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Since the birth of the written word, and earlier with the inclusion of the history of oral tradition, literature has been greatly preoccupied with the theme of Good & Evil and the consequence of man's rejection of good, his guilt. The playwrights of ancient Greece, Elizabethan England, and Renaissance Europe have been just a few links in the long chain which has kept alive this thematic tradition. Do the modern playwrights continue this tradition, and if so, are the themes presented in a recognizable form? This study seeks to answer these questions in order to discover what has become of modern man's conception of good and evil.

Due to divergent trends into the many forms of modern literature, an overall picture grows increasingly more difficult to perceive. Therefore, in order to narrow the field of comparison, this study examines one play by each of eight modern authors. Authors' lives, their other writings, and other such information not directly relevant to the particular plays being examined has been excluded by necessity in order to limit the scope of the study. If the problem of coherency is not already obvious, compare the task to some imaginary multi-legged creature stranded on an ice floe. The farther the creature is carried by the ice, the more the ice tends to break up and head off into innumerable directions, each chunk of ice trying to take a foot with it. Enough said as to the effect upon the poor

creature. So it is with the task of pursuing and comparing modern dramatists; each a part of a whole, yet each diverging into different directions as he attains personal and stylistic maturity as a playwright. The extent of variety present becomes readily evident when one considers that even this limited study encompasses eight authors of seven different nationalities, dating from 1828 to the present, ranging from Marxist propagandists to Theatre of the Absurdists, and with the settings placed anywhere from a Chinese city to somewhere in purgatory. These particular eight authors -- Leo N. Tolstoy, August Strindberg, Bertolt Brecht, William Butler Yeats, Jean Giraudoux, Jean Anouilh, Tennessee Williams, and Harold Pinter -- have been selected because of the unquestionable influences they have exerted over the course taken by the modern theatre. The specific plays chosen are not necessarily representative of the major trend (if any) of each writer. Rather, each play has been included on the basis of what kind of statement it makes about good and evil.

The first of these plays is The Good Woman of Setzuan, written between 1938 and 1941 by the German poet, Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956). It is labeled as a parable of the modern theatre and is most often classified as an epic play. As many of the works Brecht produced early in his career, The Good Woman has as it motivating force a statement to be made endorsing Marxist thought and morality. Through the development of the plot, the idea that goodness cannot survive in a pure form when placed in a hostilely competitive (capitalistic) social environment. develops [1]

The play is set in the distant city of Setzuan, China. (Actually, Setzuan is not a city but a province of China, a fact which Brecht was unaware of at the time he wrote the play.)[2] In one of his many writings on Brecht, critic Martin Esslin commented on why such a remote setting was chosen:

> As an anti-illusionist in the theatre Brecht was logically driven toward the parable form: / in the fairy-tale world of distant Setzuan or the Caucasus, it is possible to deal with real problems without having to put a realistic image of the world on stage. For naturalism, and indeed any attempt at a realistic convention, Brecht argued, had the drawback of overindividualization. If one showed one family of starving, unemployed workers in loving detail, how could one convince the audience that this was not just one individual, and exceptional, case and therefore without any general validity? To do social good to the theatre, Brecht felt, must be able to convince its audience that its examples were typical and of wide applicability. Hence he never shrank from openly drawing the moral from his examples, largely by the use of songs which stand outside the action, interrupt it, and underline its general conclusions, but also by pointed epilogues...,. It is in these

> settings that the familiar can be made to appear strange so that it can be critically appraised and evaluated by an uninvolved audience.[3]

This mention by Esslin of Brecht's open didacticism has been repeated by many other critics.

One such critic, David I. Grossvogel, speaks of the playwright's attempts to keep the spectator detached and observant. He also purports that the great distance between the audience and the setting is meant to strengthen the strangeness of the situation. Accordingly, Grossvogel states that this "'effect of estrangement'... will enable the spectator to see anew social conditions which he had accepted because of too great a familiarity: what seemed hitherto static will appear, in terms of the Marxian dialectic, susceptible of analysis in function of its 'becoming.'"[4]

The protagonist, the good woman of Setzuan, is a young prostitute named Shen Te. She is sought out and tested by the gods as a last hope for the argument that "one can be good and stay good."[5] These three inept gods endow her with a thousand silver dollars and send her on her way to do good. She then buys a small tobacco shop and is immediately descended upon by all sorts of beggars, lazy relatives, and just plain moochers. Shen Te also falls helplessly in love with a scandalous young airplane pilot who only seeks her money to further his career. At first, Shen Te manages to be generous and altruistic, but as others' demands begin to threaten the core of her resources she is forced to literally become two different characters. Her

second identity becomes that of Shen Te's male cousin, Shui Ta. Shui Ta functions as Shen Te's opposite element---a ruthless capitalist who reappears as often as necessary to prevent Shen Te from being utterly devoured by the demands being made upon her. Brecht does not condemn the poor for their demands; instead, they have been corrupted by existing social conditions and are "omnivorous out of necessity."[6] He believes in man's innate goodness and generosity, but, "as a moralist, he refuses goodness when it leads to human misery."[7] So, as Shui Ta, Shen Te is able to "safeguard her livelihood but cripples her life; as Shen Te she fulfills her life but forfeits her livelihood."[8] In Brecht's setting the necessities of survival become the greatest evil Shen Te must face. His point is clear--as long as these "conditions" prevail, the good woman of Setzuan "has no chance to escape the conflict of goodness versus survival."[9] Whereas most of the plot centers around the actions and thoughts of one person, the author is nonetheless blaming the tragedy on existing social conditions and not on the individual. Shen Te remains unable to be good without reverting back to Shui Ta at least "once a month" as the gods acknowledge in the last lines of the play.[10]

In strong contrast to Brecht's concluding despair of The Good Woman is the optimism expressed by Jean Giraudoux(1882-1944) in The Madwoman of Chaillot. Written shortly before the author's death in 1944, the play can be"generally described as a philosophical comedy about modern mercantilism."[11] The plot of The Madwoman concerns a handful of investors and entrepreneurs who meet in a sidewalk cafe and hatch a scheme to drill

for oil within the very district of Chaillot,in Paris. They are ultimately foiled by an eccentric old "madwoman," Countess Aurelia. In fact, the greedy investors are even forced to a mock trial (by proxy) to answer to the charges that they have rejected beauty for materialism. After they are found guilty, the real investors race to their own death sentences by heading down a stairway, in search of oil, in the Countess' basement. As soon as all of the investors and their entourage have descended, a trap door is closed behind them, ridding the world of their corrupting influence. A definite demarkation is made between the "wicked of the world, the financiers who seek only profit," and the "poor of the world, interested only in human happiness."[12] (The poor are represented by the Countess and various beggars, singers, and street vendors who assist her.)

The Madwoman may be a wonderfully comical play written with a sizeable degree of theatricality, but it is equally a serious work with much to say about personal social values. Although Giraudoux does not make any scathing attack on the nature of capitalism, he most definitely places himself "on the side of the joy of life, a positive affirmation of man's need to overcome despair and of the possibility of doing so."[13] In condemning all-consuming materialism, he does not do so without due process. The fact that Giraudoux had one served in France's diplomatic corps can be seen through his heavy use of debate in his plays. In The Madwoman the mock trial of the financiers fits this form of debate. Addressing this issue is Jacques Guicharnaud in his book, Modern French Theatre:

> Characters on Giraudoux's stage talk more than they move. The greater part of certain scenes, even of certain plays, can be performed sitting down, for the drama can best be expressed through conversation or verbal debate. The characters reveal their inner struggles through the shock of words and phrases, or, as bearers of contrary truths, they oppose one another like lawyers in court before judges...and a jury."[14]

When the profiteers' "obsession with material values" has caused them to be"defeated by their lust for wealth,"[15] the Countess' success in eliminating evil allows the good to be brought to the surface in all those who had been formerly dominated by the evil.[16] In one of the madwoman's beautiful rationalizations she says that "there is little time to assert human values, and they must not be denied."[17] The refreshing note of optimism at the close of the play is welcomed as the author's faith in the ability of the individual's will to pursue and defend human truth, even at the cost of being labeled as a madwoman for not adopting the world's materialism. Clearly it is Giraudoux's philosophy that "the individual must attempt to re-order his relation to destiny."[18] The overall effect of the production is that of a play in an"expressionistic style in which the characters transcend psychological reality to demonstrate social or universal truth."[19]

Succeeding Giraudoux in the re-theatricalization of the French theatre is Jean Anouilh(1910-). His The Lark(1953) is an imaginative portrait of the struggles of Joan of Arc. The script is based on historical material (some of its ex-

changes are from Joan's authentic trial), but the setting is somewhat surrealistic.[20]

> In (The Lark) the characters are again beyond their lives in some vague, stagy after-world represented by an equally vague and theatrical setting. As the curtain rises on a cast gathering up properties left behind from an earlier performance, the spectator immediately understands that he is witnessing a re-enactment.[21]

Considering the subject matter of The Lark, the polarities of good and evil should be clustered around the maiden's purity and the inquisitor's spiritual blindness. Well, the polarization of good and evil is between these two primarily, but Anouilh does not handle the issue in any sort of cut-and-dried fashion. From some perspectives the irony in the play makes its author appear more cynical than a casual reading of the play would suggest. For example, Joan's father generalizes that "sweet little girls turn into lying hussies:

> A girl! She's as pure as a baby. She holds up her forehead for a goodnight kiss and her eyes are so clear you can read to the bottom of her soul, one last time. And then, bang! The next morning--even though you locked her in--you don't know what's happened--you can't read a thing in her eyes anymore, they flee you, and she lies to you! She becomes the devil."[22]

Certainly those lines were not included without some pessimistic philosophical thought behind them.

Anouilh makes an even stronger (albeit subtler) indictment against the motivations behind Joan's actions when he explains through her dialogue why she retracted her confession and went to her death.

> Why does Jeanne d"Arc retract her confession? Psychologically, because she may not be keen about lifetime in prison; philosophically, to be true to her role; but dramatically, because she has suddenly glimpsed Jeanne slipping into middle age, accepting, compromising, gourmandizing, primping . And these prospects repel her so much that she immediately chooses death."[23]

To be sure, this type of motivation is not the noble virtuosity of the traditionally portrayed martyr. Perhaps this is a part of the playwright's style described as "bitter realism" by Guicharnaud.[24]

Even with this occassional glimpse of underlying pessimism, The Lark is still a play full of hope for the unquenchable truth of purity and beauty. In an indirect way, even the inquisitor is forced to acknowledge that "there will always be a man to hunt down somewhere...who will finally be caught and killed,...simply because he will say No without lowering his eyes."[25] The inquisitor speaks these lines not in understanding, but "hisses them between his teeth." Nonetheless, he is unwittingly vindicating Joan by making it clear that she is being persecuted due to her insolence--not because of the heretical stance she is taking. How can Joan's death be seen in any positive light? From one perspective she could have pride in

having said No while remaining aware of the danger of saying it. On a greater scheme, she becomes superior to her fate by affirming her control over its outcome.[26] Through her chosen martyrdom she is somehow prevailing over "the universal conspiracy against man and against the concrete beauty of life."

The Lark is a good example of the many modernist plays which contain attitudes on so many levels that simple overall descriptive generalizations become impossible. If one can perceive what is being said on the various levels, he will usually find one character's motivations conflicting with the same character's on different levels.

In another modern play, The Power of Darkness(1886), by Leo N. Tolstoy, the reader has no problem whatsoever in distinguishing true good from evil. The play is about a peasant family beset by the worst corruptions imaginable---infidelity, adultery, a murder of an old man, and a case of infanticide. Tolstoy filled the play with many true-to-life elements---a sick old man Tolstoy modeled after himself, a realistic setting and language for the peasants, and even some of the factual events of the plot. The actual subject of the crimes was inspired by a real case involving a peasant in Tula. From these basic elements Tolstoy "wove a work of black, brutal despair."[27]

All of the characters are heavily underscored and lean on their shadows. Nikita the farmhand is handsome and weak; Anisya--hot-blooded and completely dominated by wild sensuality; old Matrena, who encourages her son to commit adultery; Akim, Nikita's father, a muzhik with a stutter who aspires to saintliness. The sin of the flesh begets crime. Anisya poisons her husband in order to be free to love Nikita. But Nikita, not content with sharing Anisya's bed, also seduces Anisya's sixteen-year-old daughter, Akulina. A child is born to Akulina. Going

berzerk, Nikita crushes the tiny bastard between two boards (at Matrena's and Anisya's insistence so that Akulina can soon be married off). But he doesn't have their strength of character. He appeals to them: "I can't go on! Where can I hide?" Long after the baby has stopped breathing Nikita thinks he can still hear it whimpering. Tolstoy himself admitted that he could never "read without tears the scene in the cellar where Nikita crushed his child with a board so that its 'bones crunched.'"[28] In fact, the scene proved so realistically gruesome that Tolstoy had to subsequently write it into a scene in which the murder was merely recalled instead of acted out on stage.[29] Later, while a crowd is gathered for Akulina's wedding, Nikita tries to hang himself in the barn, but is prevented by a drunken soldier he finds there. Mitrich, the soldier, succeeds in what Akim had failed to do with his hard-edged morality---that is, to convince Nikita not to fear men, but to fear God. Nikita then goes into the house and kneels in the midst of the wedding guests. Instead of issuing the blessing that all expect, he proceeds to confess to all his crimes and sin. He even takes the blame for murdering Anisya's husband when he had actually not been a party to the poisoning. Despite his family's attempts to quiet him, Nikita continues his confession (much to Akim's spiritual rejoicing), and is finally hauled away by the local police. Ironically, Nikita's release from his inner bonds of guilt only come after he has been bodily bound by prison.

To trace Nikita's path to his downfall within the power of darkness, one needs to remember the specific moral around which the entire play is built. Without a question, "traditional religion is invoked throughout the play,"[30] and Tolstoy

deliberately based it on a strong Christian sense of morality. The specific moral was voiced by Akim early in the play when he said, "If the claw is caught the bird is lost." [31] Applied to Nikita, his "claw" is caught the moment he crosses himself and swears before an icon that there has been nothing between himself and Marina, a young girl he had seduced before he had married Anisya. It is "from that moment he is lost."[32]

The didactic air of the entire story is so prevalent that it would seem a parable from the scriptures if it were not for its power as drama. Total evil is embodied in the form of Matrena, Nikita's ruthlessly ambitious mother who initiates both murders in the play and sundry other things. Her opposite element would definitely be Akim, whose ardent conservative orthodoxy makes him contrast sharply with the other characters. It is again ironic that Tolstoy's sole virtuous character cannot reconcile Nikita because of being so abrasively religious.[33] Although the most obvious import of what the author is saying deals with personal morality, at least one critic has suggested that the plot has political overtones in that it reflects " a general bestiality growing out of the ignorance of the Russian peasants."[34] This would seem one likely intent because Tolstoy had intended the play to be for the peasants; unfortunately, they did not comprehend what he was trying to say in the play, for at its first reading (to a group of forty peasants gathered at the author's home) the most enlightened feedback given was that "in the beginning Nikita was doing all right. But afterward, he went wrong."[35] The Power of Darkness did find a response among Czar Alexander III and his nobles however, and was scheduled to be produced by a joint effort of the two most pre-

stigious Russian theatrical companies of the day. Unexpectedly a member of the Holy Synod denounced the play as being nihilistic and pressured the czar into even prohibiting it from being published in book form. The Russian premiere production finally took place during the reign of Nicholas II.[36] The stark realism which caused the work to be suspended at first is the very element which has caused it to survive successfully into the twentieth century. As gloomy as parts of the plot are, the gruesomeness is somehow "neutralized by the moral message of the terrible evil-begetting power of evil."[37] Tolstoy did not create a completely dismal void in which man is lost ultimately to evil's power; instead, he voiced a decidedly optimistic note by having Nikita respond to his guilt and heed his God-given conscience, thus redeeming himself. Evil IS pitted against an ever-waning image of earthly good, but man can still win out in the end if he will but exercise his will to choose the right path.

Writing in England as a contemporary of Tolstoy, Irish-born William Butler Yeats(1865-1939) wrote a play in which man is left no escape from his sins, in this life or the next. The play, Purgatory(1938), is about the nature of the inescapability of inherited sin. The set consists of a decrepit old house and a gnarled, bare tree, and could either be placed here on earth or in purgatory. The only two characters acting in the story are an Old Man and his sixteen-year-old son. The plot is fixed upon the Old Man's statement about souls in purgatory being forced to "re-live their transgressions, and that not once but many times."[38]

The Old Man begins by narrating the history of the old house, his childhood home and the same that his mother and her ancestors had lived in. His mother had married a common stable groom and had brought about the ultimate ruin of her house's long and noble history. The Old Man beholds her in a vision, waiting on her wedding night for the return of her new husband from the pub. The consumation of her marriage also marks the date of the conception of her son, now the Old Man. She is being forced to re-live this night over and over because it marked the beginning of the curse she brought upon her family. She had died giving birth to her son, not living to witness her husband's squandering of the family fortune on women and liquor. Adding more shame to the family's name was the husband's neglect of his boy's education. Due to his mistreatment, the Old Man had stabbed his father to death when the Old Man had been only sixteen.

The Old Man's son does not see the vision and scoffs at the story being retold to him. He tries to steal his father's bag of money but is interrupted by the reappearance of the vision (which he can now see, too). The Old Man, in a moment of anguish at seeing his mother once again being forced to relive her sin, turns and stabs his son with the same knife he had slain his father with. He had hoped by ending the family line and stopping it from further degenerating he would be freeing his mother, but, to his horror, the vision continues and he hears the hoofbeats of his father's horse on his way to consumate the marriage again. The hopeless despair in his words is unmistakable as he cradles his son's lifeless body,

Twice a murderer and all for nothing,
And she must animate that dead night
Not once but many times!
Oh God,
Release my mother's soul from its dream!
Mankind can do no more. Appease
The misery of the living and the remorse
of the dead.[39]

Written as the next-to-last play Yeats would write, Purgatory has been hailed as the play in which Yeats "reached the height of his powers as a dramatist."[40] Its theme, as many of Yeats' works, is this restlessness that is "the state of the dead, especially the kinds of sin that cause a spirit to become earth bound."[41] What inspired Yeats to write write such a plot without a sign of hope, and to whom was he directing his statement? Yeats himself answers what was his inspiration when he commented that the play is about a spirit who "suffers because of its share, when alive, in the destruction of an honoured house; that destruction is taking place all over Ireland to-day."[42] The author's motivations might also be better understood in light of the fact that he intended Purgatory to stand at the end of his last volume, a volume which he knew would have to be published posthumously. In it, he "expressed his own conviction about this world and the next" as a sort of self-judgement.[43]

Whatever Yeats' motivations, his play comes across as one which views man's destiny in an extremely fatalistic light. Unlike Giraudoux's or Tolstoy's characters, Yeats' have no

control over their destinies once they have entered into sin, and are even punished for trying to alter their fates. Much like Tolstoy though, evil begets evil in the sense that it is furthered by being passed on to one's descendants. No real explanation of why men's fates are so rigidly fixed is given by Yeats, and this may be where he is making the strongest comment about where evil is to be found. It is to be found in the ignorance of man about why he feels doomed to live out an inevitable fate.

Seemingly the place to find good in the play lies in the possibility that the Old Man's mother could have prevented all the coming evil by honoring her family's name and not marrying beneath her position. This argument could be weak if one insists on interpreting Yeats' fatalism as dominant even before his character sins, but there is really nothing to prove that he extends it that far. It is true that the Old Man's mother did not foreknow what doom she was initiating when she acted, but she was aware that her base marriage was a "sin" in the eyes of her forebearers. Just as the Irish were committing selfish acts of hate that had reprecussions for their descendants, the mother was committing a selfish act (even an act of love) which had devastating effects which extended to those after her. Considering Yeats' comment about his countrymen's bloodshed, this concept of perceived evil seems a likely one.

The punishment of evil is also the central idea in There Are Crimes and Crimes(1899), by August Strindberg(1849-1912). The play was originally coupled with another play and was published

under the book's title, Before a Higher Court. The title, Crimes and Crimes, refers to the concept of there being crimes and sins that are a matter of wish and thought, whether they are ever fulfilled by actions or not. In the Swedish author's own words, "I've now wanted to deal with the problem of the Evil Will and the responsibility for evil thoughts and the individual's court of self-punishment."[44] The play's plot is something as what follows. A playwright in Paris, Maurice, has finally received great success for one of his plays. Caught up in the euphoria of his triumph, he abandons his mistress, Jeanne, and their child, Marion, to pursue a mad affair with a young sculptress that he has just met, Henriette. At a cafe Maurice is overheard by those around him as he tells Henriette that he wished Marion had never been born so that he would be free to leave his commitments to his past. Soon after, word reaches him that Marion has in fact died, and the police, having been told of his words at the cafe, suspect him of murder. For two days Maurice is tracked by detectives who are waiting to find some evidence of his crime. The play is denounced and the people of Paris despise him so much that he is forced to travel under an assumed name. At the end of the story, Maurice is vindicated as it is determined that Marion died of some rare disease, and his play is instantly restored to greatness.

As Strindberg knew, "good and evil may very well be interwoven in a web that is hard or impossible to disentangle."[45] In this light the guilt of an evil-thinking person takes on more importance as a theme than does the distinction between

good or evil actions. Committed for whatever reasons, Maurice's "crimes" consist of "rejoicing over the success of his play on a Paris stage, celebrating that triumph with a demonic woman who has helped a friend get rid of and unwanted pregnancy, neglecting the faithful woman he loves, and indulging in loose and careless remarks about matters that have popped into his mind."[46]

The author's perception of Maurice's guilt would apparently come at least partially from some of his own experiences. To be specific, Strindberg had once himself wished his daughter slight ill-health as he looked at her portrait, intended as a serious attempt at a type of bewitchment. He had done so only because he missed her so and needed a good excuse to leave his work in Paris and return to her. (Thankfully, nothing ever befell his daughter.) While he was staying in Paris, his play, The Father premiered with tremendous success and its author, as did Maurice, hesitated to attend a dinner honoring the success. Strindberg fell in love (briefly) with a young English sculptress and later reproached himself for almost deserting his responsibilities to his wife and child.[47] With this many obvious parallels to the plot of Crimes and Crimes, plus some other personal experiences not mentioned, it becomes nearly impossible for a critic to try to separate the art from the artist as some aesthetes insist upon. It is certain that the crisis Maurice goes through is meant to teach him a moral lesson. The price he paid was his utter rejection while he was suspect, a punishment which in the early draft of the play included children slapping him in the face, and even newspapers carrying the notice of Marion's

death flying in the wind after him.[48] The way in which guilt is used by Strindberg makes it seem the punishment for the crime in as much as it haunts Maurice to the point of torture. This is easily seen by noting that "although he is declared innocent after it is discovered that the child died of natural causes, he feels that he is to blame because of his evil wishes."[49] If one is looking carefully for it, there is even a type of foreshadowing to be found concerning Maurice's liability for his thoughts. In the cafe when Maurice and Henriette first meet they both confess to having committed cruel deeds in their dreams. Ironically, Maurice goes so far as to comment that, "If we had to answer for our thoughts, who would stand a chance?"[50]

Some critics have used Strindberg's earlier works, those concern- his belief in the guiding hand of the Unseen One, to analyze Crimes and Crimes, but others reject this comparison. The argument for an Unseen One is weakened when one considers that a woman's happiness and a child's life would have been taken away just to teach one man a moral lesson. On the other hand, an Unseen One's severity might be warranted if one takes the author at his word when his logic is carried to the extremes; i.e., "the evil intention is punished as the evil deed."[51] No rationale is spelled out about why these higher laws governing man's thoughts are as they are, only that the consequences are as sure as the laws of Nature. The obscurement of reason in Strindberg's universe seems typical of the tendency toward irrationality which led to the development of the Theatre of the Absurd.

Nowhere can the irrationality of the Theatre of the Absurd be seen better than in The Dumb Waiter(1957), by the British playwright, Harold Pinter(1930-). In it two gunmen, Ben and Gus, are sitting in a flat somewhere waiting to be contacted and notified whom they are supposed

to kill for their employers this time. After waiting a little while, Gus tries to fix some tea on the stove in the kitchen, but finds that he has not a match to light the fire with. Without explanation, an envelope containing matches is soon slipped under the door and discovered by the men. Now possessing matches, Gus is still unable to make the tea because he discovers a coin meter on the stove and he has not a shilling. The men are then startled as the previously undetected dumbwaiter in the wall rattles down the chute to their room. It begins to send down a series of notes ordering various food to be sent up. Not knowing who is ordering, but not wanting to be found out, the two men gather up what snack food they have with them and hurriedly send it up as a substitute. It dawns on the men that the flat they're in must have once been the kitchen to a restaurant, but they go on irrationally trying to fill the orders even though they know that the kitchen must have long been converted to their flat. Finally Ben discovers a speaking tube at the edge of the dumbwaiter and uses it to explain to the mysterious person above that they have no more food to send up. Oddly, the voice in the tube criticizes the staleness of the food sent up without ever even addressing the fact that the men have sent up junk food instead of the Chinese and Greek dishes ordered. Gus leaves the room to get a glass of water and Ben continues to wait by the speaking tube. More orders come through the tube. This time they tell who is to be killed---the next man who enters the room. Gus returns (without his jacket or holster) and meets Ben holding a gun on him. The curtain falls without the audience ever seeing Ben actually shoot Gus.

Joining and leaving the play with the action in progress is just

one of the many indications that the play follows Pinter's existentialistic thoughts. In his existentialism, the occurrence of actions in the present moment, detached from continuity, is important in its emphasis of existence over(before) essence.[52] One type of continuity is reason, or logic based upon observed cause and effect. The play excels in being devoid of all reason because there are no clear origins of anything in the play. Who employs Ben and Gus? Where did the matches come from? Who usually cleans up after the gunmen do their killings, and what happens to the victims' bodies? Where is the flat located? Who sends down the orders in the dumbwaiter? Why is Gus to be killed? Why does Ben decide to carry out the order to kill his partner? All of these questions go intentionally unanswered and the effect created is that of confusion and fear in the minds of both the characters and their audience. The fear is of the uncertainty of the unknown and is therefore, by definition, anxiety. Since the cause and effect element has been removed, crime and punishment and guilt no longer have meaning. Guilt is replaced by anxiety. Up until now, there have always been crimes to cause people to have justifiable guilt; now, however, "we find ourselves much more driven by what has been called angst, which the dictionary defines as 'a feeling of dread, anxiety, or anguish.'"[53] It is this unexplainable fear of an impending menace that Pinter captures so well in his existentialist plays. All of the unknown---who's ordering the killing, who's to be killed, etc.---combines to create an atmosphere that is "sinister and threatening."[54] Arthur Ganz, a critic of Pinter's works, states that everyone relates to this fear without guilt because "none of us is without the sense that unreasonable demands are being made upon us by forces and circumstances that we cannot understand."[55] The "tense 'now' of commands" coming "without cause or precedent" from the dumbwaiter certainly endorses Ganz's view.[56]

The gunmen, unlike the characters created by other playwrights, fear not any tangible or imagined threat or punishment; rather, they "stand trembling before all posibility" as the dumbwaiter continues to demand from them.[57] Finally, an overall sense of absurdity through the mixture of comedy with tragedy causes the audience to feel even more uneasiness. Ben and Gus are rambling on about hobbies, odd newspaper items, whether or not one says "light the kettle," or "light the gas," and several other trifles.[58] This truly humorous dialogue seems somehow bizarre in light of the morbidity of the reason the men are there. Even the title contains an ambiguous comic and tragic set of meanings. It is either simply referring to the box in the wall, or to Gus, the "dumb waiter" who has been so stupid as to not foresee his imminent execution.

In this unusual play the sense of what is good or evil becomes more elusive than in any other form found in the modern theatre. It is likely that Pinter is pointing out the evil of meaninglessness, in contrast to the other authors who have found evil in something or someone. If it is meaninglessness that threatens man as an evil, then good must be found in the restoration of reason and order. It is quite understandable that Pinter might be taking this stand when one considers the meaninglessness of crime, war, racism, etc. that are present at the time of the author's writing.

Finally, the last play to be examined herein is The Glass Menagerie (1944), the first smash success written by the American playwright, Tennessee Williams(1911-1982). The story, as Pinter's, is filled with characters who feel menaced. Specifically, they are menaces by three things--themselves, others, and the universe. The Glasse Menagerie is set in a small apartment in 1939. The apartment is peopled with Amanda, a

domineering mother just past middle age; her son,Tom, who is grown and works in a warehouse; Tom's slightly younger sister, Laura, who is crippled and painfully shy; and a visitor friend from Tom's work place, Jim. Although the events of the plot are set in 1939, they are being told in retrospect by Tom in 1944.

Early in the action it becomes known that Amanda's husband had long since abandoned her and the kids to fend for themselves. Between Tom's job and Amanda's meager income from selling magazine subscriptions, the small family manages to get by. Laura is not so much physically crippled as she is emotionally. Her shyness has grown to the extent that she can no longer function with any normality in the real world that exists outside the apartment. Her condition is only worsened by her mother's constant pressuring for Laura to receive "gentlemen callers" in the fashion of the ante-bellum South. In a real sense, Amanda is as much in a fantasy world as her daughter. Tom, unable to cope with his mother's delusions or his sister's, escapes after dinner each night to the movies where he stays and drinks until late each night.

As a result of his mother's promptings, Tom brings Jim home for dinner one night, being a potential match for Laura as Amanda sees things. Unbeknown to the others, Laura had had a crush on Jim in high school and still does to some degree. She is spruced up, along with most of the apartment, ahead of Jim's arrival as Amanda prepares to entertain with an affected gentility reminiscent of that found in Gone With the Wind. Once Jim and Tom do arrive, Laura's shyness causes her to almost grow physically ill, but her mother forces her through the painful ordeal of sitting through dinner. After dinner, Amanda makes sure that the two young intendeds are left alone in the parlor. Jim notices Laura's

timidity and takes it upon himself to relay to her some of what he has been learning in a self-assertiveness night course. As he talks, Laura shows him her most cherished possessions, hundreds of small animal figurines---her glass menagerie. Just when Jim's coaxing begins to work in getting Laura to open up, he lets it slip that he is engaged to be married soom. While Laura tries to keep from showing her broken heart, the two waltz to the music coming through the window until they accidently bump the table with the glass menagerie on it. A fragile little unicorn's horn is broken off and Laura comments that it is now like the other little horses and no longer a thing that has survived past its time. In a symbolic gesture not fully understood by Jim, Laura then gives the broken unicorn to him, representing her broken heart.

After Jim has left, Amanda rages at Tom for bringing home a man whom he knew was already spoken for and ineligible. She continues until Tom leaves --- permanently. The play draws to a close with Amanda and Laura both left to their shattered, deluded existences.

Searching for Williams' main emphasis becomes a dubious task when one considers that the author once told the New York Times, "I have never been conscious of writing with a theme in mind."[59] Whether intending it or not, Williams' play contains a discernible theme of loneliness and isolation due to self-delusionment. As in many of his works, his "characters are frustrated, sensitive, unfortunate people who preserve ideal images as bulwarks against the shipwrecks of their lives."[60] Amanda has preserved and even applied to herself the mythical concept of the precocious Southern Belle. She manages to hold onto to this concept despite the fact that she could not hold onto her own husband due to her nagging. She forced her maladjusted view upon Laura, and in doing so, set the

stage for disappointment whenever someone is ever compared to that idealistic image.[61] Although Tom is an escapism is a reality in the play, the main focus is directed to Amanda's and Laura's inability to adapt to the real world.[62]

In terms of finding the depiction of good and evil in the play, The Glass Menagerie is not quite as difficult to figure out as the Theatre of the Absurdists' plays. Evil is represented by the mistake of self-delusionment to the point of becoming nonfuncional in a real world. Further, Amanda's passing on of her idealized concepts to Laura is another example of how evil furthers itself in heredity. One possible social comment Williams could be making is the disillusionment of America that occurred in the thirties and how it ended the national idea that all one had to do was to, in Amanda's words, try and you will succeed. This great hope was literally extinguished in the end of the play when Tom tells Laura to blow out the candles that had been lit during the power-outage, because lightning would now light the way. Speaking from 1944 in retrospect, Tom is dismally referring to the gunfire that will light the sky in a destructive way with the onset of WWII. America's optimism hadn't led her to success, but to more chaos and destruction. This is the prevailing element in Williams' plays---his characters "do not plan to change mankind or reshape the world," but choose to find some escape from it.[63]

Now, to attempt to re-unite the chunks from the ice floe back into one mass. What have been the points of contrast and comparison to be found among these eight playwrights' works? Specifically, what trends can be discerned in the treatment of good and evil in the modern theatre?

Each of the authors seems to have had some concept of what good and evil are to man and how he can react to them. Each's motivation in writing seems to come, at least in part, from their desire to make their particular perception known to all. Some such as Tolstoy, Brecht, Giraudoux, and Anouilh, see their role as moralistic and purposely attempt to teach their morality through their plays. They believe in man's ability to control his ultimate destiny and say so through their works. Opposing them to some degree are Strindberg, Yeats, and Pinter through their depictions of characters bound to some sort of fate that binds their actions. Williams' doesn't readily conform to either category, but he comes closer to the second group in the way he has his characters bind themselves.

The evil perceived by these authors ranges from materialism to violent crime, evil thoughts to inherited sin, and from blind religious persecution to not fulfilling one's self socially. Many of them believed as Hamlet that the evil men do lives on after their bones have been interred. Others have valiantly argued for man's ability to stop the cycle of evil and human suffering. Whatever their stands on the issue, they all have seen the subject as one of enough importance to address it in their plays. Maybe in this fact can be found the greatest unifying factor amongst them. They all believed in speaking out on their views (as Abraham Lincoln put is so well) because,"to live by silence when they should protest makes cowards of men."

Notes

[1] Walter H. Sokel, "Brecht's Split Characters and His Sense of the Tragic," in Brecht: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 128.

[2] Eric Bentley, Parables for the Theatre: Two Plays by Bertolt Brecht (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1947), p. 9.

[3] Martin Esslin, "Bertolt Brecht," in Columbia Essays on Modern Writers (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 21.

[4] David I. Grossvogel, Four Playwrights and a Postscript: Brecht, Ionesco, Becket, Genet (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 8.

[5] Bentley, p. 11.

[6] Allan Lewis, The Contemporary Theatre: The Significant Playwrights of Our Time (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1962), p. 231.

[7] Grossvogel, p. 36.

[8] Sokel, p. 128.

[9] Peter Demetz, ed., Brecht: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 13.

[10] Bentley, p. 95.

[11] Laurent LeSage, Jean Giraudoux: His Life and Works (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1959), p. 80.

[12] Lewis, p. 198.

[13] Lewis, p. 201.

[14] Jacques Guicharnaud, Modern French Theatre: From Giraudoux to Genet (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 19.

[15] Lewis, p. 200.

[16] LeSage, p. 80.

[17] Lewis, p. 200.

[18] Lewis, p. 195.

[19] Lewis, p. 201.

[20] Guicharnaud, p. 16.

[21] Guicharnaud, p. 94.

[22] John Harvey, Anouilh: A Study in Theatrics (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 101-102.

[23] Harvey, p. 126.

[24] Guicharnaud, p. 124.

[25] Guicharnaud, p. 128.

[26] Guicharnaud, pp. 127 and 134.

[27] Henri Troyat, Tolstoy (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1965), p. 486.

[28] Ernest J. Simmons, Leo Tolstoy (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1946), p. 417.

[29] John Gassner, A Treasury of the Theatre, Vol. II (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967), p. 175.

[30] G. W. Spence, Tolstoy the Ascetic (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1967), p. 70.

[31] Spence, p. 68.

[32] Spence, p. 68.

[33] Spence, p. 68.

[34] Spence, p. 70.

[35] Troyat, p. 481.

[36] Simmons, p. 420.

[37] Simmons, p. 417.

[38] A. Norman Jeffares, ed., Eleven Plays of William Butler Yeats (New York: Macmillan Co., 1964), p. 200.

[39] Jeffares, p. 205.

[40] Curtis B. Bradford, Yeats at Work (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), p. 171.

[41] Bradford, p. 303.

[42] Richard F. Peterson, William Butler Yeats (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p. 169.

[43] Harold Bloom, Yeats (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 426.

[44] Walter Johnson, August Strindberg (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), p. 159.

[45] Johnson, p. 159.

[46] Johnson, p. 159.

[47] Martin Lamm, August Strindberg (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1971), pp. 320-321.

[48] Lamm, p. 321.

[49] Lamm, p. 320.

[50] Lamm, p. 321.

[51] Lamm, p. 320.

[52] Walter Kerr, "Harold Pinter," in Columbia Essays on Modern Writers (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 7.

[53] Kerr, p. 19

[54] James T. Boulton, "The Caretaker and Other Plays," in Pinter: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), p. 198.

[55] Arthur Ganz, ed., Pinter: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), p. 8.

[56] Kerr, p. 21.

[57] Kerr, p. 22.

[58] Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1969), p. 235.

[59] Gerald Weales, "Tennessee Williams," in University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965), p. 15.

[60] Lewis, p. 287.

[61] Louise Blackwell, "Tennessee Williams and the Predicament of Women," in Tennessee Williams: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1977), p. 102.

[62] Signi Lenea Falk, Tennessee Williams (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1961), p. 75.

[63] Lewis, p. 289.

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