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DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

”The Weakness of Male Characters in Twentieth Century British Drama”

Verfasserin

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angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag. phil.)

Wien, 2010

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt: A 343
Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt: Anglistik und Amerikanistik

Betreuer: Univ. Prof. Dr. Ewald Mengel

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Acknowledgements

I would particularly like to thank Univ. Prof. Dr. Ewald Mengel, my advisor at the University of Vienna, who offered his expertise and encouragement throughout the process.
My thanks go to my English and German teacher Melita Kiš and my very good friend and colleague Nina Bardek, who helped me from the initial writing phase through the final ending.
I would also like to thank my friends from the Croatian Catholic Mission for their help and support during my studying in Vienna.

Mojim dragim roditeljima

1 INTRODUCTION

Based on the social, political, and cultural changes, gender roles have also changed. Masculinity is in crisis and under attack today. Even though the world is still defined by men, women gain more power in the public sphere of life. Men are confused and disoriented because they have lost their dominant position within society. The changes in real life are reflected in the plays by many male playwrights in 20th century. Plays reflect the weakness of male characters, their flaws, and their failure. The pressure on males very often leads to an addiction to cigarettes, alcohol, sex, and games which is seen as an escape from the weakness. The reasons and causes for the weakness of men are going to be discussed on the basis of three Irish, three socio-psychological, and three political plays which are produced at different time and cover the whole 20th century.

The three Irish plays which demonstrate the weakness of males in this work are John Synge´s *The Playboy of the Western World*, Sean O´Casey´s *Juno and the Paycock*, and Martin McDonagh´s *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*. The swaggering Irishman is supposed to be strong, to earn money, and protect his family, but Christy, Boyle, and Padraic fail. They are preoccupied with their own self-given labels of a playboy, a captain, and a lieutenant. They try to reach the appropriate status to match the title in order to have an important role within the community they live. On their way of becoming strong and important they mistake fiction for reality. The inability to face reality is their weakness. This weakness turns Christy and Padraic into murderers and Boyle into an alcoholic. Women, on the other hand, remain strong. They are the breadwinners of the family and bring stamina into life. Pegeen, Juno, and Mairead keep facing reality and fighting for a better life without men.

Socio-psychological plays taken as an example to show the weakness of men are John Osborne´s *Look Back in Anger*, Harold Pinter´s *The Homecoming*, and Patrick Marber´s *Dealer´s Choice*. The men in these three plays have a problem with women. The fear of women is their weakness. They are attracted and scared of women at one and the same time. This love-hate relationship makes them vulnerable and, therefore, weak. The fear of women leads Jimmy to have a sexual affair, Pinter´s characters to sexual addiction, and Marber´s characters to the opposite, namely, gambling. Motherhood, real and symbolic, is an obstacle and issue in relation to the definition of male identity. They are

threatened by the woman´s ability to bear children. The motherhood has to be destroyed so that a man can reach his own identity. Alison loses a baby and becomes a mother rather than a partner to Jimmy, and Ruth becomes both mother and whore to the grown males.

The fact that women are the bearers of life plays an important role in political plays which portray the weakness of male characters in Arnold Wesker´s *Chicken Soup with Barley*, David Edgar´s *Maydays*, and David Hare´s *Murmuring Judges*. Men and women are both involved in the system. With the political change, men become disappointed and withdraw. Their weakness is their indifference towards the system and the lack of interest. They neither have the need, nor the courage to fight for their beliefs and ideals, or to change the system for the better, but embrace the situation as it is due to their economic improvement. Women, on the other hand, bear not only life, but also hope. Sarah, Amanda, Sandra, and Irina remain dedicated to what they believe and keep fighting. These women fight for their family, a microcosm, and the society, a macrocosm.

2 IRISH PLAYS

Innes explains that Ireland plays an important role in defining British drama, because its relationship with English theatre is very close. While the whole of Ireland was still under British rule, Irishmen who wanted to become writers developed their careers in London as the only available theatre centre. These originally Irish playwrights count as part of English dramatic tradition by almost any criteria. Their subject is primarily English society. Synge and Yeats are transitional figures to some extent. Their work is designed as the expression of a national consciousness that is clearly differentiated from England. O'Casey abandons Ireland because his work is banned there. Although his later plays are written in England, to which he retreats from the hostility of the Dublin public, all his work is specifically addressed to an Irish audience.[1]

According to Sternlicht, early international recognition of modern Irish drama as a major contributor to world theater and literature rests on the handful of plays Sygne

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[1] Cf. Innes, 5.

leaves behind. A generation later, O'Casey renews and enhances that recognition. He is the next truly world-renowned dramatist after Synge to arise from Irish theatre. Like Synge, O'Casey shapes dialogue, adding dignity to the utterances of the poor.[2] Bowen adds that Synge blends the farcical, the comic, and the lighthearted with actions normally associated with tragic, even disastrous results. Synge's mixture of traditional opposites paves the way for O'Casey.[3] As Simmons points out, the vitality of O'Casey's dialogue is firmly based on the real energy of Dublin slum discourse, just as Synge's was based on peasant speech.[4] In Durbach's opinion, if Synge, in *The Playboy of the Western World*, celebrates the magnificence of the self-creating hero, O'Casey in *Juno and the Paycock* shows the catastrophic consequences to men who live dream lives of impossible wish-fulfillment. They present a splendid study of two contrasting Irish temperaments.[5]

Pilný argues that Irish drama has been experiencing a gradual shift since the mid-1990s. It is concerned with collective identity on the one hand, and the mainly naturalist theatrics of most canonical plays on the other. Both emergent and established playwrights start to focus more on stories of individuals while providing as little stimulus for allegorisation as possible. At the same time, they begin to explore alternative modes, for example physical theatre and performance. The most remarkable case in point is provided by the work of Martin McDonagh. He is a dazzling star among many outstanding contemporary Irish playwrights. McDonagh's plays enjoy extreme popularity with audiences worldwide despite their physical and verbal violence and their subversive treatment of much of the mainstream Irish dramatic tradition. His plays tend to be perceived as images of Ireland of one kind or another.[6]

2.1 John Millington Synge: *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907)

The Playboy of the Western World has come to be Synge's most highly regarded play, and it is probably his most successful one. It was also the most hostilely received of all Synge's plays, being met with riots at its first performance in Dublin. According to

[2] Cf. Sternlicht, 69, 88-89.
[3] Cf. Bowen, 73.
[4] Cf. Simmons, 58.
[5] Cf. Durbach, 117.
[6] Cf. Pilný, 154-155.

Thornton, Nationalists were objecting to its portrayal of the Irish character and others to the mention of a woman's undergarment in public ("…standing in their night shifts…"). The drama was denounced by reviewers for faults ranging from dirty language and libel upon the Irish character, to psychological inconsistency or opacity, and tonal and generic confusion. More recently and less emotionally involved critics have been able to see the play's virtues more clearly.[7] The play is not only the judgment of the mentality and actions of an entire community but also a story of young innocence and love. It presents characters whose own perceptions undergo revolutionary changes. The action of the play revolves around Christy Mahon who tries to become the playboy.

Thornton states that the play specifically explores the relationship between reality and abstractions, with particular emphasis upon why some abstractions have the power to modify reality, while others offer at best a deceitful and dangerous delusion. Its presentation of these issues is metaphysical. Synge's play proposes philosophically complementary treatment of its theme, subtle and affirmative. Christy, the Playboy, is truly remade by 'the power of a lie' (Synge, 122) through which Synge presents a dynamic and satisfying relation between idea and reality. The prime agency by which idea and reality interrelate is language.[8] Critical statements express the question of the genre the play belongs to. Synge's play is a strange mixture of exotic language, metaphor, satire, farce, extravaganza, comedy, and tragedy. It is more comedy than tragedy because it has a happy ending. The title of the drama is a cliché that bears connotations of comic exaggeration. Most critics agree that the play obeys the rules of twentieth-century naturalism.

2.1.1 Christopher Mahon

Christy is the protagonist and the only character in the drama that changes and grows. According to Corkery, the point of the play is the continuous growth of Christy Mahon's character from nothingness to full manhood. This development is due almost entirely to his meeting with Pegeen. She is, like the others in the village, drawn to him by the glamour that the great adventure of killing his father has thrown around him.

[7] Cf. Thornton, 134.
[8] Cf. Thornton, 127.

Later she says that it is not the deed itself that wins either her or the others, it is Christy's way of telling the tale, the fine bit of talk. He presents himself as a quiet poor fellow with no man giving him attention. To Pegeen he is only a soft lad and she treats him to bread and milk. To Widow Quinn he appears as one fitter to be saying his catechism rather than murdering his father. To his father he is only a dirty stuttering rough rude man, one who spends his days fooling over the little singing birds he has; one who would hide if he saw girls full of life and fun come over the hill. Christy is extremely poor and easily exhausted. It is only when he triumphs at the end that he becomes fit material for great drama.[9]

Thornton states that much of the difficulty in categorizing the play arises out of the ambiguity of the central character and the complexity of his psychology. The puzzlement over Christy revolves around the question whether he is shown as a hero or a buffoon. He is presented as a typical peasant, but also as a humorous and exaggerated figure. Christy seems to be continually changing from cowering to bragging. At the end of the play, he seems different than he was at the beginning. This change is necessary to the central theme of the young man's self-surprising growth under the influence of people's expectation and admiration. In the early stages of the play he is only a potential hero, but also a potential buffoon and coward, and his attitude does change between fear and self-assertion. At the end of the play he really is different than he was at the beginning, because one of the potential selves latent within him has been evoked and realized.[10]

Furthermore, the theme of reality and fiction plays an important role. This becomes important because Christy has a dream. He tells the people that they are 'after making a mighty man of [him] this day by the power of a lie' (Synge, 122). In Thornton's opinion, both Christy and the reality are transformed by a lie. The metamorphosis of Christy from whining boy to self-confident hero is the main basis of the play's development. The important catalyst in the reaction is the image of Christy in the eyes of the village people. During the play he becomes in actuality the hero they mistakenly presumed him to be at the beginning. Pegeen's image of him, as well as his own image of her image, is most important because his growth occurs largely so that he may

[9] Cf. Corkery, 192-194.
[10] Cf. Thornton, 137-138.

become worthy of her. As a result of his aspirations, the reality of what Christy is undergoes a transformation because of the dream it is challenged by. Christy's dream, conceived in hope and aimed at transforming his very self, succeeds.[11]

As already mentioned above, the language is the connection between reality and fiction. Thornton explains that the eloquence of Christy's language shows the growing vigor and imagination of his accounts of his battle with his father. It also points out the importance of his successive elaborations of his story of the murdering and of his rhapsodic wooing of Pegeen in his transformation. In the play, language takes on an importance and acts as mediator between actuality and potentiality, between reality and abstraction. It is largely through language, through his successive accounts of the murder and his self-surprising eloquence in wooing Pegeen, that Christy projects and brings into being one of his potential selves that had until now lain inactive.[12] Bowen adds that language makes a playboy of Christy, language sustains him through his trial, and language affirms his triumphal position in the end.[13]

In addition, Synge shows the poetic extravagance of Christy and exposes the hyperbolic nature of his language. According to Grene, Christy seems to be the romantic poet, a self-created myth-maker. His description of his emotion is vivid and genuine, and in no way denied by the incongruity of object. Critics often identify the playboy as poet. The play dramatizes the gradual development and the unexpected blossoming of the poet's craft from its first uncertain expression to the full display of mature art. However, Christy is not a poet, in the literal sense, nor can he be said to symbolize the artist as such. He is rather a man capable of imaginative reflection. Christy's attraction lies in the fact that he is not a writer of prose poems, but a far more basic and complete representative of imagination.[14] He represents a sort of a poet to Pegeen. Christy's love for Pegeen inspires his words which resemble those of a poet.

> PEGEEN. […] and I've heard all times it's the poets are your like – fine, fiery fellows with great rages when their temper's roused. (Synge, 37)
>
> CHRISTY. Amn't I after seeing the love-light of the star of knowledge shining from her brow, and hearing words would put you thinking on the holy Brigid speaking to the infant saints, and now she'll be turning again, and speaking

[11] Cf. Thornton, 139-140.
[12] Cf. Thornton, 139-140.
[13] Cf. Bowen, 77.
[14] Cf. Grene, 134-135.

> hard words to me, like an old woman with a spavindy ass she'd have, urging on a hill. (Synge, 84)

Grene explains further that while the myth of the playboy remains static, and Christy tries desperately to live up to it, a real and organic change is taking place in his personality. He finds himself between two women, Pegeen and Widow Quinn, but Pegeen's admiration for Christy becomes more to him than simply an instance of his luck. Pegeen occupies the centre of his mind, partly because she is the first girl to take an interest in him, partly because he senses in her a special response to his fine words. The two women are of more or less equal value, but Christy is pleading Widow Quin to help him win Pegeen: 'It's herself only that I'm seeking now.' (Synge, 86) He is in love for the first time. Although his love is still part of the image of the admired playboy, it now has priority over everything else. Christy reaches a new peak of self-assurance as playboy in his triumph at the sports. The sudden realization of manhood, which Pegeen's infatuation for him has brought to him, enables Christy to do so. The greatest prize is still Pegeen.[15]

> CHRISTY. […] it's great luck and company I've won me in the end of time – two fine women fighting for the likes of me – till I'm thinking this night wasn't I a foolish fellow not to kill my father in the years gone by. (Synge, 50)

Pegeen Mike is the only other character in the play that has a leading part. She runs the establishment. Thornton points out that the unevenness of Pegeen's attitude toward Christy, first admiration and then scorn, expresses both her wish to find out how much of a man she is dealing with, and her uncertainty about whether she most deeply wants to rule or be ruled by her man. The severity of her treatment of him at the end of the play expresses her deep disappointment when she concludes that he is much less of a man than she had thought.[16] King adds that Pegeen turns against Christy and rejects him because he has been story-telling and play-acting. To her he is 'an ugly liar [who] was playing off the hero, and the fright of men' (Synge, 121). Pegeen's answer is a betrayal of Christy as playboy, lover and poet. She is prepared to send the maker of images to his death once he becomes the doer of deeds.[17]At the end, she is even more disappointed after realizing that he is worth having, but that she has let him escape her.

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[15] Cf. Grene, 138-139.
[16] Cf. Thornton, 138.
[17] Cf. King, 154-155.

> PEGEEN. I'll say, a strange man is a marvel, with his mighty talk; but what's a squabble in your backyard, and the blow of a loy, have taught me that there's a great gap between a gallous story and a dirty deed. (*To men*.) Take him from this, or the lot of us will be likely put on trial for his deed to-day. (Synge, 127)

Grene explains that even when Christy is embarrassed by the appearance of his father, it is Pegeen's love only which he wishes to regain. He no longer cares for general admiration, but tries to kill his father for the second time in order to gain Pegeen's praises. The boast has completely disappeared and Christy is a young lover like any other desperate to win the approval of his mistress. It is the terrible shock of her betrayal of him which awakes him from his dream. His belief in Pegeen is ruined but this ultimately only strengthens his belief in himself. Where before he had thought his love, and the words he used to express it, originated with her, his inspiration, he can now see that it had source within himself.[18] Christy loses his illusions about Pegeen because her behavior shows him her true character. He lost ungrateful Pegeen, but found himself.

Another person who Christy has a serious conflict with and tries to kill is his own father. In the beginning, old Mahon describes his son as a coward, a weak and lazy person who wastes his time, who escapes from girls at the first sight of them. He condemns Christy for lazy dreaming, narcissism, and even effeminacy. Bowen points out that one of the problems in all of Chrisy's exaggerations are exactly how much of old Mahon's account of his worthless, beaten, scapegoat son to believe. Mahon's version of the younger Christy is a little hard to reconcile with even the frightened fugitive of the first act. But Mahon's exaggeration becomes fact, and his version of the past a foreshadowing of the future, when the mob eventually turns on Christy.[19]

> MAHON. […] a lier on walls, a talker of folly, a man you'd see stretched the half of the day in the brown ferns with his belly to the sun. (Synge, 80) Didn't you hear me say he was the fool of men, the way from this out he'll know the orphan's lot, with old and young making game of him, and they swearing, raging, kicking at him like a mangy cur. (Synge, 97)

According to Mengel, Synge uses the old theme of the fight between the father and the son and transforms the tragic substance into the comic one. Important is the relationship

[18] Cf. Grene, 139.
[19] Cf. Bowen, 81.

between essentiality and illusion, truth and lie, reality and fiction, and also the role that illusions play in peoples' lives. Christy's story about killing his father is fiction without any truth. In spite of this, people are ready to believe this false story. In their eyes, poor and cowardly Christy is a hero. In this way, Synge demonstrates the seduction of people with fiction and the danger that comes out of fiction. The belief of the citizens of Mayo in his false story sets in motion the process of Christy's self-development that finally makes him able to be what the others see in him. In this way fiction creates reality. While the village people are ready to enjoy the story about killing his father and admire Christy, they turn away dreadfully against him as he tries with one blow to turn fiction into reality.[20]

Further to this, Christy fails to kill his father for the second time. Old Mahon reappears, but this time, he is full of admiration for his son because in confronting his father, Christy has proved his manhood. He has finally reached his status of the playboy, however, the village people reject him because of his deed. For them, he is a hero when he kills far away from them, but doing it in front of them, showing courage of a hero, frightens those people. This act makes him brave in the eyes of his father. His relationship to old Mahon has changed for better. At the end, Christy is not dependent on his father any more, but he dominates instead.

> CHRISTY. Go with you, is it? I will, then, like a gallant captain with his heathen slave. Go on now and I'll see you from this day stewing my oatmeal and washing my spuds, for I'm master of all fights from now. (Synge, 132)

King states that Christy can be seen as a character that is made into a hero by the dramatic role which he is called upon to perform. He is cast in the role of a hero in a play within the play. He is then called upon to try out his status in relation to those who have encouraged his assumption of heroism. Christy is placed in a situation in which he must measure his new status against his past. This past materializes to confront him in the person of his father. Part of Christy's dramatic development has been concerned with freeing himself from fear of confronting his father, a fear which is widely shared by the society which sought to make of him the father-murderer. As playboy, Christy becomes a focus of people's creativity as well as of their weaknesses and fears, but he

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[20] Cf. Mengel, 34.

refuses to be their fool.[21] His rise to playboyhood lies in his being convinced that he is a playboy.

> CHRISTY. Ten thousand blessings upon all that's here, for you've turned me a likely gaffer in the end of all, the way I'll go romancing through a romping lifetime from this hour to the dawning of the judgment day. (Synge, 133)

Bowen explains that the Mayo men are impressed by the metaphoric power of Christy's crime. They praise him with such honor that his exaggerated speech begins to rise to heroic proportion. Although Christy has performed seemingly heroic acts in winning the athletic events and races, they too are only metaphors for life's activities. They are an unimaginative recreation of more realistic tests of manhood and events that draw their power not from language but from banal physical skills. His exaggerations lead the people to consider Christy a traditional boastful hero. To be regarded as a serious hero, Christy has to be seriously challenged. Such a challenge comes collectively from the Mayo men and also from the woman he loves. When reality overtakes the village people, they become like the mocking mob who have ridiculed Christy all his life. Their taunts help drive him to the second attempted murder. Their attitude inspires Christy's most powerful speech, strong because truth finally overtakes exaggeration.[22]

> CHRISTY. Shut your yelling, for if you're after making a mighty man of me this day by the power of a lie, you're setting me now to think if it's a poor thing to be lonesome, it's worse, maybe, go mixing with the fools of earth. (Synge, 122)

According to Bowen, the townsfolk, through their adoration, are themselves responsible for raising Christy's self-esteem to the point of his independence from society and his father. Christy's eventual knowledge does not concern either the irreversible nature of his crime or his self-destructive pride. It is in fact the very cause of his pride, his valued ideas of himself, enabling him through deed and more importantly through his speech to bring about his own independence and manhood. Blind self-preservation and a series of vague provocations in the form of humiliation cause the first murder. The second is more purposeful, and the third, a metaphoric murder in which Christy simply defeats and makes his father obedient by assuming the superior role, is the most purposeful of all. Christy begins his journey through life in triumph and with contempt for the society

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[21] Cf. King, 140-141, 156.
[22] Cf. Bowen, 79-82.

of weaker beings. He has achieved manhood through knowledge, but the knowledge that Synge gives to Christy is triumphal self-assurance. Christy becomes free and independent of the townspeople, of Pegeen, and of his father.[23]

Christy's weakness comes from his own insecurity. He is insecure in his good looks and also has a weak personality. He holds the mirror up to check his identity and speculates optimistically about his future good looks. He is generally very shy and does not really have an opinion but listens to what other people say and tries to live up to their expectations. That is why the citizens of Mayo, Pegeen, and his father have the power over him. Christy can be seen as an almost empty space filled by the desires of the people who project heroic qualities onto him. He is not strong enough to oppose other people's expectations. In defying the banal morality of the townspeople and Pegeen, Christy achieves a final manhood and shows the tendency towards the swaggering Irishman. He starts as a weak and naïve young man who is running away from the law and becomes glorified as a mighty hero. At the end, Christy has been transformed into a strong and independent individual.

Synge's play gives an insight into the relation between reality and fantasy, the nature of role-playing, and the growth of personality. According to Pilný, *The Playboy of the Western World* is a kind of bildungsdrama, dealing with the growth of its central character to maturity. The growth of Christy follows a trajectory in which moments of glory alternate with ironic pitfalls. The ironic moments shape the course of Christy's way to selfhood.[24] Grene states that the play shows the growth of Christy's new and more convincing freedom. Synge's drama demonstrates Christy's development from weakness and dependence on his father and his first love, to a healthy and mature self-sufficiency. Christy is very different from the traditional comic boaster. His lies are unconscious fantasies which delicately mark his own growing sense of self-esteem. This also shows a real development in his character and a definitive change in Christy by the end of the play. Through a series of fantasy adventures he reaches a peak of real achievement in the dominance of his father and the crowd. The humiliated boaster becomes human.[25]

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[23] Cf. Bowen, 74-75.
[24] Cf. Pilný, 60-61.
[25] Cf. Grene, 137, 139.

Not only in Synge's but also in O'Casey's play there is a concentration on the male individual. According to Berninger, this is typical of the realist drama. The emphasis on the role of the important individual and the concentration on the male characters are two important ideas which determine the representation of heroism in the realist drama. Because of that, there is a corresponding marginalization of women and the population. Male protagonists are emphasized. This is evident in the titles of the plays, where there is a tendency towards the personalization of the story. Characters are understood through their language because it portrays their social and individual background. Also important for the realist play is the difference between the realist and anti-realist representation.[26] In *The Playboy of the Western World* and *Juno and the Paycock* there is the illusion of reality which troubles the male protagonist and causes his weakness.

2.2 Sean O'Casey: *Juno and the Paycock* (1924)

Juno and the Paycock is the second play of O'Casey's *The Dublin Trilogy* and is considered to be his masterpiece. As Sternlicht points out, it is a play of human waste that is presented as comic as well as tragic. In it O'Casey portrays human greatness in the face of great grief, poverty, suffering, and hopelessness. It is a story of ordinary people caught up in political events that are far beyond their possible control. O'Casey's tragicomedy is centered on the then-recent events of the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War and set in the shabby Dublin slums.[27] O'Riordan states that the Boyle family, Juno and Jack with their two grown children, Johnny and Mary, is a microcosm of Ireland: a family like a country, divided against itself – the picture of a nation at bitter war, mirrored in a few hearts and minds.[28] The play is a domestic and social drama with expressive realism and the imagery of politics. It gives a specific insight into the Irish characters, their mixture of moods, and their failure of moral perception which is responsible for the chaos.

Durbach explains that the title of the play crystallizes the central opposition of the two dialectical principles which shape the whole: the horror of facing the reality of one's

[26] Cf. Berninger, 58-59.
[27] Cf. Sternlicht, 88, 92-93.
[28] Cf. O'Riordan, 45.

domestic crises, and the illusions which tempt one to fantasize the horror out of all existence.[29] O'Riordan adds that the women in the play, especially Juno, are the ones who carry the eventual burden of reality, while the men ignore and outface it in a diffusion of lies and talk. While men are ineffectual, women are the strong and dominant characters. Irishwomen generally rule their families. The dominance of Juno, in her moments of suffering, is the triumph of the play.[30] According to Sternlicht, O'Casey implies that masculine vanity, drinking, and foolishness are the curses on Irish womanhood. Most of the author's men are lazy cowards and their lives are essentially aimless.[31] 'Captain' Boyle and 'Joxer' are a team. They are the comic characters, completely irresponsible, and still rather conventional. The two of them are idle, full of songs and fantasies. Boyle needs Joxer just as Joxer needs Boyle.

2.2.1 'Captain' Jack Boyle

> (*THE CAPTAIN […] is a man of about sixty; stout, grey-haired and stocky. His neck is short, and his head looks like a stone ball […] His cheeks, reddish-purple, are puffed out […] On his upper lip is a crisp, tightly cropped moustache; he carries himself with the upper part of his body slightly thrown back, and his stomach slightly thrust forward. His walk is a slow, consequential strut. His clothes are dingy, and he wears a faded seaman's-cap with a glazed peak.*) (O'Casey, 9-10)

The 'Paycock' of the title is 'Captain' Jack Boyle himself. Durbach states that O'Casey's physical description of the man imposes upon human movement the bizarre impersonation of the bird. The puffed-up appearance, the backward-inclining and paunch-protruding strut is as close as male vanity can possibly come to an impersonation of the peacock. With the physical appearance goes a moral nature, a self-increasing pride, a constant preening of his pretended reputation before a willing audience of parasite-birds. Manners and morality coincide in the 'Captain'. O'Casey's distortion of reality is that quality of his dramatic style which makes the fusion possible. Peacockery means an egoistic concern with one's self, one's image, one's importance, one's opinions, and one's appearance. It comes face to face with that which consistently opposes it: the need to confront a desperate reality and the need to make provision for

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[29] Cf. Durbach, 113.
[30] Cf. O'Riordan, 43-46.
[31] Cf. Sternlicht, 91, 93.

life's necessities.[32]

> MRS. BOYLE. […] struttin' about the town like a paycock (O'Casey, 4)
> […] There'll never be any good got out o' him so long as he goes with that shoulder-shruggin' Joxer. I killin' meself workin', an' he sthruttin' about from mornin' till night like a paycock! (O'Casey, 9)
> […] Your poor wife slavin' to keep the bit in your mouth, an' you gallivantin' about all the day like a paycock! (O'Casey, 14)

Simmons explains that the glory of the peacock's feathers serves for courtship or defense, but Boyle's visionary flights are self-consuming. He learns nothing, he is preparing for nothing but another drink. Boyle is work-shy and develops pains in his legs when a job is mentioned. On the other hand, he has a great capacity for enjoyment with his friend Joxer. It is the drink and the talk that keeps 'the Paycock' out of the house and out of work. The 'Captain' feels he is perfectly educated already. He has all he wants apart from a little money to indulge himself and free himself from his wife's nagging. In poverty and prosperity, he lives a high standard. Boyle is not just the universal lazy braggart, but also the remainder of that tradition of improper nobility, of people with habits above their social rank. Boyle swells, exaggerates, and dreams himself an epic past and a glorious future. He is dedicated to his own artistry as dreamer and too weak to face up to the truth. The 'Captain' has the expansive humorous desire for an easy life.[33]

> BOYLE. D'ye want to dhrive me out o' the house?
> MRS. BOYLE. It ud be easier to dhrive you out o' the house than to dhrive you into a job. (O'Casey, 14)
> BOYLE. […] U-ugh, I'm afther getting' a terrible twinge in me right leg!
> MRS. BOYLE. […] It's miraculous that whenever he scents a job in front of him, his legs begin to fail him! […]
> BOYLE. […] U-ugh! There's another twinge in me other leg! Nobody but meself knows the sufferin' I'm goin' through with the pains in these legs o' mine! (O'Casey, 16-17)

Furthermore, the 'Captain' is the 'Paycock', the swaggering Irishman who detests work, brags, and prefers drinking to all other activities. He smokes a clay pipe and is a classic drunkard who cannot stand straight. Boyle has never been a captain but named himself 'Captain' based on a single voyage on a coal barge. He is exposed as a fool, a bully, a hypocrite, and as being lazy, irresponsible and tricky. He is a boaster, ingenious in his

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[32] Cf. Durbach, 112-113.
[33] Cf. Simmons, 54-56, 59-60, 63, 69.

defenses against reality. Jack uses his time and money foolishly and too quickly, without thought of the future. He is full of false pride and his self-indulgent nature. His own deceived self-importance leads him into his imprisonment. He is the very embodiment of the chaos from which he tries to distance himself. Boyle has the ability to absorb reality into the life of the imagination. He is the representative of the foolish illusions and pompous selfishness. The 'Captain' is a self-dramatizing egoist.

According to Goldstone, the irresponsibility and selfishness is embodied in Boyle himself. He stubbornly refuses to accept any responsibility and continues to drink. Boyle is self-centered and without sympathy for the sufferings of other people. He thinks only of himself, even if it is just to cheat his parasitic buddy, Joxer. The unpleasant tenement and the chaos create a strong temptation to escape, if possible. Boyle has a great talent for such escape. He can shamelessly live off Juno when this is possible. He can always enjoy himself because he has vitality and eagerness for life. Also, if he has to, or chooses to, he can act a role, instinctively knowing how far he can go without being hurt. Boyle is quick-witted and knows how, chameleon-like, to find an attitude or pose that works for him at a certain moment. His technique is intuitive and spontaneous. Nevertheless, Boyle is a destructive and vulnerable figure because he has completely failed as a father. It is not what Boyle has publicly done, but simply the fact that he obviously never cared for his family.[34]

> MRS. BOYLE. […] You'd think he was bringin' twenty poun's a week into the house the way he's going on. He wore out the Health Insurance long ago, he's afther wearin' out the unemployment dole, an', now, he's thryin' to wear out me! An' constantly singin', no less, when he ought always to be on his knees offerin' up a Novena for a job! (O'Casey, 5-6)

Moreover, Boyle is a weak father, a dreamer and an idealist. He refuses his function as parent and breadwinner. The 'Captain' becomes a worthless husband who uses every opportunity to avoid work and rejects different jobs. He simply ignores major family responsibilities thus demonstrating his weakness. The tragedy that happens to his son and daughter does not affect him. He is completely drunk at the end of the play and therefore unconscious of his son's death. The father-son and the father-daughter relationship do not really exist. Boyle is not interested in the lives of his children, neither when they are little, nor when they are young people. He is an egoist who only

[34] Cf. Goldstone, 93, 95, 97-98.

thinks how to please himself. His fluency and expansive good humor co-exist with a selfish indifference to other people's misery. His wife represents for him the one actual threat to his carefree liberty and to his profound dread of work. Boyle only imagines the rebellion and has a wish to assert himself against his wife, but does not have the courage to do that.

Durbach states that 'Captain's' pride prevents him from acknowledging the real self: ugly, black, featureless, lacking compassion, mean, and self-regarding. He stands for the betrayal and hypocrisy of Irish manhood, with his stone-heartedness. Boyle's independent masculine 'Republic' (O'Casey, 27) is clearly a world without charity, compassion or moral responsibility. Juno and Mary, both victims of male peacockery, have to leave this 'Republic' to make a better world for Mary's unborn child.[35] The 'Paycock' rejects his pregnant daughter because the scandal will damage his reputation. He is not really capable of throwing anyone out, let alone his pregnant daughter. He just speaks strongly, but does not do anything. As a typical weakling, Boyle escapes the unpleasant situation by going out for a drink. It is different with Juno. Leaving Boyle and the tenant place means her liberation. She was trying hard to keep her family together, but she failed: Johnny is killed and Boyle is hopeless. Nevertheless, she does not give up but keeps fighting.

> MRS. BOYLE. We'll go. Come, Mary, an' we'll never come back here agen. Let your father furrage for himself now; I've done all I could an' it was all no use – he'll be hopeless till the end of his days. I've got a little room in me sister's where we'll stop till your throuble is over, an' then we'll work together for the sake of the baby.
> MARY. My poor little child that'll have no father!
> MRS BOYLE. It'll have what's far better – it'll have two mothers. (O'Casey 86)

Furthermore, Boyle's two great weaknesses are his inability to face reality and refusing to take at least some responsibility. For him, it is easier to get drunk than to work or to try to help his children. He is not only a weak father but also a weak husband. Juno, as the breadwinner, is the stamina in the family, not Boyle. The 'Captain' has his friend Joxer to escape to when he is short of money and to entertain in style when he has plenty. He seems closer to Joxer than to his own wife. Durbach states that by praising very highly his importance through fantastic bragging, he protects himself against the

[35] Cf. Durbach, 118-119.

shabby reality of his true identity. Like Christy Mahon, he creates himself out of the, somewhat alcoholic, poetry of the Irish imagination without rising above the level of the mock-heroic.[36] In the end, the 'Captain' appears to be a rather pathetic alcoholic figure instead of the conventional braggart and the vain man nagged by his wife who thinks that he can take care of himself.

> BOYLE. […] the whole world's in a state o' chassis! (O'Casey, 20)
> […] the whole counthry's in a state o' chassis. (O'Casey, 42)
> I'm telling you … Joxer … th' whole worl's … in a terr … ible state o' … chassis! (O'Casey, 89)

2.2.2 Johnny Boyle

According to Goldstone, since the 'Captain' is so unwilling to recognize anyone else's identity, it is difficult for his son Johnny to have any self or identity of his own. Johnny is so ashamed of his father that he feels driven to believe in something. He cannot sustain his belief, since he has no respect for authority figures who would embody the values underlying such belief. From the bitter arguments between Boyle and Johnny, it is obvious how little Johnny respects his father, and with good reason.[37] Johnny does not want to have anything to do with the 'Captain'. He blames his father for lying to the whole family about the money that actually is not coming and for his constant irresponsibility. He also blames his sister Mary for embarrassing the family by getting pregnant out of the wedlock. He, on the other hand, has given away his colleague and neighbor who got killed because of that.

> (*JOHNNY […] is a thin, delicate fellow […] He has evidently gone through a rough time. His face is pale and drawn; there is a tremulous look of indefinite fear in his eyes. The left sleeve of his coat is empty, and he walks with a slight halt.*) (O'Casey, 7)

Johnny is Jack's and Juno's crippled son and the focus for the theme of political activism. He was wounded in the hip and lost his left arm fighting for the Republic in the War for Independence. His haunted idealism is contrasted to Juno's practical domestic perspective. His mother was against his going to the war, but he did not want to give up, not even after he was wounded. After the peace treaty he joined the Irish

[36] Cf. Durbach, 117.
[37] Cf. Goldstone, 98.

Republican Army rebels fighting the new Irish government. The son is not only crippled in body, but also badly damaged in his mind by his experiences in the war. He is crippled, in pain, and frightened because he has betrayed a comrade. He cannot escape the IRA because he is bound to it forever by his previous actions. Although he now hates the whole thing, he is summoned by it on suspicion of betrayal. Johnny lives in constant fear that he will be killed for what he has done. This fear makes him weak and unprotected.

In addition to this, Johnny is a disillusioned IRA veteran who has informed Tancred. Goldstone points out that Johnny's disillusionment and betrayal are directly connected with his death. Although he does not make his motives too clear, apparently as a boy he joined the IRA in 1916 because of confused motives. He believed in the cause, though how deeply or knowingly is difficult to tell, and he obviously had the support of his parents and neighbors. Despite the fact that he was wounded in the hip and lost his arm, he has remained loyal to the cause for several years. As he remarks to his mother 'a principle's a principle' (O'Casey, 31). At the time the play begins, he seems to have reached the breaking point because he found himself undermined by a secretly harmful, corrosive force. This force is moral chaos, brought on by successive national crises and the stifling, divisive environment. The moral chaos affected Johnny the most. He is traumatized, fearful, and reduced to a shell of a person.[38]

Goldstone explains that Johnny simply cannot sustain his Republican convictions. This is because his neighbors and parents, whose support he needs, do not support the Republicans. As a result, Johnny has nothing to believe in and, in bitterness and desperation, begins to hate those forces that made him what he is, namely his family and the IRA. He fights bitterly with his father who epitomizes the worst in his family and informs on one of his comrades. Having betrayed Tancred, Johnny becomes even more self-centered because now he lives in absolute fear of his life. Except for arguing with Boyle, he has no defenses, so that he is reduced to letting his mother treat him like a sick child. Although Johnny does not appear frequently, he shows the audience to what desperate lengths people can go when at best they have only basic selfish feelings to sustain them, and at worst, they begin to destroy even these. Johnny does clearly

[38] Cf. Goldstone, 94-95.

embody confusion and narrow self-interest.[39]

> JOHNNY. I can rest nowhere, nowhere, nowhere. […] Let me alone, let me alone, let me alone, for God's sake. (O'Casey, 41)
> […] Mother o' God, there's a shot I'm afther getting'! […] I'm afther feelin' a pain in me breast, like the tearin' by of a bullet! (O'Casey, 83)

Simmons states that Johnny, as the trapped betrayer, is in the state of panic and desperation. He is not only trapped physically, but also in the whole enterprise of violent nationalism. When he joins an active revolutionary body, he does not realize that he is likely to suffer. It is too much for Johnny and he reacts against any intrusion.[40] He is a wounded wreck who becomes very sensitive, nervous, and touchy. Johnny's betrayal of his neighbor is a dramatic expression of the fragility of his high-minded principles. O'Riordan adds that Johnny's confused actions lead to his physical and psychological break-up, which ultimately leads to his death in the wretched struggle for Irish independence. It is a test of the real acting strength: his political guilt lies behind the whole momentum of the play, and manifests itself in the form of hallucinations, fits of temper, bitterness and whining self-pity. As one of life's fugitives, he is extremely annoyed as much by an obsessive preoccupation with escape, as by jollity in the house of horror outside.[41]

> JOHNNY. I won't go! Haven't I done enough for Ireland! I've lost me arm, an' me hip's desthroyed so that I'll never be able to walk right agen! Good God, haven't I done enough for Ireland?
> THE YOUNG MAN. Boyle, no man can do enough for Ireland! (O'Casey, 60)

Moreover, Johnny has turned excessively religious as part of his reaction against action and enthusiasm. The light before the picture of the Virgin seems to represent the light of Johnny's life. He is both obsessed and scared of that light because he anticipates that when the light in front of the picture of the Virgin dies out, he will die too. The light dies out and the rebels come for Johnny, drag him out, and shoot him for treachery. According to Mitchell, death's coming for him at the end is the logical conclusion of this process. This death-dominated, death-dealing reality which Johnny has helped to make takes his life.[42] What really destroys Johnny is his own weakness that mostly

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[39] Cf. Goldstone, 96.
[40] Cf. Simmons, 57-58, 65.
[41] Cf. O'Riordan, 62.
[42] Cf. Mitchell, 101.

comes out of his fear. He is a weak character because of his dependency on other people and their approval. As an invalid, he is not only psychologically, but also physically dependent on others. His desperate need to believe in something also makes him weak. Due to a weak role-model in his father, one could simply say: a weak father – a weak son.

2.2.3 'Joxer' Daly

> (*JOXER […] may be younger than the Captain but he looks a lot older. His face is like a bundle of crinkled paper; his eyes have a cunning twinkle; he is spare and loosely built; he has a habit of constantly shrugging his shoulders with a peculiar twitching movement, meant to be ingratiating. His face is invariably ornamented with a grin.*) (O'Casey, 10)

O'Riordan states that Joxer is Boyle's prodigal crony and has a wrinkled cunning appearance, crowned with roguish impishness summarized in his own catchphrase, 'It's better to be a coward than a corpse!' (O'Casey, 22) He is a jackal and a babbling, old bachelor. His shoulder-shrugging postures masquerade a foxy interior. Joxer compliments Boyle, and both are 'paycocks' in their own rite – Joxer all the while playing foil to the greater 'Paycock'. His mannerism is his shoulder-shrugging. Their complementary comic roles are contributory factors towards a tragedy of death and destruction, even though they are unaware of it. Their indolent, idle, useless lives mirror much of the pathos of Ireland's manhood. Boyle and Joxer are tragicomically interdependent.[43]

According to Simmons, Joxer is one of the most memorable characters in Irish literature. O'Casey shows the full range of Joxer's ingenious adaptability. At the same time, he is moral and totally amoral, delinquent, tentatively sympathetic, curious, tormenting, and even invisible. His character is exactly embodied in the vitality of his speech. He is largely an echo to Boyle and the parasite of Boyle's braggart. Joxer devotes most of his energies to developing the vanity and surprised anger of the victim whom in a sense he loves. He flatters and fosters as an artist. He is revealed as a hypocrite, but Boyle welcomes him back.[44] The parasitic Joxer is 'Captain's'

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[43] Cf. O'Riordan, 48, 62.
[44] Cf. Simmons, 59-60, 71.

companion, but he has to find a new role to match the new respectable and prosperous Boyle. Prosperity keeps Boyle and Joxer apart, but they come together again when the legacy proves to be false.

> BOYLE. […] Juno, I'm done with Joxer; he's nothin' but a prognosticator […]
> JOXER. You're done with Joxer, are you? Maybe you thought I'd stop on the roof all the night for you! Joxer out on the roof with the win' blowin' through him was nothin' to you an' your friend with the collar an' tie! (O'Casey, 34)
> JOXER. The anchor's weighed, farewell, ree .. mem .. ber .. me. Jacky Boyle, Esquire, infernal rogue an' damned liar. (O'Casey, 72)

Durbach explains that Joxer's parodic inversion of the humanist position makes his failure all the more morally shameful. For it is Joxer who reveals most clearly and plainly the lies with which people deceive themselves and who consistently violates the very sentiments which he is constantly mouthing. Nevertheless, he never deceives himself and, in this, he differs from that most dangerous of all the peacocks, the self-celebrating, self-romanticising Captain Boyle.[45] Joxer pretends to be more important than he really is. In reality, he is the embodiment of a coward. Just as the 'Captain', he also fears Juno and escapes dangerous situations. His weakness lies in the fact that he does not have a stable character on its own. He exists only in relation to Boyle. Even in the moments when he despises Boyle, Joxer realizes that he cannot live without him.

O'Casey's play has the mood of tragicomedy and portrays family, marriage, poverty, and political commitment. Durbach points out that in this play it is the woman, Juno, who embodies the sense of earthbound reality, and the man, peacock, disastrously committed to his illusions, who embodies the insubstantial opposite. Unlike Christy Mahon, O'Casey's men fail to transform their dreams into actuality, finding it far more comfortable to luxuriate in the platitudes of Irish national sentiment.[46] Their greatest weakness is their unwillingness to face reality and to deal with it. They try to hide from it, or escape it. This reality almost destroys them. They attempt to avoid their responsibilities and the easiest way to do it is to get drunk. What is in common for these characters is that their weaknesses are social rather than individual. These men feel an inner tension between the actual and the possible. They are guilty of the illusions and self-deceptions.

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[45] Cf. Durbach, 117.
[46] Cf. Durbach, 117.

Women, on the other hand, accept the realities of life. According to Simmons, Mrs. Boyle is the breadwinner in the family and the only one who makes sure that everybody is fed. She helps, organizes, and tries to pressure her husband into responsibility. Juno can see nothing beyond hard work and conformity. Her authority is based on her sense of responsibility.[47] Sternlicht adds that Juno is a magnificent woman, a rock on whom all the members of a collapsing family cling. She is a compassionate, courageous, and pragmatic human being. Unlike the men, Juno is not political. The family is destroyed, but one believes that Juno and Mary will survive, for it is matriarchy that sustains and preserves the race.[48]

2.3 Martin McDonagh: *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (2001)

It is the second play in McDonagh's dark comedic *The Aran Islands Trilogy* and his most controversial play. McDonagh ironically reflects establishing themes of Irish culture and satirically explores the expectations of an audience. His play actually ironizes the very notion of Irish dramatic realism. Russell states that he follows Synge in part by writing within the classical Irish tradition of the idyllic countryside, while savagely attacking the sentimentality of the terrorist movement as a noble response toward the love of one's own land.[49] This drama is a black comedy with sudden and unexpected twists. McDonagh uses dramatic tactics of the so-called 'in-yer-face theater' which exists in Britain since 1990's. This type of theatre invades one's personal space, touches the nerves, and aims to be sensational. There are no realistic plays, but the ones that are disorienting, symbolic, surreal, and nightmarish. These plays are extremely violent, cruel, vulgar, and shocking. They are also physically and linguistically aggressive. Physical violence is actually shown on stage.

According to Russell, McDonagh's drama can be read as postmodern satire, which views meta-narratives with skepticism and tends to destabilize them. His manipulation of timeless stage gimmicks generates epistemological uncertainty on the part of his characters. McDonagh's comic blending of the grotesque and fantasy connects him to

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[47] Cf. Simmons, 54, 63.
[48] Cf. Sternlicht, 92-93.
[49] Cf. Russell, 6.

the oral and written Irish comic tradition from its oral roots through its twentieth-century manifestations. His play employs violence in an unexpected way and with unexpected consequences on audience perception. Brutal scenes draw audiences in by their immediacy, an immediacy that film, McDonagh's most influential source, cannot achieve. The influence of horror film in particular upon McDonagh's drama is evident, especially by asserting that genre's creation and subsequent destruction of monsters. McDonagh often creates monsters but then leads the audience into sympathy for them, rather than killing them, subverting that monster's destruction one has been conditioned to expect by one's own viewing of horror films.[50]

Pilný argues that the boundless intertextual creativity demonstrated by this author has become regarded as a clear symptom of McDonagh's postmodernism. The multiplicity of intertextual gestures and sources of pastiche have included many a famous cult movie, thereby extending the popularity of the plays from a particular kind of regular theatergoer to a much larger group of youngish film fans.[51] Lanters points out that it is precisely through the erasure of boundaries between the trivial and the profound, the fragmentation of identity, and the radical destabilization of traditional norms and values, including those relating to gender and sexuality, that McDonagh's postmodern plays engage satirically with the foundations of Irish nationalism.[52] Pilný adds that the aesthetic of McDonagh's work may be summed up by the term grotesque entertainment whose chief characteristics include the staging of graphic, often not deserved violence, offensive language, and omnipresent black humor. It often raises questions of ethics, justice, and artistic responsibility but as a rule, all such issues are swiftly hidden by further outrageous happenings.[53]

According to Pilný, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* contains a great quantity of rough humor and builds a plot line on many detailed parts which are sometimes difficult to understand. The play is only a re-enactment of the blood and guts of Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*, combined with *Killer Joe*, while throwing in a few details from *Desperado* and *Bonnie and Clyde* for good measure. The drama sadly remains a rather shallow farce. The author seems to be examining at least how much blood and

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[50] Cf. Russell, 4-6.
[51] Cf. Pilný, 156.
[52] Cf. Lanters, 9.
[53] Cf. Pilný, 162.

torture will be tolerated on the stage. One of the aspects the play manages to retain from its predecessors is its repeated self-reflexivity. The punk note thus receives a significant degree of qualification, ultimately in the final echo of *Waiting for Godot* which equals to an ironic meta-reflection on the nature of the whole play.[54]

McDonagh's drama revolves around a terrorist named Padraic and his cat, Wee Thomas. Padraic decides to form a splinter group of the INLA, itself a splinter group of the IRA. Lanters explains that it is a detail that functions as an indicator of the play's use of fragmentation as a satirical device. The play satirizes Irish nationalist identity politics by foregrounding and problematizing the gender and sexual identity of its characters, and by interrogating the republican exclusionary attitude towards women and homosexuals. The author destabilizes general assumptions about the connection between political violence and masculinity by simultaneously pointing up the (homo)erotic potential of all-male violence, thereby also troubling the distinction between love and hate and undercutting the machismo of tribal warfare. The treatment of gender here is less a reversal of cultural norms than it is an interrogation of the very operations of cultural normativity and its consequences.[55]

2.3.1 Padraic Osbourne

Padraic is twenty one, handsome, and comes from Inishmore. At the beginning of the play he is on a mission of torture and chip-shop bombing in Northern Ireland. He calls himself the 'lieutenant' even though he is not in the army, but a member of the IRA's splinter group called INLA. Padraic is the self-proclaimed lieutenant of the title, just as the Paycock is the self-named 'Captain'. Padraic moves around the country bombing places and always has a weapon with him: razor, holsters, and handguns. He is impressed and obsessed with bombs. Being convinced that he is doing Ireland a favor by killing drug dealers, he considers himself a nice person. The INLA wants to reassert their control over his identity. The lieutenant believes that he can command his destiny, rewriting his identity as it suits him. Thinking about forming his own splinter group shows Padraic's love for his country.

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[54] Cf. Pilný, 158-159.
[55] Cf. Lanters, 18-19.

At one point, he even tortures a drug dealer for selling the drugs to the schoolchildren. Padraic does not even smoke marijuana, but perhaps he should because it might calm him down. Torturing people seems normal to Padraic due to his distorted picture of how the world should function. In the beginning he fights for a good cause, against drugs, but in a wrong way. Going around the country and killing people, even drug dealers, makes him a criminal, not a hero. Padraic breaks the law in order to establish it. Because of this, he can be seen as a distorted, postmodern Robin Hood. He is a contradictory person. Padraic tortures a drug dealer, but when this one mentions that he also loves cats and has one, Padraic gives him the money to get to hospital. He believes a drug dealer who lies about his love for cats only to save his life. Padraic is considered not be very bright and his morality is disturbingly confused.

> DAVY. As if he wasn't mad enough already. Padraic's mad enough for seven people. Don't they call him 'Mad Padraic'?
> DONNY. They do.
> DAVY. Isn't it him the IRA wouldn't let in because he was *too* mad?
> DONNY. It was. And he never forgave them for it. (McDonagh, 7)

The INLA wants to free Ireland for everybody, not just for the schoolchildren, the old people, and the unborn babies, but also for the junkies, the thieves, and the drug dealers too. This is what Padraic does not understand. He is a good soldier, only a little overenthusiastic. Having constantly two guns and using them simultaneously, he is simply showing off. He is considered to be a mad man and a bully. The 'lieutenant' tortures people physically, using ropes, knives, and guns. He devotes himself to the brutal acts for the freedom Ireland. At the same time, Padraic seems to enjoy this brutality. What he cannot stand is the brutality against his own cat. He has always been a bully, but after the death of his cat, he becomes even worse. He is a very angry and brutal person who becomes more furious and mad after he hears what has happened to his beloved cat.

In the beginning of the play there is presumably a dead black cat, which causes murders and brutality throughout the play. The same cat appears alive at the end showing McDonagh's postmodern, unexpected twist. The cat called Wee Thomas has a very special place in Padraic's life. He has had Wee Thomas since he was five years old. This black cat has been his only friend in the world for fifteen years. Padraic is very

fond of his cat and loves it more than life itself. His devotion to this animal is beyond love, one could say it is an obsession. He is an incredible cat lover. At the first mentioning of his cat's trouble, he leaves everything and hurries home. Wee Thomas is his only reason to live. He threatens and murders for the sake of the cat. Padraic loves his cat to that extent that he even cries, in spite of being a brutal male who kills and tortures people. The cat exposes the imagined and constructed nature of human forms of identity.

> PADRAIC *[…] happily […] calls out in a whisper, looking for his cat*. Thomas? Wee Thomas? Here, baby. Daddy's home. Are you not well, loveen? I've some ringworm pellets here for ya. (McDonagh, 38)
> […] Ye have killed me cat and ye've ruined me life, for what I've got to live for now I do not know … (McDonagh, 43)

Furthermore, at the mentioning of his cat, his eyes can even fill with tears. He cries heavily when his father informs him about Wee Thomas's accident. Blaming others for killing his cat and seeking revenge may be the only possible identity for Padraic. He searches for a scapegoat in order to kill him or her. Padraic needs an enemy in order to feel powerful. The death of his cat becomes a justification for killing people, showing that Padraic's need for an enemy goes out of control. He is ready even to kill his own father. When the action takes a different course and his ex-companion tries to kill him, he wants to say a prayer for his dead cat. The death of his cat makes Padraic even sadder than being shot himself. Wee Thomas's death knocked him off his guard.

> PADRAIC. I will plod on, I know, but no sense to it will there be with Thomas gone. No longer will his smiling eyes be there in the back of me head, egging me on, saying, 'This is for me and for Ireland, Padraic. Remember that,' as I'd lob a bomb at a pub, or be shooting a builder. Me whole world's gone, and he'll never be coming back to me. (McDonagh, 44)

According to Lanters, if loving his cat makes Padraic a 'gayboy' in the eyes of some people, this perception is heightened by the fact that his male cat occupies the position traditionally held by the woman. This implies ambiguity of Padraic's sexuality. By placing the cat over people in his affection, Padraic breaks the boundaries between humans and animals in a grotesque fashion that exposes the misguided nature of his obsession. At the end of the play, after Padraic's death, the real Wee Thomas returns home alive. In spite of his great love for that cat, Padraic has not been able to tell the difference between the real pet and the unidentified stray. It seems that Wee Thomas

had simply been out having a good time.[56] It seems that 'all this terror has been for absolutely nothing' (McDonagh, 68).

Until the death of the cat, the father-son relationship seems to work well. Donny is Padraic's father who looks after Wee Thomas while Padraic is absent. Donny becomes nervous and upset when he finds out that the cat is dead. He is even afraid for his own life because he knows his son's bad temper. Padraic is disappointed by his father and made very angry because he did not stop Wee Thomas getting hurt. He holds Donny responsible for the cat's death because he trusted his father and gave him what he likes most to take good care of it. After Wee Thomas's death, he treats his father like any other individual responsible for the accident and prepares to kill him. Padraic prefers his cat over his own flash and blood and is ready to kill Donny, blaming him for the death of his beloved pet. His having no problems killing his own father demonstrates a strange and distorted morality in Padraic's mind.

Beside the strange relationship with the cat, the play also deals with the masculinity in crisis. Padraic does not prefer Inishmore girls, but he also does not prefer boys in the romantic sense. He only enjoys torturing boys. Padraic's love interest, Mairead, has close-cropped hair, wears army trousers, and carries an air rifle. She is described as 'a boy with lipstick' and 'a girl with no boobs' (McDonagh, 51). Padraic himself used to wear a 'girly scarf' (McDonagh, 7) when he was a boy, although he crippled his cousin for laughing at him for it. Padraic does not seem to notice Mairead in the beginning and is troubled by Mairead's fluid gender identity and her desire to join his terrorist splinter group. She wants to join the INLA, but there is no place for women in that splinter group. Padraic does not want to accept her in this group for her own good. In his opinion, it is better for her to stay at home and to play a typical role of a good Irish wife. He advises her to marry, let her hair grow, and learn to cook and sew.

In addition, this specific fluidity and instability of gender and sexuality signify the incoherence of identity. Mairead's style of dressing and acting is shocking to Padraic.
He still has a traditional picture in his mind of a woman who wears a dress and has long hair. With her modern style, Mairead looks repulsive to Padraic, but also makes him interested in her. They become close after Mairead saves Padraic's life by killing other

[56] Cf. Lanters, 20-21.

villains from INLA. Their relationship becomes romantically public, which shows that Padraic is not completely a mad bully, but also an emotional person. Still, the emotions and memories he has for his cat are far more stronger than the affection for Mairead. The two of them start a love affair and become engaged. When Mairead appears wearing a dress, Padraic is shocked again. She does not really look like a boy at all in a dress. With her gender playing, Mairead constantly confuses Padraic and makes him insecure and weak about his own gender identity.

> PADRAIC. […] What the hell's that you're wearing?
> MAIREAD. Isn't a girl allowed to wear dresses now and again?
> PADRAIC. Just that it comes as a shock is all. […] When you get up close to you, you don't really look like a boy at all.
> MAIREAD. Thank you.
> PADRAIC. Just except for your hair. (McDonagh, 58)

Mairead is a new type of Irish independent woman. Padraic is impressed at her abilities with a gun. Guns serve as a mediating factor in the initiation of this romance.

Padraic and Mairead share the affection for killing. The performance of violence is connected with an erotic charge. They get close and romantically connected through the act of killing, demonstrating eroticized destructiveness. Sexual dysfunction and confusion about sexual identity may lead to violence. Mairead first saves Padraic by killing the men from the INLA who try to kill him, but than shoots Padraic in the head once she finds out that he killed her cat. The love for cats is another thing that Padraic and Mairead share. His death allows Mairead to take over his lieutenantship and to continue where Padraic left off.

> PADRAIC. Look at you. We have a matching pair. One fecked cat each. Who says we have nothing in common but shooting fellas? No, I shouldn't be joking like that. Not about poor Wee Thomas, now. (McDonagh, 64)

As an authority figure, Padraic reveals himself as an isolated and pathetic individual.

He also mistakes fiction for reality: some other black cat is killed, not his Wee Thomas. He actually distorts reality and lives in fiction, making his own crusades. The incredible love for his cat is his greatest weakness which transforms into a great brutality towards other people. Another reason for Padraic's weakness is his gender and sexual insecurity. To cover his weaknesses, he overreacts in showing himself as a real man. In his eyes, the real man has to be a bully and a villain who even kills other people without good

reason only to demonstrate his strength. Mairead's strength and courage scares him because this is a new concept of a woman which he is not used to. He is appalled by and attracted to Mairead at the same time.

McDonagh provides his protagonist with a variety of outrageous moral deficiencies. Russell points out that the sympathetic monster Padraic in *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* refuses to conform to stereotypical, romantic constructions of Irish national identity that were obtained during the lowest point of Irish nationalism and, somewhat disturbingly, offers counter-narratives to a neatly defined nationalist history.[57] Padraic's rebellion is directed to the outside, to others, and against society. His sadistic acts are a reaction to oppression. In the end it is a rebellion which turns against him and eventually causes his death. Pilný argues that McDonagh's play mocks the incapability of individual character, Padraic, to be reconciled with elements of the past, his dead cat. The vendetta becomes his reason to live. Padraic shows weakness through the inability to move on from past concerns.[58]

3 SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL PLAYS

Born at the same time as Osborne, the Nobel Prize laureate Pinter is the central figure in the generation of post-war playwrights. According to Innes, the naturalistic long violent attack in speech and writing of Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* sets the theatrical agenda for the movement. In Osborne's play, the protagonist voices his alienation and anger at the new age and women in the name of the whole new generation of males. In *The Homecoming*, Pinter gives the specific and recognizable social context. In the same way as Osborne, he uses completely ordinary people and typically everyday situations in his play. Partly because of Pinter's use of ambiguity *The Homecoming* is cast in an unmistakable tone of comedy which lies in the incongruity between normal expectations and what actually happens. Pinter uses language to create an atmosphere with words that are sometimes unexpected and violent. His linguistic influence can be seen in the comedies of a playwright such as Patrick Marber.[59]

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[57] Cf. Russell, 6.
[58] Cf. Pilný, 166-167.
[59] Cf. Innes, 328-329.

Innes explains that during the 1990s a younger and more subversive generation of writers emerged. A surprising number of them chose to express their social criticism in comic terms. Perhaps the most characteristic voice of contemporary English comedy comes from Patrick Marber. With his first play, *Dealer's Choice*, he catches the public ear. The increasingly bleak tone of his drama seems to sum up the mood of the younger generation at the end of the millennium. Marber's insistence on the all-embracing nature of the addiction makes poker an image for contemporary England.[60] Wandor states that the moral questions, or questions of personal identity and meaningfulness, either revolve around a specifically male figure as in Osborne, or are clustered round male groupings as in Pinter and Marber. The issues addressed in these three plays are ones concerning male identity, for instance what it is to be male, what it is for men to hold and live by certain values in the second half of the twentieth century. The male controls the dramatic structure of these worlds.[61]

3.1 John Osborne: *Look Back in Anger* (1956)

Osborne's play expresses a working-class discontent. According to Elsom, its class significance is not that it is a proletarian play, but that it presents such a gloomy picture of a dispossessed almost-ex-graduate. Osborne has become associated with a group of writers who are known as the 'angry young men'. The generation of 'angry young men' brings a new tone, new milieu, new characters, and new language into drama. The characters come from the working-class and their language is rough, aggressive, and critical. Through Jimmy Porter, Osborne voices the natural uncertainties of the young, their frustrations at being denied power, their eventual expectations of power and their fears of abusing it, either in running a country or a family.[62] Innes explains that the title of the play is motivated by outrage at the discovery that the idealized Britain after World War II is inauthentic. What marks *Look Back in Anger* is the impulse to explode the psychologically crippling Establishment myths.[63]

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[60] Cf. Innes, 427-428.
[61] Cf. Wandor, 93.
[62] Cf. Elsom, 76.
[63] Cf. Innes, 91.

Innes also points out that this play has an impact out of all proportion to its dramatic quality and is a sociological phenomenon. The author's deliberately unglamorous depiction of everyday urban life establishes the new criteria for the authenticity and relevance. Social frustration is taken out on personal relationships. The movement in the play is one of progressive isolation, with the protagonist driving each of his companions away. Denied political opportunities for changing the world around him, the consciously proletarian Jimmy Porter is reduced to the verbal assaults on his wife, whose Establishment background makes her a representative of the class system.[64] *Look Back in Anger* is a one-man play. Alison, Helena, and Cliff exist only in relation to Jimmy. Characters are clearly divided into class lines, in which sex equals status. Two men from the middle-class are set against two women from the upper-class. The social conflict is shown through the sexual battleground of Jimmy's marriage to Alison.

3.1.1 Jimmy Porter

> *[…] Jimmy is a tall, thin young man about twenty-five […] He is a disconcerting mixture of sincerity and cheerful malice, of tenderness and freebooting cruelty; restless, importunate, full of pride, a combination which alienates the sensitive and insensitive alike. Blistering honesty, or apparent honesty, like his, makes few friends. To many he may seem sensitive to the point of vulgarity. To others, he is simply a loudmouth. To be as vehement as he is is to be almost non-committal.* (Osborne, 1-2)

From the very beginning of the play, with its references to pride, cruelty, malice and honesty described in the secondary speech, Jimmy is presented with ambiguous irony. He has a paradoxical nature and can be cruel but tender at the same time. According to Innes, his passion is undercut by the lack of awareness, but also the inability to understand that the Edwardian values are comparable to his own. Self-pity is deliberately substituted for commitment.[65] Through the whole play Jimmy smokes a pipe, reads the posh newspapers, and plays his jazz trumpet. He is a cultural snob who values only the safe classics, the most traditional jazz, good books and posh Sunday papers. Jimmy enjoys food and likes to eat, but does not get fat. The fact that he wears long hair has nothing to do with any dark, unnatural instincts he possesses, but with his

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[64] Cf. Innes, 86.
[65] Cf. Innes, 87.

decision not to spend his money on haircuts and because he prefers long hair. Jimmy thinks that none of the other characters in the play are as clever as he is.

In Taylor's opinion, it is difficult to see Jimmy as a heroic person, but he is a permanent human type: the self-punishing solitary in a self-inflicted exile from the world, drawing strength from his own weakness and joy from his own misery. In spite of the fact that he has a working-class background, he has attended, but not quite finished, the new red brick university, which is not good enough to get a higher position in a society. As a result, he lives in a small and dirty attic flat in an uninteresting Midland town and makes his living by keeping a sweet stall in the market. Everything in his life dissatisfies him and he constantly complains about something. The sufferer from all this is his wife Alison, whom he cannot forgive for her upper-middle-class background. He constantly torments her in order to provoke some reaction.[66] Jimmy sees himself as the anti-hero who rescued Alison from her privileged family prison. He also feels that Alison has betrayed him, by marrying him while still remaining mentally and spiritually in the world of her parents.

In addition, Jimmy is very rude towards Alison. He attacks her for being ignorant, clumsy, not having an opinion, and not being enthusiastic. Her upper-class background makes him very angry. In her opinion, Jimmy acts like a child. Alison describes him as a savage who is uncompromising and ruthless, in spite of the fact that he is an educated man. She takes him to be a 'spiritual barbarian' (Osborne, 69). It looks as if he does not know what love or responsibility means. He is nasty not just towards Alison, but also towards Cliff, a friend who lives with them and has the catalytic function between Jimmy and Alison. Helena, Alison's friend who comes to visit and becomes Jimmy's mistress, thinks that Jimmy tries hard to be unpleasant and offensive. She also considers him to be a very tiresome man, a bully and a villain. Jimmy describes himself as 'a young man without money, background or even looks' (Osborne, 52) and hopes that people 'won't make the mistake of thinking for one moment that [he is] a gentleman' (Osborne, 57). Through his cruel behavior the protagonist tries to hide his weaknesses.

Wandor points out that Jimmy still belongs to the generation which faced compulsory National Service. From the beginning he shows his class-based chip on the shoulder

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[66] Cf. Taylor, 41.

which is one of the reasons for his weakness. His wife Alison and her family represent all that Jimmy despises in a ruling class which no longer supports old-style patriotism. Since that cause is dead, for Jimmy there is no longer any good cause to fight for. The great pain and suffering of Jimmy's mind is ironic because Jimmy may despise their cause, but he has none of his own. It is worth noting that Jimmy has no links to a broader base of solidarity. He runs a sweet stall in the market, and therefore he is not involved in organized labor and has no other political allegiances. Osborne has made him not belonging to any class, and displaced as a result.[67] Jimmy is a man who needs a cause to live and to die for. He defines the ideological centre of the play when he says:

> JIMMY. […] I suppose people of our generation aren't able to die for good causes any longer. We had all that done for us, in the thirties and the forties, when we were still kids. (*in his familiar, semi-serious mood*) There aren't any good, brave causes left. […] No, there's nothing left for it, me boy, but to let yourself be butchered by the women. (Osborne, 89)

Displaced as he is, and with his wife, from the class he despises as an enemy in his camp, the protagonist creates his own war zone, and chooses his own targets. Wandor explains that his attack on the old class system and its lifestyle focuses on Alison's family, and, since she is their representative and female, on women in general. Therefore, gender conflict has two functions. First, it becomes the site for a displaced class conflict which Jimmy cannot fight anywhere else because he has the enemy on his own territory. The fact that his mastery is incomplete is represented by the fact that he has to keep asserting it. Second, the battle with Alison is also a fight for sexual identity. It is through her that Jimmy has the potential to feel like a 'real' man. The playing out of their gender battle becomes the central dynamic of the action, with the attacks virtually all below the belt and one-way. In order to establish his manhood, he has to attack women.[68]

> JIMMY. Have you ever noticed how noisy women are? […] The way they kick the floor about, simply walking over it? Or have you watched them sitting at their dressing tables, dropping their weapons and banging down their bits of boxes and brushes and lipsticks? […] When you see a woman in front of her bedroom mirror, you realize what a refined sort of a butcher she is. (Osborne, 19)

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[67] Cf. Wandor, 42.
[68] Cf. Wandor, 43.

Furthermore, Jimmy is sexually attracted to women, but feels threatened by them at the same time. The relationship with his wife and his mistress is only sexual and the moments of tenderness do not seem true at all. He cannot live without women, but cannot stand them when they are around. Female sexuality and virginity represent a hidden power which scares the protagonist. Even though he taunts his wife with her virginity, he is the one who actually feels taunted by it. A woman's biological ability to reproduce is another reason why Jimmy feels weak. His wife gets pregnant, but is scared to reveal that to Jimmy. Alison does not tell him that she carries his child because he will suspect her motifs and feel betrayed. She is aware that Jimmy resents children because he is a big child himself. Having a baby would cause Jimmy's dread of responsibility. His sexual desire as well as his emotional vulnerability are linked with his feelings about motherhood and create an emotional confusion that is shocking, sad, and repulsive.

> ALISON. Jimmy's got his own private morality, as you know. […] It is pretty free, of course, but it's very harsh too. You know, it's funny, but we never slept together before we were married. […] And, afterwards, he actually taunted me with my virginity. He was quite angry about it, as if I had deceived him in some strange way. He seemed to think an untouched woman would defile him. (Osborne, 26-27)

Wandor defines the most important function of the play: *Look Back in Anger* shows masculinity in crisis with great honesty and violence. Most certainly, Jimmy wants and needs Alison, sexually and emotionally. He is aware of his vulnerability, confessing to her in a rare moment of openness that '[t]here's hardly a moment when [he is] not – watching and wanting [her].' (Osborne, 30) Yet vulnerability is weakness for a man, and Jimmy fights it off whenever it threatens him, transforming it into aggression. The discomfort at his own vulnerability is displaced onto an attack on Alison, her female sexuality and her potential motherhood. This becomes possible because they justify his fear and revolt from her sexuality, which he experiences as a threat. The climax comes when all Jimmy's feelings about female sexuality and motherhood merge. The brutal dramatic irony is that Jimmy does not know yet that Alison is expecting a baby, when he violently and verbally, apparently unprovoked, attacks her.[69]

> JIMMY. […] If you could have a child, and it would die. Let it grow, let a

[69] Cf. Wandor, 43-45.

> recognizable human face emerge from that little mass of indiarubber and wrinkles. […] Please – if only I could watch you face that. I wonder if you might even become a recognizable human being yourself. But I doubt it. […] I have never known the great pleasure of lovemaking when I didn't desire it myself. Oh, it's not that she hasn't her own kind of passion. She has the passion of a python. She just devours me whole every time, as if I were some over-large rabbit. That's me. That bulge around her navel – if you're wondering what it is – it's me. Me, buried alive down there, and going mad, smothered in that peaceful looking coil. Not a sound, not a flicker from her – she doesn't even rumble a little. (Osborne, 36)

Jimmy's violence drives his wife to return to her family, but Wandor explains that Alison finally capitulates to Jimmy, entirely on his terms. She confesses her miscarriage, but Jimmy shows no sympathy because his wish came true and he does not feel threatened any more. He still bears more scars in the battle between the sexes. Alison has lost her child and with this also the possibility of having other children, of becoming a real mother. At last, she and Jimmy retrace into an imaginary world of bears and squirrels, in a childlike pre-sexual place where they can find some peace and understanding. It is also a place where Jimmy may never have to confront responsibility as a father. It is as if he has had to destroy the possibility of motherhood in her in order to gain her as a mother for himself. Perhaps Jimmy has to find a surrogate mother rather than an adult, sexual companion[70] because he does not feel weak or scared in this kind of a relationship.

> ALISON. The game we play: bears and squirrels, squirrels and bears. […] It was the one way of escaping from everything […] Full of dumb, uncomplicated affection for each other. Playful, careless creatures in their own cosy zoo for two. A silly symphony for people who couldn't bear the pain of being human beings any longer. (Osborne, 46)

Trussler adds that Jimmy and Alison's common loss has caused their marriage to seem less important. Their game of bears and squirrels is a brave attempt to compensate for this failure with a help of an extended metaphor which can be felt by the sense of touch as well as verbally. This game becomes not in the least embarrassing, but strangely fragile and moving. As a form of conventionalized sexual play it has an undoubted dignity of its own. Such a mutual continuation of a fantasy-level of experience can be a sophisticated form of sexual communication. The gulf which separates them ensures that it is the only level on which Jimmy and Alison's marriage really works. Their

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[70] Cf. Wandor, 46.

fantasy is therefore compensatory rather than complementary. The couple settles down to make the best of the mutual fantasy that protects them as much from each other as from the world.[71] The retreat into their game of bears and squirrels becomes important as a means of making the old existence endurable, with some form of comfort.

Another real and important aspect of Jimmy’s character is the power of language that belongs to him through the whole play. Wandor points out that he is the one who is never lost for words, can break into soliloquy whenever the structure of the play commands, can control his audience in the play and out.[72] He actually detests physical violence and that is why he bullies all the other characters only verbally. Jimmy's working-class language is cruel, powerful, exciting and dramatic. His language reflects his egoistic, frustrated and desperate character. Innes adds that the play is focused almost exclusively on Jimmy’s long and very angry disapproving speeches. This negativism makes Osborne’s protagonist the spokesman for the young generation. Jimmy’s rebellion is purely verbal. The strong expression can be a cover, compensating for the inability to take effective action.[73] He describes that he ‘learnt at an early age what it was to be angry – angry and helpless’ (Osborne, 59). This equation of passion and weakness sums up the contradictions within Jimmy.

In addition, Jimmy is actually a very sensitive person, easy to hurt, which can be seen as another reason for his weakness. He shows his sentimental side when he talks about his father’s dying. This traumatic experience at the age of ten started making him angry. Jimmy thinks that the world has treated him pretty badly. In spite of that, he would be lost without his suffering. Mengel explains that he is torn apart between the hate towards what he detests and the hate towards what he loves, including himself. His sense of emotional loss makes him sentimental. Jimmy is nostalgic for the lost ideals and old times. His melancholy, self-torturing and neurotic behavior demonstrate his anger towards the new age and society. Jimmy is frustrated because nothing changes and everything good is gone, suffering deeply from the world which surrounds him.[74] He only talks negatively and criticizes, but is actually too weak to do anything. The protagonist loses hope, faith and the sense of his existence. Having no ambitions any

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[71] Cf. Trussler, 42, 44-45.
[72] Cf. Wandor, 42.
[73] Cf. Innes, 88-89.
[74] Cf. Mengel, 70-71.

more, Jimmy is not even in search of a particular background.

> HELENA. Do you know – I have discovered what is wrong with Jimmy? It's very simple really. He was born out of his time. […] There's no place for people like that any longer – in sex, or politics, or anything. That's why he's so futile. […] he thinks he's still in the middle of the French Revolution. And that's where he ought to be, of course. He doesn't know where he is, or where he's going. He'll never do anything, and he'll never amount to anything. (Osborne, 96)

According to Trussler, Jimmy has remained rooted in the past of his own reshaping, created in the process of self-rationalization. He stands for the paradox of a person who has tasted a university education and acts as a cultural snob, but lives in a provincial small attic room. He decides upon his modest living existentially, which creates and identifies him. He is shaped by personal circumstances which leave him self-consciously proletarian and sexually uncertain. Jimmy is engaged in the war of the classes and the war of the sexes. Social Puritanism rather than a sexual one is perhaps at the core of Jimmy's character. His ethical system is entirely a product of sentimentalized working-class Puritanism. Apart from sexual relationships, he is only good at brawling. Jimmy does not talk to his wife, except in anger or in allegory. This is because he is weak and too much of a Puritan to pay her any sexual compliment other than to have sex with little emotional feeling.[75]

Jimmy can be seen as an anti-hero in disagreement with his world. He is unconventional both in morality and in taste. Jimmy has a pessimistic attitude and no ideals to fight for, which gives him the feeling of weakness. He speaks ironically about his alienation from a society in which he is denied any meaningful role. Jimmy hungers for power from the position of the social marginalization. He perceives Alison, her family and friends as natural enemies, for they come from the upper-middle-class. Jimmy is an isolated person who cannot break the society, so he is on to break his own wife who represents the society he hates. His social frustration leads to the sexual frustration and he becomes afraid of women because of their ability to bear children. It seems as if Jimmy's identity can only be strong if Alison is weak. The misogyny in the play could be explained in terms of feelings of weakness, fear, and loss which are compensated in raging machismo. Jimmy's cruelty is part of a defense mechanism which hides his own basic

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[75] Cf. Trussler, 51-52.

insecurity. He is a bully who tries to be dominant and needs to be in the center of attention all the time.

Wandor points out that Jimmy has every crisis of male identity: class, no place or cause, gender identity, sexual assurance, and the need for and fear of women. The play shows a post-war life defined entirely in terms of a male identity. To call Jimmy a misogynist is too simplistic. It is not simply that the play contains a person who has no respect for women. That is too easy a dismissal of something which is extremely powerful in emotion. Jimmy's dilemmas are real, but they are specifically the dilemmas of a young post-war male. The gender bias of the hero is reinforced. Alison is imagined as realistically defeated in order to enable Jimmy to survive and to acquire some kind of identity. The imaginative process of inventing Jimmy Porter has necessarily involved inventing a woman who has little stage identity in her own right. Alison exists only in relationship to Jimmy. Jimmy controls not only her class basis, but also her sexual being and what she is allowed to feel. He is her author. She can be sexual and motherly, but only to him.[76]

The play gives a social and psychological insight of the protagonist. Jimmy Porter is a complex and troubled character who suffers and makes wrong choices. Elsom concludes that Jimmy is not just a critic of his society, but also the object of criticism. He is the main example of the social malaise which he attacks. With Jimmy, Osborne has opened up a much wider subject than rebelliousness or youthful anger, that of social alienation, the feeling of being trapped in a world of meaningless codes and customs. Osborne's ambivalence towards the protagonist is apparent even from his description of Jimmy in the text. The significance of the divided feelings is what represents both the tension between the longing for security and the desire for change.[77] His working-class background as well as his gender and sexual insecurity represent two most important reasons for Jimmy's weakness against which he fights verbally.

[76] Cf. Wandor, 47.
[77] Cf. Elsom, 77.

3.2 Harold Pinter: *The Homecoming* (1965)

Pinter's play shows an untypical family and their social and psychological behavior. The attitudes of the characters and their relationships to each other are primitive, showing constant physical and verbal violence, aggression, threats, insults, fear, self-doubt, and irony. These individuals demonstrate the relationship between power and identity through their fight for dominance. The family members are shown as animals whose brutality expresses the nature and morality of the unit in which they live. Teddy teaches philosophy at an American university and comes home after six years to introduce his wife Ruth to his father Max, his brothers Lenny and Joey, and his uncle Sam. The brothers try to make love to Ruth, Teddy leaves, and his wife stays with his family, becoming some combination of a wife/mother/whore. The title of the play refers to Teddy's homecoming in the beginning, but is actually Ruth's homecoming at the end. Pinter demonstrates a struggle between Teddy and his family for possession of Ruth because she is the single female character in the play. These men need Ruth for sexual and financial reasons. This is why the power in the house and in business is hers.

The special focus of the play is on sexual addiction, especially because the family is in prostitution business. These men are attracted to women, but, at the same time, fearful of them. The play deals with the male/female relationships which are connected with the Oedipus complex that causes psychological ambiguity of those characters. Bock explains that these men suffer from a massive Oedipus complex. This explains the mother/whore woman as the only type they are able to accept, and only then, if they degrade her. They are a group with obvious or hidden homosexual connections and therefore have been able to live without women until Ruth comes. Since the group's heterosexual desires are weak, she will be able to satisfy them all. Out of this combination of Oedipus complex and homosexuality, Pinter develops the group's attitude towards women in general as highly aggressive. Their constant wish to kill the mother/whore is their only way to overcome their oedipal desires.[78]

[78] Cf. Bock, 178-179.

3.2.1 Max

Max is the father in this play, a retired butcher about seventy years old. In a way, he is obsessed with order and clarity, and does not like mess. He is the father who has taken over the role of the mother and devotes himself to cooking, cleaning and even talks about his own pangs of childbirth. Disturbing are Max's memories of his late wife. He has the most ambivalent attitude towards Jessie: he praises her as the mother of his children, but also calls her a "slutbitch" because of her career in prostitution. According to Bock, Max himself has looked after the children, bathed them and fed them. He has played the mother's role and still does. That is why he puts the blame on family obligations for not having a career in horse racing. His lack of gender-identity is revealed in his birth envy.[79] On the one hand, he is angry for taking over the role of the mother. On the other hand, Max likes it better to be the mother of his three sons than the father. His weakness in being the father figure lies in the fact that he is actually uncertain whether he is the biological father of his children.

> MAX. […] I gave birth to three grown men! All on my own bat. (Pinter, 40)
> […] A crippled family, three bastard sons, a slutbitch of a wife – don't talk to me about the pain of childbirth – I suffered the pain, I've still got the pangs – when I give a little cough my back collapses (Pinter, 47)

Cahn points out that the crucial standard by which Max judges women is how effectively they fulfill the role of a prostitute. His claims of expertise arouse Lenny's anger who calls his father 'sexless' (Pinter, 73) and Max's only response is silence. The antagonism between Max and Lenny is apparent from the first words, and reveals that Max is the weaker character. Max's questions which Lenny usually ignores can be seen as a cry for attention or the act of a father seeking to ensure that his son continues to follow orders. Max is also concerned with memories of his own father. He is hurt by memories of his weakness, of affection turning into abuse. Max hated his father's taunting, and when the opportunity arose to gain authority over him, he took it. Now Max is in a similar position of vulnerability against his own son Lenny, who is gradually usurping Max's place at home, in business, and in life. No matter how bitterly rivalry separates the two, Max and Lenny understand each other. Their place as males in

[79] Cf. Bock, 179.

the family means that they are inseparably tied.[80]

Cahn explains further that Max bullies and threatens others, but his walking stick is a phallic symbol and a cruel parody of old age and fading masculine strength. Because of that, Max resents his son Joey by lessening his skills of a boxer. This hints at the frustrations of an old man who has lost his youthful vigor and is reduced to mocking the efforts of others. Max is infuriated over his diminishing power. In the first scene he admits he is getting old, but in the last one he denies it. His only comfort is to insult his brother Sam. Max's contempt for him serves to keep Sam in a subordinate position. His insinuation of homosexuality is an attempt to make Sam even less of a man than Max. In spite of the fact that he feels threatened within his family, the father tries to keep his strength through his struggle to maintain the togetherness of the family. He also tries to hide his vulnerability by keeping his sons under control. Max constantly reminds them that they are still dependent on him and wants to keep them as children. He will maintain his dominant position only if they are dependent on him.[81]

> MAX. We've had a smelly scrubber in my house all night. We've had a stinking pox-ridden slut in my house all night. […] I've never had a whore under this roof before. Ever since your mother died. (Pinter, 42)

The event which causes Max to explode is the appearance of Ruth. According to Cahn Max's professional eye is struck immediately, but his reaction grows more complicated. His tribute to the memory of his wife has a double implication: perhaps he has never brought a whore into the house, or perhaps Jessie was the last one he allowed. The fact that Ruth is a mother and has three sons reflects, once again, Max's own gender weakness. Max seems to reveal his antagonism towards Ruth and the control that she as a woman has over male sexual fulfillment. He is also jealous of her power and her biological motherhood. In spite of that he proposes to keep Ruth because it is a good idea to have a woman in the house. One can sense the conflict within Max. He is talking about a maternal figure, but he is also talking about a whore. His polite and respectful manner is appropriate to one, but not to the other. In one moment Max speaks as father, but in the next one he speaks as sexual predator.[82] He desires Ruth, but is also afraid of her.

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[80] Cf. Cahn, 55-57, 59.
[81] Cf. Cahn, 56, 58, 65.
[82] Cf. Cahn, 63-64, 70.

3.2.2 Lenny

Lenny is Max's second son who is in his early thirties. He is sleek, intelligent and works as a professional pimp. According to Cahn, Lenny refuses to be submissive in the relationship with his father. Instead, he has enough strength to establish his security with brief and sharp replies. Lenny questions Max's cooking, satirizing his father's role as the woman of the home. He taunts his father's feminized role and mocks the weakness of his father's threat with the stick. Lenny's cries of fear and his father's punishment with the stick are history. He is dominant now, and like a younger primate standing over a defeated older male, he enjoys greatly in power.[83] He provokes his father to hit him, knowing that Max is too old and physically weak for that. In order to hide his own insecurity and weakness, Lenny tries to humiliate his father any time he has a chance and to prove that he is in charge now.

> LENNY. […] You think you're cooking for a lot of dogs. (Pinter, 11)
> What the boys want, Dad, is your own special brand of cooking, Dad. That's what the boys look forward to. The special understanding of food, you know, that you've got. (Pinter, 17)

Moreover, Lenny is the strong character in the relationship with his father, but when Ruth confronts him, he is a weakling. He starts a conversation with Ruth without knowing that she is his brother's wife. In their first conversation, he and Ruth compete verbally for power. Cahn states that Lenny's need to talk suggests weakness, while Ruth's strength is manifested in her calm. He is unwilling to deal with Ruth's marriage to Teddy, suggesting that, as he sees it, that relationship is meaningless. He brings Ruth a glass of water, trying to make the action as a gesture of intimacy and to prove his authority. Yet Ruth's refusal to thank Lenny or to place herself in any way in his debt makes the proposal less forceful. Furthermore, he wears pajamas, while Ruth is fully dressed. Lenny pretends the situation is humorous, but he actually feels threatened. In his job he is accustomed to seeing women wearing nightclothes. In this reversal role he acts like a little boy in front of his mother. Lenny wants to hold Ruth's hand, but she insinuates that he does not have the capacity to proceed further.[84]

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[83] Cf. Cahn, 56-57.
[84] Cf. Cahn, 61.

> LENNY. I mean, I am very sensitive to atmosphere, but I tend to get desensitized, if you know what I mean, when people make unreasonable demands on me. (Pinter, 32)

Cahn adds that Ruth's attack on his manhood provokes Lenny to demonstrate his knowledge of the London underworld, as well as his potential violence toward women. He talks about a woman who made a proposal to him. He wanted to kill her, but then decided only to beat her up because she was sick. With his story, Lenny wants to demonstrate power over women and his right to assault a female of whom he disapproves. He decided that the woman was sick without any evidence, showing a statement of authority. The fact that he chooses to demonstrate his manhood with a narrative in which he does not conquer a woman sexually, but instead beats and kicks her, implies that he is impotent. The second story also reflects Lenny's weakness through his latent brutality, this time against an old woman. She asked him to help her shift an iron mangle which was too heavy for him. He recalls running away after striking the old woman. The first story depicts violence against a younger woman, a prostitute. The second relates violence against an older woman, a maternal figure.[85]

Cahn explains that through narrative, Lenny actually attacks both aspects of Ruth's personality, a mother and a prostitute. His comments can be seen as masculine showing of courage. Yet he fails to prove his sexual capacity. Ruth feels this weakness intuitively. Sensing fear, she becomes more aggressive and Lenny retreats almost at once. Ruth's femaleness, her identity as woman/wife/mother, and, most likely, whore, makes Lenny helpless. As her advances become more shameless, his noisy and boastful talk makes his fears both more desperate and more comic.[86] Lenny runs away when Ruth offers herself to him, which can be seen as double weakness. As a man, he refuses the woman who is ready to give herself to him sexually. As a professional pimp, Lenny is scared to find out how good Ruth really is. He wants her to be both his mother and his whore, but is weak to cope with it even though Ruth is ready to play both parts. With his stories, Lenny pretends to be strong, but his actions show that he is intimidated by Ruth's femaleness and motherhood.

> LENNY. Just give me the glass.
> RUTH. No. *Pause*.

[85] Cf. Cahn, 61-62.
[86] Cf. Cahn, 62.

> LENNY. I'll take it, then.
> RUTH. If you take the glass … I'll take you. *Pause*.
> LENNY. How about me taking the glass without you taking me?
> RUTH. Why don't I just take you? (Pinter, 34)

3.2.3 Joey

Joey is the youngest son in the family, a man in his middle twenties, and rather clumsy. The first thing he does when he enters the house is to ask about food, which emphasizes the animalistic element in the play. He works as a demolition worker, but he is also an amateur boxer who hopes to become a professional. As a boxer and a demolition worker, Joey has the physical means at hand to dominate his family, but being slow at understanding things prevents him to take the opportunities available to him. When Joey calls his father an old man, Max punches him in the stomach and knocks him down, even though Joey is an amateur boxer and physically stronger. As his father comments, Joey has problems with attacking and defending and not only in boxing, but also in everyday life. His biggest problem is his psychological weakness. Joey lacks the intellect to use his physical strength and therefore functions only as an extension of Lenny's mind.

> MAX. […] What you've got to do is you've got to learn how to defend yourself, and you've got to learn how to attack. That's your […] trouble […] You don't know how to defend yourself, and you don't know how to attack. (Pinter, 18)

The same way as Lenny, he also has stories about being abusive towards women. As in his brother's case, this can mean that Joey is not sexually successful. Seeing Ruth dancing and kissing with Lenny, he comments that 'she's wide open' (Pinter, 58). This arouses and frightens him at the same time. Lenny hands Ruth over to Joey who continues dancing, kissing, and embracing her. In the moments of passion, they continue their sexual game upstairs. Joey spends two hours with Ruth, but fails to go all the way with her. His unfinished business can be seen as lack of performing skills with women, or fear of an experienced woman like Ruth. Perhaps Joey thinks that he cannot properly satisfy her which makes him feel weak as a man. He is aware of that and admits his own sexual failure. This unpleasant experience can cause him to be not just sexually, but also psychically hurt. Joey is perhaps physically strong, but he is sexually

weak.

> JOEY. I didn’t get all the way.
> LENNY. […] You didn’t get all the way? But you’ve had her up there for two hours. […] He’s had her up there for two hours and he didn’t go the whole hog. […]
> TEDDY. Perhaps he hasn’t got the right touch. (Pinter, 66-67)

3.2.4 Teddy

Teddy is Max’s eldest son, a man in his middle thirties. He is a university professor who teaches philosophy at an American college. He is the only one educated, married, and a father himself. Teddy is an intellectual who runs away from home because he does not like the family’s way of life which deals with prostitution. It is his homecoming at the beginning of the play. Teddy should be relaxed as he comes home, however, he is rather tense, confused and talks incessantly. He tries to comfort Ruth, but actually seeks reassurance and tries to strengthen himself. Teddy’s insecurity reveals that he does not feel comfortable being at his old home, but also because he brings his wife for the first time. The setting is completely new to her, but she feels more pleasant and relaxed than Teddy. It is obvious that Teddy is the weaker half in this relationship and that the power belongs to Ruth. She is beyond her husband’s control. In spite of his intellectual wall, he feels isolated and is in need of Ruth’s emotional support.

> TEDDY. Look, it’s all right, really. I’m here. I mean … I’m with you. There’s no need to be nervous. Are you nervous?
> RUTH. No.
> TEDDY. There’s no need to be. (Pinter, 23-24)

Surrounded by his family members, Teddy rises to defend his way of life. According to Cahn, his lack of passion implies both that his life is the opposite of what he claims it to be and that Ruth is probably unhappy in America. Lenny also challenges Teddy’s way of life and his right to Ruth. Teddy takes the moment to offer a defense, but Lenny intrudes on Teddy’s area of expertise. The incongruity of Lenny’s question is comic, but his intention is serious and reflects his cynicism. There is no point for the family to read Teddy’s critical works because they would not understand it. The analysis is Teddy’s justification for his passivity. He avoids the issue and surrenders, unwilling to hold his

intellectual ground.[87] Elsom adds that Teddy has lost his roots – by being educated and by becoming too rational he no longer fits in with the rest of the family. He distrusts the instinctive emotions which surround him. Teddy fears those instincts, but he also suffers from a lack of feelings, which turns him into an outcast from his family.[88]

> LENNY. […] Do you detect a certain logical incoherence in the central affirmations of Christian theism?
> TEDDY. That question doesn't fall within my province. […]
> LENNY. But you're a philosopher. Come on, be frank. […] Well, for instance, take a table. Philosophically speaking. What is it?
> TEDDY. A table. (Pinter, 51-52)

In Cahn's opinion, perhaps Teddy's intellectual sophistication, the product of his education, may also have removed him from ordinary human emotions. He uses philosophical training, not to understand life, but to set himself apart from it. He refuses to participate in the family ways, to fight for his own wife, or to stand for any principles. Teddy has never told the family he got married. His excuse is amusingly lame, but the audience soon understands Teddy's real reasons. He is afraid that his family will be too pleased with his wife. Ruth's gradual disengagement from Teddy continues. He begs her to return to America with him, but his urgings are inadequate to her.[89] At first, Teddy does not accept his father's proposal that Ruth should stay with his family. He refuses to be disturbed and to support Ruth's staying in London. He does not need Ruth out of sexual reasons, because he has substituted them with intellectual needs. He wants to prove that he as a man dominates Ruth. She decides to stay and shows that her husband is too weak to have power over her.

In addition, Teddy realizes that he has become a stranger because the family does not need him but his wife. He is too weak to oppose his family and starts to pimp his own wife. He does not seem to escape his family's business after all. Cahn points out that Teddy pretends to be superior to his family, but in a way, he sinks lower than they do because he refuses to admit the outrage taking place. His philosophical background apparently permits and encourages such detachment. Teddy substitutes intellectual equilibrium for a suitable sex life. Ironically, he is the one who tells Ruth about the scheme that his family has suggested. Perhaps he is trying to outdo his family, to be

[87] Cf. Cahn, 66, 68.
[88] Cf. Elsom, 110.
[89] Cf. Cahn, 65, 67-68.

even more vicious and colder than they are.[90] Teddy comes to conclusion that his marriage has broken down because Ruth will not be turned into a respectable college professor's wife. He leaves without a word, which means that he has already become a stranger to Ruth. The homecoming is not Teddy's, it is actually Ruth who returns and stays.

> TEDDY. […] Well, I'll leave your case, Ruth. […]
> TEDDY *goes to the front door.*
> RUTH. Eddie.
> TEDDY *turns. Pause.*
> Don't become a stranger.
> TEDDY *goes, shuts the front door.* (Pinter, 80-81)

Hollis explains that Teddy is the most frightening and shocking character in the play. He seems the most incapable of standing up to his father and to his family. Teddy's emotional detachment permits him to play the game according to the lines of power. He does not have the power to control Ruth and therefore willingly gives her up. Teddy cannot compete with his family because he is impotent as a human being. He is given to philosophical abstractions and is incapable of dealing with the concrete presence of Ruth and his family. Teddy's inability to change Ruth's fate forces him to participate in the brutality of his family, not out of conviction but out of weakness. Behind the cultured facade, Teddy is empty and as such he has no business in the arena with the animals. He considers the odds and carefully retires from the field. Teddy returns to America to be the mother to his three children. He has become the outsider who has been completely defeated.[91]

3.2.5 Sam

Sam is Max's brother, a man of sixty-three, with a sense of courtesy. He is a hire-car driver who does not take liberties with the passengers. Sam is proud of being the best driver in the firm, the one that everybody asks for. He has never got married and does not have children, but, in his opinion, there is still time. Sam sexuality makes him frustrated and vulnerable all his life. Being the gentlest, weakest character in this male constellation, he is the subject of his brother´s never ending teasing. Max bullies the

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[90] Cf. Cahn, 70-71.
[91] Cf. Hollis, 104-105.

pathetic Sam for being the sexless breadwinner. He is mocked by the rest of the family for not fulfilling his fundamental masculine privilege of having offspring, and therefore an outcast. Sam is too weak to take part in the fight for biological dominance. His knowledge about the family's past gives him a form of power. He used to take care of Max's wife Jessie, while driving her in his cab. Sam implies that both Max and his friend MacGregor shared the affection for Jessie.

In this animal kingdom, Sam still has some morality, but is too weak to impose that on others. According to Hollis, Sam is the only sympathetic character in Pinter's play. He reveals in the silences of his speech that he also loved Jessie and perhaps would have treated her a bit better than Max. He had to stand on the sidelines all of his life and watch other men taking liberties in his car. In the return of Ruth, he sees the cycle beginning again, for Ruth is going to replace Jessie. He protests the arrangement because there are legal ties between Teddy and Ruth even though the family consistently seems uninterested in the legality of the relationship. One thinks that Sam's protest is a human request. He wants to save and respect the institution of marriage in order to save man from himself.[92] In his desperation, Sam suddenly says: 'MacGregor had Jessie in the back of my cab as I drove them along' (Pinter, 79).

Cahn explains that this outcry is Sam's way of protesting, but he also tells Teddy that neither does he nor Teddy belong to this family. Sam's crisis is caused by his dilemma to find himself in a group that obeys the laws of the blood. Sam is completely unlike his brother Max, just as Teddy is unlike his two brothers. Perhaps both are born outside the family unit, and that is why Sam feels his kinship with Teddy. While Teddy lacks the moral courage to oppose his family, Sam lacks the physical strength. Under the strain of rebellion Sam collapses and lies motionless on the floor.[93] Being unable to change the situation, he feels frustrated and weak. Esslin states that Sam embodies the family's self-awareness about the true nature of the mother, Jessie. He is the family's conscience, its super-ego. It is natural that he collapses at the moment when the situation about which he has felt ashamed and guilty all his life is restored.[94]

[92] Cf. Hollis, 105.
[93] Cf. Cahn, 71.
[94] Cf. Esslin, 156.

In Hollis's opinion, the separate characters of the play comprise a single person. Max is the hunter, the butcher, the provider; Lenny is the arranger, the social man; Joey is the violent man, the protector; Teddy is the intellectual, the thinking man; Sam is the feeling man. Together they are a composite man in search of the composite woman, Ruth, the eternal wife/mother/whore.[95] Esslin adds that Lenny and Joey are complementary. While Lenny is slick and fast, Joey is slow and strong. These two brothers act as one and can be seen as different aspects of one personality. Lenny embodies the younger son's cleverness and cunning, Joey his strength and sexual potency. Similarly Max, the father, and Teddy, the eldest brother can be seen as two aspects of the father figure. Max embodies the father's senility and ill temper, Teddy his superior wisdom. At the end of the play Max and Teddy have been defeated, while Lenny and Joey are victorious. The connection between the two sides in the conflict was Ruth.[96]

According to Cahn, Pinter's play shows the conflict between generations of males. The cycle is interrupted with the entrance of one female, Teddy's wife. Now instead of fighting strictly over territory, the males begin to fight also for the possession of Ruth. For all their bullying, the men in this house lack masculinity and Ruth is the ultimate figure of authority at the end.[97] Hollis points out that when confronted by Ruth, they are powerless and give in to heart attacks, impotence, or childlike dependence.[98] These men suffer from moral, intellectual, physical, and sexual weakness. Those weaknesses become apparent with Ruth's entrance into their home. They finally grasp her strength and their own powerlessness. Even though they try to act as strong men and demand their male dominance, their pleas are seen as childlike helplessness. They need a mother/wife/whore and Ruth can provide all that. Her female abilities impress and scare Pinter's men at the same time. Their weaknesses become obvious through Ruth's female dominance.

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[95] Cf. Hollis, 108.
[96] Cf. Esslin, 154.
[97] Cf. Cahn, 59, 64.
[98] Cf. Hollis, 107.

3.3 Patrick Marber: *Dealer's Choice* (1995)

Marber's drama is a bleak comedy and a pessimistic play beneath the comic surface. It is not only about the poker game, but also deals with masculine rituals, the nature of obsession, and father-son relationships. The author uses poker as a means of exploring the characters. Generally, these men find it difficult to relate to women and therefore use poker as a sexual substitute. Poker is their escape from the real world which starts as a sanctuary but can become life threatening. These characters live only for today, not caring for tomorrow and the only important thing today is to win. Victory and money give them the sense of power and importance. One of the important questions in the play is who the biggest mug really is. It turns out that each of them is naïve and easily fooled in his own way. They cope better with losing in poker than losing in real life. That is why they stay in this game of deception even though it hurts because their weakness is stronger than their common sense. In spite of their ideas, they do not have the will or the strength to change their lives.

3.3.1 Stephen

Stephen is a restaurant owner, in his late forties. He is his own boss and a successful businessman who has built the restaurant out of nothing. Stephen is a very responsible person who makes his own rules. He does not break those rules and does not want anyone else to break them. Most of all, he is proud of his self-discipline which he tries to impose on other people. Stephen pays attention to everything that is happening in his restaurant, with the guests and with his employees. In this way, he can be seen not only as a successful businessman, but also as a control freak. He tries hard to have everything and everybody under control trying to hide his own insecurity and weakness. One of his weaknesses is his gambling addiction because he cannot imagine his life without gambling. Stephen runs the weekly poker game in the basement of his restaurant with his staff after the customers have gone. This is the only occasion when he sees his adult son Carl who also comes to play poker.

Furthermore, Stephen can only relate to his son through the weekly game. The father-son relationship functions only on the gambling level which also represents the male-

bonding ritual. Stephen loves his son, but has not been the world's greatest father. Even though he is successful in his business, he feels that he has failed as a father and tries hard to correct it. Not being the wishful father figure is one cause for Stephen's weakness. He wants Carl to work with him for two reasons: first, to learn the restaurant business properly, and, second, to see him more than once a week for a poker game. He insists on Carl's playing even when he has to give him the money for the game. In this way, Stephen has power and control over his son even if only for one day in a week. He does not want to give his son the money to open the restaurant because Carl would lose it by gambling. The father wants Carl to stop gambling, but he cannot stop himself in spite of his self-control. Paradoxically, he helps his son even by paying Carl's gambling debts, thus enabling his problems to continue.

> STEPHEN. If you don't play how are you ever going to learn?
> CARL. Learn what?
> STEPHEN. Self-discipline.
> CARL. Poker's got nothing to do with self-discipline. It's about guts, it's about risk, it's about passion –
> STEPHEN. You're living in a fantasy world Carl […] poker is all about discipline. The discipline of the game itself and the discipline of turning up here every Sunday night with a hundred pounds to play in the game. (Marber, 27-28)

In addition, Stephen has failed not only as a father, but also as a husband. Not being a good husband is another cause for his weakness. He probably spent more time gambling than with his wife and son. The audience finds out that Stephen was married when he asks his son about his ex-wife. In the game called divorce, he has lost half of his property. Stephen has no luck with women after his divorce. Perhaps he is afraid of a new failure, of being rejected, or he is insecure in his seducing and performing skills, or he has simply lost an interest and faith in women. Stephen copes with a mid-life crisis in the way that he replaces his sexual needs with his regular game of poker. It gives him the sense of power and control because he wins most of the time. Stephen is more secure in his restaurant which is both his business and his life. He avoids women so much that he has hired an all male staff. These men are his employees, colleagues, friends, and family. In this male constellation which surrounds Stephen, there is no place for a woman.

> FRANKIE. Stevie boy doesn't like women […], prefers to surround himself

> with virile younger men. All stems from this high-stakes poker game he got involved in, lost half his income to a woman, game called … Divorce. […] So ever since then he's become a bit of a …
> STEPHEN. Oh, Frankie, and you were doing so well. The word you're groping for is-
> FRANKIE. I know the word, 'misogynist'.
> STEPHEN. That's the one. (Marber, 82)

Moreover, Stephen likes poker better than any woman. He even keeps a record of all the games they have played with graphs and charts on his computer. In Sweeney's words Stephen 'lives for his poker' (Marber, 77). His gambling problem is another reason for not having serious relationships with women. Perhaps he has failed as a father and as a husband because his gambling addiction interfered with his responsibilities at home. He is, like his son, addicted to gambling. Even though he does not like risking, always plays sure with a small amount of money, and wins most of the time, it is still an addiction because he cannot stop. He enjoys playing poker, but better than playing he likes winning. The poker game in the basement of his restaurant gives Stephen the illusion of power. Gambling is Stephen's weakness which helps him to escape the real world outside his restaurant and a strange way to keep a relationship with his son. He stays where he feels safe in order to avoid new disappointments out there in the open world.

3.3.2 Mugsy

Mugsy is in his thirties and has worked in Stephen's restaurant since it was opened. He is the head waiter, the customers are very fond of him, and he seems to be indispensable. Mugsy presents himself as a ruthless person in poker, in his wishful future business, and in everything that is related to money. He likes to act as a macho man among his co-workers, trying to present himself more important than he really is. He considers himself an expert in psychological nuances with an ability to read people like open books. Morality is not his strong side because he has no problems inventing stories, lying, or using people for his own cause. Being ruthless can be seen as a strategy to hide one's weakness. Even when he does not play poker, he plays a dirty game with everybody just to get what he wants, at any cost. He gambles on any occasion and even tosses a coin in order to avoid work. He is a gullible but stubborn person and thinks that

life is like a poker game.

Furthermore, Mugsy wants to be his own boss and sees himself as a man of vision destined to succeed. He has a plan to open a restaurant with Carl and hopes to persuade Stephen to give them the money to start. Stephen thinks Mugsy is an idiot who also owes him some money. Even though he knows nothing about running a restaurant, Mugsy simply does not want to give up his dream. He cannot control his own life, let alone have a responsibility over such an important business. Mugsy wants to be taken seriously and not as a foolish person who is easily deceived. He refuses to face reality and thinks his boss does not want to loose him and that is why he holds him back. Being disappointed with himself makes him weak, but the false interpretation of Stephen's words makes him feel important. He wants to open a restaurant to prove to himself and the rest of the world that he has potential. In spite of the fact that others think him stupid, he is stubborn and does not give up his ideas.

> MUGSY. You're treating me disrespectfully, Stephen, you can't push me about just cos you're in charge, I'm not your fucking son. (Marber, 62)
> STEPHEN. I think … that you're good at the job that you do. I also think that you don't, in your heart, really *want* to open a restaurant. I think it scares you. And I think you're disappointed with yourself that it scares you. (Marber, 64)

Like the rest of the men in the play, Mugsy is also addicted to gambling. Mugsy's nightmare is a special type of poker which Mugsy invents and chooses every time he is the dealer. Mugsy's remark that '[p]oker without gambling is like sex without orgasm' (Marber, 67) clearly shows that the game is his substitute for a sex life. He is obsessed with winning and losing and cannot control himself. He even takes pride in being 'a good loser' (Marber, 85) because for him, there is no fun in playing poker 'unless it hurts' (Marber, 46). Stephen compares Mugsy's gambling addiction with a drug addiction and describes him as 'a junkie with a new fix' (Marber, 93). It seems that Mugsy suffers from an impulse-control disorder. Gambling is all he thinks about and all he wants to do, regardless of loosing. He cannot control this strong impulse which makes him a compulsive gambler. Stephen pities Mugsy and considers him to be weak, not able to survive another loss in the game. Mugsy cannot stop playing even when he is losing because he is a gambling addict.

> STEPHEN (to MUGSY). Why can't you call it a night?
> MUGSY. Because I want to win my money back.
> STEPHEN. That's not the reason, it's you, you can't stop, it's no fun for you unless you lose.
> MUGSY. I don't want to lose. […]
> STEPHEN. Yes you do, you're addicted to it. You can't stop punishing yourself. […] Mugsy, I'm trying to protect you. […] From yourself. (Marber, 92)

In addition, Mugsy becomes desperate to recoup his losses. He believes that by gambling more money he will win the lost money back, but it only deepens his problem. As a result of his gambling, Mugsy does not have any personal relationships. His addiction also interferes with his work because he has to work many hours overtime to pay off his gambling debt to Stephen. Thinking is secondary to Mugsy and that is why everybody considers him to be stupid and a mug, a foolish person who is easily deceived. Stephen describes him through 'his relentless inability to recognize his own inadequacy' (Marber, 107). Mugsy realizes that everybody sees him as a mug, but he does not want to be seen as such. At first he refuses to think about himself as a naïve person, but later he doubts that perhaps he is a mug after all. This can also be seen as an interesting pun with his name: mug – Mugsy.

3.3.3 Sweeney

Sweeney is in his thirties, works as a chef, and is a sensitive person. He is content with his job in Stephen's restaurant where he has been working for seven years. Sweeney is a good worker and devoted to his boss. He is always open, straight and honest with all the males in the play. He constantly tries to protect others and to live up to other peoples' expectations. Sweeney has a good heart, but he is a weak-willed person. He does not stand for his beliefs and decisions but indulges the others. In spite of his efforts, he fails as a husband and as a father just like Stephen. Once again, the gambling problem can be seen as the reason for the destroyed family. His wife leaves him, but he says it is a mutual decision. She does not allow him to see his five-year-old-daughter, but the following day is an exception. Sweeney has a chance to be a good father even only for a day and is really looking forward to it. He understands his responsibility as a father and takes it seriously, but he also has responsibility towards his friends and poker. It seems that being a father is more important than any game.

> MUGSY. And what about your responsibility to poker?
> SWEENEY. My Louise is more important. I'm not turning up to her with red eyes, knackered and stinking of booze. (Marber, 3)
> […] I want to be awake when I see my daughter. (Marber, 28)

Further to this, he is aware of the fact that he should not play poker that particular night. On the one hand, Sweeney does not want to play because he is scared of losing the money in the game and having nothing to spend on his daughter the next day. On the other hand, he wants to play because he is addicted to it and he does not want to let his colleagues down. He admits that he does not have any discipline, which makes him weak. Frankie, Stephen and Mugsy persuade Sweeney to play. He finally plays because he wants to please everybody and puts his reasonable hesitation behind him. As a compulsive gambler, he cannot control his impulse to gamble, even if he might hurt his daughter with it. He feels powerlessness over gambling and over the group pressure. Eventually, he gambles away all the money, becomes angry with the rest of the group, but is also on the edge of tears. Sweeney feels self-hatred and self-pity at the same time. Being too weak to do anything else, he starts crying. Sweeney puts his feelings over his common sense. He is not strong enough to stick to his decision, but lets other people decide instead of him.

3.3.4 Frankie

Frankie is another waiter in Stephen's restaurant. He is in his thirties, and addicted not only to gambling but also to smoking. In the same way as Mugsy, he also pretends to be a macho man. He is thought to be successful with women, but there is no proof for that. In fact, Frankie and Sweeney live together. This raises a question about Frankie's sexuality. Perhaps he is attracted to women but afraid of them at the same time, or he prefers men. Frankie has a special relationship with Sweeney, but the audience does not find out in what way. Perhaps the two of them are simply friends who work together, share the gambling addiction, and represent strong male bonding. Frankie's dream is to turn his addiction into business by becoming a professional poker player. He is smart, gives witty answers and uses idiomatic expressions in every situation. He does not talk much, does not show his real feelings but always seems to be in good mood and ready for joking. Perhaps joking and provoking is his strategy to hide his weakness. Frankie

uses every chance to provoke others verbally, especially Stephen.

> STEPHEN. Frankie, the next time you want to steal a forty-pound bottle of wine you could at least have a decency to ask.
> FRANKIE. Isn't that a contradiction in terms?
> STEPHEN. Don't fuck around with me Frankie, this is theft.
> FRANKIE. I'll pay for it.
> STEPHEN. You bet you will. (Marber, 43)

Moreover, Frankie is another gambling addict in this male constellation. Sweeney has taught him how to play poker years ago, but Frankie is now a better player. He is quite good at the game and wants to become a professional poker player in Las Vegas. He is preoccupied with gambling, having thoughts about gambling experience in the past and the future. He has already bought an airline ticket to the USA. Frankie gambles to escape a career of a waiter in the restaurant but also to leave London and England. In his opinion, there is a shame in being scared at a poker table. He is good with amateurs, but faced with Ash, a professional player, he loses. Frankie still does not have the poker face, but actually a tell-tale flaw. When he bluffs at the poker game, he looks scared. Frankie loses for the first time since the group has been playing poker and becomes easily disillusioned. He has become what he most despises: scared at a poker table. Frankie is neither brave, nor persistent enough to pursue his dream. Apart from gambling, being weak-willed is his weakness that comes out of his own insecurity. He has neither the courage, nor faith in himself and that prevents him to make his dream come true.

3.3.5 Carl

Carl, short for Carlton, is Stephen's son, in his twenties, described as a person who acts in an unmanly way. Carl is always late, is not reliable and his promises do not mean much. He owes money to Mugsy, Sweeney, and Ash, not to mention to his father. People neither trust him, nor take him seriously. At first he does not want to do anything in his life, later he wants to do something after all. Carl does not work at his father's restaurant, but delivers pizzas. He has worked in Stephen's restaurant before and it has not worked well for either of them. He realizes that he cannot deliver pizzas all his life and therefore Mugsy's idea of opening a restaurant seems like a nice solution. He only

comes to his father's restaurant to play poker and to borrow money from his father. He is still dependent on Stephen financially and is aware that his father protects him. Carl does not want to be helped or controlled by his father, but cannot make it on his own. He is irresponsible and incapable of a serious job, let alone running a restaurant.

Furthermore, Carl, like his father, is a compulsive gambler. He thinks he plays well, but actually he has been losing the whole year. Carl does not have the discipline and 'play[s] like a girl' (Marber, 29). He tries to hide the extent of his gambling by lying to Stephen. In this father-son relationship, Carl feels ashamed and inferior to his father because Stephen is successful both in business and in poker. Blaming his father for the gambling problem is a way to avoid taking responsibility for his actions and a sign of weakness. In Carl's opinion, his father makes him 'feel like shit' (Marber, 97), but Stephen cares for him and considers him to be a talented boy. By bailing Carl out of debt, his father does not solve the problem but, actually, enables gambling problems to continue. Carl does not want the loan to be personal. He thinks poker is just a game, but for his father poker is the only personal level on which the two of them can relate. It seems as if he needs his father to be his little private bank, denying at the same time the familial and emotional level. But every transaction between Stephen and Carl is emotional because they are father and son.

> CARL. I can't go to a bank.
> STEPHEN. And why is that, Carl? Because you were a compulsive gambler, Carl. Because you were addicted to slot machines, which, by the way, is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard in my entire life. No bank will touch you, Carl, because last year you were bouncing cheques all over London and your father, your father the bastard, i.e. me (by the way) covered all your debts so that you wouldn't go to prison. (Marber, 32)

As mentioned above, Carl feels weak in the father-son relationship because he is not as successful as his father. Perhaps he keeps gambling in order to beat his father at his own game and to prove that he is not totally useless and unsuccessful. Carl actually has two fathers: Stephen, the biological father, and Ash, the 'professional' father. Ash even introduces himself as Carl's father when he comes to the restaurant. Both of them taught Carl to play poker, but he keeps losing!!! It seems that he does not really have the talent to be a gambler. Perhaps they have taught him badly, or he simply does not learn. He does not have the money to give back to Ash and is scared that his mentor might hurt

him. Carl cannot borrow the money from Stephen to pay Ash back because his father thinks Carl has stopped gambling. Suddenly, he finds himself in a vicious circle. Carl has tasted the real game, not just the one in his father's basement and cannot stop because he has become an addict and is simply too weak to change himself.

Due to his gambling, he does not have serious relationships either with a woman, or with friends. Carl's gambling addiction also interferes with the father-son relationship and leads to financial disaster. He cannot stop gambling and therefore cannot regain control of his life. In the same way as Mugsy, he suffers from the impulse-control disorder. As a compulsive gambler, Carl is unable to control his gambling urge, even though he knows that his gambling is hurting him and his father. Gambling is the only thing he thinks about, no matter the consequences. In spite of the fact that he owes money to different people, he keeps gambling. He even gambles more money in order to win and pay the debts, but it only causes more problems. As a gambling addict, Carl tries to deny or minimize the problem claiming that he has stopped. He does not want to admit his powerlessness over gambling, which makes him weak. Carl's denial keeps the gambling problem going. He cannot imagine his life without gambling.

3.3.6 Ash

Ash has turned his gambling addiction into business and is the only professional poker player in the play. As a true gambling addict, he does not want to admit his weakness, but only admits that he is a smoking addict. He is in his early fifties, also divorced, but considers himself lucky for having gained his freedom. Ash is not a very eloquent person and only minds his business. He plays cards dishonestly only for money, but turns out to live in poverty. Gambling is the only thing he does. It is his addiction, his business, his life, his passion, and his weakness. Ash is preoccupied with gambling and keeps doing it despite serious, even dangerous consequences. As with the rest of the men in the play, his gambling career strains his personal relationships. The relationship with Carl is just professional for him. Ash does not let his emotions get in his way. He does not care for Carl because business is business. Ash does not want to hurt Carl, but needs the money that Carl owes him urgently. He does not pity Carl, but Carl's father.

ASH. […] I've given you my time. I taught you how to play. I've covered your debts for a year. I trusted you … and you repay me like … you're compulsive.
CARL. And you're not?
ASH. No, only thing I'm addicted to is these. (*He holds up his cigarette*.) […]
CARL. Come on, don't be like my dad.
ASH. I'm not like your dad, Carl – I don't care about you. *Pause*.
CARL. I … thought you liked me? *Beat*.
ASH. Not especially. (Marber, 53)

In Ash's world, the poker game is more important than personal feelings. He does not show his feelings because it would make him vulnerable. Vulnerability can be seen as the sign of weakness for a man. He cannot let himself be close to Carl because he could not collect the money Carl owes to him. Being vulnerable in a poker game can be used against a professional player like Ash. He tries hard to hide his emotions but still finds himself in a vicious circle caused by gambling. He comes to Stephen's restaurant to clear a gambling loan owed to him by Carl. Ash finally collects the debt by blackmailing Carl's father. He needs this money to pay off his gambling debt incurred in a 'big boys' (Marber, 53) poker game. It is the game where the stakes are far higher and the consequences of failing to pay a debt are serious. Since he will still be £1,000 short, Ash is at risk of being beaten up or killed. It turns out that Ash is the real mug in this play. He simply loses control over his life due to gambling. The game becomes dangerous and never ends.

According to Innes, Marber centers the action entirely on a poker game which reveals the personalities of the players and the shifting power-relationships between them. The author focuses on an all-male society where dealings, whether in business or cards, become a vicious test of manhood. Gambling is represented both as a masculine ritual and an addiction which provides the escape from the real world. In the psychology of gambling, addicts play in order to lose, motivated by self-hatred or the need for respect. In *Dealer's Choice* there are no winners because poker is a game of bluff and deception, which becomes self-deception. Everything these characters do is a trick, fuelled by unrealistic dreams or unaffordable debt. For these men poker is a substitute for love and it replaces family. They are divorced and incapable of sustaining a relationship with women.[99] Gambling addiction disrupts the lives of Marber's characters. They are preoccupied with gambling, spend time and money on it, chase losses, and gamble

[99] Cf. Innes, 429-430.

despite serious consequences. Being unable to stop it, or to cure it, makes them weak. Generally, their weakness is the inability to face themselves and the reality.

4 POLITICAL PLAYS

An extremely political theatre that was almost always left-wing oriented started in the 1970s in Britain. Around the year 1968 began the student rebellion and mass protests against the Vietnam War. This situation inspired left-wing writers, who were aiming at a mainstream audience. What was important was the political effect and political message of those plays which influenced the collective thinking. The only problem of those plays is that they were only popular and relevant during the specific time in which they were written and which they are describing. With the change of the political situation, those plays run out of fashion. Characters in the political plays are representatives of social classes and positions with a strong male-centeredness. With the beginning of the 1980's, political plays were not as popular as they used to be. Edgar and Hare were the ones who continued writing in the 1980's and later on, and there are many others who still keep writing political plays.

Even before the existence of the political theatre, Wesker was one of the rare playwrights who dealt with political issues. The most important political playwrights are Edgar and Hare, both left-wing oriented intellectuals. The theme of the socialist loss of idealism is characteristic of Wesker's *Chicken Soup with Barley* and Edgar's *Maydays*. Edgar's *Maydays* can be seen as a direct continuation of Wesker's *Chicken Soup with Barley*. Wesker's play ends with the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956, and Edgar's drama starts with it. While Edgar's *Maydays* expresses a deep sorrow for the loss of socialist faith, Hare's *Murmuring Judges* gives a critical analysis of Britain's legal institutions. Unlike Hare, Edgar is only minimally interested in the private lives of his characters, but at his best he dramatizes their public roles. Edgar and Hare have managed to write a political drama in its images of collective strength and isolated pain. Their political plays strongly criticize Margaret Thatcher and her regime.

4.1 Arnold Wesker: *Chicken Soup with Barley* (1958)

Chicken Soup with Barley is the first play of *The Wesker Trilogy*. It is a political play about a Jewish working-class family, showing the fall of Communism as well as the disintegration of the Kahn family. The parallels between politics and the family go hand in hand because the political issues are part of the characters and the household. In three acts, Wesker covers a twenty year period of time, starting in 1936 and ending in 1956. The Kahn family, Sarah and Harry and their children, Ada and Ronnie, form part of an East End Jewish community which is involved in an anti-fascist action at the beginning of the play. In the post-war period, only Sarah and Ronnie still believe in Communism. Harry's commitment has sunk into an apathy to which he is soon physically condemned by a stroke. At the end of the play, all the characters have given up their political ideas and actions except Sarah. The play ends with Ronnie's disillusionment and his own loss of socialist faith that culminated in the Hungarian uprising of 1956.

4.1.1 Harry Kahn

Harry is the weak character from the beginning of the play to its very ending. He is explicitly described as a weak husband, a weak father, and a weak man. Another great weakness is also his addiction to smoking cigarettes. Harry's biggest problem is that he cannot keep a job, and that is why Sarah, Harry's wife, is the breadwinner in the family. He has neither support, nor respect within his family. Sarah is militant, dominant and the strongest character in the family and in the play. In relation to his wife, Harry is weak in many ways. As opposed to him, Sarah is the active member of the Party. While she fights against apathy in every way, Harry surrenders himself to it without the smallest sign of fight. When it comes to strength, they are the direct opposite of each other. Harry is pleasant and friendly but lacks Sarah's great energy and vitality. His private and safe world, to which he escapes under pressure, includes books, music, tea and cigarettes. He is introduced in the stage directions at the very beginning of the play.

> (HARRY KAHN […] *He is 35 and also a European Jew. He is dark, slight, rather pleasant looking, and the antithesis of Sarah. He is amiable but weak.*) (Wesker, 11)

In the time of important social and political changes, Harry is neither eager nor interested in politics like his wife. He is interested only in books and smoking. Sarah makes fun of Harry by calling him a politician. He is not particularly happy about taking part in the demonstrations and marching, but feels obliged to follow his wife. During the march, Harry waves the red flag, gets frightened of the police and weapons, drops the flag, and runs to his mother's place where he has a cup of tea and reads a book. He acts not as a fighter, but as a coward. He does not march for the Communist ideas because he does not really want to fight for them and is also scared of what is happening in the streets. Instead of the active support of the demonstrations, he takes refuge in his mother's flat. For Harry it is much easier to focus on doing nothing than to participate in risky actions. He does not have the strength or the will for political or private changes.

> CISSIE. […] None of us have ever been able to control him, the eldest brother! […] you wanted to change him! She wanted to change him.
> SARAH. It's your mother who spoils him, you know that? […] He's her son all right – and he wants to be looked after like everyone looks after her. Only it's such a pity – he can walk! (Wesker, 28)

Furthermore, Harry is mama's boy who does not want to take his life into his own hands. In their constant verbal fights, Sarah nags about Harry's indifference and hopes that he will start acting responsibly towards his family and politics. Harry's most common answer to Sarah is to leave him alone, but when she keeps nagging he simply raises his hands in despair and gives up. He feels uncomfortable when she starts to speak. Harry cannot face a confrontation, and therefore, he tries to avoid it. She accuses him of stealing the money from her bag, but Harry pretends not to know what she is talking about. Many times Sarah does not believe what he says, calls him a liar and curses her weakling husband. Harry is unable to defend himself because he knows he is guilty of what his wife accuses him of. He acts as if he was a small child, throws his book to the ground and leaves the room. Instead of being a man and facing the confrontation, Harry, again, behaves cowardly and escapes.

> SARAH. […] Look at him! The man of the house! Nothing matters to him! (*Pause*.) Well, Harry, why don't you look at me? Why don't you talk to me? I'm your wife, aren't I? A man is supposed to discuss things with his wife.
> HARRY (*at last*). What do you want me to say?
> SARAH. Must I tell you what to say? Don't you know? Don't you *just* know!

> (*Pause*.) Artful! Oh, you're so artful!
> HARRY. Yes, yes. I'm artful. […]
> SARAH. That's it, run away. […] Weakling, you! *Weakling*! (Wesker, 33-34)

According to Leeming and Trussler, Sarah's hostility towards Harry is equal to her antagonism towards the apathy that obstructs the fulfillment of her ideas. Harry is too lazy to move, not very noticeable, and tries to hide the truth. On the one hand, all this makes him an opponent of social happiness. On the other hand, he identifies the system as its victim. Harry is both cause and effect, self-preserved in the play. In the beginning he enjoys reading, is quick and active in self-defense and even more accurately informed than his wife. He tries to ignore Sarah's nagging but participates energetically in the eventual quarrel in the first act. Later in the play he is provoked into an outburst of rage. This time it is a sudden attack of childish bad temper that responds to a continually annoying frustration. This shows, only for a moment, a slight change in Harry's consistent personality.[100]

Again and again Harry is unemployed. He does not know how to take an opportunity or at least to keep a job. Not being able to keep a job makes Harry unable to support his family. He is not interested in politics, but it seems that his own private politics is to stay unemployed. Not only is Harry an incompetent worker, he is actually lazy. Working represents a waste of time for him. Better than any work, he enjoys reading books and smoking. Sarah and the children make fun of him for being unable to keep a job. When confronted with this problem, Harry always promises to look for a new job, but he is aware that when he finds one it will not last for long because of his unwillingness towards work. Why would he go to work when he can stay home and sleep? He often has headaches, which exemplifies another way of escaping the quarrel in the family. Perhaps Harry has a headache because he spends most of his time sleeping. He is constantly being accused of something, which makes him offended and sensitive, but he is too weak to change himself.

> SARAH. What! you here already?
> HARRY. The place closed down.
> SARAH. It always happens where *he* works. [...] When it's a slump you always manage to be the first one sacked and when the season starts again you're the last one to find work. Ah, Harry, you couldn't even make money during the war. The war! When *everybody* made money. (Wesker, 35) […]

[100] Cf. Leeming and Trussler, 50-52.

> ADA. Daddy – you are the world's biggest procrastinator. […] He ought to be ashamed of himself. The industry's booming with work and he's out of a job. You probably got the sack, didn't you?
> HARRY (*offended*). I did not get the sack. (Wesker, 40)

In one out of many quarrels with his wife, Harry has his first stroke, stammers in Yiddish and cannot move. The stroke can be seen as a consequence of Sarah's constant terror, nagging and blaming. After he has survived the first stroke, Harry is slightly paralyzed down his left side, but still capable of moving around. The first stroke has just made him age prematurely. Harry is still strong and the family is not sure how sick he really is. They cannot distinguish between his laziness and illness, because he pretends to be in even worse condition than he really is. Harry's tragedy is in being aware of what is happening to him, but staying uninterested to do anything about it. It seems that he does not regret what has happened to him, but feels relived for not being responsible for his actions any more. He becomes almost deliberately bed-ridden and wants to be taken care of. After surviving the stroke, Harry has a legitimate excuse to be an unable person.

> RONNIE. He walks – slowly and stooped – with his head sunk into his shoulders, hands in his pockets. (*Imitates his father*.) His step isn't sure – frightened to exert himself in case he should suddenly drop dead. You ought to see him in a strong wind – (*moves drunkenly round the room*) like an autumn leaf. He seems to have given up the fight, as though *thank God* he was no longer responsible for himself. [...] I don't suppose there is anything more terrifying to a man than his own sense of failure. (Wesker, 47)

In addition, Harry's sickness takes over him gradually, especially after he has had the second stroke. The paralysis has now made him totally unable to work. He has difficulty in talking, is senile sometimes, and can only just move around. Harry smokes more than ever, which is his only comfort and true happiness. Crippled by paralysis, he walks by dragging his feet slowly along. Harry's physical paralysis can also be seen as an expression of the spiritual paralysis to which he has surrendered. Despite all that, Sarah stays with him and still wants to help her weak husband. She cannot leave Harry alone because of his difficult condition and baby-sits him all the time. After the first and, especially, after the second stroke, Harry is not only economically but also physically dependent on his wife. Nothing of this, however, worries Harry or makes him feel ashamed. He does not enjoy it, but does not even try to fight for a better life.

> SARAH. Poor Harry. He's had two strokes. He won't get any better. Paralysed down one side. He can't control his bowels [...] It's not easy for him. But he won't do anything to help him-self. I don't know, other men get ill but they fight. Harry's never fought. [...] He didn't want to die but he doesn't seem to care about living. (Wesker, 60)

Moreover, Harry has never been a committed member of the Party like his wife, but that, too does not seem to bother him. Ironically, he tries to convince his daughter not to give up politics, but to keep fighting. This comes as a surprise, for Harry has not been concerned and has not taken part in his children’s upbringing. Instead, he has spent his time at his mother’s, at the pictures or out with his friends. On one occasion, Harry's weakness almost literally put Ada's life in danger. She had diphtheria and Harry was absent for six days, spending his relief money. A neighbor saved Ada's life by giving her chicken soup with barley. It seems as if neither family nor politics matter to Harry because he is only interested in his hobbies. He is aware that the members of his family do not respect him and that he does not represent a role model to his children or a person to look up to. Harry has failed in many ways and has disappointed people who love him, but, sadly, not himself. He continues to be passive and without desires in all spheres of his life. Harry is aware that he will never change.

> HARRY. What I am – I am. I will never alter. Neither you nor your mother will change me. It’s too late now; I’m an old man and if I’ve been the same all my life so I will always be. You can’t alter people, Ronnie. You can only give them some love and hope they’ll take it. I’m sorry. It’s too late now. I can’t help you. (Wesker, 56)

It is obvious throughout the play that Sarah is the dominant figure. According to Wandor, a strong woman is in charge of the domestic situation. She feeds and nurtures the family, goes to work, and actively supports the Communist system. Harry is only a secondary figure. Sarah sees Harry as a dreamer who loves books and does not appreciate communication. She is the centre of power in their family, and her strength and power make Harry weak and fragile. He becomes weaker, more silent, and less articulate. In this sense he is not a real man. Harry cannot keep a job or support his family and he is not politically active. Wesker shows the reversal of typical gender roles. It seems that a woman can be strong only if a man is weak. The nature of manhood and the definition of male identity are traced through the play. By the end of the play, Harry's failure is complete, especially in the physical sense. Sarah has become

Harry's mother, looking after him as if he was a baby.[101]

Wesker shows Harry's gradual decline through the play. Leeming describes that in the beginning it is only the psychological weakness but after his first and, especially, his second stroke, Harry's weakness becomes also physical. He cannot himself live up to Sarah's standards. Being indirect and trying to hide the truth only increases with Sarah's attacks upon it, until the physical paralysis leaves Harry helpless, justified in his standstill. Being the man who takes refuge from an unpleasant situation at his mother's house, he goes back into his virtual babyhood again. His easily excited temper decreases to childish bad temper. He constantly lacks Sarah's energetic and dominating behavior.[102] Even his children consider him not being up to the role of a father or a worthy companion to their mother. As a weak person and a weak father, he transmits his weakness to his children, especially to Ronnie.

Morgan explains that Harry is the obvious weak spot in the community and in the family, though presented with a touch of humor. He is comfort-loving, work-shy, essentially timid, and frightened, above all, of his wife. At the same time, Harry is intelligent enough and still capable of putting up a show to cover the weakness of his will. But decline sets in Harry’s life. He is constantly unable to stay employed, until successive paralytic strokes give him excuse for not taking part in the struggle. Harry represents to his son Ronnie what he mostly fears to discover in himself: apathy, failure, and purposelessness. Yet Harry’s decline is a natural process of decay through his weakness that develops into an illness.[103] Due to his physical weakness, laziness, lack of interest, and political disillusion, Harry is not motivated to work. His disappointment in politics influences not only his own life but also Ronnie’s. Eventually, Ronnie also becomes disillusioned, loses hope, and gives up just like his father.

4.1.2 Ronnie Kahn

The audience starts to follow Ronnie from the second act of the play where he is a lively and enthusiastic fifteen-year-old-teenager. He is well-spoken and has a warm

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[101] Cf. Wandor, 50-52.
[102] Cf. Leeming, 10-11.
[103] Cf. Morgan, 34-35.

relationship with his sister Ada, who represents his role-model. In the beginning, Ronnie is very eager in politics, wants to fight and believes in the new beginning. In this way, he follows his mother's faith in politics and blames his father for not attending the Party meetings. Beside his active participation in the political life of that time, Ronnie works in a bookshop. He does not really enjoy his work, but only likes poetry and considers himself to be a 'socialist poet' (Wesker, 48). He feels inspired and wants to write a socialist novel which makes him very enthusiastic. Sarah tries to persuade her son to leave the bookshop and to continue his education. He can always write but she wants him to learn a good trade and to have a secure job. She does not want Ronnie to become like his father who never really had a proper job. Ronnie does not want to take up a trade, is appalled by it and hates it just like his father. Unlike Harry, he still has an ambition to accomplish something in his life, namely to become a respectable poet.

> RONNIE. What about me? (*He regards himself in a mirror*.) Young, good-looking, hopeful, talented ... hopeful, anyway.
> SARAH (*sadly*). You? I'll wait and see what happens to you. (Wesker, 54)

While Harry is a static character, Ronnie changes through the play. He starts as a boy filled with enthusiasm and active participation in the political life. In the beginning he does not respect his father and has an argument with him. He tells Harry that he is ugly, calls him 'a lazy old sod – whoopee!' (Wesker, 38), and treats him like a child. He acts as a superior to his father, but he is still a scared boy. On one occasion, Harry's unexpected anger, furiousness and shouting begin to frighten Ronnie. He does not know what to do in this situation and cries like a small child. Like his father, he cannot face a confrontation and tries to escape the danger. Ronnie is appalled by the prospect of becoming weak like his father and by the end of the play, he becomes just like Harry due to his disillusionment and not caring. The author shows the tendency to transmit the weakness from father to son. At the end, Harry has transmitted all his moral weakness and partially his bodily paralysis to his son.

> (RONNIE *stands there trembling. He had not meant to provoke such anger, and now, having done so, is upset. He is not quite sure what to do. Almost involuntarily he hands over the envelope, and when he has done so he goes to a wall and cries. He is still a boy – he has been frightened.* [...]).
> HARRY. […] you've upset me and your-self – you silly boy.
> RONNIE. Can't you see that I can't bear what you are. I don't want to hear your lies all my life. Your weakness frightens me, Harry – did you ever think

> about that? I watch you and I see myself and I'm terrified. (Wesker, 56)

Furthermore, Ronnie points out his own similarities in character to his father. Sarah also emphasizes that Ronnie is like his father, for instance he lies about not getting a rise in a bookshop and making a story out of it. According to Hayman, Ronnie is meant to be a weak character. Wesker does not present it as clear and obvious as with Harry, because Ronnie is never precisely defined by his dialogue. Most of the time when he is present, he seems tiresome. Ronnie's biggest weakness is that he is more effective in his absence than in his presence. He is more interesting to the audience when he reads a passage from the beginning of Harry's never finished autobiography than when he makes his own phrases. At the end of the play, Ronnie comes back from Paris, ten years older and disillusioned with what International Communism has become. He does not want to confront his father with his feelings of suppressed anger.[104] Through his own disillusionment, Ronnie understands his father. The main similarity between father and son is the disappointment with what has come out of the Communist ideas.

> RONNIE. Who else was it who hated the jobs he had, who couldn't bear the discipline imposed by a daily routine, couldn't make sense of himself and gave up? […] I've lost my faith and I've lost my ambition. Now I understand [Harry] perfectly. I wish I hadn't shouted at him as I used to. (Wesker, 73)

As a smart boy who had ambitions, Ronnie ends up working as a cook in Paris. He comes home in despair and resentment. Ronnie hates his job in the kitchen, is broken and cannot fight any more. He is angry about the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 and disappointed with Socialism, Communism and the Party. With the loss of his political illusions, Ronnie has also lost his writing ambitions. He goes through a mental agony, is frustrated and does not care for his life any more. He faces his mother and rejects the ideals she has taught him. Ronnie is neither optimistic like his mother, nor enthusiastic as he used to be and wishes he could cry sometimes. He blames his mother for not seeing that her political ideas and everything they believed in has fallen apart and also for refusing to face the current situation of disintegration in the Party and in the family. Ronnie holds his mother responsible for his own disillusionment in life and simply gives up believing, just like his father.

> SARAH. But your father was a weak man. Could you do any of the things he

[104] Cf. Hayman, 26-28.

> did?
> RONNIE. I would not be surprised. (Wesker, 76)
> SARAH. [...] You've got to care, you've got to care or you'll die. […] Ronnie, if you don't care you'll die. (Wesker, 77)

Leeming and Trussler explain how Ronnie's loss of social faith deepens its nature from that of a temporary disillusionment to that of a constant sadness and anger. In the second act, he is still optimistic and enthusiastic. Ronnie's energy is different from that of Harry's brighter self. Only in the final scene his rhythm of movement finally resembles his father's as he crumples into a chair. He has been hurt by Ada's disillusion because she was his role-model. This shows his ability to accept other peoples' influence and ideas. His character is easily influenced and changed, which creates the impression that Ronnie is weak to bear the most important theme of the play, namely ethics. His final collapse is significant because his new emptiness reaches the climax of believing in something that was known to be wrong. Ronnie himself illustrates the changes of social climate before and after the Second World War.[105]

According to Taylor, Wesker has shown two weak men in his play. Harry is weak-willed and totally unconcerned with politics. All he wants is a quiet life without worries. Harry generally runs away and hides till it is all over or just sleeps until he is actually paralyzed after his second stroke. His self-centeredness is manifested in his lethargy. Gradually Ronnie begins to follow in his father's footsteps. He himself is eager enough in the second act but becomes disappointed by the end of the play. The Russian invasion of Hungary destroys his faith in the ideals which previously ruled his life. His awakening is harsh because no one warned him about possible doubts in the Communist ideas. Now he completely understands his father who has lost faith because communists had lost Spanish Civil War to fascists. At the end of the play, he seems all set to become another Harry, with no sense of purpose to keep him going. Ronnie does not care any more.[106]

Apart from Harry's physical and emotional weakness which he transmits on his son, the main reason for Harry and Ronnie's weakness comes from the defeat of the Communist system. Sarah finds her strength in Communism and keeps fighting even when this system falls apart. As a strong woman, she does not let herself be easily disillusioned.

[105] Cf. Leeming and Trussler, 52-53.
[106] Cf. Taylor, 145-147.

She stays committed to her political ideals and ready to fight for them at any occasion. Harry and Ronnie, on the other hand, do not have either Sarah's strength or her faith in the Communist ideology. With the fall of the system, they stop believing in the Communist ideas and give up fighting. Their political disillusionment influences their private disappointment and makes them weak.

4.2 David Edgar: *Maydays* (1983)

Maydays is a political drama on a world wide scale that begins in 1945 and ends in the early 1980s. It takes place in England, Hungary, the United States, and the Soviet Union. The play is historically dated with a number of important days in the history of Communism. It shows a post-war socialist history and serves the function of recording the political and social climate of a given time. The individual journeys are defined by the collective journey of an epoch. Billingham explains the title of the play that has two meanings. Firstly, May Day stands for the first of May and marks the struggle of the working classes for equality and justice. Secondly, 'Mayday' is an international radio distress signal used especially by ships and aircrafts. It is a call for help that is associated with a great danger and therefore with a need for help in the face of that danger.[107] In this play, the fall of Communism together with the political and private fall of the characters can be interpreted as a call for help. Saving that system could be a salvation of private lives, because private also means political.

There are fifty-three characters in *Maydays*, but only three protagonists. The play traces the political fates and reactions of three male characters from different generations: Jeremy, Martin, and Pavel. Edgar shows the political journeys of his three protagonists who are at first fanatic about Marxism and Communism and later ashamed of their Labor Party. These characters are defined by their public roles at their work and in politics, while their private involvements become secondary. All three men are represented as products of social forces. The individual characterization of the male characters might be defeated and made obedient to the demands of the bigger political picture. The crisis of conscience leads each of the male protagonists to reject doctrinaire Communism. They start as the idealistic Communists and end as supporters of Margaret

[107] Cf. Billingham, 59-60.

Thatcher and her regime. The main concern of *Maydays* is the analysis of the reasons behind these individual defections from Left to Right.

4.2.1 Jeremy Crowther

According to Innes, a framework of expectations is established through the figure of Jeremy. He is a working-class Marxist who proclaims the 'New Jerusalem' (Edgar, 13) at the beginning of his political path. First he breaks with the Party over Hungary in 1956, then rejects the anti-intellectualism of the 1968 student revolution, and ends up as the leading theorist in a Right-wing think-thank. Jeremy's motivation remains the same throughout the play. It is the need to resolve the basic disagreement between the strong wish to make people equal and the necessity to preserve their freedom. Later he simply substitutes liberty for liberation and switches from hard-Left to extreme Right.[108] At the beginning, Jeremy is a seventeen-year-old-boy and a member of the British Communist Party, who delivers a rousing May Day political speech celebrating the victory of the Labor government and Socialism over Fascism in Europe. He starts as an idealistic Marxist who supports the Communist ideas and is ready to fight for a better world which he calls the 'New Jerusalem'. Jeremy believes in freedom of the spirit gained by liberation from tyranny of the previous regime.

> JEREMY. […] Comrades, we have been asked a thousand times what we mean by socialism. As throughout the continent the toiling masses rise to liberate themselves from tyranny, to fashion with their own hands their own New Jerusalem, we can at last say: *this* is what we meant. (Edgar, 13)

Over the years, the young agitator of the first scene has become disillusioned with Communism and what has come out of it. At the age of thirty-three, he works as a liberal teacher at a minor public school, is modestly dressed, has a bicycle and a cottage. Jeremy and Martin meet for the first time in the school where Jeremy works. In their first dialogue, Jeremy remembers his radical past, but has stopped believing and fighting for the Communist ideas. He gives up being a Communist and leaves the Party because of the Soviet invasion of Hungary. The most important reason which influences Jeremy to stop being a Communist is his insight into the inhumane and undemocratic character of the practical Soviet Communism which distances itself extensively from

[108] Cf. Innes, 186.

the original ideals. Disillusioned with Communism and the Party, he turns to books and teaching. This decision has not been easy for him to make and it has completely changed his life.

> JEREMY. Because I left it over Hungary. *Slight pause*. Well, more accurately, I left it at the time of Hungary. It was actually 'over' what were called my 'obstinately opportunist tendencies'. […] And it hadn't turned out how we thought it would at all. […] You hear a kind of scream. The scream of the possessed. And you realise there's all the difference in the world, between liberty and liberation. (Edgar, 29-30)

Moreover, Jeremy advances in his profession and becomes a frustrated university professor who teaches English Studies at Leeds University. He has an office, wears an overcoat, carries a briefcase, reads *The Times*, drives a car and lives in a comfortable house in London. His economical situation has apparently improved and shows that he is not immune to Capitalism. A letter in *The Times* which mentions the case of a Russian dissident P.M. Lermontov affects Jeremy's shift of loyalty and support rightwards. He has been 'brutally assaulted by the real world' (Edgar, 73), looses his faith in Communism, leaves the Party, and opts for the new Conservatives. People have liberated themselves from the old regime, but instead of gaining the spiritual liberty, they become possessed by a new regime, the consumerism. Jeremy criticizes the Capitalist society which brings the loss of moral and ethical values. He explains that the problem with people is having too much freedom which is the complete reverse of his original politics.

> JEREMY. […] And, of course, permissiveness implies permission, and even licence must be licensed, by somebody or another. But what has changed now is that it's the market sells the slop that's poisoning us all and commerce that's provided the long spoon. […] Mine, mine, mine. Well, I don't call that liberalism, though some might, nor socialism, though it's socialism's mutant child. I'd call it nihilism, and unless it's understood that our disease is not too little freedom but too much, it will destroy us all. (Edgar, 122)

Bull gives a very detailed insight of Jeremy's political and private life. At the beginning of the play Jeremy, as a young man, addresses the Communist rally. He starts as the northern English working-class Communist. Later he becomes disillusioned and leaves the Party after the Soviet invasion of Hungary. He slips first into teaching in a public school and then into the academic life. The audience follows Jeremy's gradual absorption by the political Right. Having repressed the young self who had notions of

the 'New Jerusalem', Jeremy ends up on the far Right. There, the ex-Communist, ex-Liberal Jeremy is quite comfortable. He becomes a member of the Committee in Defence of Liberty, a Right-wing group that consolidates an anti-socialist future for Britain.[109] Jeremy's obvious weakness is that he does not have a strong political goal and becomes easily disillusioned with Communism and attracted by Capitalism. He becomes disappointed, simply gives up and turns to the opposite political side.

Jeremy represents the older generation, while Martin stands for the younger generation. Martin follows his mentor's political path, starting on the Left and ending on the Right. Because of the generation gap, Jeremy is already disillusioned with the Communist ideas because of his experience, whereas Martin still needs to live through that. At the end, both men have experienced the same political path and the same process of disillusionment. Both Jeremy and Martin are confused about the concrete political goals and let themselves be easily discouraged. Swain explains that Edgar shows the changing political ideas of these two men. The author gives them one scene alone together in each of the three acts of the play in which they discuss their positions in 1962, 1972, and 1978, respectively. The topics of conversation are public and political, but the existing difficulties are a result of personal backgrounds and feelings. By the end of the play, they are both members of a Tory think-tank.[110] Once their economic condition has advanced, they reject Socialism and opt first for moderate Conservatism and later for the more radical Thatcherism.

4.2.2 Martin Glass

Martin, the next protagonist of the play, is the English middle-class vicar's son. Painter explains that he is closer to Edgar's own lived experience than any other character in the play. Martin's story is true because a lot of it happened to Edgar and to people he knew. Edgar's drama follows Martin's political journey, his personal relationships, in particular with Jeremy and Amanda, and his ultimate change to a completely opposite political opinion. Martin can be seen as an existentialist tragic hero who makes the wrong choice. He is a man who cannot build on his choices and impulses to resistance,

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[109] Cf. Bull, 222-223.
[110] Cf. Swain, 287.

and ends up living in bad faith.[111] Bull adds that Martin is the most developed character in the play. He is at first radicalized by his opposition to nuclear warfare, but later he begins his move towards a revolutionary position. Martin's inability to accept leadership is attacked by both Trotskyites and anarchists. Towards the end of the play Martin writes for *The Sunday Times*, disillusioned with revolutionary politics.[112]

According to Billingham, Martin's surname carries some interesting connotations. Glass has a transparency that enables clear viewing. It may have magnifying elements, which help more detailed sight. Glass may also be fragile and therefore easy to break. All these qualities help define the character of Martin Glass. He is the central prism through which the audience views the complex ideological world of the play. Martin is also a character whose resistance is ultimately fractured through his opaqueness. Glass must be made to adjust to uniformity of belief, strategy, and action. This ideological and individual agreement with established rules is what finally cracks and fundamentally breaks Martin.[113] Innes adds that his surname indicates both his function as a mirror of the times, and the way he sells out first libertarian comrades for the Marxist party line, then the doctrinaire Party for humanism, only to turn to Conservatism.[114] In the end, Martin becomes the mirror image of himself.

Martin starts his political journey as an enthusiastic, seventeen-year-old-pupil, wearing an army uniform with the badge of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). At his young age, he is already addicted to smoking and fighting for the Communist ideas. During the active support of the political actions, Martin meets Amanda, his future lover, and joins the far-Left Socialist Vanguard Party only because of her, but suspects the Party's intentions. Martin lives in London, smokes, has not finished his studies, and has a small trust fund. He is politically active and considers the Party to be his wife which shows that politics becomes personal. After a while, Martin is not welcome in the Socialist Vanguard Party because he recognizes the inhuman tendencies of the Communist ideology. His long articles are rejected because they are critical of the Party line. Martin acts as the rightward-leaning element within the Party, as if he had become the noted Trotskyite. He is not able to accept a leadership because of his individualist

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[111] Cf. Painter, 93-94.
[112] Cf. Bull, 222-224.
[113] Cf. Billingham, 58.
[114] Cf. Innes, 187.

tendencies. Politics has become too personal for Martin and that is why he is expelled from the Party.

> JAMES (*suddenly angry*). Martin, it's very simple. There are things you won't give up. You still have this antipathy to working in a group that's led, if just in part, by manual workers. There is something in you that fundamentally distrusts the concept of a leadership, particularly if it's on the surface less articulate than you. […] I couldn't care less what you feel. It's what you think and do. (Edgar ,80)

Painter gives a detailed examination of what Martin thinks and feels throughout the play and of the contradictions he suffers from. His Party disapproves of Martin's defense of his friend Phil and in this context he is attacked for what he thinks and does. When Martin withdraws his support for Phil, he is attacked for what he does not seem to feel. Martin is confused and does not know who and what he should support any more because he cannot rationalize his emotional reactions. Martin's choices are a product of his lack of negotiation between what he thinks and feels. His big mistake is making an absolute distinction between his thoughts and feelings and therefore he becomes very vulnerable.[115] His emotional indecisiveness is his biggest weakness. Towards the end of Edgar's play, Martin does not think he can remember how he felt on the political Left. He has cut himself off from his feelings because he does not want to be vulnerable.

> AMANDA (*quietly*). Martin, I'm not […] interested in what you think.
> MARTIN. You see, I feel the problem does come down –
> AMANDA (*quietly*). Or what you feel.
> MARTIN. I mean, […]
> AMANDA. I am increasingly convinced, […] that the problem does come down to what you are. *Pause*.
> MARTIN. I'm sorry? *Slight pause*. What d'you mean, 'to what I am'?
> AMANDA. Martin […] try to imagine what life would be like if you didn't have a cock. I think that would be really helpful. Actually. (Edgar, 96)

It seems that Amanda, a strong woman, leads Martin's politics because she always seems to be one step ahead of him. Amanda persuades him to join the Socialist Vanguard Party. According to Innes, they live together briefly, but as he becomes disillusioned with Socialism she becomes disillusioned with him. Both Amanda and Martin later reject the Party for the same reasons. The difference is that Martin loses his idealism and Amanda maintains it. The last scene brings her into direct conflict with

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[115] Cf. Painter, 100-101.

what Martin has come to represent. Whereas his first gesture of protest has been in the cause of nuclear disarmament, now he opposes the women who camp on his property, outside the cruise missile base.[116] Filled with money and success, Bull adds ironically, Martin has bought back his old family house, next to the base, that he rejected as a young Socialist.[117] He used to be Amanda's friend, but now he is the person who could call the police and have the women who protest on his property removed.

> AMANDA. I'm running a resources centre.
> MARTIN. Well well well. I run a XJ12. *Pause*.
> AMANDA. There's gold in them thar Tory think-tanks, then?
> MARTIN. Well, silver, certainly. […]
> AMANDA. Oh, Martin, what the fuck's gone wrong with you? (Edgar 143-144)

In the final scene of the play, Martin confronts his former lover and old comrade Amanda. Billingham explains that the former Left revolutionary Martin now owns the land on which the women demonstrate. He is bitterly cynical about the women's politics, which he sees as naïve and self-interested. Amanda is equivalently bewildered and depressed by her former comrade's political transformation. She is involved in a protest which is something Martin can no longer remember.[118] He now represents an individual concept of freedom, works as a journalist for the *Sunday Times*, and drives a posh car, a Jaguar limousine. As the owner of the house and land and as the driver of a Jaguar, Martin shows that he is tricked by the capitalistic and consumerist society. He has embraced Capitalism which is the opposite of what he used to fight for. The crushing of his deeply held political convictions results in him ultimately moving to the extreme Right.

> AMANDA. […] what we all are trying to do […] can only be accounted for by something in the nature of our species which resents, rejects and ultimately will resist a world that is demonstrably and in this case dramatically wrong and mad and unjust and unfair. And I wonder, Martin, if you ever really felt like that. Or, if you did, if you can still remember.
> MARTIN. No. *Pause*. No, as it happens, I don't think I do. (Edgar, 146)

Martin's concern is that the sense of compassion and justice that led him to Communism had to be left behind. He goes through the early political idealism, the radical political activism, and the ultimate betrayal and disillusionment. According to

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[116] Cf. Innes, 188-189.
[117] Cf. Bull, 223.
[118] Cf. Billingham, 60-61.

Painter, Martin ends up in his old family house, repressing his resisting self. That rebellious self is the ‘real’ self that Martin betrays.[119] He retreats into his personal privacy, without having a political goal, disillusioned by both the many Lefts and the rationalizing Right. His weakness lies in the constant negotiation between what he thinks and feels. In relation to politics, his weakness is apparent in the constant indecision between Left and Right. His need to be guided, by Amanda and Jeremy, is also a sign of weakness. The only thing he stays truly committed to throughout the play is smoking. Ironically, smoking as an addiction also represents weakness.

4.2.3 Pavel Lermontov

Pavel, also a protagonist of the play, goes through a different political journey than Jeremy and Martin. Billingham explains that the Soviet Russian military invasion of Hungary in 1956 provides the ideological location for Pavel’s journey. He starts as an officer with Russian Military Intelligence, but becomes a victim of the Soviet regime’s brutal treatment of dissent. His transformation from an agent of the regime to one of its dissident critics begins after he has witnessed an act of individual political courage by a young Hungarian resistance fighter named Paloczi. By the end of the play, Pavel refuses to be used as a public relation’s trophy by the network of extreme Right-wing businessmen and journalists that includes Jeremy and Martin.[120] He embodies the obvious contradiction between the individual’s right to freedom of speech and the possibility of revolutionary social and political change.

Pavel Mikhailovich Lermontov is introduced as a Soviet lieutenant at the age of twenty-seven during the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. During the Hungarian uprising against Soviet control, Pavel is engaged in helping to bring the rebellion to an end by force. He thinks that the Hungarian government has invited the Soviet army to help them in the struggle against terror and reaction, but Paloczi, a young Hungarian rebel, explains that it is completely wrong. Pavel realizes that the invasion is the wrong choice to practice Communism. He believes in the ideals, but not in the brutal practices like the invasion of Hungary. Later he works as an interpreter for the Institute of African and

[119] Cf. Painter, 101.
[120] Cf. Billingham, 57-58.

Asian Peoples in Moscow. He is quite disappointed and angry about the political situation in his country. Pavel despises the totalitarian regime in the Soviet Union and dreams about the Western democracy. He assembles a petition which quotes the Soviet Constitution for the freedom to demonstrate.

Due to his circulating the petition, Pavel becomes a prisoner in a camp complex in the Soviet Union. Wandor explains that his imprisonment in a labor camp is also caused by betrayal and revenge. He is imprisoned as a dissident, betrayed by Clara, his stenographer during the Soviet invasion of Hungary. She was insulted because he had sneered at her for being an ignorant peasant girl. He is surprised and shocked when he discovers Clara's action. This moment articulates Pavel's consciousness about the links between the personal and the political.[121] He continues to write for the West and smuggles out a statement about the camps, from the camps. He keeps fighting, but feels betrayed by both the system and the people, undergoing a political education through forced labor. After many years in the labor camps, Pavel is released and exiled from the Soviet Union. He is finally free and in the West. At Frankfurt airport, Pavel is shocked, confused, and does not find the words to describe his newly gained freedom.

> LERMONTOV. […] There is, a saying in our country. That it seems foolish to spend so much time, as we do, learning to speak, when one … When one is not allowed subsequently to do so. *Slight pause*. Now I can speak. *Slight pause*. Now I am free to say what I like. *Slight pause*. I find … I have no words to say. (Edgar, 101)

Furthermore, Pavel comes to London as a free man and has interviews. He talks about his own lived experience, but has problems expressing himself. He speaks German, a little English, and Russian is his native language. Pavel's knowledge of English language is inefficient and represents a problem for him and other people. According to Painter, the important aspect concerning Pavel is an emphasis on the serious difference between language and meaning. He is unsure of the English language and tries hard to describe the meaning exactly. He tries to learn a new vocabulary and with it a set of values where the concept of freedom does not seem to be attached to human rights protest. It is assumed that Pavel and his Hungarian friend Paloczi speak Russian when they speak alone.[122] In conversation with other people, there are also moments when

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[121] Cf. Wandor, 210.
[122] Cf. Painter, 103.

Pavel slips into Russian. Usually this happens when he cannot remember an English word.

In Britain, the Committee in Defence of Liberty wants to give Pavel a freedom award. He is honored with a banquet by the hard Right and asked to give a speech. He translates for himself the word liberty as freedom and feels privileged. According to Swain, his former stenographer Clara accuses Pavel of being a traitor to the cause of Socialism. This accusation directs Pavel towards the recognition of the dangers he will meet in England if he is to remain true to his beliefs. He suddenly understands the nature of his hosts' political beliefs and withdraws from the situation.[123] In the beginning, he admires the Western democracy and freedom, but when he finally comes to the West, he is disillusioned because freedom is not what he has expected. Pavel refuses to be a member of the hard English Right because he does not want to be imprisoned by the Western ideas.

Painter explains that the Committee for the Defence of Liberty is trying to claim Pavel for their cause because he is an obvious example of someone who has suffered terribly under the Soviet regime. As the guest of honor, Pavel delivers his speech, but deviates from the written version and continues in his own words to celebrate resistance. His hosts are Authoritarians, and that is what he tries to escape. Pavel has not changed his mind and, therefore, he rejects the award.[124] As the Soviet dissident who has escaped Russian Totalitarianism, he refuses to accept Authoritarianism in Britain. He does not accept the award because he notices that the people who want to give him the award have a different concept of freedom than he does. They want to force freedom through the authority and state power and Pavel does not want to participate in that. He is not interested in personal profit, but in liberty of the people, something the meaning of which his hosts have forgotten.

> LERMONTOV. […] I'm sorry. I have not fulfilled my duty. Pavel Mikhailovich has not reminded you of what he was supposed to. […] But he will nonetheless say something. […] It's just – that it does appear to be – the same variety of people – who applaud [state control] on their own side – but oppose it on the other. People for whom, the ultimate reality is not in fact resistance, but – […] 'Authority'. (Edgar, 137)

[123] Cf. Swain, 291.
[124] Cf. Painter, 103.

Innes describes Pavel as an officer in the Russian army who finds it impossible to reconcile the Soviet role in Budapest with his conscience and becomes a dissident. Pavel is shown as a fighter for civil liberties back in the Soviet Union and as a prisoner in a labor camp. His connections with the West begin when he starts to smuggle statements out of his country. Eventually, he is exiled to the West, where Jeremy and Martin try to persuade Pavel to join the Right-wing group. Realizing the repressive basis of The Committee in Defence of Liberty, he refuses to become a part of it. Pavel will not give his support to Martin and Jeremy's movement because he stays true to his beliefs.[125] He is neither the obvious weak character, nor completely a hero, but simply a human being. Apart from having problems with English, his weakness is being a traitor because he has stopped being a Communist.

Edgar presents the male-defined epic and political play. According to Wandor, male characters are given much more attention to than the female characters, even though those men are shown through their private and political weaknesses. In the context of the play, where the dates of each scene in the life are determined by the male protagonist, his political ideas and conscience are given greater value. The political world traditionally belongs to men, who argue and debate with one another. The play convincingly denies familial ties, interpersonal relationships and sexualities. One of the consequences is that a critical core of maleness is also denied. These men are asexual and obviously unable to have proper personal relationships. All three of them have transferred the force of personal feelings on to their politics and have had to find a way to destroy the women along with the feelings.[126] Women are persistent in their political fight and represent hope, whereas men easily give up and stop fighting.

As in Wesker's play, the main reason for Jeremy, Martin and Pavel's weakness comes from the defeat of the Communist system. Amanda, as a strong woman, is the only one who still believes in Communism and keeps fighting even when this system falls apart. Just as Sarah, she represents strength and faith. Amanda stays strong in her political ideas, ready to fight for them even when others have given up. Men, on the other hand, lose their strength and faith which comes out of the Communist ideology. After the

[125] Cf. Innes, 188.
[126] Cf. Wandor, 211-212.

system fails, they stop believing in the Communist ideas and choose the opposite political option. Once again, the political disillusionment influences the private lives of the characters, demonstrating their weakness.

4.3 David Hare: *Murmuring Judges* (1991)

Hare's "Condition-of-England" trilogy examines some of the important British institutions: the Church, the Law and the Labor Party. *Murmuring Judges* is the second play in that trilogy and deals with the individual lives and moral decisions. It is a political play about the British legal system where the state of the nation is shown in a critical way. Innes explains that the title of the play refers to an antique law against criticizing the judiciary that the play as a whole is guilty of, rather than any of the characters in it. Hare's focus is on the political system and even the most powerful individuals are prisoners of that system. All of them are shown as acting with good intentions, even if misguided.[127] Typical for Hare's plays, including *Murmuring Judges*, is Civil Courage. This moral category has become rare nowadays, because the success and reputation are more important than justice. Hare shows a male-dominated and patriarchal society which has lost its moral principles.

According to Wade, Hare's work demonstrates the operation of the judicial system on three different institutional levels: the Bar, the police force and the penal system. What the play reveals is a sense of institutional disconnection, of systematic injustice. Hare describes how the individuals working within a dysfunctional apparatus foresee goodness and maintain ethical sensitivity. *Murmuring Judges* shows lawyers, judges and politicians maintaining a kind of antiquated fraternity, professional filiations by class privilege, Oxbridge education and shared aesthetic taste. The play reveals the legal world as an archaic system of paternal privilege and protocol, whose ceremonial wigs and robes cover a fundamental want of social awareness and concern. The key question of the text involves issues of moral responsibility and the difficult situation of acting in an ethical manner.[128] The audience traces three male individuals: a prisoner, a policeman, and a lawyer, and shows how they think and operate within the system.

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[127] Cf. Innes, 226-227.
[128] Cf. Wade, 70-71.

4.3.1 Gerard Mckinnon

> GERARD MCKINNON *[…] barely in his twenties, thin, wiry, tall, his dark hair down to his shoulders. […] He has an Irish accent.* (Hare, 1)

Gerard Thomas McKinnon is the central character in the play. Homden states that at the opening of *Murmuring Judges*, Gerard is not praying, but anticipating the imminent judgment to be passed upon him by the court of law. It is a judge who has Gerard's life in his hands.[129] According to Donesky, most of the play is concerned with the miscarriage of justice in Gerard's case. He is a young man who is found guilty and sentenced to five years in prison for driving the truck in a robbery. Two reasons are given to explain why he receives such a harsh sentence for a minor first offense. Firstly, he denies any involvement despite solid evidence providing his role in the robbery. The second reason is his Irish accent which is a clear disadvantage. It appears obvious to Irina, the Afro-American female lawyer who takes up the case instead of Sir Peter, that Gerard has been forced to lie, that for some reason he has been blackmailed into pleading not guilty. Gerard confirms that his partners in crime have blackmailed him into lying. Later he is brutally beaten by several other convicts, which strengthens Irina's conviction that blackmail is involved.[130]

> IRINA. […] Why did you lie?
> GERARD. 'Cos I'm scared. Scared, so I have to go to the lavatory. That sort of scared, do you know? (Hare, 41)
> I was thinking, you know, it's like the water's up to here … (*He draws a line across his neck.*) One big wave and I'm gone. Every week I just about survive and no more. Then Barabara was pregnant again. I was asked to do this job, I thought, OK, just the once. What everyone needs is one lump of money. And the waves will only be up to my chest. […] The two of them went in, and I sat outside in the van, shit-scared, I admit. (Hare, 43)

Being in prison for the first time, Gerard does not know the procedure or the conditions inside of it. He has been given prison clothes that are too big for him and a number he will answer to while in prison. He is confused, astonished, bewildered, and worried. Gerard is not worried about himself, but about his family. He has an unemployed girlfriend and two young children, one of them with Down's syndrome. He has only

[129] Cf. Homden, 209-211.
[130] Cf. Donesky, 176-177.

turned to crime as a last resort to support his handicapped child. Gerard needs help to cope with the new situation because he takes the role of a victim and the person without hope. His self-preservation is at stake and he has to fight against the system that has sentenced him too harshly for his first offence. Instead of a will to fight, he has an empty look on his face, is very quiet and calm. Although there are other people involved in that robbery, he is on his own and frightened. Irina is the only one interested in his case.

Wade points out that Irina visits Gerard in his prison cell and empathizes with him. As she learns more of his case, she is moved by Gerard's terrible situation and understands that Gerard is the victim of an anti-Irish bias on the part of the judiciary. Moreover, she suspects that his conviction involved some kind of illicit secret agreement between the arresting officer and the other individuals who participated in the crime. Irina's commitment to Gerard is a moral one. At first she comes to him as a lawyer, but later as a friend.[131] Though Irina believes Gerard from the beginning, Gerard does not trust her straightaway. He has not asked for an appeal and is surprised that Irina is thinking about his case and encourages him to fight. When he realizes that she is doing her best to help him, she gains his trust. Their conversation becomes more private with a sudden intimacy between them and Gerard likes it. He has a friend now who believes him which makes him less scared and more optimistic.

According to Homden, Gerard suffers for being, if not entirely innocent, then naïve and afraid, for being a victim. Through Irina's visits, the audience witnesses Gerard's decline, his attitude hardening against his imprisonment in the face of the loss of his family. Her intervention leads to Gerard's humiliating assault, questioning his identity, and subsequent solitary confinement in prison. This, in turn, leads to his becoming interested in literature, especially in Irish history and his background. He does not ask questions about the appeal which Irina struggles to obtain. After she tells him that it resulted in a six-month reduction of sentence, he shows no reaction at all. This reduction is not enough to save him from the brutality and crime that happens in jail. When Irina visits Gerard in prison for one last time, their conversation lacks the intimacy of their earlier meetings. Gerard has accepted the role offered to him.[132]

[131] Cf. Wade, 71-72.
[132] Cf. Homden, 212-215.

IRINA. I said I'd be your friend. And I will. I'll keep coming. It's something I want. Not to say, 'Oh, we're all in separate compartments…'
GERARD. But we are. Aren't we?
IRINA. I'm hoping not. (Hare, 104)

4.3.2 Barry Hopper

Barry is an experienced and very competent policeman in his mid-thirties. He is ambitious and deeply interested in beating the system, no matter what. Barry is sad about not seeing his son because his wife took him and ran off with an antiques dealer. He now has a secret affair with his colleague Sandra, but the relationship with his partner Jimmy overlaps the affair. Barry admits that he does get tired of pretending not to be in a relationship with Sandra and of not looking at each other at work. On the other hand, having secrets is Barry's way of life. He is closer and more devoted to Jimmy than to Sandra. When he is promoted to the Flying Squad, he does not want to go without Jimmy. Barry drives a BMW, which he earned by catching thieves and doing the job, not by bribery. He is everyone's favorite policeman who tries hard to present himself as a macho man. He laughs a lot, is cheerful, friendly, and almost always in good mood and ready for joking.

Together with Jimmy, Barry puts three criminals away without saying how he had found them in the first place. He is satisfied for three men have actually been sent to prison for the crime they have committed. The problem is that Barry is acquainted with two of the three men he has arrested, but refuses to admit that. He does not want anyone to know that those two criminals are his informants. Barry never mentions it because it is simpler and clearer that way. He does not know Gerard, but evidence has linked Gerard to the robbery van. Barry believes that Gerard got a five years sentence for his first offense because he is Irish and because the other two got more. The audience can read national prejudice in Barry's words. He considers himself to be heartless, except when he is alone with Sandra. First he wants to lock all the criminals up, no matter how minor their offenses are. Later, he becomes aware that Gerard as well as the other criminal should not be in prison because prison does not really make people better.

Moreover, this brave policeman is getting bad-tempered, becomes irritated, even furious and eventually loses hope in police business. He is angry because the rich are getting richer by tax evasion and because the government ignores it. The police catch only the small criminals, often for the very ridiculous crimes. Barry keeps asking himself and his colleagues about the purpose of being a policeman. In spite of that, he works overtime too much. Barry is still a team player and their man on the street because no one has that much experience. In his opinion, the police deal with the scum, but do not have the power they need to deal with them. As a representative of the law, he thinks he is allowed to do things his way. Barry believes that each policeman has to make an effort to fight the crime in his/her way. That is why he makes his own sticks of dynamite and then frightens the criminals. Sandra calls him a bent copper, which makes Barry very angry.

> BARRY. […] You've got to *be* a copper. It's expected. You have to give it lots of mouth. Talk about how you go over the side. […] Didn't they tell you? It's a team game. (Hare, 33)

The inventive policeman does not think he has done anything wrong because those men he has arrested are criminals. He performs his trick that always works: he uses his bag filled with the sticks of dynamite in order to get information. As Innes points out, Barry has the best of motives for tampering with evidence: persuading the gang to become informers in order to catch far more violent armed criminals.[133] He receives a medal for that arrest in spite of the fact that he has planted the evidence and has made the case an unsafe prosecution. He can loose everything if he gets caught, but Barry is willing to take chances. According to Wade, Hare establishes a tension between Barry and Sandra, the two colleagues and lovers. There is a strong debate between them because of their differing opinions on the right proportion of idealism and pragmatics. Barry defends a hard-knuckled attitude that allows for the compromise of rights and procedures. Sandra expresses her opposition.[134]

> SANDRA. […] That's the thing about you, Barry, you used to be smart. You were really smart. Until your main interest got to be in beating the system. Working out your grievance. And that's when you began to get really dumb. Because you lose sight of things. You're so concerned to do it your way, to prove you're the guy who's got it over everyone else, you lose sight of what

[133] Cf. Innes, 226.
[134] Cf. Wade, 71.

the point is. We're meant to make sure that the criminals go down. (Hare, 77)

According to Homden, Barry has the same view of a professional life as the Bar and the hardest rule is sticking up for your side. No one wants to know about the fact that Barry already knows the villains, lies about it, and acts too defensive over the case.[135] By acting in his own way, Barry confronts not only Sandra, but also Irina. She questions his actions and accuses him of breaking the rules, but he does not take lectures on ethics from lawyers. Barry himself breaks the law in order to maintain it. He can be seen as a modern version of Robin Hood who breaks the law in order to catch the criminals and help the inefficient legal system. He acts as a strong man who is above the law, but is weak to admit his actions after he is discovered by Irina and especially Sandra. She used to admire him, but not any more, because now Barry thinks that sometimes it is clever to pretend to be stupid in their job. His way of dealing with the offenders demonstrates the lack of Civil Courage. Without moral boundaries, Barry represents hidden danger by taking the law into his own hands.

4.3.3 Sir Peter Edgecombe

SIR PETER EDGECOMBE QC, *who is tall, thin, fastidious, in his early sixties, with a slightly raffish appearance which contradicts the precision of his speech.* (Hare, 3)
WOODY. […] He's a decent man. He's flash but he's decent. (Hare, 11)

Sir Peter is a successful and famous lawyer who represents the prejudice of the upper-class lawyers against both his colleagues and clients. He accepts Irina as his junior, but at the same time he jokes about her youth and the lack of experience. He considers criminal law boring because it involves real human beings and the relevant facts. He likes the libel cases for they are a matter of opinion. In those cases, one is arguing about the things which no one can prove and Sir Peter is good at such juggling. He does the civil cases because they bring more money than the criminal cases. It has nothing to do with 'the intellectual attraction of civil law' (Hare, 92), it is only about the profit. Sir Peter is interested in everything else except in truth and justice. He does not keep to his morals and values but overlooks what is going on. By his unprofessional behavior, he shows his lack of Civil Courage, even though his language is well constructed,

[135] Cf. Homden, 211-212.

pompous, and very convincing.

Concerning the system, Sir Peter is grateful to the British police, because only three per cent of all crimes reach the courts. The scale of problems can rise if the police begin to have some significant success. Sir Peter does not think as an ordinary person who wants to stop criminal activities, but he thinks from a typical, immoral layer's point of view. By thinking and acting in this way, once again, he demonstrates his lack of Civil Courage. He does not fight against crime, but he fights to gain a more pleasant life. As Wu points out, Sir Peter is the spokesman for a profession that guards its interests by means of exclusion, like a club. He argues that very point in ridiculing Irina's wish to reform the police.[136] He considers Irina to be rather naïve because the police are considered to be a force although everyone knows that it is actually a club. Like any other club, it has a membership and it is difficult to become a part of that closed society.

Furthermore, Sir Peter wants to take Irina to the opera because he needs something nice to hold his right arm. At first, Irina does not want to join him, but eventually, Sir Peter and Irina go to the Royal Opera House dressed in their evening attire. Sir Peter thinks that all educated young women love classical music. He is really excited about the opera and the dinner, and is proud to be seen with Irina at a table for two. It is only the appearance, but it plays an important role in Sir Peter's life. He has taken Irina as his junior because she can argue a case, but also because she is an attractive young woman. Homden states that to undermine his certainty in his convenient professional judgment, Irina suggests the idea that she might have been lying when she said she enjoyed the opera. The price of the tickets is no guarantee of her truthfulness. Sir Peter's prejudice is based on the innately human qualities of rivalry, lust and greed.[137]

According to Donesky, the main concern of the play is to expose the way Sir Peter's prejudice against Gerard, the prisoner, results in a miscarriage of justice, without having the same prejudice towards his Afro-American colleague Irina.[138] He has lost Gerard's case, which, in his opinion, is very trivial and he only accepts it 'as a favor' (Hare, 3). He has no personal motive at all, but wants to show the human side of his character although his records do not quite reflect that aim. Like most lawyers, Sir Peter does not

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[136] Cf. Wu, 110.
[137] Cf. Homden, 214.
[138] Cf. Donesky, 178.

enter a prison even though he has been in charge of Gerard's defense. Gerard has not contacted him for an appeal, and it is not Sir Peter's responsibility any more. Being indifferent towards Gerard's case, he decides not to appeal on any grounds and to let the whole sentence stand because the case is not interesting to him. He is actually quite hostile towards Gerard and considers his case to be a waste of time. He is not even well prepared for it and stumbles over the names in the courtroom. In other words, he does not do everything he can for Gerard because of his own prejudice.

> SIR PETER. (*[…] smiles, enjoying himself.*) […] I don't blame him. He's fighting like a rat.
> IRINA. How do you *know*?
> SIR PETER. (*[…] shakes his head, confident.*) […] After a while, you do develop an instinct. That's one of the things a first-rate advocate has. Your profession, after all, is the judgement of people. It's not even conscious. It becomes animal. It's a gut instinct. Here. (*He points to his heart.*) I'd say if anything it's *the* crucial ability. You're asked to walk every day through a minefield of lies. If nothing else, you do develop a certain forensic capacity for distinguishing invention from truth. (Hare, 89-90)

Donesky explains that Irina urges Sir Peter to appeal the case, based on Gerard's testimony, which he unwillingly agrees to do. Sir Peter refuses to believe Gerard has been blackmailed into lying and to accuse the police of planting evidence or doing a deal will not help the case. He thinks Gerard's revelation to Irina is just another manipulative lie. For these reasons, he will only run with the 'lame-dog appeal' (Hare, 87) meaning he will appeal simply on the jury's compassion without presenting any new evidence. He invokes his remarkable ability to judge people instinctively. Neither Sir Peter nor Irina ever gains access to concrete evidence that would validate or disprove Gerard's word, yet both are equally convinced they know the truth. Hare demonstrates that Irina's instincts are right and the source of true justice and that Sir Peter's instincts telling him Gerard is lying are the typical prejudice that an upper-class lawyer would have towards a poor, young, uneducated Irishman involved in a minor crime. Irina tells Sir Peter that his instincts are mere prejudice.[139]

> IRINA. […] These judgements, these 'judgements' you make all the time, these judgements which seem to be graven in stone, they have only the status of prejudice.
> SIR PETER. That is really not true.
> IRINA. […] It seems so obvious to an outsider. Do you really not know? All this

[139] Cf. Donesky, 177.

> behaviour, the honours, the huge sums of money, the buildings, the absurd dressing-up. They do have a purpose. It's anaesthetic. It's to render you incapable of imagining life the other way round. (SIR PETER *shifts, uncomfortable*.) (Hare, 90-91)

One can conclude that Gerard, Barry, and Sir Peter are tied up by their weaknesses. Being scared and therefore weak makes Gerard a victim of other people and the system. Breaking the rules, doing things his way without principles, and dishonesty are the main characteristics when portraying Barry as a weak man. Prejudice and the lack of Civil Courage portrait Sir Peter's weakness because he sees only what he wants to see. The male characters illustrate the sexist, racist, and elitist prejudices that exist within the legal system. According to Donesky, the weaknesses of the three male characters are fully intended as a testimony to the strength of what Hare characterizes as the powerful forces of materialism that undermine their efforts and the institutions they are part of.[140] Homden points out that the male-dominated Establishment is infiltrated by two slightly different women, Irina and Sandra. What these two women share is the commitment to the principles of right and wrong.[141] The play suggests that women are the ones who carry hope for a better and fair society.

5 TURNING THE TABLES

Sharon Stone, the famous Hollywood actress, once said that we live in the world in which men have to apologize for being weak and women for being strong. Male/female weakness is directly connected to their gender roles. These gender roles also define male/female relationships and identity. As Wandor points out, one cannot understand the representation of men without understanding the representation of women.[142] Cultural, political, and social changes cause the role changes and different representation of men and women. From the cultural and political point of view, masculinity is in crisis today. The gender roles have changed and therefore male identity, behavior, role playing and role changing are under attack. The male role becomes more and more problematic due to female role.

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[140] Cf. Donesky, 183.
[141] Cf. Homden, 214-215.
[142] Cf. Wandor, 26.

According to Wandor, people are necessarily socially male or female. The gender difference is one of the basic starting points in how people experience the world, and how they are part of it. In terms of drama, some of the very important questions relate to how possible it is to imagine being, feeling, and functioning as a member of the opposite sex. In all cultures, at all times, being born male or female implies the possibility of certain social roles, and carries with it assumptions about feelings and identity. The division of labor based on gender roles across cultures and across time is historically and fundamentally rooted in differences about which people still argue. The most important questions are: Are men and women different? Are they equal or unequal? Is it all genetic, or social, or a bit of both? Gender roles are as much about power relations as are those of class, race and social positions. With this acknowledgement comes the prospect of understanding how the gender dynamic works in the world of drama.[143]

Mangan explains that there is a modern distinction between sex and gender. Sex describes people according to a paradigm based on the biological sciences. It is about belonging to a particular biological category, possessing certain kinds of reproductive organs, having or not having the ability to give birth or to breast-feed. In distinction from sex, gender describes people according to a paradigm based on social sciences. It refers to the typical social roles and behaviors attributed to, or performed by members of both sexes. Therefore, masculinity is the sum total of the social performance of biological males, and femininity that of biological females, but that simplicity is not straightforward. Looked at cross-culturally, in practice males and females share many roles and behaviors that are soon to become meaningless. Also, advances in medical science have now reached a stage of sophistication where those biological categories which were once regarded as unchangeable are now seen to be less so. To talk about gender means also to enter the world of values and human activity in different cultures.[144]

Gender is the way people are socially and culturally constructed. Mangan uses the word 'gender' to refer to a relationship in order to explain relations between various categories of men and women. The masculine may be characterized as 'not womanly'.

[143] Cf. Wandor, 16-17.
[144] Cf. Mangan, 8.

It can also be defined in relation to different kinds of 'non-masculinity'. The marks of a non-masculine male vary from one culture to another and might include a love of music, having the status of a priest or a slave, being unable to bring down a deer with a bow and arrow, wearing an earring, an inability to drink large volumes of alcohol and so on. Gender ideology constructs shifting sets of binary oppositions which are guaranteed to construct an 'other' which can be excluded. Masculinity repeatedly defines itself in terms of its opposites, and the history of gender construction is a matter of marking off the 'other'.[145]

Wandor points out that there is a very different kind of understanding the nature of gender-based difference. It is possible to interrogate and explore the similarities and differences between biological givens and the social constructs of gender within which people live. Such an approach implies that not only in principle but also in reality there is no need to set virtually limits to the imaginative capacities of men and women. Social and cultural being admits a variety of possibilities in spite of the biological differences. In social and political terms this is still a revolutionary idea. The crucial example is that women give birth and breast-feed. Men's physiological investment of being a father is relatively minor. However, this does not imply that women are incapable of having a successful carrier and have children, nor that men are incapable of loving and nurturing a child.[146]

Gender is one of the primary imaginative imperatives. Wandor adds that, the forms of representation of the human self are influenced by what people know about their lived social realities, as well as imagined possibilities. The concept of the imperative of gender has been absent from the received traditions of dramatic criticism until very recently, even though the relationship between gender and drama has been a controversial issue from the very beginnings of theatre. The social and political power has been primarily in the hands of men. It was not thought proper for women to appear in public, or to take on public roles outside of family life. The occasional historical exception only proved the rule. While knowledge about matriarchal societies proves that women have ruled, it does not change the reality of male dominance in the majority of

[145] Cf. Mangan, 9-11.
[146] Cf. Wandor, 16.

world cultures today.[147]

Wandor also explains that the transition from war to peace involved a major shift in gender-based employment. The patterns of domestic employment altered, with women working in industries which the men had left. Wartime service had meant that men had to look after themselves, acquiring domestic skills if they did not already have them. They were developing a nurturing element parallel to the more macho heroic image of the soldier. After the war, the traditional division of labor was largely reestablished. Women were moved back into the home to liberate jobs for men, and men were returning to take up their roles as the major breadwinners. Women did continue to work outside the home, but the shift returned to conventional ideology and practice. The large numbers of women were effectively doing two jobs, one at home and one outside the home, which made them both wives and mothers. At the same time, new scientific advances in improved forms of contraception meant that women were no longer inevitably tied to child-bearing roles. It made it possible for women to have more sexual freedom than before and therefore potentially more sexual power.[148]

According to Wandor, the function of gender is important in the game between the personal and the political, the public and the private, the home as the sphere of privacy, and work and politics as the sphere of the public and social. This shows the contradiction between ‘the world of women’ and ‘the world of men’. The relationship between the family and sexuality, and the parent-child relationship have become important. The questions about the nature of gender roles themselves are difficult to answer. Emotional dependence, authority, and nurturing derive from an urgent imaginative need to explore the new worlds and ideas. It is necessary to make sense of the new shakedown of roles. What does it mean to be a ‘man’ today? What is it to be a ‘woman’? Even today, there is a separation between the intellect and the emotions. Men are still associated with the intellect and the world of politics, and women are in charge of the emotions, separated from the world of intellect and politics, or there as secondary figures.[149]

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[147] Cf. Wandor, 21- 22.
[148] Cf. Wandor, 27-29.
[149] Cf. Wandor, 36-37, 249.

Mangan argues that the broader concerns of the late twentieth-century theory of drama, theatre and performance are about how they relate to modern gender studies. The issue of masculinity is being foregrounded in a number of academic fields at present. A wide range of investigations of contemporary masculinities has been undertaken by sociologists and gender theorists, that an academic subfield of 'Men's Studies' has become recognized. This leads to occasional anger and the ironic amusement of many feminists who established Women's Studies precisely because everything 'else' seemed already to be 'Men's Studies'. For Mangan, 'masculinities' are a problematic term, because there are many 'masculinities'. They are historically contingent, continually changing, being redefined and renegotiated. Their meanings are closely tied in with those of other kinds of power relations, like class and nationality. Sociologists and gender theorists have recognized this for a long time, and many dramatists and performers have been exploring it in their own ways for an even longer time.[150]

Mangan summaries some of the typical masculine gender norms: adventurer, breadwinner, playboy, president, sportsman, superman, tough guy, warrior, and so on. Men take risks and have adventures. They are strong, courageous, and always have to be the best they can because they do not accept being the second. Men are supposed to work for a living, to provide for and protect family. For them, fathering means bring home the bacon, not necessarily nurturing. A man is judged by how much money he earns and the status of his job. Men are in control of their relationships, emotions, and job. It is unusual for them to show their emotions, for example by crying. Asking for help is a sign of weakness for a man. A man should be self-reliant and not depend on others. Accomplishment is central to the male style. Men are supposed to be sexually aggressive, attractive, and muscular. They pursue and strive for power and success. Men enjoy playing sports, where they can learn the thrill of victory and how to compete. They take death-defying risks to prove themselves and identify with war heroes. Men are supposed to be perfect. They do not admit mistakes.[151]

In addition, Mangan explains that the above listed messages are those which are labeled 'the classical man', and which have been present for a long time. There are few other messages which are described as being specifically 'modern expectations on men' that

[150] Cf. Mangan, 5-6.
[151] Cf. Mangan, 207-208.

are different from classical male behavior. A man should be like his father, because a father is his role model. Males express feelings in ways similar to their fathers. Men give up their freedom when they get married and become faithful husbands. A man should do good deeds and acts to set a good example and put other's needs first. He is a nature lover, has a respectful treatment of plants and animals and is in harmony with nature. Men are technicians. They relate to, understand, maintain, fix and repair machines and things around the house. Men should defy authority, be non-conformists, do right and obey the law, but also question and rebel against the system. A man has to be knowledgeable, go to college, and value book learning to become a scholar.[152]

As Mangan states, the crisis in masculinity, in the workplace and the family, has been one of the most important issues of the late twentieth century. Masculinity is in deep crisis, because many men feel emptiness, impotence, and rage. They think they are abused and unrecognized by modern society. On the one hand, manhood offers compensation and prizes, on the other hand, it brings emptiness and despair. There is a possibility that each generation may be subject to its own crisis in masculinity. The theatre always responds to the repeating crises which constitute the very notion of masculinity. Gender as socially constructed identity will continue to undergo constant redefinition, because societies themselves evolve and develop. There is no single stable prior position against which this current crisis in masculinities is to be measured. It seems that crisis and anxiety are rather the conditions of masculinity itself. Gender identity is never truly stable. Its terms are continually being redefined and renegotiated. The gender performance is continually being restaged.[153]

According to Wandor, only one sex can be strong, and, for it to be so, the other has to be conceptually and actually weakened or deprived. By social tradition, women are already the 'weaker' sex. Where a strong woman has been imagined, the otherwise strong male must be seen to be damaged. This damage is visited upon the male body: he is ill, dying, incapacitated. A woman as the mother is at the physical and domestic centre of the family. She gives birth to the next generation, and therefore she can come to represent not only procreation and the link between generations, but also hope and power. Motherhood is more obviously visible than fatherhood in its early stages:

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[152] Cf. Mangan, 207-208.
[153] Cf. Mangan, 246-248.

pregnancy, birth, and early childcare, even though both are crucial biological, social and emotional roles. For the male-gendered imaginations motherhood has to be denied or destroyed in order for men to develop a sense of self, and female strength is therefore hedged around. Male identity and independence can only exist if the mother is destroyed. For men motherhood must become symbolic.[154] Men are concerned with their own place in the world.

Wandor argues that the term sexism is used to refer to the socially systemic ways in which men and women are raised with a dualistic view of the value and roles of the sexes. The main argument has been that men are superior to women. When women do something that is specifically a female action, from having babies to doing particular jobs, that function will be valued as lesser, generally paid less or not at all. Men in general both exploit and oppress women. The struggle for women is to combat an internalized belief in their own inferiority, to be both socially and personally independent. Women start to demand equal pay, equal education and opportunity, and free contraception and abortion on demand. They also argue for more power for women at the top, an equalizing with men, without questioning any of the foundations of the current system. These demands are expressions of the fundamental changes to give women a more equal position in terms of education, workplace, family, and sexual choice.[155] Women start to imitate men in order to succeed within a capitalistic social system.

The assumptions of male superiority are questioned because women organize separately, and take charge of their own activities. Wandor states that the sexual division of labor is not a biological given, but socially constructed and learned. Therefore, inequalities, roles, and lifestyles can be changed, and society itself can be modified to agree with this. Feminists focus on the family, demanding changes in the way it works. The central discussion becomes an analysis of family relations, with the economic imbalance and division of labor. Women have been dependent on men and isolated at the centre of the family, men have been excluded from childcare. Women have been trapped as sex objects, and within the family. The relationship between private and public life, family and work is constantly stressed, since women's lives and

[154] Cf. Wandor, 94-96.
[155] Cf. Wandor, 116-118.

their destinies are connected with both spheres. Modern men today are as much part of the family as are women, just as women have their own productive role to play in the world of work and politics.[156]

Wandor also points out that the position of women has changed considerably since the seventeenth century. Political and social changes created a climate in which women demanded to participate. Individual women, and feminist movements since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, coinciding with the rise of socialism, have challenged the traditionally subordinate aspects of women's social roles. At the general level, all feminism has certain aims: to challenge a biological determinism which says that men are superior to women, because power is not genetic; to change the position of women in some way; and to assert the importance of self-determination for women, individually and collectively. The key issues of a gender-based self-determination do not belong to the ideology of masculinity.[157]

A woman is not only a mother and a housewife today, but also has a carrier. It is the age of the new woman who gets more respect in the society than ever before. She is not a damsel in distress who needs to be rescued any more. A woman is educated, has a job, and is perfectly capable to take care of herself without the help of a man. Instead of waiting for a man to buy her presents, she can earn money on her own and by herself whatever she wants. A modern woman plays more roles simultaneously: a mother, a wife, a businesswoman. She has not given up her traditional, gender, and sex based roles, but acquires a new role in the society. A woman combines the career with motherhood. As a mother she symbolizes strength and gives life. Being a carrier woman, she has the possibility to take over power from a man.

Men, on the other hand, are more and more confused and doubtful about their role in modern society. A man has lost his dominant position due to the new role that women play. He does not need to earn money for a woman or to protect her any more. The loss of orientation in social context is a reason for male weakness. Men have always been dominant in the public sphere because women were excluded from it. Women had the main role in the private sphere. Men have traditionally been jalousie of and threatened

[156] Cf. Wandor, 118, 121,125-126.
[157] Cf. Wandor, 23, 142, 146.

by female ability to bear children. A woman still remains in the private sphere and bears children, but also has a role in the public sphere, which traditionally belongs to a man. Now men are scared to become outsiders and marginal within the society.

Traditionally, men are supposed to be dominating in most cultures around the world. They were the dominant gender in male-oriented society, but became beset by failure in political domain. Instead of keeping this dominating position, men failed. They are acclaimed in theory, but they failed in praxis. The process of decentralizing of males in 20th century society has begun. Nevertheless, we still live in a male society. This is most evident in business where a woman is still less paid than a man for the same job. A woman has to fight against a ´glass ceiling´ in public domains of modern society. Every day there are more female presidents, prime ministers, directors, chief executives, and top managers. The exploitation of females no longer functions. Women finally react against male dominance. The more female strength present in the society, the more male weakness becomes obvious.

6 CONCLUSION

The weakness of male characters in 20th century is under attack, both in reality and in drama. Based on gender differences, women are gaining more power each day, and men are losing their dominant position. Men are not necessarily the breadwinners any more. Going to work and earning money is no longer enough because women can do it themselves. Female roles have evolved within the society and women have come out of the private sphere. Since men and women are connected through their gender roles, new roles for women also cause a change in male roles. While women accept the new opportunities, men lose their ground. They have problems coping with a new, independent woman. Men think that they have nothing to offer to women and start to feel useless. A man does not need to protect a woman or provide for her living and therefore feels weak and marginalized. Women slowly take over positions that used to be reserved for men. Men need to take time to accept this change in gender roles.

In Irish plays, instead of facing reality and accepting changes, men try to escape it. The male characters in John Synge´s *The Playboy of the Western World*, Sean O´Casey´s

Juno and the Paycock, and Martin McDonagh´s *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* are troubled and scared of the strength that women have. The playboy, the captain, and the lieutenant do not seem to be worth being called that. They only play important role in their own private universe which is miles away from reality. Women like Sarah, Juno, and Mairead innate strength and give hope. While men think only of themselves, their needs, and dreams, women have a broader picture on their mind. They take care of their families and try to attribute to the community. Christy overcomes his weakness and gains his identity eventually. Boyle´s weakness deepens because his drinking addiction makes him even less aware of reality. Padraic´s weakness leads him to death.

The main weakness in the socio-psychological plays is the simultaneous attraction to and fear of women. In John Osborne´s *Look Back in Anger*, Harold Pinter´s *The Homecoming*, and Patrick Marber´s *Dealer´s Choice* male bonding plays an important role in opposing the female strength. This strength comes out of the woman´s ability to bear children. Jimmy, Pinter´s men, and Marber´s men seem to need a mother more than a female companion. They feel insecure and threatened of losing this potential mother and therefore real motherhood has to be destroyed. This gives men a chance to develop their own identity. Instead of facing their weakness, they turn to addiction as a way of escaping responsibility. They become sexual and gambling addicts. Due to their weakness, it is impossible for these men to have a serious relationship with women. Alison and Ruth have to be both mothers and whores to fulfill the needs of the men.

In political plays, women, again, give life and hope for the future. In Arnold Wesker´s *Chicken Soup with Barley*, David Edgar´s *Maydays*, and David Hare´s *Murmuring Judges* men simply give up and stop fighting. The political change also brings the change of their ideals. Their weakness comes from their own inability to stay truthful to their beliefs. The men in these three plays embrace the situation as it comes, uninterested to change it or to fight for something better. They live in their own protected world, indifferent towards the reality around them. Women keep fighting for what they believe, in spite of the fact that the political system has failed. They fight both for personal and social good. Sarah, Amanda, Sandra, and Irina provide hope for future generations.

7 ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Man greift die Schwäche der männlichen Charakteren des 20. Jahrhunderts, nicht nur in der Realität, sondern auch im Drama an. Auf der Basis von Genderunterschied kommen Frauen jeden Tag an die Macht und Männer verlieren ihre dominante Position. Männer sind nicht mehr unbedingt die Geldverdiener. Arbeiten und Geld verdienen ist nicht mehr genug, weil Frauen selbst das machen können. Weibliche Rollen haben sich in der Gesellschaft entwickelt und Frauen sind aus der privaten Sphäre herausgekommen. Da Männer und Frauen durch ihre Genderrollen verbunden sind, rufen die neuen Frauenrollen auch eine Änderung in Männerrollen hervor. Weil Frauen die neuen Angelegenheiten akzeptieren, verlieren Männer ihren Boden. Sie können nicht die Probleme mit der neuen, unabhängigen Frau bewältigen. Die Männer denken, dass sie den Frauen nichts mehr anzubieten haben und beginnen sich sinnlos zu fühlen. Mann sollte nicht mehr seine Frau schützen oder ihr Leben ermöglichen und deswegen fühlt er sich schwach und marginalisiert. Frauen übernehmen langsam Positionen, die früher für Männer reserviert waren. Männer brauchen Zeit um diesen Wechsel in Genderrollen zu akzeptieren.

Anstatt sich mit der Realität zu konfrontieren und Änderungen zu akzeptieren, versuchen die Männer in den Irischen Dramen zu fliehen. Die männlichen Charaktere in John Synges *The Playboy of the Western World*, Sean O´Caseys *Juno and the Paycock* und Martin McDonaghs *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* sind beunruhigt und haben Angst vor der Stärke der Frauen. Der Playboy, der Kapitän und der Leutnant sind nicht der Mühe wert um diesen Namen zu tragen. Sie spielen nur eine wichtige Rolle in ihrem eigenen privaten Universum, das meilenweit weg von der Realität ist. Frauen wie Sarah, Juno und Mairead verkörpern die Kraft und geben Hoffnung. Während Männer nur an sich selbst, ihre Bedürfnisse und Träume denken, denken die Frauen an die allgemeine Situation. Sie kümmern sich um ihre Familie und versuchen ihrer Gemeinde beizutragen. Christy bewältigt seine Schwäche und findet am Ende seine Identität. Boyles Schwäche vertieft sich, weil seine Alkoholsüchtigkeit ihn noch weniger bewusst vor seiner Realität macht. Padraics Schwäche führt ihn zum Tod.

Die fundamentale Männerschwäche in den Socio-psychologischen Dramen ist die gleichzeitig fühlbare Anziehungskraft sowie Angst vor Frauen. In John Osbornes *Look*

Back in Anger, Harold Pinters *The Homecoming* und Patrick Marbers *Dealer´s Choice* Männerfreundschaft spielt eine wichtige Rolle in Opposition zur weiblichen Kraft. Diese Kraft stammt von der weiblichen Möglichkeit Kinder zu gebären. Jimmy, Pinters Männer und Marbers Männer scheinen als ob sie eher eine Mutter statt eine weibliche Begleiterin brauchen. Sie fühlen sich unsicher und gefährdet, weil sie diese potentielle Mutter verlieren könnten und deswegen muss die echte Mutterschaft zerstört werden. Das gibt den Männern eine Chance um ihre eigene Identität zu entwickeln. Anstatt ihre Schwäche zu akzeptieren, wenden sich Männer zur Süchtigkeit als eine Möglichkeit der Verantwortung zu entfliehen. Sie werden sex-und glücksspielsüchtig. Aufgrund ihrer Schwäche ist es unmöglich für diese Männer eine feste Beziehung mit Frauen zu haben. Alison und Ruth sollen nicht nur eine Mutterrolle, sondern auch eine Hurenrolle spielen um männliche Bedürfnisse zu erfüllen.

In politischen Dramen sind es wieder Frauen, die Leben und Hoffnung für das Zukünftige tragen. In Arnold Weskers *Chicken Soup with Barley*, David Edgars *Maydays*, und David Hares *Murmuring Judges* geben Männer einfach auf und kämpfen nicht mehr. Politische Veränderungen rufen die Veränderung ihrer Ideale hervor. Ihre Schwäche geht aus ihrer Unfähigkeit hervor den eigenen Überzeugungen treu zu bleiben. Die Männer versöhnen sich mit der ganzen Angelegenheit, ohne Interesse um etwas zu ändern haben oder um etwas Besseres zu kämpfen. Sie leben in ihrer geborgenen Welt und sind der Realität gegenüber ganz gleichgültig. Frauen kämpfen weiter um ihre Ideale, obwohl das politische System fehlgeschlagen hat. Sie kämpfen um ihr persönliches und soziales Gut. Sarah, Amanda, Sandra und Irina geben Hoffnung allen zukünftigen Generationen.

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