dukes calls the leading character in Barker's plays the "hero-raisonneur", who suffers from an excess of grey matter.[24] Barker's hero is intellectually sharp, but emotionally frigid. He suffers from an excess of intellectualism as also from an excess of "emotional asceticism".[25] Trebell's life is

21. Ibid.,p.115.
22. Ibid.,p.36.
23. Ibid.,p.32.
24. Modern Dramatists p.139.
25. Desmond McCarthy, The Madras House, 1910

built on rationalism; the only divinity he recognizes is the divinity of reason. Rationalism tends to engender scepticism, and undermines his faith in God and religion. There is an intellectual austerity and emotional coldness about him. To a great degree, Trebell lacks humanity. Amy calls him "a cold-blooded brute," and his sister blames him for not having loved Amy ("You didn't love her enough"). Trebell's distaste for emotion is also noticed by his friend Wedgecroft: "I've never yet seen you thrilled or rattled."[26]

Trebell is presented as a brilliant politician, courageous and masterful, self-sufficient and imperturable, and self-controlled. Barker, is, however,careful not to make Trebell a very attractive personality. His egotistical and unsympathetic behaviour to Amy; his contempt of the common people, his blunt manner towards his colleagues, contribute to his downfall. His suicide is a confession of weakness inconsistent with his self-sufficiency and indomitable will. Archibold Henderson's judgement of Trebell is however, too severe. He says that there is no spark of altruism in his nature, and calls him "repellent and abnormal in temperament; a megalomaniac of the most virulent type."[27] This is a misrepresentation of the character of Trebell. Trebell's real weakness is a feeling of superiority over others, and an aloofness from them. But he has the greatness to identify himself with a cause, a social cause, to do good to the community by improving

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26. Waste, p.40.
27. European Dramatists, p. 390.

its education.

Amy O'Connell possesses physical attractiveness and charm of manners, but a low intellectual calibre. She does not live with her husband because she does not want children. And when she is to bear a child, her one thought is to get rid of it. Her acute awareness of women's rights, and insistence that she will not go through with the child, create anxiety in Trebell's mind, and complicate the dramatic situation.

Frank W. Chandler says: "Barker is a trifle too severe upon his heroine and too lenient with his hero."[28] There is some element of truth in this comment. True, Trebell's coldness to Amy when he learns of her condition is understandable in view of her own attitude towards motherhood; but he is too indifferent to her pleadings for some show of love. Frances accuses Trebell for not having loved Amy, and believes that, had he shown affection to Amy in her piteous state, she might have found courage to confront the ordeal. She says: "If you'd loved her...only a little...she might have found courage to face it."[29]

Nowhere in Barker's drama contempt for human frailty is more ruthlessly revealed than in the severe judgments which other characters pronounce upon her. O'Connell calls her a "worthless woman",[30] Trebell describes her as the "little trull";[31] and Horsham says "I always found her a detestable little woman...a harlot at heart!"[32] Barker appears to be severe upon her, and arouses little

28. Aspects of Modern Drama, pp.311-132.
29. Waste, p. 101.
30. Ibid., p. 76.
31. Ibid., p. 101.
32. Ibid., p. 82.

sympathy for her. He is indignant at her for her squeamishness and condemns her for want of courage to flout public opinion.

Frances Trebell, sister of the hero, is presented as a specimen of ideal womanhood. She has a marked resemblance to Eleanor Strowde, sister of the hero in The Secret Life. Both are dedicated, loving and self-sacrificing sisters who spare no pains to make the life of their brothers happy. Frances gives up teaching to turn a housekeeper, and her life ebbs away in brotherly service and love. Frances says to Trebell: "I love you...you're all I've ever loved."[33] No calamity could be more stunning to her than her brother's tragic fall. At the end of the play when Trebell is done for, it is moving to find her clutching her brother's arm in an attempt to thaw his frozen despair, and wrest a promise from him that he will "do nothing foolish".

Frances performs an important dramatic function. By her sanity and humanity, she throws into sharp focus Trebells detachment, egotism and lack of human touch. Also her attitude towards Amy is dramatically significant. Apart from Farrant, every character in the play dislikes Amy; but Frances is most sympathetically disposed to her, and excites our pity for this "waif-like creature." When Lady Julia, Lady Mortimer and Lucy Davenport remark that they don't like Amy, Frances says: "I like all sorts of people".[34] She takes strong exception to her brother calling Amy "The little trull".[35]

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33. Ibid., p. 109.
34. Ibid., p. 15.
35. Ibid., p. 101.

Unlike Trebell in whom the opposing qualities (e.g. idealism and cynicism) are not harmonized, the contradictions in Cyril Horsham, are reconciled. The Prime Minister has a reputation as a cynic. He makes cynical comments on Brampton, one of the prospective Ministers of the shadow Cabinet:

> ...He's the greatest gossip in London. The one pleasure life has left him...apart from bullying her ladyship... being his scabrous little chats with the dozen or so young women whom he honours with his senile attentions.[36]

"A little snappishness is a safety-valve" is a suggestive stage-direction. Horsham's comments, though caustic, provide his mind a release from the great strain of diplomacy. But in Horsham cynicism is combined with humanity. He shows genuine sympathy and considerateness to Saumarez, his secretary: "And go home now, Saumarez, you've had a long day...and two hours of it with your dentist."[37] Beneath an apparent nonchalance, Horsham is mentally agile and imperturbable. Confronted with a challenging situation, tense with conflicts and intrigue, he handles it tactfully and cool-headedly. To the astute and sophisticated statesman with his "emotions faded" all experience has become primarily intellectual. Thus he dismisses from his mind the fate of Amy, the fate of Trebell, and the failure of his political ambition with no regrets:

> ...at sixty-five I am tempted to try this rather imaginative stroke...and I fail. I'm not surprised.

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36. Ibid., p. 65.
37. Ibid., p. 69.

> But the calculation was such a nice one...such a combining of imcompatibles! what a triumph...and how amusing![38]

Horsham does not regard any value as absolute. His actions are governed by expediency. When Trebell's fate is sealed, and he sees the powerful combination of Trebell, Brampton and Cantilupe disintegrating, Horsham accepts the harsh realities of the situation, and decides not to include Trebell in the Cabinet.

The portrait of Horsham is partly satirical. In Act III Wedgecroft hits out at the Prime Minister for conferring the title of knighthood on a quack doctor suggesting that, on his retirement, if Horsham were the Prime Minister, he would write an open letter to him entitled: "How not to organize the Medical Profession."[39]

Lord Charles Cantilupe's is a brilliant piece of characterization. As in <u>The Voysey Inheritance</u> it is evident that Barker has carefully studied legal matters, so in <u>Waste</u>, it is equally obvious that he has closely examined that religious thought that Cantilupe represents so brilliantly. As a representative of the High Church, Cantilupe is steeped in conventional creeds and sacraments, and is sustained by a living faith in God, religion and morality. Like O'Connell, he dissociates himself from his age:

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38. Ibid., p. 91.
39. Ibid., p. 67.

... I find myself inevitably at war with the master-fallacy of a godless age...the belief that the things we do can be better...or other...than the thing we are.[40]

As in Ann Leete and The Voysey Inheritance, there is a contrast between conventional morals and rational ethics in Waste. Trebell stands for rational ethics, while Cantilupe figures as the exponent of "rigid religion and scrupulous morality". Trebell struggles against a ruthless social order which clings blindly to its conventions. Lord Charles regards Trebell's moral lapse as a deadly sin, and threatens not to join the Cabinet, should the "adulterer" be taken.

In George Farrant the hero finds a sincere friend who, though he does not excuse his sexual indulgence, puts up a spirited defence for him at the conclave to save the statesman for the government and the country. He persuades O'Connell to keep mum at the inquest, and fervently appeals to Trebell's political antagonists to stand solidly behind him in order to pull him through the crisis. And when the Prime Minister decides to drop Trebell from the Cabinet, he strongly protests against his decision:

I don't care so much about the Bill...but I do bar Trebell's being dished...just when we'd got him clear from the real mess too. What fools it leaves us looking![41]

40. Ibid., p. 50.
41. Ibid., p. 41.

Farrant is unimaginative and devoid of finer perception. The Prime Minister perceives before his colleagues do that his plan to include Trebell in the Cabinet in order to pilot the Bill will not operate. But Farrant takes a "romantic view" of the Prime Minister's office, and his appeal to him to exercise his authority in order not to dish Trebell shows his lack of imagination. He is, however, well-meaning, and good-natured. He is sick of politics - a profession in which one has to manipulate and manoeuvre. His ideal is: "a safe seat and devotion to my country".[42]

In Blackborough, Barker draws the figure of a modern politician, self-seeking, ambitious, pragmatic, foxy, and unscrupulous. Notwithstanding his ability and masterful personality, he inspires contempt in his colleagues and others by virtue of his egoistic opportunism. Lady Julia calls him "a hog of a man"[43]; and Trebell "a getter...not a giver."[44] The conclave in Act III throws into sharp focuss Blackborough's ruthlessness and unscrupulousness; and as a result his character assumes sinister dimensions. He is presented as a thruster, a dark force bent upon sabotaging Trebell's chances of entering the Cabinet, and a Machiavellian statesman who seizes the opportunity of sinking an antagonist.

Dr. Gilbert Wedgecroft, like Farrant, is a pillar of strength to Trebell. "I have backed you from the start", he says to Trebell, "No, not for a place...you could have had that any time, I knew...but to win."[45] Both Farrant and he persuade O'Connell

42. Ibid., p. 11.
43. Ibid., p. 9.
44. Ibid., p. 34.
45. Ibid., p. 39.

to hold his tongue at the inquest. He is deeply concerned when Trebell tells him that he (Trebell) is likely to be dropped by Horsham; and breaks out: "If they throw you over now...the next one that calls me in...I'll poison him."[46] Dr. Wedgecroft being a doctor, a professional, is an ally to 'life'-the 'life force'. When Wedgecroft met Amy at Trebell's, Amy asked him to help her out in her trouble (pregnancy), but he refused to do so. He combines in him the matter-of-factness of a scientist and the kind feelings of a humanist.

III

It is illuminating to contrast Barker's Waste and Elsie T. Schauffler's play Parnell which was performed in 1936 at the New Theatre in London. While Trebell is thrown out by the Conservative Party because of the scandal, Parnell refuses to abandon the woman he loves and, repudiated by his party, dies in her arms. In Waste, the hero's rejection by Horsham has grave consequences, and Amy is condemned for her lack of courage; in Parnell, sympathy is concentrated on the lovers, and the consequences of the scandal are shown as secondary. Though the theme of these two plays is identical: the ruin of a prominent politician by scandal arising out of a love-affair, the handling of the theme is different. While in Parnell the love between Parnell

46. Ibid., p. 95.

and his beloved is presented in the conventional ,romantic fashion; in Waste the love between Trebell and Amy is presented in an unsentimental manner.

It is interesting to note that Galsworthy's The Mob (1914) is identical to Waste in the conception of the waste of an eminent man of parts, though the circumstances and factors conditioning the waste are widely different. Like The Mob, Waste is a modern tragedy, more intellectual than emotional, in which social environment plays a significant role in bringing about the tragic end of the hero. In Galsworthy's play, Stephen More, the idealistic hero, becomes a victim of mob frenzy; in Barker's play social convention largely contributes to the hero's fall. There is evidence in Waste to show that Barker blames social and religious conventions which are responsible for many evils and wrongs. He seems to suggest that Trebell's subordination of moral and social law to the instinct of nature could have been overlooked in the light of his great worth to the state. It would appear that the playwright shares the hero's impeachment of social convention:

> The one natural action, which the slight shifting of a social law could have made as negligible as eating a meal, can make me incapable...takes the linch-pin out of one's brain, doesn't it?[47]

The same attitude is reflected in Barker's condemnation

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47. Three Plays: Ann Leete, Voysey Inheritance, Waste,1909,p.295

of Amy for not daring to defy social convention, and bearing the child without shame and fear. This comes out most effectively at the end of the play, in the short epilogic scene, in Walter Kent's indictment of society:

> ...I'd like to go through the strees and shout that he's dead...that they've lost him and wasted him, dammn them! with all his work undone! who's to do it?...oh, the waste of him...oh, the waste...the waste![48]

Barker holds the social order responsible for the waste of "invaluable public material as well as private opportunity". Trebell's fall is, however, due also to his own flaw of character. He betrays weakness by succumbing to his impulse to satisfy his sexual appetite; commits adultery which is a culpable offence in the eyes of law.

Waste is a powerful and grim tragedy. Trebell is presented as a man suffering terribly from the frustration of his aspirations. The dramatic power, with which Barker portrays the mental anguish and disappointment of the hero fighting desperately for life; embracing a kind of "God to whose creating we travail",[49] but not the Divine Being who would guide his destiny, is most striking. "The tragedy as a whole", says Allardyce Nicoll "is full of the most impenetrable gloom; hardly a ray of hope serves to irradiate the darkness of the life depicted."[50]

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48. Waste, p.115.
49. Ibid., p.109.
50. British Drama, 1947, p.375.

The theme of Waste runs like a motif throughout the play. The entire matrix of human life is submitted to a scrutiny which expresses inherent drawbacks and pitfalls in the human situation. In the opening scene of the play we meet a highly sophisticated society: the ladies at Shapters in the drawing-room of Lady Julia who discuss politics, and look ahead to the intricate moves of the game of chess, we call politics. This world is a world of power: subtle, calculating and ruthless. The complications are introduced by the composite nature of the party system, and a convention-ridden society. Blackborough represents the new power that emerges with industrialization, and which has the peculiar sternness coupled with foxiness to push the issues to a crisis and expose the party to a strain. The things appear to be promising, though dangers lie lurking beneath the surface. We find that Trebell is sought after by the Conservative Party for pushing through the Bill of Disestablishment, which, if successful, would greatly add to its power and prestige. At this critical moment the destructive force in the form of pretty Amy, who had been estranged from her husband, O'Connell, raises its head. Trebell and Amy enjoy their dalliance unaware of the consequences that would follow from it. She conceives and is panicky. Unfortunately for Trebell, Amy has a mortal horror of bearing children. She would go to any length to avoid the agony of motherhood. This, in fact, is responsible for her estrangement from O'Connell, her husband, and the waste of the lives of this couple. Amy tells Trebell why she left O'Connell:

> One has to marry. I was a fool to marry Justin. He found out...after a bit. He thinks it a sin. I said I'd a right to choose. What do women's rights come to if that's not their right? So I left him.[51]

Through her rash and cowardly suicide, she becomes responsible for the waste of the unborn child, and that of Trebell who was at the height of his popularity, and would have risen to the acme of power, had she not crossed his way at that particular moment.

Similarly, there is an evidence of waste in the political sphere through contradictions between intention and action, and conflict between innovation and convention. The Conservative Party is on the verge of achieving something which will not only ensure its stability and continuance in power, but would also give the country funds and resources for a more purposeful education. But at the conclave at Horsham's it becomes evident that personal rather than public considerations are likely to dominate in their approach to human affairs. A Party, which is prepared to take a bold and somewhat unpopular measure ("Two governments have shirked the thing...though it has been plain these ten years that something drastic must be done,"[52] scuttles by the fear of a scandal, and refuses Trebell the chance, which he wishes to take of owning all on the floor of the House of

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51. Waste , p.45.
52. Ibid., p.35.

Commons, of repenting for his moral lapse in the only way possible. Trebell declares at the conclave:

> ...Irishman is right. There'll be poisonous gossip. Well...I'll tell the truth. I'll stand up in my place in the House and say: This I've done...this I am... this and no more I repent.[53]

The Party fails to take this manly offer of Trebell and there is a terrible waste of political possibilities and of expectations.

We have here a modern tragedy of its type where the tragic waste flows far beyond an individual to the whole social order whose complexity turns out to be self-defeating, destructive and wasteful. In the face of this, Walter Kent's lament about the waste of an individual sounds pitiably inadequate.

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53. Ibid., p.81.

CHAPTER V

THE MADRAS HOUSE

The Madras House, written in 1909, was first produced by Frohman at the Duke of York's Theatre on March 9, 1910. It was not a popular success and only ten performances were given. In 1925 the play was revised and was presented at the Ambassadors' on November 30 of that year. Barker gave a brilliant production, and it continued for 103 performances, a record for any Barker play in England.

The Madras House is a bold experiment in dramatic technique having no plot structure in the conventional sense of the word. There is no logical sequence of relationship between characters , events and incidents; only a casual link is provided between them. For example, when the curtain rises on the business offices of Roberts and Huxtable drapery establishment in Act II, the six Huxtable daughters are seen no more (although they haunt our minds), but are casually mentioned in Act III by Constantine ("Even if you have liked bringing up six daughters and not getting them married...")[1] and in Act IV by Philip ("I rather want to know just what the world gets by it. Those six thin girls at my uncle's...)[2] Similarly, after Act II Yates drops out of the dramatic action, though we hear of her again in the conversation between Constantine and Philip, revealing that her seducer

1. Granville-Barker, *The Madras House*, 1911, p. 104.
2. Ibid., p.136.

is no other than Philip's father.

The play is, however, a conversation piece, and there is a unity of theme rather than that of action. The various scenes concern themselves with the central theme, namely, woman's position in modern society and the relationship between the sexes. Barker studiously sticks to his theme, and succeeds in forging the ramifications of his thought without the aid of plot architecture. The thematic unity is solely based on the relation of each episode to the pivotal theme.

Even the mannequins parade, which has no direct connection with the plot, serves as a peg for a discussion on the theme. One would notice the Shavian influence on Barker in adopting the discussion technique, but there is one striking difference between the two playwrights. Shaw often lets the discussion element get out of hand by making his characters talk about things not strictly germane to the theme; while Barker's characters talk pertinently on the theme, and even when they touch upon other topics they "ramble concentrically", as George Meredith would say. Max Beerbohm observes:

> Mr.Granville-Barker sticks to his theme. We know where we are. A steady flame burns for us, in place of mere showers of disappearing sparks.[3]

As usual, Barker gives an elaborate description of the setting and characters, interwoven with critical comments.

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3. Max Beerbohm, Around Theaters, 1953, p. 568.

Critics like Archer regard Barker's comments embodied in the stage directions as intrusions of the author's personality, and suggest that these 'non-dramatic' elements should be as "impersonal and colourless"[4] as possible. True, Barker's comments are not "impersonal", but they are undoubtedly helpful and illuminating to producers, actors and readers.

Act I shows Philip Madras accompanied by Thomas, calling on Huxtable, his uncle, and partner in the Peckham drapery establishment of Roberts and Huxtable, London. As in The Voysey Inheritance, Barker loses no time in plunging into the central theme of the play. They are shown into the Huxtable drawing-room to wait for the family. Philip's conversation with Thomas highlights the main theme:

> Well, my dear Tommy, what are the two most important things in a man's character? His attitude towards money and his attitude towards women.[5]

Disinclined to accept State's offer of directorship with a salary of £ 700 a year after the sale of the Madras House, Philip announces his intention of retiring from business and joining the London County Council.

The members of the Huxtable family return from the church and find the visitors waiting. Polite introductions follow:

Julia. Oh, What a surprise!

Philip. Yes, we walked down. Ah, you don't know...let me introduce Major Hippisly Thomas...my cousin, Miss Julia

4. The Old Drama and the New, 1926, p.364.
5. Ibid., p.6.

Huxtable ... and Miss Huxtable.

Julia. How do you do?

Thomas. How do you do?

Laura. How do you do?

Julia. Have you come to see Aunt Amy?

Philip. No, your father.

Julia. He's walking back with her.They'll be last, I'm afraid.

Laura. Will you stay to dinner?

Philip. No, I think not.

Laura. I'd better tell them you won't. Perhaps they'll laying for you.

Laura goes out, decorously avoiding a collision with Emma, who, panoplied as the others, comes in at the same moment.

In a moment Emma arrives, and the introduction has to be gone through again:

Philip. Hullo,Emma!

Emma. Well, What a surprise!

Philip. You don't know...Major Hippisly Thomas ... Miss Emma Huxtable.

Thomas. How do you do?

Emma. How do you do? Will you stay to dinner?

Philip. No, we can't ...[6]

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6. Ibid., p. 8.

This section comprises elements heard just now, and Philip's explanation repeats the words 'father' and 'walk' from the preceding passage.

In another moment comes Mrs. Huxtable whose entrance is heralded by Jane:

Jane. You? Mother!

She has turned to the hall, and from the hall comes Mrs. Huxtable's rotund voice, "yes, Jane!"

Jane. Cousin Philip!

Mrs. Huxtable sails in and superbly compresses every family greeting into one.

Mrs. Huxtable. What a surprise! Will you stay to dinner?

Emma. (Alive to a certain redundancy). No, Mother. they can't.

Philip. May I introduce my friend ... Major Hippisly Thomas ... my aunt, Mrs. Huxtable.

Mrs.Huxtable. (Stately and gracious). How do you do, Major Thomas?

Philip. Thomas is Mr.Eustace State's London manager.

Thomas. How do you do? [7]

There are nine sets of introductions in the earlier part of this Act, and they reach the climax, the pattern being reduced to the barest minimum:

Minnie. How d' you do?

Thomas. How d' you do?

7. Ibid., p. 9.

Clara. How d' you do?

Minnie. How d' you do, Philip?

Philip. How d' you do?

Clara. How d' you do?

Philip. How d' you do? [8]

These perpetual polite introductions of the daughters of Huxtable to Major Thomas reflect the sophisticated middle-class culture of the early years of the twentieth century, and suggest the extent to which human relationships in the Huxtable household have been fossilized into prim formalities. There are touches of humour and irony in the greetings and good-byes, the bowings and hand-shakings of characters so subdued to the mechanism of politeness.

In the earlier section of Act I some significant facts come up in the conversation; Philip's father, Constantine Madras, after a long separation from his wife, is coming to England to negotiate the sale of the two firms with State, an American financier. In the latter part there is a mention of the living-in system, and the Yates scandal which Philip is to investigate. The playwright adroitly provides the background information necessary for the spectator or the reader to understand the action as it develops.

But what dominates Act I is the Huxtable family at Denmark Hill, a London suburb. It is a realistic picture of the flatness,

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8. Ibid., p.15.

and mental vacuity of a middle-class family of the Edwardian times. The dramatist creates an appropriate atmosphere by local colour and other details.

The 'Happy' home of the Huxtables is,indeed, a prison, which is worse than Wormwood Scrubs. Convention-ridden as the family is, it is not the tie of affection,but the chain of duty to submit to parental authority and respectability which binds the inmates. Mrs. Huxtable considers it her daughters' duty to love her. All the daughters are used to their chains. Emma wonders: "...if one stopped doing one's duty how upside down the world would be![9] Convention denies them self-expression. Though emotionally starved and frustrated, they submit to the shackles, and pretend to be happy in their prison home. "It would be so ungrateful not to be!"[10] When their father has provided a comfortable house commanding an excellent view of the Crystal Palace, unhappiness would indeed suggest ingratitude. The Misses Huxtable , half-comic, half-pathetic, have imbibed the lessons of parental authority and respectability. Emma tells Philip:

> ... father seems afraid of spending money, though he must have got lots. He says if he gave us any more we shouldn't know what to do with it...and of course that's true.[11]

Julia, who is thirty-four, had talent for water-colour drawing, but this was regarded as a dangerous proclivity by her

9. Ibid., p. 25.
10. Ibid., p. 26.
11. Ibid., p. 26.

parents and hence she was sent to an art school. After two years at the art school she learnt enough about art not ever to want to do her favourite water-colouring again. Emma confides to Philip the story of how her sister, Julia, retained in her possession a collar marked 'Lewis Waller' which had come into her hands through the remisness of a laundry: "And when mother found out she cried for a whole day. She said it showed a wanton mind."[12] Her romantic attachment to the collar was considered more dangerous by her mother than her talent for water-colour sketching. Philip's grave reception of the story throws into relief the subjugation of Mrs.Huxtable's mind to conventional morality. It also explains Julia's hysteria caused by sex frustration. The collar thus symbolizes humiliating and unnatural slavery to respectability.

The parental authority and also been threatened by Jane, the youngest daughter. When a gentleman proposed to her:

> ...mother said: it would have been more honourable if he had spoken to father first, and that Jane was the youngest and too young to know her own mind.[13]

Jane was at first rebellious against her mother but she successfully quelled her daughter's "bolshevism" and she knuckled under.

The depiction of the depressing spectacle of the "happy English home" of the Huxtables is one of the most ironically

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12. Ibid., p. 25.
13. Ibid., p. 25.

ruthless reflections on the foolish exercise of parental authority, and the imposition of a wooden and squeamish conventional propriety that can be found in the English drama.

The economic factors determining the fate of women, and the relations between the sexes are highlighted in Act I. The Huxtable daughters and Mrs.Huxtable depend for their allowances on Huxtable. For presenting their mother with a cosy corner, the girls have to 'beggar' themeselves, since their dress allowances are meagre. Any eligible gentleman who visits the house is given to understand that nothing need be expected from Huxtable beyond his approval. The economic factor governing the fate of women,and the relations between the sexes are also the highlights of Act II. In the Huxtable 'Happy'home the girls are cabined, confined and condemned to soulless drudgery; at the drapery establishment too the shop assistants lead a life of unrelieved depression and frustration. The inmates of both the prison houses are shackled and subjected to repression. In Act II many drawbacks of the living-in system are examined. Barker attacks this system (a social evil of the day) which forces the employees to marry respectably, and not to contract a secret marriage.

Act I glances at a scandal at the Peckham shop concerning Yates. Having failed to handle the case to his own satisfaction, Huxtable deputed Philip to hold an inquiry into the matter. Philip conducts the private inquisition. Miss Chancellor, the

house-keeper of the firm, confirms her accusation of having seen Brigstock kissing Yates. And on the basis of a single kiss of friendship,her experience, as an observer, has led her to imagine that Brigstock is the father of the child Yates is carrying. The artificiality of the situation in which the employees of the firm find themselves is so great that Miss Chancellor's experience, as a house-keeper, has let her build imaginary events just on the basis of a friendly kiss. Mrs. Brigstock, who married four years ago, is sick of the wretched life her husband is leading, and the slander providing the last straw, makes her a jealous hysteric:

> I lie awake at night away from him till I could scream with thinking about it. And I do scream as loud I dare ...not to wake the house. And if somebody don't open that windo, I shall go off,[14]

she warns Philip.

At the statement of Yates that she could have married Brigstock, if she wanted to, Philip clears Brigstock by retracting the accusation against him.

The virginity of the Misses Huxtable and the provident barrenness of Mrs.Brigstock are challenged by Yates. She chose to have an affair, is expecting a child, and declines to have a husband. This is just the opposite of the pole of domesticity, a contrast between Act I and Act II - "between Huxtable who is

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14. Ibid., p.47.

married too much, and his employees who are married too little."[15]

Though Miss Chancellor naturally takes a serious view of Yates' transgression and suggests her and Brigstock's dismissal, Philip takes a sympathetic view of the matter and would like the living-in-system to be "a utopia of Platonic friendships"[16] wherein kissing and innocent flirtation should be permissible. "The device of the living-in-system might have dated this Act completely", says Gerald Weals, "if Barker had not taken the trouble to use it metaphorically as well as realistically."[17]

The second half of Act II is dominated by Jessica, Philip's wife. A short conversation between husband and wife shows that their wedded life is not happy. It is Jessica's misfortune to have married a man who shows coldness to her; when weary of her artistic pursuits, she would like to amuse herself by having lunch out with her friends, or wish him to attend a symphony concert with her.

This is followed by an amusing conversation between Philip and Thomas. Thomas announces that Jessica, who has been flirting with him, wants to be made love to. He wishes she were not so attentive to him.

Philip smiles at him and asks him that, instead of warning him, he should warn Jessica and tell her that he (Thomas) is afraid of making a fool of himself with her. Philip's sense of humour and his sense of decency towards women won't permit

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15. Graham Sutton, Some Contemporary Dramatists, 1924, p.15.
16. Ibid., p.16.
17. "The Edwardian Theatre and the Shadow of Shaw", Edwardians and Late Victorians, 1959,p.181.

him to ask his wife to stop flirting with his friend. This episode is dramatically significant showing as it does that Philip lives up to his professions of Platonic friendship. Thomas has his permission to kiss Jessica if she wants him to.

Act III transports us from Roberts and Huxtable drapery store to the fashionable dressmaking establishment i.e. the Madras House in Bond Street. Huxtable, Philip, Thomas, and State are sitting in the historic rotunda to negotiate the sale of the Madras House. Prior to the serious business of the conference, the parties to the deal are diverted by a mannequin show. The fashion parade would seem to be based on something Barker had actually witnessed several times. First, Windlesham, the manager of the Madras House, ushers in a costume from Paris, the very last word in expensive finery. The young French girl wearing the costume circles the room. Another costume worn by a French lady is exhibited, and then a third one with a surmounting hat of straw. These costumes are the latest importations from France. The hat, imitated from la belle Helene's improvisation, becomes the centre-piece. This riot of visual display - the mannequins parading the latest French fashions in dress, and Windlesham talking Cockney French and adjusting the models' costumes with pins - is highly amusing.

The mannequin display serves an important dramatic purpose. It mocks at the slavish imitation of the French fashions by the English, and shows how great a part sex plays in their lives.

Philip remarks:

> La belle Helene, Mr.State, is a well-known Parisian cocotte...who sets many of the fashions which our wives and daughters afterwards assume.[18]

And Constantine designates the cap as 'a cap of slavery'. It presents a strange sex-relationship between the charming French girls and the sexless man-milliner in charge of them. It serves as a peg for the discussion of the play's central them: woman and her position in modern society.

Immediately after the mannequin parade, Constantine Madras joins the participants of the conference. One may observe that the transaction of the sale of the two firms is put through in a couple of minutes. Practically, the discussion on the position of woman in modern society, and the relationship between the sexes fills out the whole Act. It is really a splendid display of a wide range of the male attitudes to this vital problem. First of all, State expresses his sentiments on the romance of business, and then his philosophy of the fair sex. He relates how he sought the poetry of the Woman Spirit in 'the virgin forest';[19] but his money-maker's touch reduced it to mere lumber. The 'canned peach' and 'the ready-made skirt' business also served their turn in enriching him. With elation and pride, he describes an experiment of the Burrows establishment in Nottingham store in which the ladies' wear department is served by sturdy

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18. Granville-Barker, The Madras House, 1911, p.79.
19. Ibid., p.85.

handsome gentlemen, and the mens' wear by attractive women - "Always of course within the bounds of delicacy"[20]- and in which business has considerably improved. It is the"Mean Sensual Man" that he appeals to. Since clothes are a woman's chief means of expression, and as the middle-class women of England "form one of the greatest Money Spending Machines the world has ever seen"[21], State thinks that the social and political emancipation of middle-class women will give an incentive to the drapery trade. He is interested in the "Women's Movement", which is woman expressing herself. He maintains that woman expresses herself primarily through clothes. He wants every woman to be prettily dressed, and regards it her birthright 'to dazzle and conquer'. He wishes to see the poor, ugly provincial woman "burst through the laural bushes and dash down the road...clad in Colours of the Rainbow".[22] The American capitalist considers the problem from the economic point of view; and it may be observed that even today his attitude is valid in that in advanced countries all over the world sex attraction is exploited for pushing up the sales of goods in department stores.

Constantine who has been carefully listening to the argument of State explodes: "You see...I am a Mohammedan...and this attitude towards the other sex has become loathsome to me".[23]

20. Ibid., p. 87.
21. Ibid., p. 91.
22. Ibid., p. 92.
23. Ibid., p. 94.

Like the other members of the group, barring Philip, Constantine is susceptible to feminine beauty, but is most emphatic in his detestation of the western attitude to the fair sex: "Europe in its attitude towards women is mad."[24] He is shocked at the sex-obsession of the English. It is a terrible thing to be constantly conscious of the fair sex. Women flaunt their charms publicly and indulge in shameless provocation. Their fascinating dresses and their behaviour are a sauce to sensual appetite. Men are constantly "distracted, provoked, tantalised by the barefaced presence of women"[25], and cannot keep a clear brain for the vital issues of life. The result is that :

> all politics, all religion, all economy is being brought down to the level of women's emotion,[26]

and men fail to realize how badly they are affected by the process. The polygamist warns Europe that it is going to the devil because of the exaggerated importance it attaches to women. "The whole of our upper class life", says Constantine, "which every one with a say in the government of the country tries to lead...is now run as a ball room is run. Men swaggering before women...the women ogling the men".[27] Instead of keeping them in their place, and to their one proper function of perpetuating the race (the Mohammedan view of women), it treats the ornamental sort as idols and the rest like slaves. The idols won't, and the

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24. Ibid., p. 96.
25. Ibid., p.102.
26. Ibid., p.102.
27. Ibid., p.101.

overtaxed slaves cann't fulfil their natural function of motherhood. He irreverently describes Roberts and Huxtable as 'an industrial seraglio'[28] where women are kept under rigid control, and earn their living by ruining their health and stifling their instincts. He recognizes that women have some good qualities and their uses to the world, but "the world's interest is best served" by making them keep to the function of perpetuating the race, and by shutting them away from public life and public exhibition. "Where are your future generations coming from? demands Constantine. "What with the well-kept women you flatter and aestheticise till they won't give you children..."[29] To climax his speech, Constantine raises up a woman's hat and exclaims: "A cap of slavery! you are all idolaters of women...and they are the slaves of your idolatory."[30]

In Constantine, Barker presents the more fundamental point of view. He provides another necessary corrective which will give women better satisfaction than her role as a mere doll or a slave. His logical and lucid reasoning contradicts State's sentimental and chivalrous approach. He points out that Europe wastes too much time on the gratification of sex; and suggests that the segregation of women from public life would eliminate many allurements and corruptions, and promote rational life. In his view man is intellectually superior to woman. ("It's degrading

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28. Ibid., p.105.
29. Ibid., p.106.
30. Ibid., p.109.

to compete with them").[31] Constantine believes in the intellectual superiority of the male sex, which held the ground in England till women had the right of vote. This belief has died down in the West since then.

Huxtable is conventional in his attitude towards the sex, and is disturbed by the advanced notions about the political, social and economic status of women:

> And I won't be upset like this, I want to take things as I find em...thatis as I used to find em...before there was any of these ideas going around...and I'm sure we were happier without em.[32]

He is content with "old-fashioned domesticity",[33] and does not approve of women's participation in public life.

Philip seems to be disgusted with the prevalent notions of sex, and the great part sex plays in Wester civilization. Neither does he subscribe to the sentimental and commercial stance of State, nor to the oriental attitude of his father. He is all for Platonic love and friendship with the fair sex. Pretty women gaudily dressed do not attract Philip. The physical beauty of women has little fascination for him .

Prettily dressed women have a charm for Major Thomas, 'the MeanSensual Man' of State's description, and he wants them to be seductive. "I think a crowd of well-dressed women

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31. Ibid., 103.
32. Ibid., 106.
33. Ibid., 107.

is one of the most beautiful things in the world".[34] He is lost in admiration at the fashion parade: the new costumes exhibited by the French girls enchant him. His view, that, if a woman always keeps herself attractive at home, a man would not gad about after other women, appears to be sound.

The discussion is both amusing and illuminating, and is enlivened by touches of satiric humour and gentle irony. Delightful and witty contests between Constantine and State ("I can't bear this, Sir...I can't bear to take such a view of life...no man of feeling could")[35]; between Constantine and Huxtable, and repartees between Philip and Thomas ("Oh, Tommy, Tommy...can you say the same!")[36] add much to the flavour of the ingeniously contrived debate. The playwright does not pretend to be able to solve the complex problem; but presents its various facets: State presents the sentimental point of view, Constantine the oriental, Huxtable the conventional, and Philip the Platonic. Many plays have been written on the relations of the sexes. But "none except The Madras House has called attention to the pervasive and voluntary sexuality of the whole of Western Civilization"[37] Barker embodies the most splendid part of his argument in the character of Constantine who complains that England suffers by the parading of charms by women. "Every public question ... all politics, all religion, all economy is being brought down to

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34. Ibid., 93.
35. Ibid.,101.
36. Ibid., 98.
37. Ludwig Lewisohn, "Concerning Granville-Barker",The Nation,Vol.113, Nov.16, 1921.

the level of women's emotion." This emotion is pleasant in its place. "But softening, sentimentalising, enervating...lapping the world, if you let it in the nursery cotton wool of prettiness."[38] With sincerity Barker lays here the truth that in the West men carry on all the affairs of life - politics, religion, the arts and the economic order - "in a vapour-bath of sexual stimulation."[39]

By the juxtaposition of the views expressed by characters on the position of women and the relationship between the sexes, Barker exposes the limitations of each. Neither State's nor Constantine's view is entirely satisfactory, as none of them treats women as individuals with their own urges and aspirations. Each of those views thinks of them as mere instruments to serve some ulterior ends - sex, trade or race.

Philip's attitude to the man-woman question is far superior to that of State or Constantine. He is disgusted with the sex-obssession of the West, and the subjection of women. He detests State's view of trafficking in feminine fascination, and Constantine's view of shutting women away from public life. Nor does he subscribe to his friend Thomas' view that women should be seductive. He hates "the farm-yard world of sex...men and women always treating each other in this unfriendly way",[40] and finery that is a sauce to sensuality. He believes that it is not merely dressing

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38. Granville-Barker, The Madras House, pp.102-103.
39. "Concerning Granville-Barker", The Nation
40. The Madras House, p.142.

woman as dolls, or treating them as juicy morsels, or adoring them as idols, but treating them as human beings with impulses and aspirations, and a role to play in society, that will bring happiness and social health and well-being. He wants intellectual companionship with women: Platonic love and friendship. He countenances feminine freedom in every sphere of life-politics, economic order and sex. That is Barker's answer to the Man-Woman question.

About this brilliant discussion scene in Act III a modern critic observes:

> It is impossible to give any idea of the breadth and brilliancy of this scene. There is deeper and nimbler thought in it, and richer humour, than in any scene known to me in modern drama.[41]

In Act IV Constantine is seen briefly with his wife. A very unpleasant scene it is. It depicts brutality on the part of the man, and shrewishness on the part of the woman. Barker contrives to capture the striking features of the wedded life the two had spent long ago: the disputes, scoldings, affronts, tyranny, lack of mutual respect and absence of love. The memories that haunt the libertine are bitter ones; behind the facade of Mohammedan righteousness appears an 'unworthy Baptist', going through his "little hells of temptation, shame and remorse.[42]

The conversation between Philip and Constantine reveals

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41. Max Beerbohm, Around Theatres, 1953, p. 572.
42. The Madras House, p. 142.

that Constantine is the seducer of Miss Yates. This disclosure is a subtle dramatic touch, and so, too, is Philip's comment: "Well...I might have guessed. Oh...you incorrigible man!"[43] The revelation provides an ironically fitting reversal of the conventional situation. Generally, the seducer denies or rejects the seduced woman. Constantine tells Philip that Miss Yates denied him the right over his own child, and refused to demand any financial assistance from him. He thus feels insulted, degraded and discomfited. This theme of women who refuse to marry the father of their child was popular with Barker's contemporaries. Hankin, for example, in the <u>The Last of the DeMullins</u> (1908), and Houghton in <u>Hindle Wakes</u> (1912) use this theme. And in Galsworthy's <u>The Eldest Son</u> (1912) Freda refuses to marry her employer's son, though he is the father of her unborn child.

The final scene, a protracted conversation between Philip and Jessica, examines the vital issue of the relationship of man and woman and her position in society. Philip is deeply concerned about the outworn bourgeois culture of the Edwardian times. In the Huxtable home it flourishes true to type unpleasing but hardy. The protagonist sympathizes with his cousins, the victims of decorum ("Those six girls at my uncle's...What do we get from them or they from the world");[44] but perceives that the refinement and aestheticism of the bourgeois leisure-class culture,

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43. <u>The Madras House</u>, p. 123.
44. Ibid., p.136.

as represented by his own wife, are rooted in a dunghill. In Widower's Houses, Shaw also shows how the culture of Sartorius, the proprietor of town tenements, draws its nourishment from human misery and squalor. It is from the high rents of his slum property that Sartorius educates his daughter Blanche in accordance with the rules of the Victorian middle-class culture. Jessica is healthy, virtuous and refined at the expense of the misery and hardship of the work-people of Roberts and Huxtable drapery store. She may enjoy free womanhood, but perhaps she does not realize at what cost that freedom is bought. Philip presents the case to his wife, and insists that they should consider whether "we good and clever people are costing the world too much."[45] His view is that society pays a high price for the intellectually gifted and virtuous people who do not share their mental gifts and virtues with those who lack these qualities. It is only by sharing with the unfortunates that the Kingdom of Heaven can be brought on earth.

Philip points out that most men's polite manners towards beautiful women are anything but good manners, suggesting that even in Jessica's refined world man has scarcely advanced beyond the savage state of sex warfare, and that the mean sensual man - the ordinary man of her world -

> ... looks on you (women) as choice morsels...with your prettiness, your dressings up, your music and art as so

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45. Ibid., p.137.

> much sauce to his appetite. Which only a mysterious thing called virtue prevents him from indulging...almost by force, if it weren't for the police.[46]

Being disgusted with the bourgeois culture of the Huxtables as also with his own culture with its refinement and aesthetic ideals, Philip thinks of doing what he can to till the soil so that a healthier culture may flourish. He must render some service to the people, even if it were only by doing "dull, hard work over drains and disinfectants."[47] He appeals to Jessica to co-operate with him in the ushering in of a true culture which should spring from the happiness of the people. He declares:

> I want an art and a culture that shan't be just a veneer on savagery...but it must spring from the happiness of a whole people.[48]

Adverse criticism has been levelled against Act IV. Archer's verdict is that it is a 'melancholy failure'. Desmond MacCarthy states that the impression it leaves behind is too indistinct. The Times Review's dramatic critic affirms that the play comes to no conclusion but simply "peters out". At the first production of the play, the audience, delighted by Act III, found the last Act disappointing; the longer it went on the cooler grew their response. Maybe the disappointment was partly due to the audience's lack of comprehension of the Philip-Jessica conversation

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46. Ibid., p.140.
47. Ibid., p.134.
48. Ibid., p.143.

and partly to its strain of bitterness such as had never been witnessed in the post-marital relations of the major characters in the earlier plays. The action resolves itself chiefly into a succession of cold exchanges or quarrels that bring little relief. Constantine appears in an unattractive light; Mrs.Madras behaves stupidly, and Jessica reacts sharply to her husband's quips and hits back.

Nevertheless, the play does not 'peter out'. Philip's rejection of State's offer for a directorship carrying £ 700 a year and his decision to run for the London County Council is significant, and is artistically motivated (there is an indication of his standing for the County Council for tidying up England in Act I.) His entry into philanthropic politics, he thinks, will enable him not only to save his "carefully created soul" and self-respect; but also to reform society and contribute his mite to the ushering in of a true culture wherein 'rags' do not 'pay for finery, ugliness for beauty, and sin for virtue'. As he says; "That's public life. That's Democracy. But that's the future."[49]

The curtain falls in the midst of an exceedingly interesting argument between Philip and Jessica over the central theme. Barker rightly cuts off the heroine's last speech in the mid-sentence. "She doesn't finish", says the stage direction, "for really there is no end to the subject."[50]

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49. Ibid., p.136.
50. Ibid., p.144.

II

Characterization in The Madras House is varied and rich. The characters are slightly exaggerated and simplified, so that their typical qualities be brought out. But this process is employed no further than the dramatic art demands. Each character has an identity of its own, its independent existence and value, and reveals the author's power of critical observation, and uncanny insight into human nature. Most of the characters have a strong basis in reality.

None of the pairs in the play is well matched(their wedded life is not harmonious): Constantine and Amelia are virtually separated; the marriage of the Huxtables is far from happy, Jessica too is dissatisfied with her marriage. She is a paragon of refinement and grace; has charm and delicacy. She is intelligent and sensitive, emotional and excitable with a cultivated taste for music, painting and poetry. Barker presents her as "an epitome of aesthetic culture"[51] but slightly caricatures her fastidious refinement through the protagonist who talks with a tongue in his cheek of his drawing-room as a 'museum', and of his daughter's school, where Jessica has put her,"cultivating Mildred's mind into but another museum...of good manners and good taste."[52] Aesthetically, Barker approves the hero, a critic of the middle-class culture.

Philip's intellectual acuteness is set off by his human

51. Ibid. p 60.
52. Ibid., p.134.

inadequacy - his emotional dryness. The Times described him as "the rather cold and fish-like Philip Madras" [53] It is his emotional detachment, coupled with his attitude of treating women as men, that creates a gulf between him and Jessica. There is no heart to the man, and it is his frigidity that makes him forget that Jessica is a "female occasionally", [54] and forces her to flirt with Thomas. The ideological differences widen the gulf: Jessica does not concur with Philip's view that a woman's beauty and foppery, are superficial and art and music are a mere sauce to man's sensuality.

For all his liberality and perceptiveness, Philip, like Edward Voysey, is priggish. Constantine calls him "a cold-blooded egoist". [55] He is concerned with the problems of his own character and conduct as also with those relating to the domestic sphere, but is wise enough to understand that all problems of individual conduct involve social issues. Hence "his concern with his own individuality spreads out into a vital interest in economics and sociology". [56] His intellectual master passion seems to be the reformation of the degenerate social fabric of English society, and he discourses at such great length on "the riddles this Sphinx of a world is asking" [57] him that we feel that the necessary detachment is not fully preserved by the dramatist.

Like old Voysey, Constantine Madras is both an embodiment

53. The Times, March 10, 1910.
54. The Madras House, p.143.
55. Ibid., p. 99.
56. A.E. Morgan, Tendencies of Modern English Drama, 1924, p.105.
57. The Madras House, p.137.

and a challenger of social evils. Unfaithful to his wife whom he deserts, he would take liberty with the shop girls, and seduces one of them. The episode with Amelia in Act IV reveals that he had had illicit relations with women. A libertine as he is, with the hunter's ideal towards women (Philip characterizes Constantine's view of life as a sort of love-chase), he embraces Mohammedanism, sets up a harem in Arabia to gratify his sensual desires. Sex indeed is the spice of his life.

The social and moral heretic sees the home on Denmark Hill a prison, and good-humouredly proposes to Huxtable:

> Even if you have liked bringing up six daughters and not getting them married...how have they liked it? You should have drowned them at birth...How much pleasanter for you...how much better for them...if you'd only to find one man ready for a small consideration to marry the lot.[58]

He hurls an accusation at Huxtable trafficing in the good looks of the shop girls. There is a combination of comedy and grimness here:

> What else is your Roberts and Huxtable but a harem of industry ...You buy these girls in the open market...And when you've worn them out you turn them out...forget their names...wouldn't know their faces if you met them selling matches at your door. For such treatment of potential motherhood, my Prophet condemns a man to Hell.[59]

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58. Granville-Barker, The Madras House, p.104,
59. Ibid., pp.105-106.

This is legitimate critism, couched in rhetorical language, of the exploitation of sex attraction for commercial purposes.

Barker presents more than one view of Constantine. The building up of his character is an instance of the transformation of a Shavian model into something radically different in kind. In Act III the masterly exposition of his sex philosophy, and his forceful contradiction of State's sentimental point of view seem to carry the participants before him and contribute to the building up of a dynamic portrait. The American financier departs, not converted, but delighted with the new standpoint. Even Huxtable cannot but admire his smart, genial, though incurably wicked brother:

> You've said odder things this afternoon than I've ever heard you say before...I was always jealous of you, Constantine, for you seemed to get the best of everything.[60]

In Act IV Constantine's personality is not that formidable. It deflates, the image we formed of him in Act III is now diminished. Jessica expresses her dislike for him. His quarrelsome and inharmonious marital life exposes him as a bully and a brute; his surly temper and uncouth behaviour towards Amelia reduce the former superhuman impressiveness of his figure. Thus the champion of the rights of men is lowered in our estimation. The giant of Act III is reduced to a caricature of the conventionally despotic male.

60. Ibid., pp.111-112.

In Mrs.Madras we see the absurd limits to which a blind devotion to convention can lead. Though Ill-treated and deserted by her licientious husband, she clings to her faith in the sanctity of the institution of marriage and its sacred obligations. Her cup of sorrow is full to the brim on learning her husband's conversion. A much-abused wife, a prey to tyranny, peevish with ill-health, humiliated and frustrated, here is a life of living martyrdom and that excites our pity.

"Who does?" Philip asks Huxtable when the latter remarks: "It's a beastly world".[61] The implication is that it is persons like Huxtable who make this world ugly by their reactionary ideas stubbornly sticking to obsolete notions of morality and resisting new concepts. Wedded to middle-class respectability, the new-fangled ideas like "the Woman's movement is Woman expressing herself"[62] disturb him. Huxtable's conservatism makes a mess of the lives of his six marriageable daughters who lead a monotonous and wretched life. Under the surface of the comfortable 'happy' Edwardian home, simmers discontent of the spinsters "withering on the virgin thorn". Gentle and humane ("I don't want to be hard on the girl")[63], Huxtable deprecates Constantine's shabby treatment of Amelia and reacts strongly to his brother-in-law's iniquitous act of conversion.

Uneducated ,smug, credulous, slow-witted, Huxtable has a feeling that he has been used all his life as a convenience

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61. Ibid., p. 106.
62. Ibid., p. 88.
63. Ibid., p. 30.

by Constantine who seems to have mastered the art of life; and by his own wife who is domineering. His imbecile personality fails to make an impact on others; even his shop assistants do not love or respect him. Though a successful businessman, there is no other creditable achievement he can boast of. There is certainly something pathetic about his utterance:

> ...My time's over. What have I done with it now? Married. Brought up a family. Been master to a few hundred girls and fellows who never really cared a bit for me . I've been made a convenience of ...that's my life.[64]

Huxtable is indeed a comic conception of pathos. However accidental his illness, which gave him time to wonder, he is sincere when he asks Constantine: "...d'you think it's only not being very clever keeps us...well behaved!"[65]

Like her husband, Mrs. Huxtable upholds and lives up to the ideals of middle-class gentility and ethics. Any departure from the well-trodden paths of convention would greatly trouble her. She is as resentful and emphatic in her denunciation of Constantine's unseemly treatment of Amelia as her husband. Unlike her husband, Mrs.Huxtable is, however, dignified and domineering.

The six unmarried daughters are a group of dull, commonplace, unispiring, colourless girls. In the stage directions the

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64. Ibid., p. 112.
65. Ibid., p. 111.

dramatist explains:

> The difference between one Miss Huxtable and another is to a casual eye the difference between one lead pencil and another, as these lie upon one's table after some week's use; a matter of length of sharpening of wear.[66]

None of them has any personality, not to speak of being imaginative, brilliant or original. And the reason for their being so sapless and nondescript is clear. They never have had a chance to grow. Freedom is absolutely necessary, Barker seems to believe, for the development of the human personality and social health and dynanism. The dangers inherent in the present situation, so far as women are concerned, are vividly dramatized in these six dummies. What they are, all women, young and old, stand in danger of becoming in course of time. The image is horrible. This is why the playwright time and again throws the shadow of the Huxtable daughters across the stage. Though never appearing more than once on the stage, they are being constantly kept at the centre of the action - they symbolize the central horror of the play. There could never be a stronger argument for the freedom of women.

One of the most vital female characters, Miss Yates, has been an asset to the firm, Roberts and Huxtable ("you are an employee of some value to the firm").[67] However, twelve

66. Ibid., p.2.
67. Ibid., p.52.

years' shop-assisting has left its imprint on her. Disgusted by the living-in system, and unable to get a suitable husband, she revolts against it, and permits herself to be seduced. She divulges this fact to Philip:

> ... I took the risk. I knew what I was about. I wanted to have my fling. And it was fun for a bit. That sounds horrid. I know,but it was.[68]

Aggressive and bold ("I'm not afraid of people"), Yates is not ashamed of her pregnancy, and does not, in the least, regret what she has done; on the contrary, she is proud of her moral lapse. She tells Philip:

> ... And I am really proud and happy about it now. Sir...I am not pretending. I daresay I'v done wrong...perhaps I ought to come to grief altogether,but[69]

Unlike Amy O'Connell, Yate's is not afraid of the scandal and so ventures to defy conventional morality by bearing the child unblushingly. She thus defeats the current double standard of morality, and turns the tables on her seducer. Barker enlists our sympathy for the deliquent Yates by making Philip show a sympathetic understanding of her transgression, and the display of her independence, and moral courage.

Miss Chancellor, the guardian of the living-in system, self-righteous, and rigidly moral, is a pillar of respectability. She represents the sexless, old maid whose conventional

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68. Ibid., p.55.
69. Ibid., p.57.

morality is challenged by Miss Yates. She is outraged by Yates' 'unladylike' attitude, and wonders why she, instead of having an affair, did not marry reputably. She demands:

> Are we beasts of the field, I should like to know? I simply do not understand this unladylike attitude towards the facts of life.[70]

She is too conventional, too prudish, too wooden to believe that woman's independence should go thus far. "Because a woman is independent and earning her living, she's not to think she can go on as she pleases",[71] asserts Miss Chancellor.

Timid and humble, Brigstock is another victim of the living-in system. He has been thinking lately for seeking the firm's permission to live out but his precarious position in the department (He is the Third Man in the Hosiery, and is not a favourite in the department) makes him scared of asking the permission. As a result, Mrs Brigstock's marriage withers , forced sterility ("How can you save when you have children ?") is a sad commentary on the living-in system.

'The Mean Sensual Man', Major Thomas is a pocket edition of Constantine, the Don Juan of the play. Like Constantine, he is vulnerable to feminine beauty, but unlike the former, he is not a Mohammendan in practice. He is obsessed with the strange notion that, if a woman evinces an interest in him, she must

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70. Ibid., P.54.
71. Ibid., P.53.

be secretly wanting him to kiss her. He tells Philip:

> ...I don't mean that unpleasantly...but all women do. Some of 'em want to be kissed and some want you to talk politics...but the principle's the same.[72]

A creature of simple instincts and affections, Thomas sets off the intellectual brilliance of Philip, and fulfils an important role in trying to reconcile us to his friend by his good-humoured criticism. At the beginning of the play he calls in question Philip's self-righteousness: "You've got what I call the Reformer's mind. I shouldn't cultivate it, Phil."[73] And later in the play he gibes at his friend's emotional detachment by suggesting"...Phil, I should like you to see in love with a woman...It'd serve you right".[74] More than the hero, Thomas appears to represent the healthy norm, the sensible humanity - aware of human needs - of liberty, sex, manners etc.

Of all the characters in the play, Eustace Perrin State's figure is extraordinarily inflated. His is a comic figure, highly entertaining, though incredible and unconvincing. Endowed with qualities one usually associates with an American, he is a smart businessman with the knack of turning money over on a grand scale. Temperamentally romantic, the Crystal Palace has an enchanting sound for him, and legends ("I believe in legends, Sir")[75]- appears to him 'the spiritual side of facts'. His language is at once pompous and florid (refer to his

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72. Ibid., p. 70.
73. Ibid., p. 6.
74. Ibid., p.114.
75. Ibid., p. 77.

description of a ball room where 'music arises with its voluptuous swell'); his poetry is Byron, "the poet of Love and Liberty...read in every school in America".[76]

His sentimentalizing over the fair sex reveals his romantic leanings, and the setting up of a museum of monographs on corsets at Southampton betrays his craving for "the eternal feminine". He wants "every dish saturated with sex, but in a diluted, romantic form"[77] which is the subject of Barker's satire. State's faith in the gospel of beauty as a way of salvation is rejected by Philip:

> What do we slow-breeding, civilized people get out of love...and the beauty of women...and the artistic setting that beauty demands? For which we do pay rather a big price...[78]

Philip does not concur with the philosopher of commercialism that woman "must have her chance to dazzle and conquer.[79] It behoves us to see, he comments, whether the 'aestheticizing' and adornment of women is really worth the price paid for it in social terms. Philip, Constantine and Huxtable listen to State as they would to a piece of fine music with rapt attention and apprent appreciation, but without the least intention of taking him seriously.

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76. Ibid., p. 101.
77. Desmond McCarthy, The Madras House, 1925.
78. Granville-Barker, The Madras House, pp.114-115.
79. Ibid., p. 91.

By overemphasizing State's characteristic trait - his romantic temperament - Barker caricatures the apostle of big business, holding up to ridicule his 'sentimental wallowings',[80] and 'ennobling abstractions' about women.

The unimpressive Windlesham struts about the stage exhibiting the new models he has brought from Paris; sometimes adjusting a costume with pins and at other time tilting the hat of a mannequin. Nature has lost her dominion over him: 'a tailor-made man', the stage directions call him, adding, 'Impossible to think of him in any of the ordinary relations of life"[81] (and these surely include the sex relation). He speaks an artificial language; the debased English interspersed with cockney French. In Windlesham, Barker presents the sorry figure of the effeminate man-milliner who has spent his life - time in the drapery trade without making an impact on his employer. Huxtable comments:"what I'm always thinking is, why not have a manly chap in charge of the place up, here."[82]

In the unsympathetic portrait of Windlesham, Barker caricatures the fantastic 'functionary' of the Madras House; and demonstrates the vacuity which results from too much concern with feminine exterior than the woman's spirit.

III

Barker has no illusions about life, he sees it as it is , and in his dramatic work projects it as he sees it. His comedy is intellectual, it appeals to the intellect, and arouses

80. Ibid., p. 114.
81. Ibid., P. 75.
82. Ibid., p. 77.

thoughtful laughter at social evils and human follies and foibles. It is distinguished by suavity, rationality and wit. Irony is his chief weapon by which social abuses and human imperfections are pilloried. The assault may be trenchant, there may be some bruises even, but the object is reform. Barker's appeal is for the demolition of the values underlying the Edwardian social order.

Like Shaw, Barker shows dissatisfaction with the Victorian conceptions of love, matrimony and the status of women; and like him, too, he champions the freedom of thought and action. The conflict between the urge for freedom of thought and action, and social conventions claims the attention of many Edwardian playwrights. This clash between rebellious youth and entrenched orthodoxy is admirably projected both in The Voysey Inheritance and The Madras House.

Both the plays satirize the domination and repression of women, denounce the inveterate social prejudice against rebellious daughters and wives, and uphold the independence of spirit exhibited by young women (Beatrice in The Voysey Inheritance and Yates in The Madras House).Both represent the 'New Woman' who battles out her way to liberty defying conventional morality. The Brigstocks display the predicament into which the industrial civilization has forced them. The Madras House is a searching examination of the relations of men and women in a society, which inhibits, by social and economic restrictions,free intermixing and companionship

between the sexes. It is a severe indictment of the sophisticated Edwardian culture. As a creative iconoclast, impatient of the jerry-built civilization of the Edwardian day, Barker, like his protagonist, is determined "to hurry on a new and rational order of living".[83] The man-woman problem has been the subject matter of many a play in which the relations between the sexes have been dealth with, but an important aspect of it, namely "the impersonal detachment in intimacy"[84] which Philip is an instrument of throwing into relief, has perhaps never before been so delicately treated on the stage. The play is, indeed, a testimony to Barker's comprehensive thinking on one of the most vital human problems: Man-Woman relations. The general male attitudes towards the fair sex presented in The Madras House still have validity today. One would, therefore, subscribe to Barker's own judgement that "It (The Madras House) is far more universal than Voysey".[85]

"The strength of The Madras House", states Gerald Weals, "for us is that, despite the Edwardian exterior, the furnishings are contemporary[86]. Though many details and topics in the play (e.g. the setting, place-names, the living-in system) are specifically Edwardian, some of the view-points e.g. Philip's conception of the "farm-yard world of sex", State's view of the commercial exploitation of sex-attraction, and Constantine's view of the pervasive sexuality in the West hold good even today.

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83. S.P.B. Mais, Some modern Authors 1823 p.248.
84. Max Beerbohm, Around Theatres 1953.
85. C.B. Purdom, Harley Granville-Barker, 1955, P.152. quoted by
86. Gerald Weals, "The Edwardian Theatre and the Shadow of Shaw", Edwardians and Late Victorians, pp.182-183.

CHAPTER VI
THE SECRET LIFE

The Secret Life was written between 1919 and 1922 and published in 1923. The University of Leeds staged it in 1953. Since it was written as a stage play, it must be judged as such. The secret life is the inner life, the life of the spirit. The moon appears to be used as a symbol of the secret life which endures in spite of, and through all changes and tribulations. The moon - the lamp of the moon - burns itself out by the dawn to reappear every night. It waxes and wanes and yet everlastingly renews itself. Strowde, Joan, Serocold, Oliver almost everybody refers to the secret life.

The play has appeared as baffling to many critics, partly because of the subtlety of characterization, and partly because of a number of philosophically enigmatic passages in the dialogue. When William Archer read the play, he wrote to the author:

> ...in this play you seem to be drifting away from, not towards the theatre that is understood by the people - even the fairly intelligent people.[1]

Barker replied:

> I protest I never have - I cannot - write an unactable play, it would be against nature, against second nature

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1. Quoted by C.B.Purdom, Harley Granville-Barker, 1955, p.203

> any how; I act it as I write it. But there is no English company of actors so trained to interpret thought and the less crude emotions, nor, as a consequence, any selected audience interested in watching and listening to such things. But that, believe me, human fallibility apart - mine to begin with - is the extent of the difficulty.[2]

For all Barker's protest against William Archer's comment on the suitability of The Secret Life for the theatre, the play failed to attain a public performance. It was performed only by the University of Leeds in 1953. The play, lacking as it does, the stage virtue of immediate clarity, critics like Archer, Graham Sutton W.A.Darlington, and John W.Cuncliffe believe that the play cannot be successfully produced on the stage. But they admit that the obscurity in the play is dispelled by a second reading. Reread the play gains both in force and clarity; and

"the little wrinkles of obscurity are apt to smooth themselves out, as the mind catches the right intonation or perceives the gesture."[3]

Darlington says:

> This second reading, with the wider comprehension it has brought me, confirms and deepens the impression made rather vaguely by the first - that here we have

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2. Ibid., p.203.
3. Graham Sutton, Some Contemporary Dramatists, 1924, p.31

> a piece of work right above and beyond the scope of most of our leading playwrights, but a piece of work so devoid of the fundamental stage virtue of clarity that I can hardly imagine that it could be successfully performed in the theatre, except before an audience of people who, like me, had read the text through carefully twice before the curtain rose.[4]

So the difficulty that critics have experienced in comprehending the play is evident in the comments that they make about its meaning. The difficulty, it seems, arises mainly from the symbolic subtleties and philosophic nature of the play. In order to understand the ideas and subtleties of the play, it is essential that we should read through the text twice.

A daring innovator in dramatic technique, Barker makes a bold departure from his earlier plays in the organization of The Secret Life. In this play there is a spaciousness of scope both in the subject matter and in the technique, which suggests that, Barker like Chekhov in The Cherry Orchard, and like the later Ibsen, tries to go beyond the conventional physical limitations of the stage. Though the loggia in Act I is crampted, it faces the sea and the sky, and we find Joan looking up at the moon. The references to the moon and America, France and Egypt expand the locale in space, and the references to the past and the future after death expand it in time. The references to the

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4. Literature in the Theatre: and other Essays, 1925, pp.191-192.

inner lives of the characters expand it in the direction within the spirit. Thus in this play Barker appears to be more concerned with the potentialities of the physical stage than in Ann Leete or The Voysey Inheritance. The stage here assumes a more spacious dimension than the thirty-foot box to which the spectators are accustomed; once again it becomes Elizabethan in magnitude. "What Shakespear gained by being free from scenery", Barker intends to gain "cunningly and unobstrusively in spite of it: cramping his visible scene deliberately so that he may suggest vaster spaces beyond."[5]

The two leading themes of the play - Strowde's love for Joan Westbury, and the party politics of the Liberal Party - are ingeniously interwoven into its texture. Strowde had been an influential member of the Liberal Party before the First World War; vital differences, however, cropped up between him and the Prime Minister, and he resigned. For eighteen long years Strowde has been cherishing the dream of his love in secret. After the war the Party wants him to return to its fold to ensure its continuing in power. But Strowde, who still cherishes the dream of love, finds it an extremely difficult task to accept the invitation to re-enter politics, since his failure to marry the woman he loves has sapped his interest in life, and because of rampant corruptions in the political field.

Both these themes of love and politics have been brought

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5. Graham Sutton, Some Contemporary Dramatists, p.37.

out in the opening scene. None of Barker's other plays opens so evocatively. The play opens with the scene at Strowde's house by the sea in the summer moonlit night. From over the parapet there sounds the end of a performance of Tristan and Isolde, half-sung, half-spoken, by Strowde and his friends, Serocold and Salomons in a mixture of German and English, to the piano accompaniment. It is the moment of Isolde's death; so the plaintive note is struck in the very beginning. The performance creates an atmosphere of sadness, the legend embodying the theme of intense, but unattainable love which is the major theme of the play.

In the first scene of Act I the theme of love dovetails with that of politics. The first exchange between Strowde and Joan Westbury who has been listening silently to the performance, throws into focus the motif of frustration and despair:

Strowde. Is that you, Joan?

Joan. Yes.

Strowde. Couldn't you endure it?

Joan. I could hear perfectly. Look at the moon.

Strowde. It might be a ship on fire.

Joan. Burnt out.[6]

Joan has been burnt out of her home. Her last words in the scene: "Burnt out inside...the moon is. Gutted...such an ugly word!"[7], suggest an inner life laid waste.

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6. Granville-Barker, The Secret Life, 1923, p.6
7. Ibid., p.15.

Wedded to the lofty ideals of public service, and cherising the high values of integrity and candour in public life, Strowde had left 'the market place', (symbolizing politics) where ideals are bought and sold. Politics to him has now become no more than a sound of lyres and flutes, 'ground-swell to an ironic orchestration of individual disenchantment':

> When I hear you talk politcs nowadays, Stephen, it's like hearing you sing Tristan.[8]

In such a situation where the here is a prey to disenchantment and despair, there is little hope of his responding to the invitation that Serocold has brought to him from the Prime Minister for re-entering politics.

Scene 2 gives further insight into the post-war disillusionment and desppair and moral emptiness. "You've all deteriorated since the war,"[9] says Eleanor to Serocold who admits:

> We physicians of the body politic, you'll observe..of whatever school...are at one in our firm faith in bleeding.[10]

While Salomons screens his disillusionment with a flambuoyant irony, Serocold speaks with candour about his disillusionment. Politicians talk glibly of patriotism and morality in connection with public affairs, but he knows too well that all have to do the only thing there is to be done:

> ...the great thing is to keep things going...to make for righteousness somehow...by the line of least resistance.[11]

8. Ibid., p.12.
9. Ibid., p.20.
10. Ibid., p.20.
11. Ibid., p.20.

Serocold talks to Joan, and as he does so, Barker skilfully gives some relevant information about Serocold, Joan and Eleanor. Eleanor lives for her brother, Evan, and Joan lives in her solitary fastness, and as she talks, we catch a glimpse of her lonely and barren life. Serocold, who has recently lost his wife, speaks of his own loneliness and unhappiness. So he too fits into the melancholy pattern of the play. Finally, Joan's conversation with Strowde deepens the mood of sadness, as both of them express the utter frustration they are experiencing.

In the final scene of Act I, although the theme of love predominates, we are allowed to have a glimpse of the political world also, and the two themes are harmoniously united. Sitting on the steps of the cottage in the moonlight, Strowde and Joan talk of their old romance, exploring the nature of their love. That they are deeply in love with each other is undoubted, but Joan insists that they were right in separating instead of marrying. She accepted the 'second-best' i.e. her marriage with Mark Westbury and 'housekeeping in the odd corners of the world', as the strain of living on the level of the 'first-best' would have been too much for her. She believes that she could not have survived the intense happiness of her union with the 'first-best'.

Joan asks Strowde why he is not in power in the political field, instead of these 'well-meaning', self-righteous politicians, and his answer is significant:

Strowde. Save me from the illusion of power! I once had a glimpse ... and I thank you for it, my dear...of a power that is in me. But that won't answer to any call.

Joan. Not to the call of a good cause?

Strowde (as one who shakes himself free from the temptations of unreality). Excellent causes abound. They are served...as they are...by eminent prigs making a fine parade, by little minds watching for what's is to happen next (...) But search for their strength ... which is not to be borrowed or bargained for ...it must spring from the secret life.[12]

Once Strowde had a glimpse of some reality, awareness of a new dimension of potentiality in him, thanks to Joan's love. But frustration in love stifled that potential which now would not respond even to the call of a good cause. He is now a disillusioned man, his will is impaired, he would not therefore "remount the merry-go-round", but would let the bungling, venal politicians manipulate the political machinery.

At this moment Barker works up to a climax. Eleanor returns from London with the news that Mark is dead. The significant dramatic question at this stage is whether her husband's death will cause Joan to withdraw herself from the world, or whether it will act as a force of liberation, freeing her from her past life and its claims, and enabling her to find a new life with Strowde.

In Act II the scene shifts to Braxted Abbey, Serocold's country house. The forestage is intended to represent a first-floor gallery with six windows overlooking the terrace. There is little outer action, the plot develops gradually.

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12. Ibid., pp. 31-32.

In Scene 1, through the conversation between Serocold and Lady Peckham, and later between Strowde and Oliver, we come to know something about Oliver. Having been crippled in the war, Oliver gets a job in a London business concern. Arrested at an anarchist's meeting, he is glad to make the scandal an excuse for getting rid of his aristocratic employer, Sir Charles Philips. Serocold being a loyalist is naturally perturbed over his nephew's anarchical tendency; while Strowde, his yet unrecognized father, wishes Oliver could attack Bellingham's government from London. The two radicals confront each other. Oliver wants to become Strowde's secretary, but a great blow dealt by Strowde is the revelation of a 'firm disbelief' that the time is not ripe for taking him as his secretary. In Oliver's remark: "Then why don't you shoot yourself?"[13] rings his protest against Strowde's loss of faith in life.

In Scene 2, in the conversation between Strowde and Lady Peckham, it is revealed that Oliver is the hero's illegitimate son. Strowde's attitude of coldness is typical of fathers' towards their natural sons. Oliver's 'going wrong' distresses his mother, and Strowde's refusal to appoint him as his secretary intensifies her unhappiness.

At the end of the scene we are introduced to two other characters, Kittredge and his granddaughter, Susan. Kittredge's revelation:

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13. Ibid., p.49.

> In my hey-day I was read, apparently, but not bought. Now I am bought but not read. Heaven forbid, though, that I should quarrel with the bread and butter I still need to consume.[14]

adds to the prevailing mood of gloom.

In Scene 3 the sound of voices raised from the terrace (these are the voices of Dolly, Joan and Susan playing the game of Straighters) forms a lively counterpoint to the conversation between Strowde and Eleanor in the gallery. A critic observes that this scene is bound to suffer in intelligibility in the theatre, as no audience can concentrate on two simultaneous conversations, and that the meaning of the one carried on off-stage would be quite lost.[15] The off-stage conversation, however, is a string of comments on the game, and is used to serve as a commentary on Strowde's mental conflict. In the theatre, one would imagine, this sort of device can be quite effective.

The frivolity of the week-end provides the background for an agonizing revelation of human frustration and disappointment. Strowde has even lost faith in the <u>Industrial History</u> which his sister is helping him to write, and is still undecided whether he would stand for the Parliamentary election or not. In the later part of the third scene the playwright crowds the scene in the gallery by contriving a discussion on the troublous times. While

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14. Ibid., p. 59.
15. W.A.Darlington, <u>Literature in the Theatre and other Essays</u>, p.195.

Kittredge good-humourdly talks of the decline of high ideals in the post-war England:

> ...I think it a subtle form of cruelty to children to educate them in ideals that the world they will emerge into never means to abide by.[16]

and complains of the 'dictation of the intellectual proletariat'; Strowde lashes at the evils of democracy - favouritism, nepotism and opportunism - and maintains that there is no evidence of a living faith:

> ... Show me a living faith, and I'll show it you careless of life.[17]

Moral chaos and spiritual bankcruptcy following the First World War are here again stressed by Barker.

In Scene 4, the climbing of crippled Oliver through the window of the gallery to where Joan is sitting alone, seems to be contrived by the dramatist to suggest that the physical maiming of the body is nothing as compared to the spiritual maiming, the pivot on which the whole play turns. Though Oliver is twenty five years old, he tells Joan that he believes he is still eighteen. The bitter war memories haunt his mind:

> A shell missed me outside Albert and did for my watch. I could shake it and it would tick for a bit...but the spring was gone.[18]

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16. Granville-Barker, The Secret Life, pp.70-71
17. Ibid., p.77.
18. Ibid., p.87.

In the destruction of the spring is symbolized the notion of time at a stop. Thewar seems to have arrested Oliver's spiritual growth at the age of eighteen. Freed from the 'greedy instinct to live', he is disgusted to live in a world which is spiritually atrophied "... this is a beast of a world to have left on one's hands", Oliver says to Joan.[19] In Act I, Scene 2, Serocold also expresses the idea of not ageing as other people do; and he preserves the manner of the eternal undergraduate. Oliver is furious he is still alive. This is Keats' posthumous existence'.[20] Invalidated by the deadly disease of consumption, Keats confined to bed in Rome, would continually ask Dr.Clark: "When will this posthumous life of mine come to an end?" And in the last letter to his friend Brown, Keats writes: "I have an habitual feeling of my real life having passed, and that I am leading a posthumous existence.[21]

Oliver explains to Joan whom he too loves why he wants to become Strowdes's secretary. He would like to know why Strowde has failed. Joan points out that Strowde can hardly be said to have failed as a politician; but Oliver is not refering to that kind of success:

> Nothing's much easier, is it, than to make that sort of success if you've the appetite for it. Find a few ready-made notions to exploit. But Evan set out to get,

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19. Ibid., p.87.
20. Colin Wilson, The Outsider, 1960, p.43.
21. Lord Houghton, The Life and Letters of John Keats',1927,p.216. edited by

> past all tricks, to the heart of things...didn't he? Don't you know? Don't you love him? Are you weary of the puzzle too? Isn't it a stone dead heart of things... and dare no one say so when he finds out?[22]

When Oliver and Joan talk of Strowde's failure, they primarily talk in reference to his political failure. In the eyes of Oliver, Strowde is a failure in that he did not contribute his share to the tidying up of things in the political sphere. Strowde alone knows that he is living with a much larger failure - the failure of his love. The tragedy of his life is that even Joan, in spite of her clinging to an abstract touch-me-not type of love, fails to understand the true nature of his failure. This is the secret which no body knows, nor is even partly aware of, except Strowde himself.

The masterful presence of Sir Leslie Heriot, the Minister of State in the Bellingham Government, conditions the mood of the earlier part of Scene 5 of Act II, and his talk with another politician, Strowde, who knows all the tricks of the trade, invigorates the atmosphere. Hariot has come on a diplomatic mission, prepared to manoeuvre Strowde to come back to the Liberal Party which will find,he assures the hero, a Cabinet seat for him after the election. Having listened to the proposal, Strowde takes the rudder and launches a trenchant assault on the Prime Minister and Heriot's motives:

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22. Granville-Barker, The Secret Life, p. 88.

Strowde. Bellingham's getting a bit feeble, is he?

Heriot (innocently pricking an ear). D'you hear people say that ?

Strowde. If he'll take me at your dictation it'll show the Gang, won't it, that you've got a strangle hold on him? And it'll show you that he feels you've got the Party behind you.

Heriot (playfully disapproving). That's very tortuous.

Strowde. Tortuous...but not very tortuous.[23]

Taking strong exception to his motives being disputed by Strowde, Heriot submits that Strowde's inclusion in the Cabinet will be conducive to the interest of the Liberal Party. The Prime Minister will not be pressurized for Strowde's inclusion. Only in the interest of the Party and on the score of his own merits will he be taken in the Cabinet.

Getting an upper hand of the demagogue, Strowde criticizes the Government's mismanagement of the Trusts, until Eleanor joins the discussion, when he becomes more aggressive and daring than before:

> The practical question is...could Heriot and I between us get rid of Bellingham the sooner? I might put that problem to the old gentleman if he sends for me.[24]

At this poser, Hariot can only flinch, and before he can recover, Strowde warns:

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23. Ibid., p.95.
24. Ibid., p.98.

> But if we didn't get rid of him the sooner the intermediate friction would not, on the balance, be profitable to the country. (Then, venturing rather far in irony) And we must think of our country, Heriot.[25]

Not only does Strowde's utterance embody his deep-seated contempt for the imbecile Prime Minister, but it also contains a veiled onslaught on the political egoists and opportunists.

In this bout the force held in reserve now expresses itself more explicitly. There is more sincerity than satire in the political creed which Strowde enunciates; and with which he is identifying himself at the moment, but which is, in fact, Heriot's own, though unacknowledged:

> ...I believe that men cease to be fools to become knaves, and that we must govern them by fear and with lies. They will work under threat of starvation. Greed makes them cunning...desire makes them dangerous...Sleep's the great ally of the rulers of the world...for it rounds each day with oblivion.[26]

The recital of the creed is a scathing condemnation of the tortuous, dishonest and ambitious politicians who run the government, and justify their rule by Machiavellianism. It is a declaration of the formal, public assumption of the role Strowde is going to adopt open-eyed.

"Can you think of a greater driving force for evil",

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25. Ibid., p.99.
26. Ibid., p.103.

Strowde asks Joan in ActI, Scene 3, "than a man who has seen a better way and accepts the worse...?" A frustrated idealist, Strowde 'accepts the worse', and succumbs to the toils of the political machinery he has been denouncing. The declaration of his political creed is a confession of despair and defeat.

After the exit of Heriot, Eleanor reacts adversely to her brother's intention of going into Bellingham's government, and the scene gathers emotional impetus by her outburst in which she speaks of the Industrial History which was the child of their 'marriage', nurtured with her life, and of Strowde's restlessness, despair and cynicism. She must save her soul from despair, if her brother can't. Strowde is apparently unmoved by her mental affliction, and Eleanor goes, as Strowde is saying:

> I shall now have to advertise...Wanted,
> a political hostess...[27]

The later part of the final scene of Act II contains a crucial episode between Strowde and Joan in which the heroine rejects his second proposal for marriage to her. The external circumstances and the trammels of past obligations had held them apart. Fate obliterates these shackles. But the irony of the situation is that Joan is still haunted by the shadows of the past, and her probings end in nothing but conundrums. 'We chose to dream', 'and the eternity in which we met', she tells Strowde.

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27. Ibid., p.106.

After the death of Mark, Strowde thought there would be nothing to separate them. But they stand asunder never to be united in the bond of marriage Strowde is cheated, is baulked of his coveted treasure. Love turns out to be a will-o'-the-wisp for him.

Painfully aware that his pathetic appeals and outburst are equally in vain, Strowde cries: "Where are you, Joan... where are you?" [28] And left alone, he murmurs: "Most merciful God...who makest thy creatures to suffer without understanding." [29] But Strowde is not praying to God, he is only venting the acute suffering he is undergoing.

Act III Scene 1 shows Oliver as the secretary of Strowde, who is working in his office in Bedford Square, London, preparing for his election campain. As Oliver and Strowde converse about the schedule of electioneering, the dramatic movement towards the climax of this scene is heralded with the quotation from the Bible which Strowde would like to verify for the election speech he is drafting. Strowde gives his comment on the quotation:

> "Now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers". Very modern and progressive and disillusioned of Elijah ! Why ever should he expect to be ? [30]

The irony of the situation is that, though Strowde desires to be progressive, he is not, as despair has undermined his faith

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29. Ibid., p.113.
30. Ibid., p.118.

in life. His objectives have collapsed. He is interested in social progress, but lacks the will power to contribute his mite to improve the sorry state of affairs.

Oliver holds in his hand the three chapters of the manuscript of the Industrial History, which contain much of the failure in Strowde's life, Oliver was anxious to track down, and the hero bequeaths these to the young secretary. Oliver perceives more meaning in it than is apparent, and gives expression to a new wisdom:

> ...better inherit a failure , I suppose...for there's something to be done with it...than a success.[31]

They then discuss the election prospects, and the work Strowde has been entrusted with (e.g. the Clumbermere business). Oliver wonders why Strowde treats with derision a scheme which is discussed with him by a Partyman. The deeper import of his remark emerges more clearly when Oliver makes an insinuation against Strowde: "Every letter I write for you...it's like laying a snare."[32] At first his response is ironical; but then he inquires: "What do you expect of me, Oliver?" Fearlessness is the hall-mark of Strowde as a politician. He discusses a government scheme or a political issue with candour, though his mocking tone, which he brings into play in the discussion, stings. In his draft election speech there is a reference to the Trust issue on which the government has bungled and is touchy about.

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31. Ibid., p.121.
32. Ibid., p.123.

Again, he returns to the theme of inheritance :

> ...Are you still out to destroy? I'm showing you the sure way. It's to fulfil. The reddest revolutionary is but a part of what he turns against (...) But disbelief's a power ...and power is satisfying. I lived half my life in the happiness...and unhappiness..of a vision. One fine day I find that the world I'm living in is nothing like the idea of the world I've been living by. It comes quite casually...conversion to disbeief (...) you cease to suffer...you cease to hope. You have no will to be other than you. You are, therefore, extraordinarily efficient (...) Watch me succeed, Oliver. That will teach you how to down me in turn. It's the best service I can do you.[33]

It is a significant statement summing up the main themes of the play: Strowde and Joan's love, and the disillusionment of the intellectuals after the war. The earlier defensive barriers between Strowde and Oliver have disappeared, and Strowde speaks his mind to him as openly as he has done only to Joan. The hidden revolutionary in Strowde speaks to the anarchist in Oliver, and the unbeliever in him brings home the efficacy of disbelief to the youth who is passing through the phase of disillusionment.

Oliver's comment is indicative of his own development since his meeting with Strowde in Act II, Scene 1, and the discussion

33. Ibid., p. 124-125.

of nihilism which the protagonist's opening words recall. It is the 'merciful executioner rather than the anarchist' who voices the comment: "Wouldn't you sooner I killed you now where you sit?"[34]

The dramatist now makes Oliver admit his knowledge of Strowde as his father, and gives them a brief moment to confront this relationship. Though the illicit relationship is acknowledged in this scene, its psychological ambivalence is present from the time, when unaware of its implication, Oliver states to Joan the nature of his attitude to Strowde:

> Evan was picked out for me, you may say...I remember saying once , when I was eight, that I meant to grow up to be like him.[35]

The restrained emotional mood is interrupted by the entry of Serocold. A breeze between the two politicians on a minor political issue accelerates the pace again, though for a brief space only. Then comes, with great suddenness, the shocking news that Joan is seriously ill. Eleanor and Susan bring in the letter which Kittredge has sent from Countesbury to Susan about Joan who is on her death-bed. Barker's handling of the plot at this point is very significant. He shows us the reaction of Strowde by plunging him in a long silence, while Oliver, Eleanor, and Susan converse. The irony which is inherent in the entire structure of the play presents him once again with the most crucial moment of his life. The audience watch with bated breath the final test

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34. Ibid., p.125.
35. Ibid., p. 85.

of the hero's spirit. Then as a climax, like a flash, comes Strowde's decision to throw up his chance of success at the polls, and to go to the dying Joan. This is Barker's way of showing in his hero the rebirth of faith and moral courage. Thus Strowde is regenerated by his unfaltering love for Joan involving self-effacement and self-sacrifice.

In the second scene Barker shifts the action from London to Countesbury in Massachusetts in the sitting room of Susan where Kittredge has been attending on the ailing Joan for the last three weeks. As he sits by her beside, he says that he has written many books on ethics, but sitting by Joan's bedside has given him more of insight into good practical life than all his reading and philosophy had done. He rejects all those abstract rules of conduct which may be fine in theory, but are useless in practice. He reminds us of Alice Maitland, who teaches Edward Voysey, in The Voysey Inheritance that to live life fully, it is not necessary to have a set of fixed moral rules and principles.[36]

Joan is content to die an obscure death, if she can be assured that her life has not been bad. Kittredge assures her that her life probably has been good. She confesses to Kittredge that she was never half so human to Strowde and bemoans her sin of denying what she could have given to him, and asks for his absolution. She prays:

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36. Granville-Barker, The Voysey Inheritance, pp.115-116

> For all denial of what I had to give...forgive me. From the soul's empty freedom...deliver me. If death cannot make fruitful, may it break and end what life could not break nor use.[37]

Feeling repentant of her coldness to Strowde, she talks of her reunion with him. She implores:

> Will you tell him, please, that as the light grows there's always a moment when he's with me.[38]

Dying of a brain tumour, tended only by Kittredge, Joan asks him as to the value of the secret life, its relation to life in general, and about the soul. These transcendental issues are raised, but as could be expected, not satisfactorily answered. Joan regards the soul 'as mortal as the body', and "the freedom of the soul as empty". Kittredge even applies the word 'useless' to the 'burden of the soul', which we would like to forget sometimes; however, he believes that the soul is there and must be reckoned with. He comforts the dying Joan with his faith that 'the generation of the spirit is not as the generation of the flesh.[39] The implication of this statement is clear. It expresses the oneness of the soul and the body, and denies the dualism of the flesh and the spirit.

In the final scene the action shifts again to Strowde's office where Oliver and Susan talk to Lord Clumbermere, an industrialist. We are brought down from the transcendental heights to the commonplace world. Clumbermere who represents big business

37. Granville-Barker, The Secret Life, p.143.
38. Ibid., p.142.
39. Ibid., p.144.

and is exploited by politicians for their own and party's ends, is scheduled to meet Strowde, but is told by Oliver that Strowde is leaving for America to see the dying Joan. Susan pleads with Oliver to recall Strowde as Joan is already dead. Oliver discounts this suggestion, but eventually gives way with a bad grace. At the end of the play, Barker seems to point to a slightly bright future. There is the suggestion that the bitterness and cynicism of Oliver may some day be broken down by Susan's natural instinct for life, love and kindness. She tells Oliver that he will have to be raised from the dead somehow. The play thus ends on a hopeful note.

Mention has already been made of the novelty and daring of the technique adopted by Barker in the play. In Act III the playwright has adopted the method of telescoping the characters' movements in both time and space. The novelty and daring of the technique, however, should not obscure the richness of emotional overtones in the manner in which the hero is brought off the stage, and the action is rounded to a close. Though he makes his last appearance in Act III Scene 1, Strowde is not dismissed until the end of the play. His intangible presence is felt in Scene 2 where the dying Joan confesses to Kittredge her denial of what she could have given to Strowde and talks of their reunion. This solemn scene with its vague designation suggests, with great poignancy, vaster scenes beyond. The play's spaciousness is suggested by such scenes that transcend the stage on which they are set. Barker is not a deviser of scenes a faire, but is a sensitive artist and a bold innovator.

In Act III also the themes of love and politics are happily welded. In fact, through the whole play these two major themes are interwoven into its texture, one blending into the other as in a continuous carpet-pattern.

II

As in The Voysey Inheritance and The Madras House, Barker packs his canvas with portraits in The Secret Life. Except for Dolly who is obscurely motivated, each character is individualized, differentiated and adequately motivated. The major characters, though interesting, are too complex and subtle to be appreciated in the theatre. The function of the minor characters: Salomons, Serocold, Kittredge and Clumbermere is choric. Salomons and Heriot are foils to Strowde, while Serocold, to some extent, stands comparison with the hero. His fidelity to his wife Mary, now dead, is a minor reflection of the love of Strowde and Joan. The characters are ingeniously worked into the framework of the play.

Most of the characters cherish in their own way the secret life. As a matter of fact, there is none who does not evince interest in it at one stage or the other. Even the most matter-of-fact characters like Clumbermere and Heriot pay lip-service to it.

The play traces the growth of the inner life of Strowde, who is presented as an idealist in his personal life and in politics,

cherishing sublime ideals of patriotism and altruism, which receive a severe blow because of the low moral tone of the political life of England following the First World War. Disgusted with lack of honesty, sincerity and frankness in public life, he retires from politics, and seeks refuge into the inner life. The unfulfilment of his love for Joan causes him to withdraw even more from the world. He is a disillusioned man, a victim of frustration, hopelessness and melancholy, lacking faith in himself and in life. A defeated idealist as he is, his is a sickness of the soul:

> ...disbelief's is a power ...and power is satisfying. I lived half my life in the happiness...and unhappiness...of a vision. One fine day I find that the world I'm living in is nothing like the idea of the world I've been living by.[40]

And elsewhere he says: "My beliefs proved unworkable. I have no new ones".[41] This is the post-war disillusionment causing deep despair among the intelligentsia. Strowde tells Joan:

> ...I'm not the first man who has found beliefs that he cann't put in his pocket like so much small change.[42]

Strowde's rejection of Serocold's invitation to return to politics, his disinclination to complete the Industrial History, his coldness to Eleanor, indifference to Oliver (who is not yet aware that Strowde is his father) and his cynicism, his mocking comments on Eleanor's Report for the Industrial Committee, his

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40. Ibid., p.111.
41. Ibid., p. 12.
42. Ibid., p. 33.

savage attacks on party politics and the philistine and venal politicians who "make for righteousness somehow by the line of least resistance", reflect the mounting despair and gloom of his inner life. He would like to contribute his share to liquidate the moral chaos in political life, but he still lacks the will power to do so. A desire he has for doing what he can for the cultural and social progress of his country, but despair saps his will, and he does not possess strength enough to do any thing effective in this sphere. Nevertheless, he decides to come out of his retirement, and to return to Parliament and the Cabinet to overthrow the corrupt Bellingham.

Strowde's fidelity to the vision of his love, nevertheless, remains unshaken. The torture of Joan's refusal to marry him, and the later agony of the knowledge that she is dying, are crises in the hero's spiritual progress. He passes through the crucible of suffering which chastens him, and prepares him for a creative purpose. He moves far from the coldness and despair which had overwhelmed him in Act I and the earlier part of Act II. Involvement in life apparently makes him less aloof and cold. His fondness for Oliver in Act III, Scene 1 is an evidence of a transformation in him. The shadow of death as it falls on Joan rouses Strowde to make the only deliberate and positive decision of his life. Renouncing the meaningless, he thus turns towards his symbol of life's meaning. He survives the ordeal because he votes for the secret life rather than the worldly ambition. He is

a different man as he goes to Joan to be with her at her death-bed. Susan is right when she says to Oliver:

> Loving her so to the last... and being cheated ...is like dying for love. He'll be born again ... in a way.[43]

One is tempted to compare Strowde with Trebell, the hero of Waste. Both are intellectuals, cold and detached. Both are brilliant politicians endowed with a genius for politics. Both fail to restrain the sensual side of their nature. Trebell behaves irresponsibly with Amy O'Connel ; Strowde gives Lady Peckham a child. But it is significant that, unlike Trebell, Strowde does not develop morbid hatred for women or contempt for unsatisfactory human relationships.

A remarkable creation of Barker, Joan Westbury is presented as a chaste woman. The white shawl placed round her shoulders in Act I, Scene 1, and the shawl that she uses in the white room in Act III, Scene 2, seem to be symbolic of her chastity. For all her love for Strowde, her love for her husband remains unabated; never does she allow her love for the true hero to interfere with the happiness of her wedded life. And even when she is free to marry Strowde after the death of her husband, she decides to remain apart. She tells Strowde:

> He (Mark Westbury) was good to me. So would you be. One must live honourably.[44]

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43. Granville-Barker, The Secret Life, 159.
44. Ibid., p.108.

Not excepting the hero and Oliver, no one suffers physically and mentally more than Joan, and invites more sympathy than she. Having lost her two sons in action, her house burnt, and her husband dead, the playwright establishes a psychological basis for Joan's sense of life wasted. She is in the grip of a terrible disease, and her restlessness itself is a symptom of the disease. Night after night she lies awake, and at last asks Strowde wistfully:

> Evan, has one to die to sleep? Well, surely then there will be an end to this terrible constant consciousness of being...of purposeless being.[45]

Even before she feels the full effects of the brain tumour, she is tortured by the loss of all those she deeply loves. There is no human being to whom she can turn except, of course, to Strowde, but even him she is not willing to marry. No doctor, she says, can make her sleep and keep still. She is 'one of Nature's pranks'. With stoical courage she bears the several cruel blows which befall her. When she grips Kittredge's hand in the agony of her fatal illness, she asks him to be stern with her.

Joan. Be stern with me...or I can't bear it, I'm afraid.

Mr. Kittredge. I'm afraid you can. Headache or heartache or a harder thing...those that can suffer them must suffer them, it seems, you are the stuff, Joan, that forges well.[46]

Barker expresses honest rage at the universal suffering,

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45. Ibid., p.109.
46. Ibid., p.141.

physical and spiritual, caused by the First World War. Joan ponders over the image of destruction caused by it:

> ... yesterday I was in camp again beyond Khartoum...watching the little black babies crawl about in the sand. I can remember one that died and didn't want to die...most of them you know, come and go as easily...and he fought the air with his fists.[47]

By making the heroine visualize such a tragic scene of the annihilation of innocent children, the dramatist condemns the bestial inhumanities of war, and excites our sympathy for the sufferers. The death of her two children seems to be insignificant in the scale of the universal tragedy. She is aware of a sense of waste and suffering passing beyond her personal loss, though she does not understand or want to understand the ultimate cause of suffering. "One's capable, you know, of uncomprehended suffering", she says to Strowde, adding "why ask what an earthquake's for?"

With the loss of an arm in the war, Oliver Gauntlett, a standing symbol of a maimed life, is a perpetual reminder of the lost generation. The brutalities perpetrated on the war front make him bitter about the 'monster world' and hate the people. Joan asks him: "Tell me how one soberly hates people. I don't think I know", Oliver answers:

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47. Ibid., p.28.

> Well, you can't love the mob, surely to goodness! Because that's to be one of them...chattering and scolding and snivelling and cheering...maudlin drunk, if you like! I learned to be soldier enough to hate a mob. There's discipline in Heaven.[48]

Both Strowde and Oliver are obsessed with contempt for the people, which springs from the general moral degeneration they find all around them. It fills them with a revolutionary urge for destruction. While Strowde's will power to act is crippled primarily owing to his failure in love; Oliver has an edge over him in that he has the will to act. He has been exposed to the horrors of war as also to the discipline of arms. Destruction on the war front is of a 'futile sort', and 'better destroying' would be the liquidation of corruption and muddle. His love of orderliness, his desire to see things as they should be, and his pulsating energy which expresses itself in action - even though it may be climbing the window to reach Joan to speak out his love to her - make a man of promise out of him, and in this lies his main distinction from Strowde.

It is interesting that Oliver, too, loves Joan. His love for Joan, however, is different in its quality from that of Strowde. For one thing, it is the adoration of a youngman for a woman much older than he. Joan is enigmatically attractive. Perhaps nothing is said of her looks or physical beauty. But it is conveyed to us, without the least shadow of doubt, that she is a universally

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48. Ibid., p.86.

fascinating woman, and her fascination is primarily that of the secret life, which attracts alike persons such as Strowde and Oliver, so different from each other.

"You've all deteriorated since the war"[49] is Eleanor's comment on the ruling party of the day. The politicians have morally deteriorated since the war. A lonely and kindly figure, Eleanor stands by her ideals. Her association with Guilds, the Institute of Social Service, and the Women's Industrial Committee, evinces her concern for social welfare, though Strowde fears that such women, even "dear, good Eleanor" would "make a commonplace world of it" in their attempt to tidy it up. It is the idealist in Eleanor who calls Bellingham 'a liar', 'a trickster' with no principles. She attacks Serocold's conception of politicaly morality which believes in the achievement of ends by questionable means (making for "righteousness somehow...by the line of least resistance").

Whether it is a social cause or simply serving her brother, Eleanor wholly identifies herself with it. She tells Strowde:

> ...I fear there's only one thing I believe in... choosing a cause to serve it single-mindedly.[50]

Eleanor, however, finds her brother out. She fears Strowde has always kept up appearances a little with her. Resenting his re-entry into the political world on its own terms, as she feels, she turns from him in disgust:

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49. Ibid., p.20.
50. Ibid., p.105.

> ...I see I can be no more use to you. You're my brother...I thought I knew you... You've become a stranger to me.[51]

Eleanor's character is cast in the same mould as that of Frances Trebell in Waste. Both are dedicated, loving, self-sacrificing sisters who minister to the needs of their brothers, and comfort them in times of storm and stress. Each reflects the sharp intellectual nature of the hero in their respective plays, though the nature of the heroic experience escapes them. The sanity of each serves as a strong wall about their brothers' domestic selves. "They stand for the best that the natural virtues can reach to by taking thought." Both seem to be presented as a complimentary picture of womanhood by the dramatist. Like Shaw's women (namely, Ann Whitefield), Eleanor Strowde and Frances Trebell have their feet firmly on the earth, but are more humane and sympathetic than their precursors.

Serocold stands out from Bellingham's colleagues (the Prime Minister's Liberal Party is loaded with axe-grinders) as a politician who tries to be honest, and in this respect he is a reflection of the hero. He affirms:

> No one will bribe me, Salomons...no one, at least, has ever tried. Whether that is a compliment to my character, or an estimate of my unimportance...[52]

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51. Ibid., p.105.
52. Ibid., p.8.

Though not a venal politician, Serocold would not hesitate to comprpmise with the next best for the achievement of his ends. He is aware that the great thing is "to make for righteousness somehow...by the line of least resistance!" Caught in the toils of the political machine, and turned by it into "a restlessly active mechanical doll", he is, however, well-intentioned and innocuous. When Lady Peckham, his sister , says to him that he is 'good right through', honesty obliges him to state: 'I'm harmless'.

Candour in public life was sadly lacking in the post-war England. Politicians would talk with mental reservations disguising their inmost thoughts. Serocold seems to be an exception. He talks frankly about the weaknesses of the ruling party; admits that its members are 'at one in our firm faith in bleeding', and tells Joan that he does not favour the participation of women in politics, though it was too unpopular a thing to say in those days (franchise had been extended to women in 1918. Writers like H.G. Wells, Shaw and Granville-Barker had championed the social, political and economic freedom of women).

Salomons, the Permanent official of Bellingham's government, who has identified himself with the prevailing order, is a sharp contrast to the anarchist hidden in Strowde. The Jew is no longer a money-lender, but operates in a finer currency that gold, and that is the marketing of ideals. Morally detached as he is, he is strongly in favour of cashing in on the politician's principles,

and 'turning to some practical account' the values of heroism, patriotism and altruism. He declares:

> ...my mentality is now a little like the money
> you let me loan to master...it's a currency...
> I'm for what's marketable.[53]

The marketing of ideals was the trade that mattered in the realm of politics in the post-war England. Salomons' moral detachment serves as a foil to the 'nice-minded' hero who being disgusted with the market-place (politics), had withdrawn from it long ago.

Serocold sings to the melody of the Liebestod:

> Good night, sir Geoffrey...Salomons K.C.B.
> flat...hidden handed bureaucrat...Beast in
> Revelations...your number will shortly be up.[54]

"One can't help liking him", remarks Strowde about Sir Leslie Heriot, Bellinghom's right-hand man, exuberant, pleasant, straightforward(his habitual never-beat-about-the bush attitude) with a keen sense of humour. Probably Strowde likes Heriot for his robust faith in life which he himself sadly lacks.

A practical politician, immensely shrewd in every matter concerning the practice of politics, Heriot's genuine modesty, which seems to contradict the bust of Napoleon on the mantle-piece of his office, contrasts sharply with Strowde's intellectual ruthlessness. Essentially an egoist, Heriot is an opportunist who

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53. Ibid., p.10.
54. Ibid., p.13.

is guided by expediency, and for whom the great thing is to keep things going, and all is well while the wheels go round. Knowing opportunism as a sort of gospel, he asserts:

> Statesmanship ... is the art of dealing with men as they most illogically are, and with the time as it nearly always most unfortunately is. We hope for a better ...we strive for a better. Never let us cease to proclaim that. But the day's work must be done.[55]

Opportunism in politics was rampant, and Barker condemns it outright through the hero.

Of the minor characters Kittredge's is the most mature and cultured mind. In Act III Barker is content to make him the mouthpiece of stray thoughts and reflections which could not find a proper place elsewhere. Only in Act III, Scene 2 is he given a full opportunity as a character. It is in this Act that Kittredge performs his choric function exploring in great depth the vital issues of love, faith, and the soul. Of love he states that one cannot help giving one's heart. It is the 'taking coming short' that leads to trouble. "Study the money market", he tells Joan, "That's what sends the values down".[56]

Simple, unpretentious and unitellectual, Clumbermere relieves the atmosphere of the earlier scenes which are

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55. Ibid., p.97.
56. Ibid., p.136.

surcharged with gloom by introducing a touch of gentle humour and hard commonsense. He never imagined that he would be a millionaire, nor that he would become a lord:

> I never supposed I wanted lots of money...but I've got it. I despise titles...I'm a lord. I was bred to the Beptist Ministry, and I still think I'm a spiritually-minded man. And perhaps if I'd been blessed with three children instead of seven, I might be running a chapel now.[57]

In Lord Clumbermere's 'creed of a business man' is emphasized the necessity of reconciling the ideal and the practical: "even the demand for simple goodness is greater than the supply. My business swallows a lot"; "Righteousness is profit, Mr. Gauntlett...and before we can have honest profit we must pay our way".[58]

Clumbermere believes that the elimination of evil from world of of reality is not possible. Evil, suffering, failure and disaster are ineradicable elements in the scheme of things. Our participation in these is essential for our spiritual growth. Strowde pays his way before he is transformed. His 'ill-meaning' part in the struggle for power carries him forward as does his love for Joan.

The trio, Lady Peckham, Eleanor and Joan, who are related to the hero, the first superficially, and the other two deeply,

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57. Ibid., pp.151-152.
58. Ibid., p.154.

represent the life of the body, the mind and the spirit respectively. "I'm a tough old heathen", Lady Peckham admits, "I've more energy than brains. And I never could fuss about my immortal soul. I'm not sure that I have one."[59] Eleanor is an intellectual who works in a fur coat all the year round; "Intellectual passion, Eleanor...chilling but admirable,"[60] is Serocold's gloss on her. Her belief is: "The work of our minds lives on".[61] "To live is to love the unattainable";[62] is Joan's interpretation of her love for Strowde. And Lady Peckham's sensual love and Joan's love of the spirit are poles apart.

Susan, the young American woman, is the product of a much freer, more spontaneous environment of the New World, stronger and less troubled by the turmoil of wars than the Old World. She cannot understand the callous indifference and cynicism of Oliver and other English friends who do not react spontaneously to the shocking news of the dying Joan:

> Oh...how horribly casual you all are! I bring you such news...you all say that you loved her...you go about your business...[63]

Susan represents the practical ideal. She does not think it right on the part of Strowde to have left England for America, casting to the winds his golden chance of obtaining a Cabinet seat, and of contributing to improve the political situation,

59. Ibid., pp.51-52.
60. Ibid., p.16.
61. Ibid., p.77.
62. Ibid., p.28.
63. Ibid., p.132.

and insists on Oliver to contact the Admiralty for recalling him.

"I see great beauty in her", observes Joan about Susan, "It'll shine out in time." With Joan's death, Susan's beauty shines out, a new force emerges. She is vital, courageous, and possesses robust commonsense. At the end of the play there is a suggestion that Susan intends to do with the despairing Oliver the work Joan has failed to do with Evan - the work of encouragement and uplift. She asks Oliver: "Wouldn't you want to be raised from the dead?" And when he replies in the negative, she says: "You'll have to be ...somehow."[64]

Oliver is compellingly attracted towards Susan. Susan is what Joan should have been, if she had more of spirits, and more of her pragmatic commonsense. She is more human, more vital, but far less enigmatic than Joan. She has also a fascination, but of quite a different order from that of Joan. She is quite charming like Joan, but has warmth of feeling which Joan lacks. No wonder that both Oliver and Susan drift towards each other irresistibly towards the close of the play.

Oliver's fear of life rules out his redemption at this stage. There is, however, an indication that he might be redeemed by Susan's beneficent love. When Susan asks Oliver whether he would want to be raised from the dead, she repudiates his

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64. Ibid., p.160.

emphatic 'No, indeed', with the bold assertion: "You'll have to be ... somehow."[65]

III

The excellence of The Secret Life lies in the depiction of the idealistic love between Strowde and Joan Westbury,and the development of the inner life of the hero. Joan, who is the symbol of chastity and the image of beauty, is primarily responsible for the discovery of the ideal love that exists between them. She observes:

> Perhaps, Evan ... for a last meaning ...to love is to love the unattainable.[66]

Joan accepted the 'second best' believing that she could not have survived the supreme happiness of her union with the 'first best'. After her husband's death which frees her for Strowde, she slips back into the 'dream' of her love. Sharing the discovery of the nature of their love ("...if we loved the unattainable in each other"), Strowde still insists that Joan should marry him, but is reminded:

> We chose to dream. The empty beauty would vanish at a touch.[67]

Taking the privilege offered, she, however, suggests:

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65. Ibid., p.160.
66. Ibid., p.28.
67. Ibid., p.108.

Some other time ! Oh, can't we pretend
that there'll be some other possible time?[68]

In fact, never did Strowde and Joan picture themselves as married and settled. This confession is made by them in Act II, Scene 5. However, in spite of Joan's rejection of the marriage proposal which shocks him, Strowde remains faithful to the vision of love nursing it to the very end. Joan speaks to Kittredge of her reunion with the hero. Strowde's "Loving her so to the last ...is like dying for her",[69] says Susan.

The yearning of Strowde and Joan for the unattainable love is like Shelly's "desire of the moth for the star". It is a desire of the moth to reach the star, a desire which is never capable of being realized, but it is in the intensity of yearning and the expectation of its fulfilment that the real happiness lies.

The ideal love between Strowde and Joan appears to be a development of Philip Madras' conception of love in The Madras House. In Act II of The Madras House Miss Chancellor, the housekeeper of Roberts and Huxtable, takes a serious view of Brigstock's kissing of Miss Yates, of Yates' transgression, and suggests her and Brigstock's dismissal. Philips, on the other hand, takes a liberal view of the matter, and would like the living-in-system to be a "utopia of Platonic friendships" wherein kissing and innocent flirtation should be allowed. Again, when Thomas, who

68. Ibid., p.110.
69. Ibid., p.159.

flirts with Jessica, tells Philip innocently that Jessica wants to be made love to, and that he is on the verge of falling in love with her, Philip permits Thomas to make love to Jessica, if she wants him to.

Philip's advocacy of Platonic friendship exhibits not only large-heartedness, but also foresight and wisdom. The Platonic friendship of his conception, which could be a means of exhilaration and delight, offers a panacea for sex starvation to the shop-assistants, who are victims of the living-in-system, which entails a virtual confinement and soulless drugdery. The ideal love of Strowde and Joan, on the other hand, precludes even kissing and flirtation ('And we never kissed'). It is a touch-me-not kind of love, cold and barren leading to spiritual emptiness and nihilism and lacking warmth and happiness which Platonic love is expected to radiate in The Madras House.

The play conveys the profound truth that evil is an essential ingredient of life in determining man's moral development. It is a part of the process through which human-beings change. Strowde through suffering passes beyond evil, and defeat. Strowde undergoes suffering caused by his frustration in love and politics. He associates himself again with the vicious political system he has been condemning. He renounces his chances of success at the Parliamentary elections, and goes to Joan to be at her death bed. This constitutes the inevitable

process of his moral progress. Like Barker, Browning also recognizes evil as an instrument in the process of man's moral growth, and absorbs it into his optimistic theory of life. In Abt Volger, the speaker says:

> The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound,
> What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more.

Evil has no more existence than silence between sounds. Good requires a medium of negation or evil, in contrast with which it may shine out and show itself in its essence. To realize oneself, to be able to play one's destined role in life, one must grapple with evil, embrace life breast-high and not shun it.

It is true that The Secret Life is a play of disenchantment, but it is not a play of despair and hopelessness. The play brings home the high price Strowde and Oliver have to pay for lack of faith in themselves and in life which causes purposelessness, cynicism and unhappiness. Kittredge sees the post-war generation giving itself to disbelief and purposelessness, but affirms that a "consciousness of purpose is still the greatest power".[70] In the face of despair and bitterness, says Kittredge, one can have faith in a better future. To the dying Joan he declares his faith:

> This I can believe. The generation of the spirit
> is not as the generation of the flesh...for its
> virtue is diffused like light, generously, unpriced.

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70. Ibid., p. 138.

> Doing and suffering and the work of thought must take its toll of us...Who wouldn't want to forget sometimes this strange, new, useless burden of the soul? Left comfortless, we must bear it for a while as bravely as we may. [71]

Apart from Kittredge, Eleanor and Susan vindicate the value of faith. Eleanor never loses her faith in life and stands up for what she can believe in and work for. She has faith in the future and in the capability of man to make it bright. When Evan mentions the terrifying prospects of the breaking up of the atom, Eleanor boldly asserts: "If we can break it up we can teach it how to behave...if we choose."[72]

Susan has a staunch faith in life and in the need for striving to translate one's ideals into reality. When Oliver tells her that Evan won't come back, she is sure that he will, and that he will be a transformed man. Oliver accuses her of believing in miracles. She admits that she does believe in miracles of that sort, and inquires: "Wouldn't you want to be raised from the dead." When he replies: "No, indeed", she says: "You'll have to be...somehow". [73] Susan hopes for a better future and is sustained by faith. It is in these suggestions of hope and faith that Barker emphasizes the value of faith, and expresses his solution to the problem of the play.

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71. Ibid., p.144.
72. Ibid., p. 66.
73. Ibid., p.160.

CHAPTER VII

HIS MAJESTY

His Majesty, Granville-Barker's last play, was begun in 1923 and completed in 1928. It is a study of the aftermath of the First World War in Carpathia, a mythical country. King Henry XIII of Carpathia suffered a defeat in the War, was made a scapegoat by his people, and forced to quit his kingdom. After his departure, the political, economic and moral state of the country deteriorates. A revolution takes place which unleashes a reign of terror. Red Terror and White Terror rage. Political corruption thrives in the midst of economic crisis and moral chaos. The government headed by Dr.Madrassy does not enjoy popularity. Stephen Czernyak and his insurgent royalists have set up their headquarters at Eisenthal and are posing a threat to the government. The King returns to his country to avert a civil war. His problem is not only the problem of an exiled monarch who returns to his kingdom in the midst of political instability and economic crisis, but the problem of an idealist who wants to stop bloodshed and establish peace and order in his troublous state. What guides the King's action is his supreme reverence for life. And it is this which brings him into conflict with personages who stand for power and privilege. The play dramatizes the idea that in the life of a nation, as in the life of an individual, humanity is more valuable than privilege.

His Majesty has a remarkable unity of action. There is a logical sequence of relationship between events, and the various episodes are artistically integrated with the structure of the play. The exposition is lucidly presented. In the audience the King grants to Osgood, the American journalist, the central situation is unfolded with forceful clarity (Act I, Scene 1). The King says that he would like to restore order, dignity and decency to his country if he could, but under no circumstances would he shed blood. He declares: "I shall not re-enter Carpathia like a thief or as a conqueror."[1] His pacifism, however, brings him into conflict with his supporters as well as his antagonists. He would neither countenance the militant moves of Stephen Czernyak who is King's supporter, nor would he accept Queen Rosamund's romantic suggestion: "Carpathia is yours, Henry. Go and take it. Go to Eisenthal Ride into Karlsburg at the head of your army..."[2]

The plot moves forward in Act I, Scene 2 in which the King grants an audience to Count Zapolya, his former Foreign Minister. The Elder statesman's critical analysis of the political situation in Carpathia, and his exposure of the Neustrian governments' nefarious designs of fishing in troubled waters in the event of a civil war in Carpathia make Henry have second thoughts on his decision of not going back to his country. He is perturbed by this revelation. "I hope there's Hell".[3] The climax of Act I

1. His Majesty, p.6.
2. Ibid., p. 12.
3. Ibid., p. 21.

reaches in the decision of the King to go back to his kingdom to save it from the threat of a general conflagration; and to restore order. He emphatically tells the Queen: "I won't have civil war started. Stephen must come to heel".[4] Roger Dod, the young Englishman, is to airlift the King's party to Carpathia.

The gloomy atmosphere of Act II, Scene I, is dramatically significant. The ruined salon of Countess Czernyak's chateau is a reminder of a grandeur that is no more. Countess Czernyak and her daughter, Dominica, are presented as people who are living on the verge of privation and have grown accustomed to danger. Even the maid's news that there are strangers in the garden fails to frighten them. Henry is aware of the critical situation. A message has to be sent to Czernyak for disbanding the armed force, and Madrassy has to be summoned for parley. The King's movements convey the impression of restlessness, and foreshadow significant dramatic developments. The Countess's memories of the revolution give us a fleeting glimpse of the reign of terror that prevailed in Carpathia after the First World War. "I find myself here among the wreckage", says the Countess, "For my life's like this". She continues:

> I stood in this room, Ma'am, and saw it wrecked round me by men and women I'd known, some of them as children...and one of them snatched back a little silver Madonna they'd taken...I suppose, he thought I valued it. They killed him...thereby that window.[5]

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4. Ibid., p.26.
5. Ibid., p.38.

Queen Rosamund's vision of the glorious past is diametrically opposed to that of the Countess:

> I dreamt last might...I woke with such a jump and the moon was shining on me...about that last Birth day ball...the men in their uniforms and all those pretty girls kissing my hand...[6]

The contrasting visions of the two ladies conjure up two divergent worlds: one that of anarchy, and the other of vanished royal glory of the past. Their visions also reveal a striking aspect of their character: The Countess' disgust of the carnage in Carpathia, and the Queen's wistful longing to return to the vanished royal scene.

At the meeting between the Queen and Colonel Hadik, who was the chief instructor in Ballistics at the Militory Academy, but is now a caretaker, we are allowed a glimpse of the decayed aristocracy represented by the latter.

Complications set in Act II, Scene 2, when Madrassy, during his parley with Henry, challenges him either to go back to Zurich or command his troops. "You can sensibly do one of two things, Sir", says Madrassy, "Be off back again. Or head the rabble from Eisenthal".[7] Madrassy is presented as a mild statesman averse to fighting, and one who pretended illness during the Red Terror and the White Terror in order to dissociate himself from violence. Thus the King and Madrassy are shown as moderates on the side of the angels. The situation is, nevertheless complicated by the news

6. Ibid., p. 39.
7. Ibid., p. 46.

that Czernyak's soldiers have begun to move from Eisenthal. Incensed at the news of Czernyak's advance in defiance of his orders, the King, rather ominously, remembers his sword, as he protests to Madrassy:

> ...If I were the fool or the trickster you seem to take me for, I'd surrender the sword...By the bye Guastalla, I must have a sword. Why mine was left behind?[8]

The King declares that he wants to stop "this sort of folly, not to profit by it."[9] At the meeting both the King and Madrassy display their earnest desire not to make an appeal to arms for the settlement of the issues at stake; the negotiations, however, do not achieve tangible results. The encounter rather inaugurates Henry's conflict with his opponents.

In Act III the curtain rises to reveal Zimony railway station where their Majesties live in the two railway coaches. The opening scene shows a conference in progress between the King's party and Dr. Madrassy, Bruckner and General Horvath representing the Karlsburg government. It soon emerges that, after three week's protracted negotiations, the parties agree to sign an armistice. Not a shot has been fired.

Barker's rejection of the conference as an opportunity for debate round a table shows a shift from his earlier technique. There is less academic discussion in this play and more physical

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8. Ibid., p. 49.
9. Ibid., p. 49.

action than in The Voysey Inheritance, Waste, and The Madras House. Although the armistice has been signed, tension prevails. It is clear that all is not yet over. General Czernyak, unhappy over the armistice, contrasts sharply with General Horvath, the seasoned soldier, gone soft, and satisfied with the settlement: "a bloodless compaign brought to a creditable conclusion."[10]

In a series of episodes groups of characters discuss the post-armistice situation, the King's personal plans and the occupation of Zimony. The progress of the action is rather slow; but apparently there is dramatic preparation for the climax in the second half of Act III. The King has promised to Madrassy that he would quit the country, the moment the trouble is over. During his stay, he,however, finds that the Madrassy government is not popular. For the first time he appears disposed, as he talks with Madrassy and Bruckner. to make a bid for constitutional monarchy. He says:

> ...I've had a happy time here...playing at soldiers...and at being a King again. And I don't want to boast...but we've been quite popular. You're not...so I gather...in Karlsburg, for the moment.[11]

Bruckner's outburst: "Who wants you, Sir...and what for?"[12] is pointedly answered by Henry who asserts as his (King's) gift the ability of getting along with his 'fellow-man', since he likes

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10. Ibid., p. 61.
11. Ibid., p. 66.
12. Ibid., p. 66.

him: "But I really like the creature...Homosapiens, you know...even when he is n't ...I like him."[13] And the King believes that the common man needs somebody who is not motivated by selfish considerations in his solicitude for him. He points out the limitations of democracy by stating that in it the rulers flatter the governed, but have no real love for them:

> ...You gentlemen that govern him (the common man)...and there are so many of you nowadays...despise him, don't you? He knows that. You flatter him... because you are afraid of him...and you come at last to hate him. He knows! He can't do without you for the moment. But it's a sort of comfort to him...tussling with life...that there's one fellow-creature(the King), at least, free enough from the tussle to want nothing from him.[14]

Reacting adversely to the King's remarks about the rulers in a democracy, Madrassy holds out a threat to him that he (the King) would not be allowed to leave Carpathia unless he formally abdicates. The gradually mounting tension is intensified by Czernyak's announcement about his differences with Horvath's stand for occupying Zimony. Nagy, the Mayor of Zimony, impatiently waiting for an audience with the King, 'sneaks in' and makes a fervent appeal for peace:

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13. Ibid., p. 67.
14. Ibid., p. 67.

> Zimoni has fought over in the war...you won't expect us to forget that, will you? We've built it up again...leave us the good we've got...This country's a bit sick of these squabblings and manoeuvrings.[15]

The Mayor's speech is dramatically significant in that it articulates the feelings of the common citizen on the return of their Majesties. Nagy, the King in miniature, disapproves of fighting and wants peace not only in Zimoni, but throughout the land. And the mood of the ordinary citizen as expressed by him is unmistakably that of many a European and possibly many an Asiatic country after the War.

After the departure of Nagy, tempers run high on Madrassy's insistance on the King's abdication. On a point of honour the King won't yield to threats, and when Madrassy throws the challenge: "Do you mean to make us fight you...after all?"[16], the King accepts it and says :"Give me choice of weapons...yes, I'll fight you and beat you! And you'd thank me."[17] Fearing events may take a serious turn, Madrassy and Bruckner shrink back and depart to confer with Horvath. Exploiting the shift in the situation, Czernyak makes a passionate appeal to Henry:

> Sir...Sir...break off with them! They've given us the chance. Send them packing. Give me my head now and I'll have you in Karlsburg in a week![18]

The King refuses to be pressuried by his General, and his

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15. Ibid., p.71.
16. Ibid., p.72.
17. Ibid., p.73.
18. Ibid., p.73.

disapproval of military action sets in motion a conflict in Czernyak's mind between obedience and defiance.

The crisis in Act III is reached with the commencement of hostilities by the royalist forces. The mixed reception to an attack on Zimoni creates a mood in which excitement and consternation are mingled. The King, furious and grim, calls for his sword. It evokes an ecstatic appreciation from Queen Rosamund: "Henry you're going to lead them! Oh, at last! You'll draw your sword and lead them."[19] But he sternly corrects her: "Nonsense... Please try not to make a fool of yourself."[20] The spontaneous advance of the soldiers, the defiance of Czernyak's orders by own Eisenthalers to round up the soldiers guilty of looting, injure his pride and eclipse his reputation. The King's authority, too, has been disregarded. Czernyak tries to retrieve his personal honour by reaffirming his loyalty: "They've been talking to me...some of them. Give me my orders, please."[21] But the King would not pretend to a semblance of authority and declines to accept the appeal: "I've no orders".[22] The King's angry refusal intensifies the conflict between him and the General. For the first time Czernyak loses self-restraint: "I wish to God I were with them, then...waiting to be shot! You've broken me, Sir...You've broken me!"[23]

The defiance of the King's authority by the troops is too much for him, and he surrenders his sword to General Horvath

19. Ibid., p. 84.
20. Ibid., p. 84.
21. Ibid., p. 86.
22. Ibid., p. 86.
23. Ibid., p. 86.

saying: "General...my troops have mutinied and disgraced me. I surrender my sword to you."[24] Horvath, under no circumstances, would accept this symbol of surrender from His Majesty whom he loves and esteems. The King throws the sword on the ground and vanishes into the railway carriage.

Nothing could be more shocking to the Queen than this surrender. Bruckner meets the Queen, and for the first time the wily statesman places his cards on the table declaring that he is for fighting, and deciding once and for all as to who is to be the master of the country:

> I've been for fighting and making you fight. Let's know who's to be the master. This wretched country needs to know... for it needs me. I mean to be its master.[25]

The Queen's vision:royalty at the centre, its authority unquestioned, often blinds her to the realities of the situation, and makes her act in a manner that borders on stupidity.Bruckner's sinister suggestion to her for keeping Horvath chatting for some time and dashing for their best guns is well received; and she allows herself to be in conspiracy with the man whom she despises. She even tries to bribe him with her pearls. Bruckner, however, will not allow such an easy victory as the Queen wants. Returning the necklace he says:

> I respect you. Madam, for the attempt. I am not above bribes. But you haven't my price in your pocket for

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24. Ibid., p. 86.
25. Ibid., p. 91.

the moment...No...I must fight you for a bit...and
beat you if I can.[26]

Czernyak accepts the challenge, takes his decision, gets the Queen's approval and thunders at Bruckner:

Tell your colleagues in the waiting room, Mr.Bruckner,
that I'm taking your advice. But if I beat you and
have my way...I'll skin you alive.[27]

In Act IV, Scene I the atmosphere is surcharged with gloom, and we see their Majesties held captive in a railway carriage under the rigid vigilance of the head jailor. The meeting of Sir Charles Cruwys, the British Minister, with the King is well-timed and nicely contrived. The British Minister informs Henry that Horvath has been ordered by Madrassy to avoid a major confrontation with a view to staving off the civil war. "Bruckner's nominee took over Horvath's command this morning", discloses Sir Charles and adds that he fears that Czernyak's two thousand soldiers would be massacred in the event of their not surrendering to the enemy. To the well-meaning Henry now there seems to be no alternative to the signing of the document of abdication. He believes that enormous gains will accrue to the nation from this:

Finessing for my skin all this week with Bruckner
and his catastrophic friends!...He's to flourish
it signed and sealed in their faces tomorrow. A
respectable Republic in being. Stocks and shares

26. Ibid., p. 92.
27. Ibid., p. 92.

mounting again! And their only excuse for letting
hell loose spirited away![28]

Sir Charles produces the document of abdication. He makes it clear to the King that the British Government has no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of Carpathia by pressurizing either Madrassy or the King for the abdication. But it is evident to Henry that the British Minister has come to blackmail him. And when Sir Charles makes an official statement: "Upon your Majesty's abdicating I am authorized by my government to offer you suitable asylum",[29] the King stoutly protests being packed off: "You can't do that! No government worth the salt will let you!"[30]

The King makes it clear that he came back to his kingdom not only to avert the civil war, but also to help the Carpathian government in the restoration of peace and order. "Have you ever been possessed by an idea, Sir Charles?" Henry asks him and is answered, "In my youth I believed I was a poet."[31] And the King continues:

> I came back set not to fight...and with nothing I wanted to win. But I did come to think for a while that there was something for me to do here, I shall never do it. Who wants it done? Yet I've never felt so much a King as I do now. As a poet...You'll understand that.[32]

So to the reckoning in terms of success is opposed the faith in

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28. Ibid., pp. 101-102.
29. Ibid., p. 97.
30. Ibid., p. 100.
31. Ibid., p. 101.
32. Ibid., p. 101.

"the battle that's worth losing", the battle that cannot be won.

Bruckner's meeting with the King is politically motivated. Without mincing words he gets down to brasstacks with Henry: "If you'll do as I tell you I'll have you in Karlsburg within the week."[33] Bruckner is ready with another hammer-blow. He informs the King "Czernyak is dead". In fact, Bruckner had got the General murdered, though he would not admit it directly. The King reacts to the news cooly without expressing surprise or grief.

Like a modern statesman, Bruckner proceeds in a tactful and subtle manner to forge a political alliance with Henry recognizing that the King's popularity and position would be to his great advantage. "I've been wondering all this week if the very legend of you locked up here mightn't beat us", he admits, and adds: "The two of us can stop things here stampeding to perdition. If we don't...I don't know now what else can...Can we shake free and make a fresh start and do the sensible thing between us?"[34] Bruckner's political plan envisages reprisals to wipe out the opposition and a fake plebiscite. The King is, however, too clever not to perceive the sinister game. Henry declines the offer which, if accepted, would accord his political sanction to Bruckner's nefarious political plan, and reduce him to a mere figure - head with little political power. ("The sight of me with a crown on occasionally would keep them amused, you think"[35]).

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33. Ibid., p.107.
34. Ibid.,pp.108-109.
35. Ibid., p.113.

There can be no bargain between King Henry and Bruckner:Czernyak's dead body would always lie between them. "I could hardly tell you, Mr.Bruckner", says the King, "how fantastically unreal all you've been saying has seemed to me".[36] The document of abdication is then signed, and witnessed by Guastalla. It is handed over to Bruckner for return to Madrassy.

Barker's heroes talk a lot, but when it comes to action,they are not found wanting. The King acts prudently to stop the civil war. The pen accomplishes what the sword could not. One would believe with Morgan:

> No act could be less spectacular, yet it is the most effective that the King has made since the play began: the fulfilment of his kingly responsibility, not the washing of the hands that seemed to concern him in the play's first scene.[37]

The signing of the document of abdication puts an end to the King's conflict with his opponents as also to the mounting curiosity of the audience as to whether or not Henry will be able to avert the civil war. This scene sets in motion the process of resolution which the final scene accomplishes.

In the final scene of Act IV Sir Charles' anticipation: "If I don't like the look of things I shall pack you across the frontier whether you abdicate or not",[38] is fulfilled; though the Queen bemoans: "But why do they let us go...why haven't they killed us?"[39] Now that the King's purpose of stopping the civil

36. Ibid., p.115.
37. A Drama of Political Man, p.291.
38. His Majesty, p.100
39. Ibid., p.126.

war has been accomplished, he is agreeable to accept the British Government's offer of an asylum in Bermuda.

On the eve of their departure, Jakab, the old farmer, comes to bid farewell. Innocent of the fact that royal honours are not valid after abdication, he asks the Queen to confer some decorations on him. The Queen, however, to humour him presents Jakab with the two Grand Crosses of Anne and five second class St. Andrews, saying: "Mr. Jakab! Yesterday you would have been a Knight of St. Andrew".[40] It is for the last time that Rosamund stands as the symbol of royalty. The Jakab incident comes on the top of the fact that the King has gone to inspect his naval escort in an ill-fitting, ready-made suit, and is followed immediately by the realization that the Queen has no money to pay for a hat-box. She for the first time breaks down: "I've stood up to the worst. But little things happen you're not ready for".[41]

The play ends with the departure of the King and the Queen for their new haven in Bermuda. And as the train moves forward, Henry draws the attention of the Queen to a flattering statement about her in the newspaper account of the interview he had granted to Osgood, the American journalist, in which she is described as combining in her 'mothercraft' and 'political intelligence!'[42] As the Queen reads the jounalist's report, she is interested in herself as a woman, not as a Queen. The curtain significantly falls on the Queen - the woman, and not the romantic representative

40. Ibid.p. 124.
41. Ibid.,p. 125.
42. Ibid.,p. 131.

of a vanished royalty. The circle has come the full round. The various episodes are ingeniously interwoven into the texture of the play, and the character and situation effectively combine to articulate the theme.

II

Like Trebell (Waste) and Strowde (The Secret Life), King Henry is an intellectual idealist possessing integrity and strong will. Like them too he has an unswerving faith in his ideals, and combines his idealism with practical ability to achieve his objectives. Carpathia is on the edge of a precipice, political, economic and moral,and the king wants to establish peace and order, and forge the unity of all political parties. His idealism runs into stern opposition, and he has to struggle hard for the accomplishment of his ideals. His ardent and altruistic idealism clashes with the Queen's love of privilege and conservatism, and the selfish and cunning politics of Madrassy and Bruckner. He would resist Sir Charles' well-meaning blackmail as well as he could. He stands for the lofty values of life - integrity, altruism, truth,humanity - which are in conflict with the egoistic and material values cherished by Rosamund, Czernyak, Madrassy and Bruckner. He reveals his philosophy of life in his reply to Sir Charles:

> There are two ways of looking at this world, aren't they? As a chaos that you fish in for your profit...you can always pull something up. Then there's the world of your

idea ...and some of us would sooner go on to the end, hoping that may come true...And the further the reality slips from you...the better you know the idea was true. I came back set not to fight...and with nothing I wanted to win. But I did come to think for a little that there was something for me to do here. I shall never do it. Who wants it done? Yet I've never felt so much a King as I do now.[43]

Although King Henry is not able to liquidate political turmoil and moral chaos, as he does not get an opportunity to do so; he wins our admiration for the earnest pursuit of his ideals. The prevention of the civil war is his significant achievement ; though the price he pays for it is his own abdication. The Queen regards the abdication as a failure of their life, but to the King the event means a practical triumph:

...I came back to stop the civil war. I've stopped it...and there won't be another. All the men are to be sent home. No reprisals...no court martialling! I've done what I came to do. I have won![44]

The King is the embodiment of courtesy. It is an inborn quality in him. In his interview with Osgood, which the Queen resents "This talking to journalists...it's so undignified."[45] he is all courtesy. In fact, he possesses all the attributes of an ideal King. In spite of the Queen's embarrasing him by persuading him

43. His Majesty, p. 101.
44. Ibid., p. 130.
45. Ibid., p. 11.

to strive for his re-instatement on the throne, Henry is patient to her except for the very rare outburst in his rebuke. "Please try not to make a fool of yourself".[46] He is shrewd enough not to fall into the trap laid by Bruckner, and to realize the truth of his own outmoded position. "Europe must face democracy",[47] he confirms.

Unselfishness and humanity are Henry's most remarkable qualities. The acceptance of his responsibilities and the pursuit of his ideals are not prompted by ulterior motives. His return to his country is motivated by its welfare. Getting on with the 'fellow-man' from whom he does not expect even his vote, and whom he "wishes well now and then with a word or two",[48] he rightly regards as his great gift. During their temporary captivity in Zimony, the King visits Jakab's farm, becomes friendly with him ("And His Majesty being so friendly"[49], and gives Snowjacket to him. He likes people and the people like him. Barker presents King Henry as a symbol of popularity and love. Although people like the democratic form of govenment, and have no faith in kings, the old sentiment of affection for them still lingers. The rulers flatter, placate and make a show of their love to the governed, because they can remain in power only subject to their approval: The King, on the other hand, sincerely loves the people, and is not afraid of them precisely because he does not expect anything from them. The King's answer to Bruckner's query: "Who wants you,

46. Ibid., p.84.
47. Ibid., p.127.
48. Ibid., p.67.
49. Ibid., p.124.

Sir...and what for?"[50] is perfectly valid:

> you flatter him...(the common man) because you are afraid of him...and you come at last to hate him. He knows! He cann't do without you for the moment. But it's a sort of comfort to him...tussling with life...to feel that there's one fellow creature, at least, free from the tussle to want nothing from him...not even his vote."[51]

Almost every character in the play speaks highly of the King. "Your King's a good fellow", says Captain Roger Dod, "I'm for him, and the country's for him...if you'd give it the chance to say so."[52] "His Majesty's a kind gentleman"[53], says sergeant-major Bacay. King Henry is a very convincing and successful creation. The play gains from the fact that he remains throughout in the centre of the action. It is significant (Barker was a democrate by conviction) that in his portrayal of a King the playwright has depicted his most likeable hero.

There is a clear resemblance between King Henry and King Magnus of Shaw's <u>The Apple Cart</u>. Both are capable rulers representing a high aristocratic tradition of political leadership. They are presented as models of politeness and good manners. Both are shrewd, strong and self-possessed with a robust sense of humour. King Henry faces the crisis created by Czernyak's mens' unprovoked

50. Ibid., p. 66.
51. Ibid., p. 67.
52. Ibid., p. 64.
53. Ibid., p. 78.

aggression on Zimoni, and the defiance of his authority with patience and cool-headedness. His sagacity and perceptiveness enable him not to be outwitted by Bruckner's tactics and his vicious political plan. King Magnus, too, confronts the Cabinet crisis; occasioned by the ultimatum, which seeks to render him politically a cipher, with courage and equanimity. Both exhibit political wisdom and foresight by deciding to abdicate in order to avert a major confrontation. By abdicating Barker's King achieves a moral and practical victory over the forces of expediency and egotism. Shaw's King averts a conflict with his Cabinet in which success would 'damage' and failure 'disable' him. He checkmates his opponents by threatening to abdicate. A compromise is eventually reached in which the ultimatum is withdrawn, and the things remain as they are. This is King Magnus' signal victory. In both the plays, in contrast with the King, who possesses sound political knowledge, political sagacity and broad experience, the CabinetMinisters are presented as persons of inferior intelligence and low political acumen; and the Kings refuse to be puppets and get the better of their opponents.

Magnificence is the great quality that the playwright associates with Queen Rosamund, Confident of her divine sovereignty her magnificence, however, borders on snobbery as compared with natural good manners of the King. When in exile in Zurich, she refuses to accept her status an an exiled Queen, and insists on court ettiqutte. She has poor Colonel Guastalla changing time after time from civilian clothes to his uniform. The King has

sympathies with him Colonel: "Poor Guastalla! in and out twenty times a day...and has to change each time".[54] There is a romantic element in the Queen's nature which makes her at times to indulge in day dreaming. The King has declared that he will not enter Carpathia either as a thief or as a conqueror, but she imagines him standing "before the altar...crowned, with your sword stretched out, taking your oath to save Carpathia in her need". "She's not very wise",[55] is Countess Czernyak's judgement. Actuated by her fanatical zeal to have Henry reinstated ("And I want you to be great...and I mean you to be")[56], she demands that the King should go back and fight for the throne. She pleads that he should countenance Czernyak and his soldiers who are prepared to sacrifice their lives for him, and that he should avail of the opportunity presented to him. ("God's giving you another chance...to draw your sword and lead them.")[57] She enters into a conspiracy with Czernyak without her husband's knowledge to have him reinstated, and would send old currency, which carries Henry's picture and is now invalid, to bribe Bruckner's underlings to assassinate him. In her frantic struggle to have the King back on the throne, Rosamund shows amazing courage and self-confidence in facing hardships and humiliation. She remains steadfast in upholding and pursuing what she believes to be right. Henry pays her a sincere tribute when he says: "You're often right by instinct when my judgement is wrong".[58] Romantic, immature, even childish

54. Ibid., p. 19.
55. Ibid., p. 76.
56. Ibid., p. 27.
57. Ibid., p. 84.
58. Ibid., p. 27.

though at times she be, the Queen is admirable too. She is loyal and compassionate to her friends. Moved by Hadik's pathetic condition, she remarks:

> ...I disapprove of your being in this menial position. I shall tell Countess Czernyak so. And those responsible for your neglect will be punished.[59]

A melodramatic quality in Rosamund is combined with her absolute sincerity. A loving wife and affectionate mother, she exhibits considerable knowledge of politics too. A woman in whom "mothercraft goes hand in hand with high political intelligence",[60] is Osgood's estimate of her.

The interest of the play centres round the King and the Queen, but the other major or minor characters from Madrassy down to Jakab are also finely portrayed. Dr.Madrassy, the present head of the Carpathian government, is presented as not an unsympathetic figure. It is dramatically significant that Madrassy was once the King's tutor in classics. Unlike Zapolya, he was not bred to politics; he is a scholar who switches over to politics. And politics brutalizes and makes him foxy and tortuous. "I'm the stippery politician, Sir...I don't fight",[61] he tells the King. It is as a pacifist that he is linked with the King. Both are opposed to violence and bloodshed in principle. As the Minister of Education, he dissociated himself from violence by contracting rheumatic fever and then shingles during the Red Terror

59. Ibid., p. 43.
60. Ibid., p.131.
61. Ibid., p. 43.

and the White Terror. He naturally feels proud of the work he did during the revolution:

> My staff stuck to me...and the work went on somehow. And through Red Terror and White Terror not a school in the country was closed.[62]

Thanks to Madrassy's non-militant policy, the major confrontation between Czernyak's insurgents and General Horvath's army does not take place. A holocaust is thus averted. Unlike Madrassy, Bruckner is strongly in favour of fighting. In contrast with Madrassy's pacifist policy, his is a militant and belligerent one. Immediately after the signing of the armistice, he tells Madrassy: "We'd better have forced him to fight",[63] and suggests to the Queen: "Haven't we had enough of this foolery? If we have anything to fight about we ought to be fighting."[64] He wants to decide once and for all who is to be the master of the country, and admits that he means to be its master himself.

He is a plebian and was once a boot-black. With poor cultural background, naturally, he is curt and uncouth in his behaviour towards others. When the King expresses his desire to prolong his stay to restore law and order in his kingdom, Bruckner turns on him with curtness: "Who wants you, Sir...and what for?"[65] "As a politician, he is radical in his outlook. When the war came, he was imprisoned for "optimism, belief in the millennium...in the brotherhood of man and the rest of it."[66] He visualized the overthrow of

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62. Ibid., p. 50.
63. Ibid., p. 65.
64. Ibid., p. 89.
65. Ibid., p. 66.
66. Ibid., p. 111.

the monarchy, and the establishment of socialist democracy which would usher in an era of peace,prosperity and happiness. He confesses he is quite cured now. However, he is hungry for power. He has weeded out intractable elements from his party, and gathered young bravados about him to capture power. He is a Hitler in miniature, a man of destiny biding his time. Says he to the King:

> There's one way to govern a country... just one. Find where its real power is...and give that play. It's in me for the moment...and the men of my mind.[67]

In his overwhelming desire to reinstall the King on the throne, Stephen Czernyak stands out among Henry's most staunch supporters and well-wishers. Failing to persuade the King 'to blaze' his way to Karlsburg, the General, working in leage with the Queen and Guastalla, launches an offensive against Madrassy's mighty armed forces. He is a Carpathian Hotspur: intrepid, ferocious ("there is something of the panther about him")[68], impetuous and noble. Both Czernyak and Hotspur (Henry IV) are fearless fighters and born leaders of men; the former fights for the King, and the latter against the King. Both the worriors exhibit amazing courage in the face of heavy odds. Outnumbered by the enemy's armed forces, Czernyak marches on Karlsburg like Garibaldi's Thousand; as Hotspur looks forward with eager delight to the time when he shall meet "the madcap Prince of Wales" in the first shock of arms; and is

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67. Ibid., p. 113.
68. Ibid., p 58.

not at all daunted on learning that the encounter must be hazarded without the help of Glendower who "comes not in, o'eruled by prophecies." Both have a high sense of honour and are actuated by generous impulses and lofty thoughts. Czernyak outright rejects Bruckner's suggestion for a surprise attack ("It wouldn't be a very pretty trick"),[69] and, when Hotspur is killed by the Prince in the battle, his last regret is not that he has lost his life, but that he has lost his reputation likewise. Both the Generals are sceptical by temperament. Czernyak's sceptical temperament would not let him be persuaded by the divinity of kingship ("you don't believe in my divine right, Stephen"); Hotspur mocks at Glendower's claim to supernatural powers.

Czernyak's integrity and loyalty to King Henry are indisputable. The military action approved only by the Queen is motivated by his fanatical desire to restore the King to the throne. He has no axe to grind. His move, nevertheless, runs counter to the King's prefessed wish that he would not fight his way to Karlsburg. On this count the General becomes a liability rather than an asset to Henry.

Stephen Czwrnyak's toughness, drive, courage and impetuousity are thrown into sharp focus by General Horvath's softness, accommodation and sentimentality. The dramatist says in the stage direction that the old General's good living and good nature have severely told upon his military virtues. Horvath expresses regret to the King that circumstances should have brought him into apparent

69. Ibid., p. 90.

conflict with him: "I have endeavoured to combine duty to my country with all possible respect to your Majesty personally",[70] he says. Indeed, Horvath has too deep a reverence for the King, and too much devotion to his interests to accept the sword which Henry holds out to him in surrender. He represents the pro-monarchical public sentiment in Carpathia.

Countess Czernyak acts as the chorus of the play. She brings home the unsettling effects of war, its aftermath. Her own country house where their Majesties find shelter was looted and wrecked by the people during the revolution after the War. It is the image of anarchy which reigned supreme after the War. There was a large-scale destruction-arson, plunder and killing during the Red Terror and the White Terror. "I find myself here among the wreakage", says the Countess, "For my life's like this, Ma'am."[71] Like Kittredge in _The Secret Life_, the countess shows awareness of the vital issues the play seeks to dramatize. She regards the King's return to his former kingdom as unwise and futile. Of course, the well-meaning King wants to settle things in his war-torn country, but as it turns out, he is not able to restrain his General, and has to abdicate to stop the civil war. The Countess is, therefore, justified in saying: "They should never come back. It was hopeless. That world has vanished."[72]

Colonel Guastalla serves their Majesties with unstinted devotion, and as a fellow-conspirator, he is prompted by the motive of helping the Queen and Czernyak in their attempts to reinstate

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71. Ibid., p. 38.
72. Ibid., p. 79.

the King. He adores the Queen as a goddess. "You're his goddess... you've only to lift your finger",[73] rightly says the King to the Queen. Fluent of speech but discret, Guastalla has a perfect temper.

Of the minor characters, Colonel Hadik's is a superb portrait, neat and chiselled. Once an expert in gunnery (He was the chief instructor in Ballistics at the Military Academy), he is now the caretaker at the Countess's and is more contented than most people in his position would be. He still has the power in him to absorb himself in higher mathematics to create, in his own way, a new world for himself:

> I study mathematics still. In the higher mathematics lies knowledge that has hardly yet been cursed by man's use of it.[74]

The King, the Countess and Hadik are presented as engaged in creating their own worlds for them. War destroys the basic values of life, namely humanity, truth, integrity, non-violence: and these personages are busy in their own way in recreating these values. King Henry is an apostle of peace and non-violence; the Countess loathes violence, blookshed and bestial inhumanities perpetuated during the revolution; and Hadik detests fighting now. The Colonel's statement:

> I was proud of my guns once...but I am not very wise now. I could still fight...but you never know who guns kill...and I think now it may not be right to...[75]

has a great significance. Like the King's and the Countess's it

73. Ibid., p. 23.
74. Ibid., p. 43.
75. Ibid., p. 57.

looks beyond the present surface to the deeper reality. It seems to suggest the very reason for the distrust of war.

For the first time Barker introduces a peasant, Jakab, in his drama, and that shows his appreciation of the importance of peasantry in the Central European countries after the First World War. In his article entitled "The Peasant and the State" Sir Lewis Namier observes: "Democracy has made him (the peasant) dominant in all the agrarian countries of Europe."[76] In his monologue at the end of the play Jakab expresses the views of peasants in general. He is not interested in politics. Governments come and governments go, "red...white...all colours",[77] he hardly perceives the benefits he gets from them. He knows the State as tax-collector. "The peasant alone is anterior to the State; he could, if need be, revert to self-sufficiency, and can therefore afford to be an anarchist." "I'll feed you or starve you...take your choice,"[78] says Jakab. It is significant that it is to Jakab that the King finally gives his horse, Snowjacket. This gesture is symbolic of the new responsibility entrusted to the peasant.

III

Reviewing His Majesty a dramatic critic observes:

> ...this is a play in which the dramatist would make the actors into the abstracts and brief chronicles of our time. He takes the actual conflict of history

76. Quoted by Morgan, A Drama of Political Man, p.322.
77. Granville-Barker, His Majesty, p.123.
78. Ibid., p. 123.

So through the various characters Barker presents vividly the disturbed condition of Carpathia after the War, and projects their attitudes to the pivotal events. He gives a detailed picture of the mood in the defeated nations of Europe. It goes to his credit that mythical kingdom though Carpathia is, its citizens and their problems are made to seem real. Not only the King and the Queen are treated sympathetically by the dramatist; even the politicians (e.g. Dr.Madrassy) are made to seem not that rough and wicked. "We suspect that these statesmen of the broken nations could hardly be so urbane as they are here made", says the reviewer, "The dramatist reverses fashionable process and turns foxes into gentry."[82]

His Majesty is a serious comedy interspersed with pathos. The mood ranges from comedy to pathos, and this mingling of the pathetic and the comic elements is subtly harmonized. The mood, however, remains prevalently ironic. There is sub-acid humour in Guastalla's constant changes of the uniform. The various images of chaos (e.g. the ruined chateau of Countess Czernyak) impart sadness and grimness to the play's mood, and the symbols used in the play (e.g. the sword picked up by Captain Dod, the railway coaches without the engine, Snowjacket) not only serve as an ironic commentary on the action, but also intensify the mood.

It is characteristic of Granville-Barker that in his plays

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82. "Awaiting Production," Saturday Review, Vol.CXL VII, Jan.19, 1929, p.79.

he raises ultimate moral issues, whatever be his avowed theme. In _His Majesty_ the question is a political one, but the implications, as usual, are moral. The King and others are put through and acid test of the sense of human obligations, and the scale on which they are measured is that of ultimate responsibility and not as politicians. It is this which lends depth and enduring quality to the play, and turns a topical subject into a crucial human issue.

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CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSION

Harley Granville-Barker is an original and versatile man of the theatre. His versatility has expressed itself in many fields, and he has made notable contribution as actor, theatrical producer, dramatist and Shakespearean critic. Barker approached stage production, playwriting and criticism of Shakespeare from the standpoint of the actor. He was an intellectual actor, and his acting was subdued and was distinguished by truth of interpretation. As a producer, too, he emphasized these traits in acting. His productions at the Court Theatre (1904-1907) helped to restore art to the English stage as also to set a high standard of realism in acting. Fidelity to the text, rapidity of delivery of the verse and simple setting are the virtues extolled in Shakespearean productions now, and for this, much of the credit goes to Barker. He was the first to emphasize these qualities in his Shakespeare productions as also in his _Prefaces_ to Shakespeare.

No one has done more for the encouragement of repertory theatres, and for the cult of small audiences than Barker. Nor perhaps has any one done more for the establishment of a national theatre in England. As early as 1904 he had vision of a national theatre, and all through his life he sincerely

worked for its establishment. It is a pity that during his lifetime this dream could not be realized for want of government support. His untiring efforts, however, did not go in vain, and a national theatre was established in 1963.

After his retirement from active work in the theatre, Barker built up a new reputation as one of the greatest Shakespearean critics, and as an authority on drama. As a dramatic critic, Barker emphasizes the importance of the drama as an educational and cultural force in the life of a nation. More than any other writer, he bridges the gap between the stage and the study. He believes that a play cannot be fully realized until it is presented on the stage. His dramatic theories are reflected in his own plays; and all he wrote on the theatre still has immense value. He brings vast experience in the theatre as well as his knowledge of the Elizabethan theatre to bear upon his Shakespearean studies. It is primarily the attitude of the producer that differentiates his approach to Shakespeare from other critics. His Prefaces to Shakespeare have immensely enriched our understanding of Shakespeare, and given a fresh direction to the interpretation of his works.

As a playwright, Barker's contribution to modern drama is equally significant. He explores contemporary social, economic, religious and political problems, and with subtlety and telling detail interprets the spirit of the social scene. His major themes embrace sex and politics. His protagonists often discuss radical ideas and revolt against social conventions. It is evident

that Barker rejects the Victorian ideals of parent-child relations and marriage and class distinctions. He is very much concerned with the institution of marriage and the problems it gives rise to - post-marital relations, mutual obligations of husband and wife, and the torture of unhappy marriages. He is fascinated by the 'New' woman emerging on the scene towards the end of the nineteenth century. Ann Leete (The Marrying of Ann Leete) is the 'New' woman, who revolts against middle-class respectability, and exercises her own choice in selecting her life companion much below her rank. Mrs. Hugh (The Voysey Inheritance) embodies the idea of independent womanhood, and her virtual separation from Hugh challenges the accepted notions of marriage in the age. In Waste Barker shows how the violation of a social convention involves the waste of a brilliant politician of great promise. The Madras House discusses the position of women in society and the relationship between the sexes. The Huxtable family illustrates the evil effects of an artificial social code. The dramatist contrasts the ideals of this emasculated household with the bold views on sex and freedom cherished by Philip Madras. Philip Madras is sympathetic to Miss Yates who violates the social code by choosing to have a child outside wedlock. Barker believes that the Victorian ideal of marriage must be liquidated to give freedom to woman to enable her to realize her individuality. He is convinced that freedom is absolutely necessary for the development of the human personality. He seems

to suggest that candour, honesty and mutual understanding between husband and wife would contribute to social health, happiness and dynamism.

Politics, as a theme, is of recurring interest to Barker in his plays. His plays demonstrate that the idealist in politics runs into stiff opposition and has to fight against egotism, opportunism and other evils of a democratic form of government. In Waste Trebell's idealism clashes with Blackborough's egotism and vested interests. Trebell's plan for education, which aims at the amelioration of the country's education, is foiled by Blackborough's opposition. Blackborough, the egoist, and Horsham, the opportunist, combine in the work of destruction. The defeat of Trebell's education plan highlights the triumph of selfish and foxy politics over fervent and altruistic idealism. In The Secret Life, Barker shows that Strowde, the idealist, who cherishes sublime ideals of patriotism, and wishes to liquidate the moral chaos in the political life, must quit his ivory tower and combat the corrupt Bellingham government. The idealist cannot be happy in solitude, suggests Barker, he has to combine his idealism with practicality, and even compromise his idealism, should the situation so demand, for the achievement of his objectives. In His Majesty, the playwright again demonstrates the truth that the idealist has to combine his idealism with practical ability in order to attain his ideals. King Henry XIII of Carpathia, the man of peace and integrity, accepts his responsibilities, and prevents

the civil war, though the price he pays for it is his own abdication. Barker believes that in a democratic system of government rulers should be intellectual idealists, like Trebell and Strowde, who are men of integrity and indomitable will, endowed with vision and courage to enforce unpopular measures which may be needed for the welfare of the community, and oppose measures which are not conducive to the good of the nation. He decries venal, unscrupulous, self-seeking, unprincipled politicians who "attune themselves to the mob mind"[1], and abuse authority to serve their own interests or those of their class.

The great merit of Barker's plays lies in the variety, reality and complexity of vividly drawn characters. He subordinates plot to the portrayal of theme and character. The leading character in his plays can be best described as the "hero-raisonneur" who is gifted with an excess of 'grey matter'. With his idealism the hero combines rationalism. However, his heroes suffer from a limitation - they are emotionally frigid. The hero is aware of the maladies of society, and has a passion to remedy them. Some of his heroines are as intellectual, and rational as the heroes. Alice Maitland (The Voysey Inheritance) is as intellectual and as emotionally cold as Edward Voysey. The intellectualism of his leading characters is responsible for the incisive discussion of contemporary problems in the

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1. Granville-Barker, Waste, p. 33.

plays which represent individuals living their lives as people in a group. He creates mood and atmosphere by means of group emotion. The Voyseys at Chislehurst, the gathering in Act III at the Madras House, and the meeting of the politicians at Horsham's to decide Trebell's fate, are the best examples of the delineation of group emotion. Each person in the group is portrayed with great care, and each exists, not only for himself, but also for the group. These scenes set the mood for the play, and create the necessary atmosphere.

Barker subordinates plot to the portrayal of theme and character, but he manifests great architectonic ingenuity in plot-construction in The Voysey Inheritance, Waste and His Majesty. The plot structure of these plays is not only closely knit, but is also best suited to articulate the theme and the development and portrayal of characters.

Barker employs the technique of discussion in his plays for the projection of his ideas. This dialectical technique, however, is vulnerable to discursiveness to which he sometimes succumbs. Naturally, the dramatic interest in Barker stems more from discussion than action.

Barker's dialogue is literary, intellectual, terse and subtle. There is, therefore, a great demand on the intelligence of the play-goer and the reader to comprehend the meaning - to fill in the gaps. These gaps take the form of frequent use of ellipses, of oblique parenthetical statements which seem to slant away from the logic of the line, and of question and

answer apparently unconnected. However, every word spoken and every detail given is important to Barker's effects: every word is perfectly appropriate and completely individual.

Barker employs the technique of indirection to reveal the inner reality of his characters. Symbols and imagery are used to convey depth of meaning, and to create the necessary atmosphere which a predominantly realistic theatre denied him. In Ann Leete the garden of Markswayde is a symbolic representation of a social system in decline. The imagery of darkness and light has a prfound relevance to Ann's personal drama and to the theme of the play. In The Secret Life the crippled Oliver's climbing through the window of the gallery to where Joan Westbury is sitting suggests that the physical maiming of the body is nothing as compared to the spiritual maiming, the pivot on which the play turns.

Like Shaw, Barker introduces elaborate stage directions in his plays, which are a part of his dramaturgy. The stage directions provide not only the description of the setting, but also contain witty, perceptive, and ironical comments on characters. This technique has evoked criticism from those who feel that such commentary is an intrusion of the author's personality, and that it is inartistic. True, that the stage direction is an extra dramatic element, but it is not without justification. In the stage directions Barker furnishes information which is helpful both to the producer and the actor in creating the desired effects. The commentary also often helps

the reader in understanding the subtle touches in the dialogue.

Barker reproduces the microcosm of life in his dramatic work with great verisimilitude. His knowledge of the social structure and of politics of the day gives authenticity to the issues dramatized. In Barker, we have flesh-and-blood humanity. There is, however, a shift in emphasis from realism to a more imaginative portrayal of life in The Secret Life. The Voysey Inheritance, Waste and The Madras House was the period of Barker's growing conviction that the remedy for the ills of the world lay in socialism. But when he turned from Fabianism, he also turned from social criticism. In The Secret Life Barker's interest extends beyond mere social problems to the mysteries of the soul, to the "secret life". There is profounder symbolism and greater lyrical intensity in this play. So the change is not only from realism in dramatic style, but also in the inner substance of the play.

Barker's contribution to the drama of ideas is considerable. He helped to make the intellectual revolt against sentimental comedies, melodramas and farces, which were the prime attraction of the West End theatres in the Victorian and Edwardian times, respectable and fashionable. He helped to widen the scope of the realistic drama by introducing subject matter until then considered unsuitable. He "did much to refine, deepen and

intensify realistic dramatic dialogue."[2] His denunciation of the 'well-made play', and the refinement of realistic dialogue added a new dimension to the drama of ideas.

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2. Allyardyce Nicoll, English Drama: A Modern View Point, 1968, p. 115.

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