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DRAMATIZATIONS OF FOUR AMERICAN NOVELS: AN INQUIRY INTO SOME PROBLEMS OF RENDERING NOVELS IN DRAMATIC FORM

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DRAMATIZATIONS OF FOUR AMERICAN NOVELS: AN INQUIRY INTO SOME PROBLEMS OF RENDERING NOVELS IN DRAMATIC FORM

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DRAMATIZATIONS OF FOUR AMERICAN NOVELS: AN INQUIRY INTO SOME PROBLEMS OF RENDERING NOVELS IN DRAMATIC FORM

CHAPTER I

THE ESSENCE OF A WORK OF FICTION-ANAGOGIA

The aesthetic differences between novel-writing and play-writing may perhaps most conveniently be approached from the angle of the perceiver: how does reading a novel compare with going to a play?

Both are works of imagination, and both treat of people experiencing things. In both, imaginary characters are placed in imaginary circumstances, and then the relations between characters and circumstances are worked out to a believable conclusion. This is true even of histories, for novelist and playwright alike must filter the characters and the circumstances through their own imagination in order to produce unity of action. In both novels and plays, then, there must be a unified human action that is believable.

There has been no generation of literate men that has not discussed the question of what unified action is, and what makes it believable; and the answers must forever remain partly a matter of individual response. The self-explanatory term "believable" refers to a personal response, and "unity of action" can be reduced to a tautology which, if it is to make sense, depends also upon a personal judgment:

the work should contain everything that ought to be in it, and nothing that ought not to be in it. Yet, since human beings are alike in some ways, some generalizations may be attempted: credibility depends upon the perceiver's being able to feel with the characters, and feel that such characters would behave the way they do in such circumstances; judgments about unity of action are, I believe, more complicated, and demand a fuller discussion.

Aristotle and Dante have each furnished an analysis of the nature of fiction, and each analysis attempts some definition, explicit in Aristotle, implicit in Dante, of unity of action: Aristotle said that fiction is the imitation of an action (Poetics, Chapters 4, 6), and Dante said that the essential meaning of fiction is "anagogical"--a tendency of the soul.

Dante uses the term "anagogy" in a letter to his patron, Can Grande della Scala. He draws upon a tradition of scriptural interpretation which finds four levels of meaning in any Bible narrative, and, by analogy, in any fiction. First is the literalia--"gesta docet"--"What happens?"--What, on the simplest grammatical level, does the story say? This seems to be analogous to what Aristotle meant by "Diction": the words the writer uses (Chapter 6). Second is the allegoria--"quid credas?"--What is the underlying doctrine, what are we to believe? There seems to be an analogy with Aristotle's Dianoia. Third is moralia--"quod agas?"--What are we to do? What sort of action does the story motivate us toward? Perhaps there is a hint of this in the Poetics (Chapter 9) where Aristotle says that poetry is more philosophical than history, because history must tell of things as they are, whereas poetry can tell of them as they might be or ought to be. Finally, there is the anagogia--"quo tendas?"--In what way, and in what direction, does it move the soul?

I am of the school that believes that Aristotle's "action" was something that went on in the mind of the artist; and, I submit, this concept is very close to Dante's anagogia, except that the anagogia goes on in the mind of the perceiver; but of course it, or at least something analogous to it, had to happen in the mind of the artist first. It seems that Aristotle and Dante are describing similar processes, but are starting at opposite ends: Aristotle begins with the action to be imitated, and sets forth Plot, Character, Thought, and Diction (the words used), in that order, as the elements by means of which the action is conveyed; Dante begins with the literalia (the grammatical meaning), and works through allegoria and moralia to anagogia--a happening in the mind of the perceiver. Both Aristotle and Dante describe a work of fiction as a process by which something in the mind of the artist is conveyed to the mind of the perceiver; but Aristotle begins with the artist, Dante with the perceiver.

Since there seems (to me) to be an analogy between Diction and literalia, Thought and allegoria, Plot (as it is sometimes used in the Poetics to mean "the soul of the drama" rather than the arrangement of the episodes) and anagogia, it would be intellectually most satisfying if one could establish an analogy between Character and moralia, and thus conclude that Aristotle and Dante were saying essentially the same thing; but I don't believe it can be done without serious distortion. There is indeed some psychological connection between the two: Aristotle says that character in a drama functions as motivation for the action; and it would seem that the motives of the agents in a fiction do raise the issue of what are proper motives for human beings generally. Furthermore, the Poetics offers one or two scant suggestions that one function of drama is to answer moral questions: besides the

comment about the subject of poetry being what might be or ought to be, there is his observation that the agents in tragedy are better than average (Chapter 4), and there is some discussion of exactly how much better they ought to be (Chapter 13). Nevertheless, the objections to the analogy seem to me insuperable: when Dante spoke of moralia, he obviously meant, not the agents' motives, but the "moral" of the story as a whole--he used the term in the same sense that LaFontaine did. We cannot, I think, escape the conclusion that Dante's concerns (at least in the Can Grande letter) were with the didactic, Aristotle's, with the aesthetic.

For an illustration of Dante's concept, the reader may find useful an excerpt from Thomas G. Bergin's paraphrase of the Can Grande letter (Dante, Riverside Studies in Literature, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1965, pp. 205, 206):

> Dante illustrates his sense here by examining the lines from Exodus: "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was his sanctuary and Israel his domain." Literally this refers simply to the historical exodus; the allegory signifies our redemption accomplished in Christ; the moral meaning signifies the conversion of the soul from sin to a state of grace; the anagogical meaning refers to the departure of the soul from the slavery of this corruption to the liberty of everlasting glory. All of the mystical meanings are allegorical, since they differ from the historical or literal meaning.

Dante decided that the distinction between the three mystical levels of meaning was too small to be of use to him, and placed all three under one heading, which he called "allegorical." I have preferred "anagogical" for two reasons: first, "allegorical" is a highly suspect word in our culture; and second, it seems from Dante's illustration that all the levels of meaning, literal and allegorical, lead up to and are a part of the anagogy.

I have chosen "anagogy" in preference to Aristotle's "action," because "action" so strongly suggests "what the actors do on the stage"; in fact, the word is used in common theatrical parlance to mean precisely this. I did consider the psychological term "orientation"; but this, I believe, implies a static state, and the anagogy of a work of fiction is usually dynamic. Finally, since I wished my meaning to be as precise as possible, it seemed better to use an unfamiliar word and define it, rather than a word in common usage and hence with a multiplicity of meanings.

As I have suggested, Dante's and Aristotle's concepts seem to have enough in common, at the very least, to throw light upon each other: although Dante had not read the Poetics, his "anagogy" goes a long way toward answering the perennial question--"What is the nature of the action that fiction imitates?" If, then, Aristotle's action to be imitated and Dante's tendency of the soul are analogous, this gives us the basis for a definition of "unity" in fiction: a fiction should contain everything that makes a particular tendency of the soul more clear or vivid, or develops it more fully; and it should contain nothing that is extraneous to this tendency. Stanislavsky (Francis Fergusson, The Idea of a Theatre, Princeton, N. J., Princeton Univ. Press, 1949, p. 239) put the matter in behavioristic terms for his actors when he said that every drama could be reduced to an infinitive phrase, and that every word, gesture, intonation, bit of costuming, lighting, stage-setting, and so on, should be an expression of this phrase.

A tendency of the soul may be of two kinds: to borrow the time-honored definition of a verb, it may describe action or else state of being. That is, the psychic state induced by experiencing a work of art may tend toward some alteration, or toward a static state. A work

of art that causes us to doubt or challenge our customary attitudes and prejudices, to confront them and test them, and possibly to move to new attitudes or to add new dimensions to old ones--such a work arouses us to a dynamic state; a work which expresses and confirms our general view of things, of ourselves and our neighbors and the society in which we live, soothes us to a static state. In response to the first work, we are confused and we suffer, but we learn something; in response to the second, we relax and are complacent or (if the work is of high quality) we expand and bask. This difference in response may serve to throw some light on the recurrent question of the distinction between art and entertainment: to the degree that the work sets us toward alteration, toward some inner modification, it is art; to the degree that it puts us in a static state, a pleasing but unexamined affirmation of our customary state of mind, it is entertainment. In short, art produces change in the perceiver, while entertainment reinforces the status quo.

But in either case, some limited area of concentration, some peculiar emphasis, is essential: no significant happening can occur--we cannot experience anything to which we attach much meaning--unless other happenings are temporarily subordinated or eliminated. That is why upstaging is so deadly in its effect. The skillful dramatist is well aware of the acute need for concentration and emphasis. Of course, concentration and emphasis are considerations in any fiction; but the novelist emphasizes points simply by including them--the reader knows that the heroine's dress must be relevant to the anagogy, or the novelist would not have described it. The playgoer, on the other hand, having live people before him, is inclined to believe that most of what they do is irrelevant, just as it is in real life--the heroine of a play has

to wear something. To be sure, the playgoer knows that costumes for a play are carefully designed, and that the reasons for a heroine's wearing a particular tea-gown are not the same as a real woman's reasons would be; nevertheless, the audience is presented with the illusion that the reasons are the same--this illusion is part of the suspension of disbelief.

The difference between a play and a series of real life episodes is that in a play everything that happens on stage is relevant to a particular anagogy, while in actual episodes most of what happens is not. The difference between a novel and real life is that in a novel, material that does not contribute to the anagogy (that is, most of what would happen in a real life situation) is omitted. Thus, the dramatist's technique for securing emphasis is different from the novelist's: the novelist emphasizes points by the number and force of the words he devotes to them, and circumstances of no significance need not be mentioned at all; but the dramatist is forced to deal with all the sensory elements of reality, and consequently must construct them in such a way that their relative significance will emerge for the audience. To return to the need for concentration and emphasis in drama George Pierce Baker (Dramatic Technique, Cambridge, Houghton Mifflin, 1947, pp. 73-77), says that many inexperienced dramatists have failed because they have not arrived at a clear decision about what is to be the central issue of their play, or of a particular scene: if a kidnapper comes into a living room, snatches a child from its mother's lap, brutally slaps it to keep it quiet and then makes off with it, we cannot give our full attention to the mother's reactions until we know what has happened to the child. It is this sort of confusion that Stanislavsky intends to eliminate by insisting upon reducing the action of a play to a single infinitive phrase: in

the case cited above, the dramatist has failed to decide whether the infinitive phrase is "to frighten a child" or "to cause a mother to grieve."

Can a novel be expressed in an infinitive phrase? It would seem that to attempt this would often impose a closer restriction on the medium than it can bear, and would result in losing the essence of the novel. If we say that the action of War and Peace is "to move from war to peace," we are saying very little, and that little not very truly. And yet, novels too are about men in action: perhaps in the case of a short novel where the action is sharply focused, reduction to an infinitive phrase might be useful, if only for purposes of comparison with the dramatization. At least we can say that everything in a novel should throw some light on everything else in it, and that proportion (sequence and emphasis) is important for the novelist as well as for the playwright. However, they are not nearly such crucial considerations.

The differences for the perceiver between novels and plays are basically of time, place, and circumstance. Since there is no definite time limit in reading a novel, the reader can choose a time when he feels particularly alert and ready to take an interest; thus the novelist has no need for a rigid, minute-by-minute control of the reader's response. The playgoer, on the other hand, has no control whatever over either time or place. Whatever his frame of mind, he must be at the theatre at the time his ticket indicates if he is to see the play. If he is one of the many who cannot sit through an evening at the theatre without sustaining some degree of physical discomfort, there is nothing he can do to alleviate it--he is at the mercy of the manager and the rest of the audience. Moreover, he has made a considerable investment of money (which, alas, is seldom the case with the novel-reader), on which the returns must be

realized within the next two hours. Finally, he can exercise but little of his own imagination upon the characters and circumstances of the fiction: they are physically before him, and he must accept them without any filtering. In sum, the novelist presents his fiction only to the reader's thought, during an indefinite time; the dramatist must reach the audience's thought through the senses, in a definite time period.

The disadvantage for the dramatist in all this (or perhaps one should say the greater challenge) is that he cannot afford to lose the audience's interest for more than a few seconds at a time. Its reaction must be kept at a pitch of much higher emotional intensity than the novel reader's. Beyond the difficulty of maintaining such a pitch, there is a further problem for the dramatist: much that is discursive, diffuse, and leisurely may be pleasing in a novel, and such material is often very important for its total impact; in a play, it must either be conveyed by acting, sound effects and stage setting, or lost altogether. A good example of this is Ethan Frome: in the novel, much space is given to developing the theme of the long, hard New England winters, which becomes a prime motive in the action; but the dramatist, aware that he could not hold his audience by having the characters talk about the weather, hardly mentions it, and the action becomes a tragedy of character rather than situation.

In fact, the dramatist cannot hold the audience by having his characters talk about anything. The inexperienced adapter may suppose that if he can find a novel with a great deal of dialogue, much of his work will be already done for him; but this is not so. Novels are full of fascinating conversations that cannot possibly be transferred to the stage just as they are: interesting ideas take time to absorb, and that

is why plays that read superbly, such as Congreve's The Way of the World, do not always play well--the audience cannot follow them.

There may be another reason why conversation on the stage is so full of pitfalls: we are trained to receive complex ideas through the written rather than the spoken word. Thus, when confronted with print, we bring our mental faculties more into play, and our sensory faculties less. And not only have we been trained to think when we read, but it is easier to do: there are no distractions. In a stage conversation, our attention is constantly being caught by gestures, details of costume, or other appeals to the senses.

However, the dramatist, unlike the orator or lecturer, need not depend on words alone to convey his ideas. He has a much better device, and one which his audience expects: illustrative action. A fictional wife who has quarreled with her husband may bring him a cup of coffee; in both novel and play, this will be interpreted as a peace offering; but an actress can bring into play a whole range of gesture and expression that would be very tedious if the novelist attempted to describe it--the novelist must deal with these elements differently. Visible action is in fact the dramatist's greatest advantage. For one thing, the presence of live people performing the action automatically carries great conviction, and heightens the audience's response--an effect not available to the film or television script writer.

Here is perhaps the place for a digression on the relative advantages of screen and stage for producing the illusion of reality. For the suspension of disbelief, what the playgoer must suppress is the awareness that the stage action is not real, but an invented one performed by actors. A moviegoer, on the other hand, must suppress the awareness that

he is looking at images on a screen and not at flesh and blood. Here the advantage of film may outweigh the disadvantage: although we see only an image, the physical circumstances of photography make it easy to believe that the people whose images we see were in truth involved in the situations we see them in--in a film of a winged man flying through clouds, a real man is photographed, and real clouds; this reality aids the illusion that the two are actually in juxtaposition. In other words, any film is potentially a documentary. Against this we have, on the stage, the powerful evidence of the actions that live people actually present are performing--smiles, sccwls, perspiration, collapse, etc.--besides the physical and psychic vibrations set up between live bodies, and the interplay of response between actors and audience.

It is possible that the greatest advantage of live actors is not physical at all, but a psychological phenomenon which makes it easy for the audience to identify themselves with what goes on upon the stage: we see people doing what in real life we might see them doing. To put it in another way, each member of the audience is a non-participating observer of things which in real life he might very easily be a participant in. The limitations of the box stage, which tend to preclude any but ordinary scenes, tend also to ensure that stage situations are usually such as are highly familiar to most of us--the settings are likely to be the living room, the garden, the street; and the episodes are likely to be such as might concievably occur there. Surely these familiar circumstances facilitate a close identification of the audience with the stage action. The film, with its relative wealth of devices for transferring the material of a novel, may nevertheless be less effective in this all-important matter of arousing empathy in the audience.

For example, in the film version of Ulysses, Molly Bloom's famous soliloquy is presented very much as it is in the book, although it is much cut: Molly is lying in bed thinking. We see her lying there silently, while her voice, uttering her thoughts, is brought in on the sound track. Such a scene would of course be impossible upon the stage. But can we feel the same empathy for Molly that we do in reading the book? As we watch her in bed, we must suppress our awareness that we can never know what a person is thinking by watching her as she lies in bed, and that we can't hear people's voices when their lips don't move. If these unusual occurrences do not give us a sense of unreality, they must at least have the effect of making us feel outside of Molly rather than inside her.

This brings us to the subject of point of view. In a novel, the point of view may shift back and forth among the characters and the narrator. By means of it, the novelist gains a delicate and sure control over aesthetic distance: he can present his characters for our completely detached observation, or set us within their very bosoms, or do anything in between. Thus, "flat" characters can be artistically successful in a novel, because they are flat to the point-of-view character. The dramatist has not this control over distance: he can indeed create flat characters if he wishes, whom we tend to observe rather than to feel with; and by this means he can focus our empathy upon one or more central three-dimensional characters. But since his flat character must be incarnated in a three-dimensional actor, it may turn out not flat after all. A few flat characters may be very useful in a novel to set off the more rounded ones; it is a question whether this ever works well on

stage (except perhaps in certain kinds of comedy, where the actor uses deliberate devices to minimize empathy). Besides the difficulty just suggested--that an actor may make an apparently flat character into one not only three-dimensional, but more alive than the main character--the only way a stage character can be made flat is either to have some other character say that he is the epitome of selfishness, or whatever it may be, or else to have him say and do the same things over and over again. The first device is unconvincing, and the second is both unconvincing and tiresome.

Now that the soliloquy is a thing of the past, then, it is difficult or impossible to create point-of-view characters for the stage. There are plays, to be sure, such as The Glass Menagerie and I Remember Mama, where there is a narrator who is also an agent. When this device is used in a novel, the effect is a rigidly fixed point of view. However, as I analyze my own response to the same device as used in drama, I discover that as soon as the narrator stops narrating and the action proper begins, I stop seeing it from his point of view. I believe the use of a narrator on the stage is not intended to establish point of view, but is simply a convenient device for presenting background material. In my opinion, this applies even to Arthur Miller's After the Fall: as soon as I imagine live bodies on the stage, even if they are declared to be figments of one man's imagination, I begin to see the action from various points of view. The audience have their own fixed point of view: as suggested before, they view the stage action as non-participant observers, and are interested to the degree that they might be interested in participating in such action in real life. This accounts perhaps for the feeling, current at least since Aristotle's time and probably much earlier,

against violence presented directly upon the stage: most of us find it more tolerable to read or hear about violence than to see it or participate in it--if we get too close to it, our impulse is to run away, psychologically if not physically: we become less involved in the action.

This fixing of the audience's point of view brings us full circle to the device of illustrative action once again. In the theatre of realism, we can never really get inside the head of an agent in a drama as we can with an agent in a novel. This limits the dramatist in his revelation of character, for character is a matter of thought and sentiment as well as action. However, the limitation has its advantages: none of us truly knows anyone else by report; for accurate knowledge, we are dependent on what he says and does. And the impossibility of the dramatist's letting us directly into the characters' consciousness eliminates the difficulty, sometimes so perilous for the novelist, of making action and speech consistent with what we are told they are thinking. And if the dramatist is under the necessity of providing his characters with more actions to perform than words to speak, that too enhances the sense of reality--in real life it is what people do that interests us, far more than what they say. Such interest as the spoken word may have for us depends enormously upon who speaks, and how--in fact, on character, intonation, gesture, and attendant circumstance, all of which is another way of saying illustrative action. And of course the prime importance of action does not mean that it need be spectacular; it can be very quiet and subtle, or in fact be no action at all: Mrs. Fiske was thought to have performed a marvel of dramatic art when, in Edward Sheldon's Salvation Nell, she sat on the

barroom floor holding her drunken lover's head in her lap for a full ten minutes without speaking or moving, while the usual barroom activity went on around her (Bernard Hewitt, Theatre U.S.A., 1665-1957, New York, McGraw Hill, 1959, p. 302).

The impossibility of getting inside the characters also precludes the intrusion of the author upon the stage; but this again is probably an advantage--we are not continually being told things about the characters which we are never given any reason to believe. Furthermore, we are spared the strain of having to decide whether to identify with the author or with the characters--we can identify with whichever characters appeal to us at the moment, as we would in real life. This reduction of strain is also an effect of the fixed point of view: in the interests of intensity of experience, it is good to be able to stand still.

In closing this discussion of the aesthetics of novel- versus play-writing, and the advantages of each, we may give some consideration to the prevalent feeling that a work of fiction is somehow artistically violated by being transferred from one medium to another. This view seems to have altered over the years, possibly because of the progressively higher quality of films, plays, and musicals. If any reader should be disposed to question this improvement in general quality, let him consider that in fifty years we have come from The Green Hat to Look Homeward Angel, from Whoopee to South Pacific; and that in the last decade, Finnegan's Wake has twice been adapted for the stage. But whatever the reason, nobody in our day seems to think that making a musical of "Bartleby" is an act of lèse-majesté toward Melville, or that a dramatist is lowering himself by taking his material from another medium.

The feeling that change of medium is inartistic may have come from the notion that one medium is a substitute for another: that is,

it was supposed that people would see the play or the film instead of reading the novel; and obviously, the experience would be a briefer one, and could not but entail some loss of material. We know now that the enormous increase in adaptations of novels to stage, screen, and television has increased the reading of novels; presumably, if a person likes the play, he is stimulated to read the novel. It seems even that transfer of medium can intensify the impact of a work of fiction--the play heightens vividness and force, the novel gives subtlety, depth, and range. All this corroborates the idea of a fiction being a tendency of the soul: if a fiction is an imitation of a psychic state, then the psychic state is at least to some degree independent of the concrete form in which the imitation is rendered, and its incarnation in various media would clarify and deepen it instead of distorting and dissipating it.

There is of course a qualification to be made here: the fiction would be enhanced to the degree that the artist who did the adapting was endowed with the sensitivity to understand it and the skill to convey it. It is quite possible for a dramatist to take a fine or grand fiction, and reduce it to something tawdry. Conversely, there is no reason why a dramatist should not have a clearer vision of the anagogy implied by a given set of characters and circumstances than the novelist did. Ethan Frome is a case in point: in Edith Wharton's novel, the character of Zenobia does not come through very definitely, at least not to me: how did she feel toward Ethan and Mattie when they fell in love, and how, if at all, did her feeling change when they were crippled? There are plenty of strong suggestions as to what her motives were, but she tends to lapse into the status of Ethan's parents and the hard New England climate--

simply another millstone around Ethan's neck. In the play she emerges as a woman whose love Ethan has rejected from the beginning, and whose passionate desire is to reach him somehow. This character, I submit, explains everything that Zenobia does in the novel, and is in fact the character Mrs. Wharton created; but in the play, we see her more clearly. (Note Mrs. Wharton's letter commending the way the play had brought her characters to life on the stage, p. 176 of this work.)

There is the possibility of course that the anagogy of the play may be different from that of the novel, without necessarily either losing or gaining in quality. For example, Billy Budd is about a young sailor who fell victim to the Establishment; Melville, in his various drafts of the story, seems to have been unable to make up his mind whether the Establishment was worth the sacrifice. Here is an issue that could be developed into three different anagogies: the author could have it that the Establishment was worth it; that it was not worth it; or that it is one of the ironies of life that we can never know whether it was worth it or not. The choice between these three lines of development would not necessarily affect the quality of the finished work: one anagogy is probably not essentially any better or worse than another; everything depends upon the artistry with which it is handled--upon the clarity, vividness, and depth of the vision the artist makes us see.

CHAPTER II

FROM A DEATH IN THE FAMILY TO ALL THE WAY HOME

To illustrate some of the technical problems of dramatizing novels, and how they may be handled, I have chosen Tad Mosel's adaptation, All The Way Home, of James Agee's novel A Death In The Family (see Bibliography, p. 210). The following method has been adopted:

1. A blocking out of the novel into sections (these sections will be marked N1, N2, N3, etc., for future reference).
2. A blocking out of the play (these sections will be marked P1, P2, etc.).
3. A close analysis of the first scene of the play, to show what material from the novel has been incorporated into it, and how this is done.

Some explanation is needed here of the criteria that have been used in the blocking out of the novel and the play. It will be noted that of some chapters and scenes there is a rather full précis, while of others, only the most general statement of contents has been made. The reason for this difference of treatment is that the purpose of the blocking out is to show as many examples as possible of the various technical problems confronting the dramatizer; accordingly, some parts that furnish particularly striking illustrations of these problems, or of the dramatist's way of dealing with them, have been treated at some length; others would

have been redundant according to this criterion, and therefore have been summarized only briefly.

The Novel: A Death In The Family

The structure of the novel is in two modes. There is a chronological narrative in three parts, printed in Roman type, covering four days. To this basic structure are added three sections in italics. The first is a short introduction, the second and third are much longer, and occur at the ends of Parts I and II respectively. These are reminiscent passages, mostly Rufus', and much of the material has the character of poetry rather than prose. The editor has furnished the following note about the italicized passages:

> James Agee died suddenly May 16, 1955. This novel, upon which he had been working for many years, is presented here exactly as he wrote it. There has been no rewriting, and nothing has been eliminated except for a few cases of first-draft material which he later reworked at greater length, and one section of seven-odd pages which the editors were unable satisfactorily to fit into the body of the novel.
>
> The ending of A Death in the Family had been reached sometime before Agee's death, and the only editorial problem involved the placing of several scenes outside the time span of the basic story. It was finally decided to print these in italics and to put them after Parts I and II. It seemed presumptuous to try to guess where he might have inserted them. This arrangement also obviated the necessity of the editors having to compose any transitional material. The short section "Knoxville: Summer of 1915," which serves as a sort of prologue, has been added. It was not a part of the manuscript which Agee left, but the editors would certainly have urged him to include it in the final draft.
>
> How much polishing or rewriting he might have done is impossible to guess, for he was a tireless and painstaking writer. However, in the opinion of the editors and of the publisher, A Death in the Family is a near-perfect work of art. The title, like all the rest of the book, is James Agee's own.

# of Pages	Sec. #	
6	N1	The prologue: the author's reminiscence of a typical evening of the summer of 1915, which identifies him with Rufus. After a page or so of cultural background (some of which is transferred verbatim to the play in the form of stage directions), he speaks of the after-supper ritual of fathers of families watering their lawns, then sitting quietly outdoors with their families until bed time. The atmosphere is of family closeness, of protection and love; but the passage ends "and those receive me, who quietly treat me, as one familiar and well-beloved in that home: but will not, oh, will not, not now, not ever; but will not ever tell me who I am."
12	N2 (Roman)	Part I Chapter 1: A narrative account, from Rufus' point of view, of the evening before Jay's death, the last occasion on which he and his son were together. They go after supper to see a Charlie Chaplin film, then to a saloon where Jay "hoists a couple" and proudly introduces Rufus to his acquaintances. Rufus is proud of his father's unspoken confidence that he will not mention the saloon to his mother. He knows how to pronounce the name of the saloon, but will not say so to his father's cronies, for this would be bragging. On the way home, he considers: "What was bragging? It was bad." He comes to the conclusion that bragging is taking credit for being smart, when what one ought to be is brave. They walk home, stopping to sit quietly together in a vacant lot and enjoy the evening. At one point, Jay takes Rufus' head and presses it against him. Afterwards, in bed, Rufus thinks he hears through his

Pages Sec. sleep his father preparing to depart; but the impression is so dim that in later years he cannot be sure that he did not invent it.

20 N3 (Roman) Chapter 2. Narrative, first Jay's point of view, then (p. 39) Jay's and Mary's at the same time, then Mary's after Jay has gone.

In the dead of night, the telephone rings, waking Mary and Jay. It is Ralph, drunk, saying that their father is very ill. Jay tries to find out how sick his father really is, but Ralph is too drunk to make sense. Jay, disgusted with himself for bickering at such a moment, soothes Ralph and says he will come.

Mary, as soon as she understands that he is preparing to leave, gets up to fix him breakfast. Jay eats a big breakfast to please Mary, and warms some milk for her to make her sleep. He asks her, to her surprise, what she'd like to do for her birthday. They discuss whether to wake the children in case Jay should be gone for several days. They decide not to, but there is a special solemnity and tenderness about their leave-taking. It is at this point that the point-of-view is shared between them. Jay goes out, point of view shifts to Mary. For two pages, she listens in "sympathy. . . amusement. . . and dread" as he starts the car. She looks in on the children. Both have wet the bed, "as always." She reflects that they are both too big for that, "Rufus certainly." She goes to bed, noting with a pleased smile that Jay has freshened up the bed for her.

6 N4 (Roman) Chapter 3. Narrative, Jay's point of view. As he drives off he thinks, smiling, that at this moment Mary will find the freshened bed; if he had breakfasted in an all-night lunch room, as he suggested doing, he could have had a shot of liquor. After passing through the mean suburbs, which he dislikes, he settles down to enjoy the driving. He arrives at

Pages Sec. the manually operated ferry. On the other side, a family in a mule-drawn wagon is waiting to cross. The mule is badly frightened at the racket the car makes as Jay drives off the ferry, and "the eyes which followed him could not forgive him the noise." He thinks that the "poor damn devils" must have waited at least a couple of hours for the ferry, and will be hopelessly late. He is now in the deep country, his home country, which he loves; and "quite unconsciously he drove a little faster than before."

N5 (Roman) Chapter 4. Mary. In her unaccustomed solitude, she cannot get to sleep. She blames herself for not caring as much about Jay's father's possible death--or in fact about Jay's father--as she should. She considers his character (amiable but weak), and that of her mother-in-law (a far finer person, whose only fault is over-indulgence of her husband), finds herself thinking that his death, though it would grieve his wife, would be a relief to her. Moreover "he'll no longer stand between me and Jay." Shocked at herself, she prays earnestly for forgiveness, and that her father-in-law may live long so that she may learn to understand him better. She realizes that it is her religion, not Jay's father, that stands between them, and prays that this "gulf" may be closed. She thinks that religion is something they never talk about, cannot talk about, and that her Aunt Hannah and the children are the only people in her life who can feel with her. As a Christian woman, she must--she must raise them in the Anglican faith; yet Jay, though not contemptuous like her brother Andrew or ironical like her father, "doesn't like it." But this will widen the gulf. She cries.

4 N6 Chapter 5. Rufus. Rufus, Catherine, and Mary are having breakfast. Mary's explanation of where Daddy has gone leads to a discussion of

Pages Sec. death. Dialogue is between Mary and Rufus. Rufus wants to know why God let the dogs in to kill the kitten, feels sure they got in when God wasn't looking. Mary tries to reconcile omnipotence with benevolence by the doctrine of free will. Rufus cannot understand why it wouldn't be much easier for God to make people be good. Mary says impressively that God doesn't believe in the easy way, for Himself or any one else: "God wants us to come to Him, to find Him." "Like hide-and-go-seek," says Catherine, entering the conversation for the first time. Rufus warmly protests the idea that God plays games, which makes Catherine cry. Rufus is in disgrace. He is angry and bewildered; but when his mother, as he is leaving for school, gently urges him to come back and tell Catherine he's sorry, because she's "just a little girl," he does feel sorry for her. "'I am sorry, Catherine,' he said. 'Honest to goodness I am. Because you're a little, little girl, and. . .' But with this Catherine exploded into a roar of angry tears,. . . and Rufus, dumfounded, was hustled brusquely off to school." (Note: none of the material from this chapter is directly transferred to the play; but the scene is an illustration of the close family atmosphere, of Mary's difficulties with her religion and with communicating it to her family, and of Rufus' difficulties in finding his identity.)

11 N7 Chapter 6. Ralph. He is ashamed of himself for losing his head and calling Jay unnecessarily. He recapitulates the circumstances: when his mother was aware that her husband was seriously ill, she sent a neighbor to summon first the doctor and then Ralph. He resents this order of priority but comforts himself by the thought that he is the only son available in this emergency. In a "virtual panic of aroused responsibility," he rushes about, arouses his wife, arouses the neighbors

to stay with the children so his wife can go with him (she will be the only son's wife on the premises), drives "like sixty" in his Chalmers, which "he had chosen because it was a better class of auto and a more expensive one than his brother's, a machine people made smart jokes about." All this is interspersed with swigs of whisky. Arriving at his father's, there is a two-hour wait for the doctor. Ralph, feeling everyone's grief as acutely as his own, attempts to confort his mother, "telling her she must be brave, telling her she must not try to be brave, to lean on him, to cry her heart out, for naturally at such a time she would want to feel her sons close around her." Aware that he is not succeeding in comforting his mother, he realizes she doesn't love him. Nor does his wife: "she was not even sorry for him; he felt slobbering and fat, the way she looked at him and suddenly with terrible hatred was sure that she would prefer to sleep with flat-bellied men--what man? Any man, so long as his belly don't get in the way." The neighbor, even the illiterate hired man who withdraws and says that he is available when needed, are behaving better than he. Everybody hates him. He is sneaking drinks all this time. Finally, rushing outside in desperate thirst, he discovers that his bottle is empty. He beats his head against the wall, bruising his temple rather badly. His shock, rage, and despair sober him, and he becomes aware that he is a slave to drink because he is a slave to other people's opinion. In these rare moments of insight, he almost believes that he can stop drinking; but in his heart he knows that he will never change. He is like his sickly son, radically inadequate; he should never have fathered children; he should never have been born. "And looking at himself now, he neither despised himself, nor felt pity for himself, nor blamed others for whatever they might feel

Pages Sec. about him." He knows that they do not hate him--his mother has always loved him "in a way she loved nobody else." His wife, although he is "the worst tail-chaser in LaFollette," is gentle and unreproachful, and never thinks of sleeping with other men. Tonight has been a test, "one of the times in a man's life when he is needed, and can be some good, just by being a man. But I'm not a man. I'm a baby. Ralph is the baby. Ralph is the baby."

8 N8 Chapter 7. Hannah. She telephones Mary and invites Rufus to go shopping with her. Mary is sure he would be delighted. Hannah insists he is not to come unless he would really enjoy it. He comes, and really does want to; but the two have some difficulty in understanding each other, because on the one hand Mary has told him he must be sure to be convincing, and on the other, Hannah "can tell direct quotation when she hears it," and consequently is not sure at first how Rufus actually does feel. In the dark hall, Grandma Lynch, almost totally deaf and dim of sight, collides with them. She gasps. They shout, to identify themselves and reassure her. "Upstairs Rufus heard Andrew bite out, 'Oh, G-godd'; but his grandmother, used to such frights, laughed her tinkling lady-like laugh (which was beginning faintly to crack) very sportingly, . . .'And there's little Rufus!' she smiled, leaning deeply toward him with damaged, merry eyes and playfully patting his cheek." Hannah and Rufus depart. He silently admires her expertise at shopping. She offers to buy him a cap. He is so much overwhelmed with joy that he cannot answer, and she mistakes his silence for lack of enthusiasm. He reassures her, and she realizes for the first time how passionately he has wanted the cap. She hopes to herself that he will not be "goody-goody" about his mother's not wanting him to have it. He first chooses

Pages Sec. a conservative blue serge; aware that this is not what he really wants, she urges him to look at some others. She feels some trepidation when she sees the really dreadful hat he has chosen, but, determined not to "boss him," she buys it for him.

16 N9 Reminiscence. (Italicized section; see p. 19, above.) Rufus. He wakes during the evening, hears his parents talking downstairs with his aunt and uncle. The darkness speaks to him. It is loving and gentle, assures him that he is protected and loved by his kinfolk. Gradually it grows threatening: are they really his kinfolk? It threatens to engulf him, and he screams for his father. His father consoles him. "'Where's the dark that skeered you?'" he asks, and lights matches in all the places where the frightening darkness seemed to lurk. In a corner he finds Rufus' toy dog, Jackie, and offers it to him; but Rufus does not want it. "'Pore ole Jackie,'" says Jay, and Rufus finally takes it. Jay reflects how he bought the dog for Rufus "too soon, and here it is now too late." Point of view shifts to Jay. He realizes that although Rufus is no longer frightened, he "'doesn't want to be lonesome, just like little ole Jackie.'" He stays and sings: "My honey, my baby," "What in the world you doin, Google Eyes," "Git on board, little children." Rufus sleeps. Jay, in his own room, reflects how his mother sang him to sleep, and her mother her, "right on back to Adam, only no one did it for him; or maybe did God?" Then: "How far we all come. How far we all come away from ourselves. So far, so much between, you can never go home again. You can go home, it's good to go home, but you never really get all the way home again in your life. And what's it all for? All I tried to be, all I ever wanted and went away for, what's it all for? Just one way, you do get

Pages Sec. back home. You have a boy or a girl of your own and now and then you remember, and you know how they feel, and it's almost the same as if you were your own self again." Although he has many good things, "it wasn't what you once had been, and had lost, and could never have again, and once in a while. . . it hit you hard enough, that little while it lasted, to break your heart." He feels thirsty, but "If I ever get drunk again, he told himself produly, I'll kill myself. And there are plenty good reasons why I won't kill myself. So I won't ever get drunk again." Mary comes up to bed. He shows her Jackie, that he found under the crib. "'Well, shame on me!'" says Mary, and adds that she will be glad when she can stoop again. "He put his hand on her shoulder. 'So will I.' 'Jay!' she drew away, really offended. 'Honey!' he said, amused and flabbergasted. He put his arm around her. 'I only meant the baby! I'll be glad when the baby's here!' She looked at him intently. . . understood him, and smiled and then laughed softly in her embarrassment. . . 'So will I, Jay darling,' she whispered. 'So will I.'"

5 N10 Italicized section. Rufus. Reminiscence of his mother singing to him, his mother and father singing together as the whole family lies on the grass on a quilt in the evening, then his being put to bed. He considers the differences between his mother and father--his mother is soft, his father scratchy--and thinks appreciatively of his father's roughness and great size.

N11 Italicized section. Rufus. Reminiscence of his mother's pregnancy. For some time she has been "different," distracted, and sometimes she looks at him as if amused, which he does not understand: "taking his face between her hands, she exclaimed, 'I'm not laughing at you, darling!' and for the first time he felt that perhaps she was." At other times

she seems not to be interested in him. There are mysterious conversations with Grandma, during which he is told to go away. He can hear words he does not understand: "pregnancy," "kicking," "discharge" are said furtively, but "layette," "basinette," "belly-band," though equally obscure to him, inspire no fear in the grown-ups. Everyone looks strangely at his mother, until "At last he asked Uncle Andrew, '. . . why is Mama so fat?' and his uncle replied, with such apparent anger or alarm that he was frightened, 'Why, don't you know?' and abruptly walked out of the room." Next day his mother tells him he is going to have a surprise, but will not tell him when it is coming, or what it is. For days he looks all over the house for it, until his mother understands what he is doing and tells him it isn't here, but in Heaven. He is not satisfied, but doesn't dare ask questions. "'Why don't you tell him, Mary?' his father said." An interchange follows between the couple on the subject of how Rufus should be told about Mary's pregnancy.

Then one day a large colored woman arrives, magnificently dressed in white. She greets him. A memory of her stirs, "and before he knew it he had flung his arms around her neck and she whooped with astonished joy." Later he tells his mother that Victoria smells good. His mother carefully and portentously enjoins him never to speak of smell within the hearing of colored people because it might hurt their feelings. She makes sure he understands that he must not do it, and why. After supper, when Victoria is taking him to his grandmother's to spend a few days, (his mother has told him that the surprise will be there when he comes home and then, in a rush of tearful love, has bidden him good-bye) he asks her why her skin is so dark. Crisis.

Pages Sec. "'Just because that was the way God made me,'" says Victoria, "in a stern and gentle voice." Unhappy silence. She squeezes his hand, he squeezes back. Somewhat reassured, she carefully, painfully, tells him he must never speak of color to colored people, or they will think he is being mean to them. More unhappy silence. Rufus feels he is the cause of the unhappiness, and syas he didn't want to be mean to her. She squats down, puts her hands on his shoulders, and assures him that she knows he didn't, that she is not unhappy, that she "couldn't hardly love you more if you was my own baby." And they go on to Grandma's, in "great peace and comfort."

Part II

24 N12 Chapter 8. About nine o'clock at night. Mary receives a telephone call from a stranger telling her that her husband has had a serious accident, and to send a male relative. She telephones her father's house. Her brother Andrew arranges to go with a family friend, Walter Starr, who has a car. On the way, he brings Aunt Hannah to stay with Mary. For about two hours, Mary, with Hannah's help, schools herself to meet whatever may be in store for her.

6 N13 Chapter 9. At the Lynches'. Mary's father and mother wait to hear what has happened.

11 N14 Chapter 10. Andrew returns with the news of Jay's death. Walter Starr fetches Mary's parents. All greet one another, Mary's father asks to speak to her alone. They talk in the bedroom she has prepared for Jay. Her father tells her she must not retreat from life into her religion, and she promises that she will not.

19 N15 Chapter 11. Mary and her father return to the rest of the family. Andrew tells the story of Jay's accident, speaking through his mother's

Pages	Sec.	
		ear trumpet so that she won't be left out. At one point, they all fall into slightly hysterical laughter. Mary decides on epitaph "In his strength." She says they must tell the Follets, and Andrew goes to telephone.
25	N16	Chapter 12. Andrew calls Ralph, Ralph is offended because he is not to be the undertaker. Mary reminisces about what has happened between Jay and herself during the past day. She and some of the others feel Jay's presence in the house, and Mary goes upstairs to the children's room, where she believes he is. She returns, and they all discuss religious faith, and whether Jay's spirit has really been with them. Catherine Lynch, Joel Lynch, and Andrew think their own thoughts. Mary asks Hannah to stay the night with her, and tries to make sure that this does not hurt her mother's feelings. All but Hannah take their leave, and Mary and Hannah prepare to go to bed.
6	N17	Chapter 13. Andrew and the elder Lynches walk home. Mary and Hannah say good-night; Hannah goes to her room and prays. Mary goes to her room and prays.
14	N18	Italicized section. (Reminiscence) The older boys tease Rufus about his name.
14	N19	Italicized section. (Reminiscence) The family excursion to see Great-Great-Granmaw.
5	N20	Italicized section. (Reminiscence) A short trip with Uncle Ted and Aunt Kate, during which Uncle Ted and Aunt Kate tease Rufus and Mary indignantly protests.

Part III

6	N21	Chapter 14. Rufus wakes up, runs to find his father to show him the

Pages Sec. new cap. His mother tells him and Catherine about his father's death; he helps Catherine to dress and they go down to breakfast.

8 N22 Chapter 15. Catherine tries to understand, and she and Rufus question Aunt Hannah, at breakfast.

19 N23 Chapter 16. Rufus, against orders, goes out in the street and tells his tormentors about his father's death; he goes back indoors and gets into a quarrel with Catherine. Hannah, very angry, shakes him.

22 N24 Chapter 17. The morning of the funeral. Aunt Hannah dresses them; their mother explains that they will all go to look at Jay's body, and to say a last good-bye. Rufus asks if they are orphans. The children go downstairs, and again quarrel. The priest comes, and is unkind to them. He goes up to their mother, and the children, listening outside the door, are aware that he is being unkind to her too (Jay, unbaptized, cannot have a proper burial service). While Mary is still closeted with the priest, Walter Starr arrives, is kind to the children, and expresses his love and admiration for their father.

12 N25 Chapter 18. Mary prepares to leave her room to go to the funeral. Realizing that this is really the end of her life with Jay, she collapses; but soon she pulls herself together and leaves the room with Hannah and the priest. She takes the children to their grandparents', and all three kneel by Jay's corpse. The children sit silently with Aunt Hannah, while Mary prays alone by the body.

8 N26 Chapter 19. The children view their father's corpse once again in the presence of the other mourners, then are taken off by Mr. Starr to spend the afternoon with him. Instead of driving them straight to his home, however, Mr. Starr makes a circle and takes them back to where they can see their father's funeral procession.

Pages Sec.

15 N27 Chapter 20. Again at Grandma's, where the family is to spend the night. Catherine, not able to understand what has happened as well as Rufus does, feels that he is preferred. She is accidentally left alone. Unable to bear the solitude, she goes looking through the house until she hears her mother and Aunt Hannah, through a closed door, praying. She hides under her grandparents' bed. She is finally found by her mother, at which she "ran to her as fast as she could run, and plunged her head into her, and cried as if she were made only of tears." Mary discovers that the little girl has wet herself.

Andrew takes Rufus for a walk. Andrew is furious at the priest, and at the church generally. He tells Rufus about a "miraculous" happening at the interment--a magnificent butterfly came and settled on the coffin as it was lowered into the grave, and then flew up into the sunlight. The butterfly, Andrew says, "has got more of God in him than that priest will ever see for the rest of eternity." Rufus feels honored by this confidence, and partly consoled by it for not being present at the interment; but he realizes that Andrew's hatred of the church includes Mary in some manner. He would like to ask his uncle "'Why do you hate Mamma?'. . . but he did not ask, and his uncle did not speak, except to say, after a few minutes, 'It's time to go home,' and all the way home they walked in silence." This is the last sentence of the book.

The Play: All The Way Home

The following synopsis and stage setting are quoted verbatim from the script:

Synopsis

The action takes place in and around Knoxville, Tennessee, and covers a period of four days in May of 1915.

Act One. The first day.

Act Two. The second day.

Act Three. Two days later.

The Setting of the Play (N1)

(the parts taken directly from the novel are underlined)

The Follets live in a mixed sort of neighborhood, fairly solidly lower middle class, with one or two juts apiece on either side of that. The houses correspond: middle-sized gracefully fretted wood houses built in the late nineties and early nineteen hundreds, with small front and more spacious back yards, and porches, and trees in the yards. These are soft-wooded trees, poplars, tulip trees, cottonwoods. There are fences around one or two of the houses, but mainly the yards run into each other with only now and then a low hedge that isn't doing very well.

The stage itself is encircled by a high cyclorama of vertical grey clapboards, suggesting perhaps the walls of a house, the paling of a gigantic fence, or even the sky. It is a background for the action of the play, dim, indistinguishable at times, bright and sunny at others, but always unobtrusive.

The structure of the Follet's two story house fills most of the stage. The living room is stage left, with an upright piano against the cyclorama, a Morris chair. . . (etc., describing kitchen, living room, two bedrooms upstairs). Only the furniture mentioned is visible; only the most necessary properties are used.

There are no interior or exterior walls to the house, and window shades suspended in mid-air suggest windows. The characters move from room to room, into the house or out of the house, without regard to placement of doors. If a character upstairs wishes to speak to a character in the yard, he merely steps to the edge of the second story and calls down to him. Sometimes the characters cannot hear what is going on in another room, and at other times the rooms join together to become a single acting area.

The only solid wall on the stage is the upstage wall of the kitchen, behind which is an escape area for the actors. From the kitchen, a practical door in this wall leads to the bathroom. At the foot of the stairs, another door opens into a closet. By going around the other side of the stairs, the characters presumably go into the other downstairs rooms of the house.

Stage right, between the structure of the house and the cyclorama, there is an open area with an old-fashioned swing suspended from the flies. Sometimes this area is the Follet's yard, sometimes it is a streetcar stop (when the swing becomes the waiting bench), and once it is Great-Great-Granmaw's yard. Below the house, running across the front of the stage, there is another shallow area which is sometimes part of the Follets' yard, sometimes a sidewalk, and once it is a road.

Act One

# of Lines	Sec. #	(I have indicated the lines per scene in the first few scenes of the play, to give some idea of how few words a dramatist must use in comparison to a novelist. A line represents about twelve words.)
10	P1	Four boys tease Rufus about his name. (N18) Jay is watching unobserved. Rufus, escaping his tormentors, runs straight into his father's arms. The boys, frightened of Jay, run off.

Lines Sec.

36 P2 Jay comforts Rufus, pretends to show him the North Pole over to the north of Knoxville, tells him he should be proud of his name and stand up for it, makes him spell "proud" and "brave", praises his spelling. Rufus would rather be praised for bravery. (N2) Jay shows him how to shake hands, tells him "when a man shakes you by the hand, that means you've won him over." Jay hoists Rufus on his shoulder to see the train coming, sings "Get on board, little children."

105 P3 Mary joins in song as she puts out bowls of flowers in house. Jay and Rufus enter house, Mary says "Jay's people will be here any minute" to drive out to see Great-Great-Granmaw. (N19) Ralph has called up from ten blocks away, instead of coming right on, to say they'll be there very soon. Mary thinks he called from a saloon, so that he could sneak a drink. Jay and Mary hope anxiously that Ralph may be in a good humor, so that the family outing will be pleasant. Mary is worried that Ralph may influence Jay to drink. Jay teasingly says that he just might. Mary doesn't like jokes on this subject. Jay doesn't like "'superintendents'. No sir, I don't like people lookin' down on me, thinkin' they got to keep an eye on me." Mary is shocked to have seemed to look down on him, and apologizes. They make up their tiff and kiss. Mary wants to keep the living room tidy for the guests (even though they don't expect to come in there), and objects to Rufus disturbing it and to Jay scraping his pipe out. Jay cheerfully invents a game for Rufus--making a collection of pipe scratchings. Mary laughs, stoops to pick up Rufus' coloring book and gets dizzy--she is pregnant. Rufus asks what is the matter, but Mary, embarrassed, declines to tell him, although Jay strongly urges her to,

Lines Sec. and is annoyed with her when she says she wants to speak to Father Jackson first. (N11). Meanwhile Rufus has discovered that stooping over does not make him dizzy, and he whirls around to produce this effect. Mary tells him there is to be a surprise for him. (N11). Where is it? asks Rufus. In Heaven, she says. (N11). Jay insists it is right here, which sets Rufus to looking for it under the furniture. Jay says to Mary that if his parents don't tell him, the boys in the street will. Rufus is astounded that they should know anything about a surprise for him, and thinks it may be the new cap he has wanted. Mary says, "Rufus, I've told you again and again you can't have one of those cheap flashy caps!" (N8). She sends Rufus to take the lunch basket outside, and she and Jay argue about the cap. Jay says that their differences make things hard for Rufus. Mary, hurt, goes to the kitchen to make lemonade, and prays that the gulf between them may be closed. (N5).

151 P4 Ralph arrives, and brags about his new Chalmers. (N7). He has been drinking, and Mary draws away from his kiss. He is stung, but Mary pacifies him and gives him lemonade. Rufus comes in, crying because he has wet his pants--had an "accident," as Jay says. "Oh, Rufus, you're too old for that," Mary cries, (N3) but Jay comforts him. (N9). However, Ralph teases him coarsely and brutally, as the rest of Jay's family come in from the car. Rufus goes in to change, the others greet each other, get settled, etc. Ralph's wife starts to take their boy indoors. Ralph shouts to her sharply, asking her where she is goin'. All family activity stops. Sally says she's taking Jim-Wilson inside before he too has an "accident." She goes in, the others resume talk, Ralph goes off and sneaks a swig from his bottle and then rejoins

Lines Sec. the family. (N7). Ralph has borrowed money to buy the Chalmers, and feels defensive about it, as he does about his profession of undertaker, and about the superiority of his brother Jay. (N7). He wants his wife to have something better to ride in than a Tin Lizzie. (N7). His wife says she never gets to ride in it, he never takes her anywhere, he's always off in it himself. They quarrel, the others try to pacify him, but he is still sulky. He reverts to the subject of Rufus: "(sing-song) Rufus is a baby, Rufus is a baby!", and says that Jim-Wilson, though younger, hasn't wet his pants in years. Mary flares up (N20) and Ralph swears. She rebukes him.

Ralph: (exploding) This family ain't Catholics and I'll take the Lord's name any way that comes to mind!

(there is a shocked silence)

Jay: You sure like to hit all bases, don't you, Ralph?

Ralph, shamed, apologizes to Mary and to Rufus. He and Rufus shake hands. Ralph pretends to writhe in the strength of Rufus' grip. Rufus is delighted, peace restored. They all prepare to leave. Sally says that Jay should drive, since Ralph is in no condition to. Ralph brutally accuses her of running after any man with a flat belly. (N7). Jay says Ralph knows perfectly well Sally never had any such idea. Ralph stumbles towards the house, takes a furtive swallow of whiskey, goes indoors.

60 P5 Jay goes in to calm his brother down. Ralph is sure that everyone avoids him because he always smells of formaldehyde (N7): last night at the movies the girl next to him got up and moved away. "Go on, Ralph!" says Jay, "you're the worst tail chaser in LaFollette!" (N7). Ralph insists it was the formaldehyde; says the picture show was

Lines Sec. good, though. He describes the Charlie Chaplin film, which Jay has seen too. (N2). They both laugh over it, and Ralph says they both like the same things, "maybe we're more brothers than we seem." Jay acknowledges this. Ralph drinks, offers Jay the bottle. Jay says everyone's waiting for them. Ralph taunts him with being "so God-damned reformed," but Jay says he was only afraid Ralph's bottle would not last him through the day. Ralph, near tears, says he wants it to be empty--he knows he's a mess when he's drinking. Jay drinks the dram or so that remains, and Ralph asks him how it makes him feel. That small amount has no effect, Jay says, but if he were drunk, he'd be "quiet. So quiet, I could hear the ticking of the earth. . . and nothin' bad had ever happened to me or ever would. . . after a while I'd go off like a fire-cracker."

Ralph: What made you change, Jay? Was it Mary's religion?

Jay: Mary's religion is her own.

Ralph: How'd you do it then?

Jay: I made a vow to myself. I said if I ever get drunk again, I'll kill myself. . . There's too many reasons why I don't want to kill myself. (N9).

Ralph considers taking the vow himself, but settles for taking a vow to think about taking a vow. They go out and join the others for the excursion to Great-Great-Granmaw's.

90 P6 A direct dramatization of N19, the excursion to Great-Great-Granmaw's. (N19 does not specify the time, but little Catherine is old enough to sit in the front seat.) When they have come back home, Rufus tells his mother that he saw Great-Great-Granmaw have an "accident," and asks "Isn't she too old for that?" Mary turns her head away to hide her tears.

47 P7 11:00 that night. A direct dramatization of the latter part of N9, after Jay has sung Rufus to sleep. Whereas N9 is Jay's stream of consciousness, this is a dialogue between Mary and Jay; and whereas the time of N9 is about four years before the main action, the dramatist transfers it to the same night that Jay was called to go to his father, which (in the play) is also the night following the day of the excursion.

84 P8 A direct dramatization of N2.--Ralph's telephone call interrupts the above conversation.

Act Two

40 P9 Catherine and Mary, later Rufus. Catherine has come early, and the whole family is to come for supper, since it is Mary's birthday. (N3). Rufus comes in, looks about for the surprise (this has evidently gotten to be a habit with him). Mary forbids him to ask questions, reminds him that he is to go shopping with Aunt Hannah. (N8). She makes him memorize his thank you speech for Aunt Hannah. (N8). In the course of the scene, Jay telephones to say his father is out of danger, and that he will try to be home for dinner.

19 P10 Rufus goes out to the streetcar stop; again the boys assemble and tease him. (N18). He agrees to tell them his name if they will answer his question: (N18). he obviously intends to ask them what his surprise is.

62 P11 Aunt Hannah arrives at the streetcar stop; the boys run off. She and Rufus discuss the coming surprise. She says it is something he should hear from his parents, but Rufus says his mother has forbidden him to ask questions.

105 P12 After supper that night. Mary is singing Rufus to sleep--"Go tell

Lines Sec. Aunt Rhoda the old grey goose is dead"--the whole song is about death. Scene between Joel Lynch and Catherine showing how irritating she is. (Mary is still in Rufus' room.) (N8). Andrew and Joel discuss the possibility that Jay may be off drinking. Mary comes down, and Joel and Mary discuss Jay. Andrew produces his birthday present to Mary--a portrait of Jay, painted by himself. Rufus awakens, comes running down in his new cap--he wants to show it to his daddy. (N21). The telephone rings, and Mary answers. Catherine takes Rufus back up to bed. The others "try not to listen, focusing on the portrait, but gradually they are caught by what they can hear." Mary is being given instructions by the person on the other end of the line. (N12). She hangs up: Jay has been in a serious accident. Andrew is to go to him. (N12). She sends her father up to Rufus, and she and Hannah go to kitchen. (N12).

P13 Mary and Hannah, occasionally Catherine and Joel. Mary tries to prepare herself, with Hannah's help. (N12). Hannah tries to distract her by telling the story of the purchase of the cap.

P14 Andrew returns with the news. (N14). The family assemble, Andrew gives an account of the accident. (N15). Several of them think they feel Jay's spirit enter the house and go up to the children. (N16). Mary goes to them, calls Jay. Rufus sits up and looks at her. She prays. (N16).

Curtain.

Act Three

P15 Rufus and the boys. He goes outdoors (N23) in his new cap, (N21) and tries to impress the boys by telling them of his father's death (N23). At end of scene, they shake his hand; but his account has been very

Lines Sec. garbled, and they go off, one "blubbering his lower lip," another staggering, "whether in imitation of a drunk or an imbecile, it is hard to say." Rufus is at first pleased by the effect he has produced, and goes in and sits in his father's Morris chair; but then he becomes aware that his father will never come home, and begins to cry. (N23).

P16 The two families assemble for the funeral. Ralph tries ineptly to console everybody--"Cry your heart out, Maw. It's natural at a time like this. I'm goana be two sons to you now. I'm goana be as many sons as you want." (N7). He is angry with Mary for consigning Jay's body to a rival undertaker. (N16). He is drinking; he finally dashes his bottle against the wall, says "I'm glad he's dead!" At this, Mary, who is about to get in the car to go to the funeral, turns to him and asks if Jay was drunk. Ralph, vindictive, refuses to tell her. She goes up to her room.

P17 Hannah and Mary. Hannah follows Mary to her room, the others wait. (N25). Mary, her faith shaken, refuses to go to the funeral. She speaks of Jay, recalling how he used to leave home for a day or two at a time, not always drinking, but needing to be away from his family. As she speaks, she begins to reproach herself for not letting him have his solitude, realizes that she must resign herself to not possessing him completely, in death or in life: she will never know whether he was drunk or not, as she never knew where he was when he went away, and this is as it should be. She decides that his epitaph will be "In his strength." (N15). Restored, she goes down and gets in the car. (N25).

P18 After the funeral. Andrew and Joel are furious that the priest would not give Jay burial rites. (N27). Andrew tells Rufus how a butterfly alighted on Jay's coffin as it was being lowered into the grave, then

Lines Sec. flew up into the sunshine. Mary, in her room, tells Hannah "I love and revere everyone in this world who has ever suffered. I truly do, even those who have failed to endure."

P19 Mary and Rufus. She tells Rufus what the surprise is to be. Rufus asks "where's the baby now, Mama?" She starts to say that it is up in Heaven, but on second thoughts, takes his hand and places it on her waist. The lights go up full on the house, with all the Follets and Lynches in various rooms; Mary leads Rufus home as the curtain begins to fall, and as they go she begins to explain physical generation.

Curtain

Some Technical Problems of Adaptation

The above blocking out of the novel and the play may serve as some indication of the technical problems involved in adaptation, and also of Mr. Mosel's consummate skill in rendering elements in the novel by means other than the transfer of words--by ingenious juxtaposition, for example, or by the invention of illustrative action. Yet the plot has not been substantially altered in the dramatization. The story is of the death in an automobile accident of Jay Follett, and its effect upon his family, principally his wife and his son. In the novel, Rufus is six years old, while in the play he seems somewhat younger; and Rufus' four-year-old sister Catherine has been eliminated from the play, or rather, reduced to the foetal stage. Walter Starr, the friend of the family, has also been omitted. With these exceptions, Mr. Mosel seems to have tried to include as many of the elements of the novel as possible.

To restate what has been said in Chapter I, the operative psychological difference between reading a novel and seeing a play is

the relation between the author and the public. The novelist is in direct dialogue with the reader, who can take up or drop the conversation as he wishes; but a dramatist must speak to the audience through the medium of the stage and its company, and if at any point the audience fails to respond and the dialogue is broken, the breach cannot be repaired--the playgoer has missed part of the conversation, and must simply do his best to make sense of what he does understand.

Since any doubt or confusion about what has happened tends to distract the audience from what is happening, the principal consideration for the dramatist is clarity: the audience must be told, as soon as the characters appear, who they are, what their relation to one another is, and what are the circumstances in which they find themselves. Note how in the first fifteen minutes of All The Way Home (P1, P2, and P3), the following relationships and circumstances are established: we know that Jay is Rufus' father; that Mary is his mother ("Mama's calling me"--P2); that Jay's family is about to arrive ("your Daddy's people will be here any minute"--P3), and that they are all going on an excursion ("we got a nice day for the outing"--P2); that Mary is pregnant, and that telling Rufus about her pregnancy is an issue between Jay and herself (P3); that Ralph is a drunkard, and that Jay may have a drinking problem too (P3).

However, clarity alone is not enough to hold the audience; the action must be natural as well as expository. Most playgoers have had some experience of the stage cousin who comes to tea, and proceeds to expound to her hostess matters which must already be achingly familiar to her; the effect upon the audience is to lessen the illusion of reality, so that the playgoer cannot play his role of non-participant observer of

a real situation. In All The Way Home, the necessary information is given in an admirably natural way: the prospective family outing is introduced to distract Rufus from Ralph's teasing; Mary calls her son to be sure he is at hand when the family arrives, and Rufus says, "Mama's calling me" because he doesn't want to go in just then; this brief passage also prepares us for the entrance of Jay's family, so that we know who they are when they come on; exposition of Mary's side of the family is brought in by means of Jay's consoling of Rufus for his unfortunate name (P2); Mary's pregnancy is established when she leans over in the course of tidying up the house for the expected guests.

Besides being informative and "natural" (credible), the action must have what is generally known as "movement"--a term more often used than defined. A workable definition for our purposes is: that quality in the action which raises curiosity in the audience as to what is going to happen later. How will Rufus deal with his tormentors the next time he meets with them? (Note that an expectation has been raised that they will appear again.) How will the issue between Mary and Jay, of the best way to tell Rufus about Mary's pregnancy, be resolved? (P3) How serious a problem is Jay's drinking? Is Ralph drunk? What will the rest of the family's attitude be toward Ralph's drinking? toward Jay's?

Another problem for the dramatist is proportion, or ordination: some interests must be subordinated to others, and the whole action must be arranged in such a way that a central issue emerges. To put it in more concrete terms, the audience must be stimulated to want one question answered above all others, and then the answer must be provided--in other words, the play must move to a climax. In All The Way Home, we want generally to know how Jay's death affected the whole family, but

particular interest is very skillfully focused on Mary: even the interest in Rufus is subordinated, by means of establishing that Rufus' reactions will depend on how Mary behaves (all through the play, Rufus' need is to know the truth about things, and Mary is the one who must tell him). The climax occurs at the point of Mary's talk with Hannah just before the funeral (P17), when she learns that she must accept Jay's integrity, his "otherness." Having accomplished this, she is then able to partially incorporate his character into her own; and we are thus prepared for the denouement, where she tells Rufus about the coming birth in the way that Jay would have done. In this connection, note how the matter of telling Rufus about his mother's pregnancy is introduced early in the play, is developed very fully at that point, and is brought up on a number of occasions thereafter; in the novel, the issue occupies a much less prominent place; but the dramatist, wishing to focus attention on the question "What will Mary do?", makes it the controlling symbol of the play.

In summation, then, the problems that the dramatist must solve in presenting his action are: 1) clarity of exposition; 2) credibility of each bit of action; 3) movement; and 4) proportion, designed to induce the audience to concentrate upon a single issue. In addition to these, which confront every playwright, the dramatizer of a novel must deal with another: he must decide how to transfer the elements of the novel to the stage. The crux of this problem is that the elements must be presented almost entirely by illustrative action--by invented episodes. Some atmospheric elements may be introduced by means of gesture, costume, stage setting, lighting, and perhaps music; but all these must work as part of the illustrative action. That is, a character cannot appear in evening dress to indicate social background or shift in mood, unless it

is evening and there is a party; lights cannot be suddenly dimmed for no reason; and background music, though its arbitrary introduction is accepted without question in films, must be accounted for on the stage.

Being thus confined to illustrative action, the dramatist is often under the necessity of inventing some that was not in the novel, or of combining such elements in the novel as illustrate a particular piece of anagogy. In All The Way Home, Rufus' curiosity about the pregnancy, his wish for the flashy cap, and his being teased by the boys, are woven together in a way that they were not in the novel. In the novel, these three elements do have a thematic connection: they are all part of Rufus' effort to fill up the lack in his life by discovering "who I am"--the one thing, as the "Knoxville" introduction tells us, that his family could not or did not do for him. But for these elements to be presented effectively in a play, they must be connected in the construction of the plot--that is, there must be a direct cause-and-effect relationship established between them. Note how this is done in All The Way Home: when Rufus' mother tells him he is to have a surprise, he thinks it may be the cap he has so ardently wished for (P3); in the same scene, his father says that if Mary does not tell him, the boys in the street will; and therefore Rufus exposes himself to more teasing, saying to the boys that he will tell them his name if they will answer him a question (P10). By this combining technique, then, material which in the novel was used only for characterization or atmosphere is woven into a tightly controlled pattern of cause and effect, thus advancing the action and contributing to the movement.

Another example of illustrative action is Jay's preparing of the bed for Mary before he goes to his father. Here the gain is not in

tighter plot structure, but in greater force of impact and in condensation. In the novel, Jay pulls the bedcovers up so as to hold in the warmth for Mary; (N3) in the play, he puts a pillow in the bed (P8), and says that his mother used to do that for him when he was a little boy so that he would not be lonely. The principal function of the speech is of course to show motive--Jay's love for Mary; in addition, it serves as a device to introduce some of the material from N9--Jay's "all the way home" reminiscences about his childhood. The action itself heightens the impact of the episode: the audience needs something they can see being put into the bed and needs to know exactly why Jay is putting it there; simply pulling the covers up not only would be less striking, Jay's intent would not be clear.

Occasionally, an element that functions as a powerful symbol in a novel is impossible to transfer to the stage, either because of limitation of time or space, or because it cannot be closely unified with the rest of the action. In the novel, urination is of major importance: in the "Knoxville, 1915" section, the fathers watering their lawns are associated with urination; both children habitually wet their beds; Great-Great-Grandmaw has an "accident"; little Catherine, when she is left alone on the day of the funeral and abandons herself to brokenhearted sobbing, is discovered to be soaking wet. In the play, all this is reduced to two brief episodes: Rufus' "accident," and his touching reference to Great-Great-Grandmaw's ("Isn't she too old for that?").

Agee uses this material to clarify and reinforce the double theme, set forth in the introduction and continued throughout the novel, of family acceptance and love together with Rufus' failure to establish his identity. The lawn-watering substitutes urination for sexuality as a

symbol for fertility. The bed-wetting and Catherine's wetting of her drawers, though of course involuntary, seem to be a claim for the privileges of babyhood and at the same time an expression of anxiety about identity: If Rufus is too old for that, why does it keep on happening to him? How old is too old (Great-Great-Grandmaw)? Does bed-wetting, involuntary though it is, constitute any sort of bridge between little boys and fathers who water lawns? Yet little girls wet as well as little boys. All these subtle Oedipal suggestions are perforce omitted from the play, where the "accidents" are used simply to show Rufus' helplessness (and Great-Great-Grandmaw's) and Jay's kindness and love.

Another bit of symbolism does not appear in the play in any form: the scene at the ferry. Occurring as it does early in the novel (N4), and taken together with the title, it is a portent of disaster. Jay, because of his car, feels happy, confident, powerful, especially in contrast to the poor farm family with the mule-drawn cart who have had to wait two hours for the ferry. The racket made by Jay's Tin Lizzie frightens the mule so badly that it goes completely out of control, and as he drives off Jay is impressed by the farm family's unforgiving eyes. The whole scene brings out Jay's feeling of superiority to the farm family, whom he regards as backward, underprivileged, to be commiserated with, relatively unable to manipulate their environment to their own benefit. The frightened mule is a symbol for the whole family, and also for all humans who have not had the benefits of mechanization. The dramatic irony is, of course, that as things turned out the mule was right and Jay wrong: the very things that Jay felt superior about--his car and his confidence--are what killed him. The scene greatly deepens the significance of the epitaph chosen by Mary (who of course was

ignorant of the episode) for Jay: "In his strength." The whole chapter is an example of the kind of thing a novelist can do easily, a dramatist only with great difficulty, if at all.

In transferring material from a novel to the stage, the necessity for movement and concentration upon one issue constrains the dramatist to a much closer unification of his material: that is, everything that happens must be tied to the total structure. For example, the scene with the boys in Act III (P15) would lose much of its effect if it had not been prepared for by similar scenes in Acts I and II (P1 and P10), and the earlier scenes would, in retrospect, be much less impressive if they did not move toward the climax in Act III. Again, Jay's lacryma rerum scene in which he feels tempted to drink is placed immediately before Ralph's telephone call saying that their father is ill, thus sharpening the contrast between Jay and Ralph (P8); and these are but two of the many examples that might be chosen. Every episode and every character fulfills not one function, but many. Even little Jim-Wilson, with no lines to speak, appears three times to produce three separate but related effects: 1) Ralph's taunting of Rufus (P4); 2) Ralph's desire to push himself ahead of Jay (P6); 3) his own unhappiness as the son of Ralph (P18).

The process of unification often involves condensation. For example, the dramatist places the visit to Great-Great-Grandmaw on the same day as John Henry Follett's heart attack, thus bringing the two unexpectedly prolonged lives into close juxtaposition with Jay's completely unexpected death (N19, P6). In Act II, several paragraphs of the novel, dealing with Aunt Hannah's early loss (N12), are rendered by the single line, when Mary leaves the room for a moment: "It's your

turn now." (P13). (Of course, the better the acting, the less is lost in the trnasfer.)

By way of illustration of the process of transfer, involving invention of illustrative action, combining and unification of the material of the novel, and condensation, we may examine in some detail the first scene of the play.

The cyclorama stage set (p. 35, this work) at once prepares the audience for some flexibility in the treatment of time and place. This not only (in my estimation) is an aesthetic reflection of the novel, where Agee produces a similar effect by his flexible shifting in point of view, but it frees the dramatist from many of the trammels imposed by an ordinary box stage set. The script of the opening of Act I is as follows:

AT RISE:

Rufus, aged six, in the yard. Four older boys wearing rakish gaudy caps dance around him, jumping up and down with ferocious joy, shoving their fingers at his chest, his stomach and face, screaming and chanting. Jay enters and watches, unseen by them.

RUFUS

(As the curtain rises, one clear frantic call)

My name is Rufus!

BOYS

(Together)

Nigger's name, nigger's name, nigger's name!

RUFUS

Rufus! Rufus!

FIRST BOY

(As the others chant "nigger's name!")

Nigger, nigger, black as tar,
Tried to ride a 'lectric car,
Car broke down and broke his back,
Poor nigger wanted his nickel back!

RUFUS

I'm Rufus!

BOYS

(Together)

Uh-Rufus, uh-Rastus, uh-Johnson, uh-Brown,
Uh-what ya gonna do when the rent comes 'roun'?
Uh-Rufus, uh-Rastus, uh-Johnson, uh-Brown,
Uh-what ya gonna do when the rent comes 'roun'?

(Rufus makes one desperate effort to escape, running straight into Jay's arms.)

FIRST BOY

Nigger name! Hey, we're gonna catch hell!
(They scramble off, and Jay looks after them, glowering. Then he puts his hand on Rufus' head and smiles down at him.)

JAY

What in the world you doin, Google Eyes?

The basic material for this taunting scene is from N18. But in the novel, the boys never come into the yard--Rufus deliberately goes out into the street to find them. Also, the connection between the cap Rufus wants and the ones the boys wear is not so close. The difference in effect is that in the novel Rufus was fascinated by the boys even though they made him suffer, and the attraction they had for him is presented first; this has the effect of enhancing the wantonness of their cruelty. The dramatist presents the cruelty and the fascination separately--a common dramaturgic device, since mixed emotions on the stage tend to lose their

impact. Thus in this first scene we see only the cruelty, and the attraction appears later in Rufus' desire to shake hands with them (P10 and P15) and in the theme of the cap; and this relevation is prepared for by having the boys' caps similar to the one Aunt Hannah will buy for Rufus.

Agee's device of carefully describing Rufus' initial friendly feeling for the boys does make their cruelty strike us with much greater force than if we had not been thus prepared for it. However, the dramatist can rely upon the greater impact of concrete action to make up a good deal of this loss--we are quite sufficiently impressed with the boys' cruelty. Besides, he can and does introduce similar scenes later on, when we know that Rufus would like to be friends with them; and having by that time learned to expect their cruelty, we can spare some emotion for the new note of pathos that is then introduced.

Jay's witnessing of the boys' cruelty is an innovation of the dramatist's; in the novel, Jay is never present at the taunting, although Rufus' stream of consciousness in N2 indicates that Jay knows about it and would like Rufus to be braver. Jay's presence at this scene in the play tells us two things: Rufus, although he is not aware of it, is under his father's protection and will get help when it becomes absolutely necessary; but he is being given the chance to handle the problem without help, if he can. Analogous material in the novel is in N9:

> I hear my father; I need never fear.
> I hear my mother; I shall never be lonely, or want for love.
> When I am hungry, it is they who provide for me; when I am in dismay, it is they who fill me with comfort.
> When I am astonished or bewildered, it is they who make the weak ground firm beneath my soul: it is in them that I put my trust.

> When I am sick it is they who send for the doctor; when I am well and happy, it is in their eyes that I know best that I am loved; and it is towards the shining of their smiles that I lift up my heart and in their laughter that I know my best delight.
>
> I hear my father and my mother and they are my giants, my king and my queen, beside whom there are no others so wise or worthy or honorable or brave or beautiful in this world.
>
> I need never fear; nor ever shall I lack for loving kindness.

The religious overtones of this are mostly lost in the play, since no religious language is used; but the sense that Rufus is being taken care of even when he is not thinking about it is retained.

The same passage in the novel brings out the idea that Jay does not over-protect his son; a few pages later, the darkness has ceased to be friendly and has grown sinister, and Rufus has first called and then screamed for his father. He can tell by what he hears downstairs that his father is annoyed at being called, but Jay comes.

> He was afraid, for he was no longer deeply frightened; he was grateful for the evidence of tears.

As soon as Jay discovers that Rufus is in serious trouble, he is ready with help:

> The room opened full of gold, and his father stooped through the door and closed it quietly; came quietly to the crib. His face was kind.
>
> "Wuzza matter?" he asked, teasing gently, his voice at its deepest.
>
> "Daddy," the child said thinly. He sucked the phlegm from his nose and swallowed it.
>
> His voice raised a little. "Why, what's the trouble with my little boy," he said and got out his handkerchief. "What's the trouble? What's he crine about?" The harsh cloth smelt of tobacco; with his fingertips, his father removed crumbs of tobacco from the child's damp face.
>
> "Blow," he said. "You know your mamma don't like you to swallah that stuff."

A few lines later, the father dispels the darkness by lighting matches in all the most frightening dark corners, and then sings Rufus to sleep. The emotional effect is transferred to the stage by Jay's presence dispelling

the cruel boys, by his consoling talk with Rufus, and by his singing Rufus back into happiness and security.

A part of the above passage from N9 has been incorporated into another scene in the play (P4):

(Rufus runs in crying.)

RUFUS

Daddy, Daddy--!

JAY

Why, what's the trouble honey?

(Squatting to Rufus' level)

What you cryin' about? Wuzza matter, honey?

(He takes out his handkerchief,)

Come on, blow. You know your mama don't like you to swallah that stuff.

The occasion is, not that he is afraid of the dark but that he has wet his pants; what has been retained is the impression that whenever Rufus desperately needs something, his father is there to give it to him.

To proceed with the scene: what we see is that Rufus is being cruelly treated; we do not see, as yet, his admiration for the boys--that he is willing to go to any lengths to get them to like him and be nice to him. The point in the novel (N18) is that he cannot bring himself to believe in their cruelty--he cannot believe that they hate him without a cause, that their appearance of friendliness and interest is but a trap. This theme--that the appearance of love may be a trap--has occurred before in N9, when the "gentle, gentle dark" begins to purr with sadistic delight, and says "for now, my dear, my darling, the moment comes when hunger and love will be forever satisfied. And darkness, smiling, leaned ever more intimately inward upon him, laid open the huge, ragged mouth--" and he

screamed for his father.

In both these passages from the novel, the glad response to the appearance of love turns to suspicion and fear. In both, the change is connected with an unsureness about his identity: he is being teased because of his name, the symbol of himself, and being told that not only is it disgraceful in itself, but that his position as a member of the Follet-Lynch family is an incognito or disguise--he is really a "nigger"; and in the awakening scene, the darkness was his friend as long as he was sure that he was the son of the people downstairs, but

> "Darkness said:. . . who are you, child, who are you, do you know who you are, do you know who you are child: are you?"

and then darkness questions whether these people really are his parents. The "Who am I?" theme is given great prominence in the novel by appearing at the end of N1, the prologue. The rest of the prologue speaks of nothing but love and security; the sudden doubt raised at the very end is as if Rufus were saying "I am aware of love and security all about me, and it is beautiful and desirable; but does it really belong to me?"

Thus the two themes "love is a trap", "who am I?" are closely interwoven, and permeate the whole character of Rufus. In the play, the "Who am I?" theme is strongly stressed by being the subject of the violent opening action; the "love is a trap" theme subsides into relative unimportance: it is only in the second teasing scene, in Act II (P10), that we see the boys pretending to be friendly so that they can mock him the more when he is decived by it; but Rufus is not deceived by it--he tells them his name, not because he believes in their friendliness, but in the hope of getting them to answer his question.

Rufus does admire the boys in the play, as is shown by his

wanting to have a cap like theirs; but the character of his admiration is much altered from the novel, if not actually reduced. In the novel a progression is described, beginning when Rufus was much younger than six: Rufus moves from a natural friendliness and trust to suspicion, fear, and a passionate desire to assert himself; and at the point where he tells the boys of his father's death, the later attitude predominates. Agee specifically states that one of Rufus' motives for seeking status with the boys is that his father wanted him to gain their respect (N23). The desire for respect is retained in the play, while the earlier natural friendliness is played down.

Rufus' credulity is displaced (to use a psychoanalytical term) in the play: instead of believing in his tormentors' sincerity and potential friendliness, he believes that they will accept his fantastic story, and in fact he almost believes it himself: that is the psychic focus has been changed from a desire for love to a desire for self-assertion. Confused and careless about the particulars of his father's death, Rufus' object is merely to hold his audience, and he is quite willing to tell them anything he thinks will impress them. He says his father was killed in a Chalmers, not a Tin Lizzie; acknowledges that he may have been drunk; and says that the car ran against a pole a hundred feet high--the North Pole, in fact--and that his father's body was crushed to a pulp. The boys go off mocking him for being crazy, but he is not aware of their mockery.

In the novel, on the other hand, Rufus gives a detailed and accurate account of the death; he does suspect that the boys are "being mean" about the Tin Lizzie, but says nothing about it; he denies the charge of drunkenness absolutely; and his closest approach to a lie is in not contradicting the boy who says his father's body was mangled. The

whole manoeuver is successful, in that he does gain the boys' grudging respect, and he is accurate in his evaluation of their response. Finally, in the novel Rufus goes back indoors and grows ashamed of how he has exploited his father's death (that is, of how he has exploited love in the interests of self-assertion); in the play, the corresponding episode shows only that his gratified vanity has given way to a painful sense of loss.

The difference in the two pictures is that the Rufus of the novel is more mature and intelligent than the Rufus of the play. There are a number of reasons for the dramatist's making him younger, in character if not in chronological age. First, Catherine has been reduced to the foetal condition in the play, so as to include the pregnancy material without going out of the time span; thus, the dramatist is free to incorporate some of Catherine into the character of Rufus--in the novel, Catherine was not able to understand her loss nearly so well as Rufus did. Further, making Rufus younger was the only way to incorporate into the play some of the reminiscent material in the novel, without resorting to the awkward device of flash-backs. (Plays that move back and forth in the chronological sequence of the episodes are rare. Some notable ones are Dear Brutus, Hotel Universe, and Death of a Salesman; but the first two are carefully identified by their authors as fantasies, and in the last, the chief character was supposed to be losing his mind.) Finally, Rufus is a far less prominent figure in the play than in the novel, no doubt partly because subtle characterizations of children are difficult to manage on the stage: there is not only the problem of finding an actor (much thornier than in films, which do not require a sustained performance), but a grown-up audience experiences some difficulty in identifying with a visible child (there is much less difficulty in a novel--we all know what it is to feel like a child). Thus, in the play Rufus

is any little boy who has lost a good father who loved him, rather than a particular boy (the author, in fact) who has lost a particular father who loved him in a particular way.

Making Rufus younger, then, has the function of condensing much material, and the effect of loss of individuality for Rufus. Even this loss, however, serves to focus more attention on Mary. All this development of Rufus does not of course occur in the first scene; but the first scene is consistent with his simpler, younger character in that he is entirely the unwilling victim of the boys: they are in his yard, instead of his having gone out to encounter them; and he tries desperately to run away from them, instead of walking quietly and aloofly off.

To proceed to the "nigger name": there is a scene in the novel (N11) which adds a dimension of depth to this taunt. For one thing, it shows that his mother, in her anxiety about hurting Victoria's feelings, is passionately concerned that the unfortunate not be tormented for their misfortune, at least not by Rufus; for another, we see that Rufus himself, in spite of being mercilessly teased by the boys, never feels any impulse to tease in his turn--he is inveterately gentle. This in fact is part of his confusion of identity: all his life Agee (Rufus), although brilliant, highly educated, and reared in an atmosphere of love, nevertheless identified himself with the sufferer and the underdog. With plenty of equipment for running with the hounds, there was yet something in him that impelled him--even compelled him--to run with the hares. The "action" (in the Aristotelian sense) of Agee's life appears to have been that his love disarmed his aggression. This appears strongly in the novel, but not in the play.

The loss of individuality for Rufus in the play is probably not

the result of inadvertence in the dramatist, but a matter of dramatic necessity: a play tends to lose dramatic impact if its action is not sharply focused. The action of the novel involves Rufus, Mary, and Catherine and, to a lesser extent, several other members of the family (at least five of the minor characters assume the point of view at various times). Stanislavsky's infinitive phrase for it might be "to sustain a death." But this is too indefinite to furnish a suitable vehicle for a drama; the dramatist accordingly has reduced it to "to lose a husband," and Rufus' function in the play is not so much to show what it's like for a son to lose a father, as to show what it's like for a mother to lose the father of her children.

To continue with the analysis of the first scene: the senseless jingle with which the boys taunt Rufus is minutely analyzed in N18: why "Rastus, Johnson, Brown" when these are not his names? How can he answer what he would do when the rent comes round when he doesn't know what the rent is, and they are obviously not going to tell him?, etc. The point is the irrationality of cruelty. This is brought out in the play by the immediate appearance of Rufus' fine, proud father, which has the effect of giving the lie to the taunt; and also by the gradual development of Jay's and Mary's characters and Rufus' situation as a member of a close-knit and moderately prosperous family.

This effect of senseless cruelty is picked up again by repeating the taunt on the day of Jay's funeral (this does not happen in the novel). Occurring as it does after the tremendous dramatic impact of Act II, it has far more force than it does the first two times: the audience knows that Rufus is indeed Rufus, whose father loved him and is dead; further, he has reasons, which he is too young to understand, for wishing he were

not Rufus; in these circumstances, his innocent and unsuccessful attempts to assert his identity carry rich overtones of dramatic irony, and very successfully arouse pity and fear. To add to the pathetic effect, the scene is transferred from the day after Jay's death, when Rufus was dressed in his ordinary clothes, to the day of the funeral, when he wears black. Finally, the stage directions require him to remove his black cap and substitute the flashy cap which his mother didn't want him to have but his father did.

In the novel, there is no conversation between Jay and Mary about the cap, nor any indication that Jay wanted Rufus to have it. Rufus wakes up the morning after Jay's death and rushes into his parents' bedroom to show it to his father; it is in these circumstances that his mother tells him what has happened (note how P12 and P15 transfer the pathos of this scene to the play without using the scene itself). Later that morning, when Rufus considers wearing his new cap to school, he realizes that he doesn't want to. Later still, when he is justifying his exploitation of his father's death by the thought that his father wanted the boys to respect him, he says to himself, "I wanted to show him my cap."

Thus in the play an illustrative action has been altered to suit the altered character of Rufus: the pathos is retained, but the action is that of a younger and less aware child. The pathos and the wantonness of the cruelty have been rendered by skillful placement of the episodes, by combination and condensation, and by visual effects. Furthermore, both the pathos and the cruelty have been enhanced by juxtaposition, which did not occur in the novel.

To conclude the analysis of Scene I: Rufus runs blindly into his father's arms. The gesture is a dramatic, visual intensification of Jay's protective presence: the father comes not only when he is called, but in direct response to his child's need he is there before he is called, and his presence dispels the terror. In the novel, Jay never frightens off Rufus' tormentors. Introducing this action into the play not only transfers some of the emotion connected with the scene of the matches, but lays the basis for the contrasting scene in Act III: there, there is no Jay to scare the boys away, and there never will be again.

The above analysis is perhaps sufficient to indicate some of the problems a dramatist faces in the transferring of material from a novel. We may now proceed to a comparison of the total effect produced by A Death in the Family and All the Way Home respectively.

CHAPTER III

A CRITIQUE OF ALL THE WAY HOME AS A RENDERING OF A DEATH IN THE FAMILY

Differences in Characterization

Jay

The central focus of the characterization of Jay, both in the novel and in the play, seems to be that he is the one of all the characters (with the exception of the agons--Mary, Rufus, and in the novel, Catherine) who ought not to have died. None of the other characters could well spare him: for his parents, he was the one son who could be relied upon for any kind of filial support; Ralph, although he was jealous of him, could not get along without him--this was manifested by his telephoning Jay the night of their father's illness, after first trying unsuccessfully to cope with the situation himself (reinforced in the play by the scene in the kitchen when they talk about drinking); Mary's father and brother both loved Jay, and both felt that Mary stood in need of some kind of character development or amelioration which only Jay could help her to attain; Aunt Hannah, closer to Mary than even Jay was, understood fully the dimensions and bitterness of Mary's loss; even Great-Great-Grandmaw had taken a "special shine" to Jay. As for Mary and Rufus, Jay died at the time when their need for him

was most acute: the children were just at the age of dawning reason, when a father's influence as teacher and model begins to be supremely important.

Moreover, Jay was the only one (again with the exception of the agons) who had no reason to wish himself dead: Although in both play and novel there is an ever-present shadow of sadness on Jay, he was doing well in his work after having a hard time getting started; he and Mary had reached a new depth in their marriage; he seemed to have overcome his drinking problems; and all in all, he was at the peak of his vitality and usefulness. In contrast, Great-Great-Grandmaw is so old as hardly to be more than a vegetable, and has moreover so completely absorbed the life of Sadie that the younger woman is virtually as old as her grandmother: Great-Great-Grandmaw's life has continued so long that it drains other people's lives instead of nurturing them. Grandma Lynch, although she has retained her mental faculties, is totally deaf and nearly blind--her life is a burden to her and to everyone because she is so hard to communicate with. Jay's father has suffered a series of painful heart attacks, and expects to die at any minute; and he too has absorbed most of the vital force of another human being, his wife. Ralph says of himself that he ought never to have been born or fathered children; and we are given the impression, from other material, that his wife and child would be better off if he were dead.

All the above is in the play; and yet the play does not present quite the same character as the novel does: there is a coarsening of Jay that ends in a slight reduction. This is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid in a dramatization, for a number of reasons. First, it sometimes happens that what is only thought in a novel needs to be said, or otherwise

externalized, in a play. For example, Ralph's thoughts about men with flat bellies (N7) are highly illustrative of his character, and can hardly be spared if we are to understand his feelings about Jay. But when thought is put in the form of words or action, it very often is more coarse, and this raises certain problems for the dramatist: surely the Jay of the novel would never have tolerated Ralph's insults to Mary, Sally, and himself in P4.

Then, as has been said before, subtle ambiguities of character are extremely difficult to render on the stage. An example of this is the treatment of the conflict between Jay and his wife. In the novel, Jay almost never offers any direct opposition to Mary, even in the stream of consciousness passages. Here are two typical instances:

(Jay is preparing to leave for his father's home: N3)

> She got into her slippers and shuffled quickly to the door. She looked back and said, in a stage whisper, "Bring your shoes--to the kitchen."
>
> He watched her disappear, wondering what in hell she meant by that, and was suddenly taken with a snort of silent amusement. She had looked so deadly serious, about the shoes. God, the ten thousand little things every day that a woman kept thinking of, on account of the children. Hardly even thinking, he thought to himself, as he pulled on his other sock. Practically automatic. Like breathing.
>
> And most of the time, he thought, as he stripped, they're dead right. Course they're so much in the habit of it. . . that sometimes they overdo it. But most of the time if you think even a second before you get annoyed. . . there is good common sense behind it.
>
> p. 29

(Jay and Mary are discussing her pregnancy, in Rufus' presence: N11)

> "Oh, Jay," she said in alarm; then said, by moving her lips, "Don't talk of it in front of him!"
>
> "Oh, I'm sorry," and he, too, said with his lips--only a whisper leaked around the silence, "but what's the good? Why not get it over with?"

She decided that it was best to speak openly. "As you know, Jay, I've told Rufus about our surprise that's coming. I told him I'd be glad to tell him what it was, except that it would be so very hard for him to imagine it and such a lovely surprise when he first sees it. Besides, I just have a feeling he might m-make see-oh-en-en-ee-see-tee-eye-oh-en-ess, between--between one thing and another."

"Going to make them, going to make em anyhow," his father said.

"But Jay, there's no use simply forcing it on his att-eigh-ten-ten, his attention, now, is there? Is there, Jay?"

She seemed really quite agitated, he (Rufus) could not understand why.

"You're right, Mary, and don't you get excited about it. I was all wrong about it. Of course I was." And he got up and came over to her and took her in his arms, and patted her on the back.

"I'm probably just silly about it," she said.

"No, you're not one bit silly. Besides, if you're silly about that, so am I, some way. That just sort of caught me off my guard, that about heaven, that's all."

"Well what can you say?"

"I'm Godd---I can't imagine, sweetheart, and I better just keep my mouth shut."

She frowned, smiled, laughed through her nose and urgently shook her head at him, all at once.

In both passages, Jay's opposition is implied rather than stated, and he even seems to be moving toward Mary's views. In the play, on the other hand, his disagreement is definite and articulate: he thinks (and says) that Mary should tell Rufus how babies are born, and that she should let him have the dreadful cap. In the adaptation, Jay loses something of fineness and complexity. The dramatic gain is a clarification of the issue, and a strong implication that Jay is right and Mary wrong. But to clarify an issue in the play that was ambiguous in the novel, and to assert a moral superiority in the play that was no moral superiority at all in the novel, but only a different moral tendency, is not only to coarsen the anagogy but to alter its substance, as we shall see later.

Another reduction is the illustrative action of the handshake. Jay instructs Rufus in the theory and practice of shaking hands (P2); the meaning of this action is powerfully reinforced when Rufus and Ralph

shake hands after Ralph's taunting (P4); it is reinforced again when Rufus shakes hands with the boys in Act II (P10); and again in the crucial scene in Act III when Rufus brags about his father's death (P15). Message: to Rufus, a handshake means that he has gained somebody's respect, and it is Jay who has taught him this. Jay appears positively as a glad-hander, and takes on some of the aura of Willie Loman. The dramatic gain is an illustrative action which focuses the whole issue of Rufus' need for status with his peers; but the loss here is immense. Not only has Jay lost dignity, but he has taught his son something that will not stand the test of experience, not even in the play: handshaking is not a sure sign of respect. Ralph shakes hands, not to show respect, but to placate Jay and Mary and to make Rufus feel better: his action of falling to his knees, pretending to be overwhelmed at the force of Rufus' grip, shows that he is playing games. And in Act III, the boys shake hands with Rufus because they are embarrassed: far from respecting him they go off making signs to one another that he is an imbecile.

There is yet another instance of a reduction of Jay (P6), one which seems to add nothing to the play. Mary stands behind Jay when Ralph telephones about their father, prompting him with common-sense questions such as has the doctor been sent for; in the novel (N3), Mary is still in bed and Jay asks the same questions on his own initiative. The result is the reduction of Jay to something like the stereotyped television father, who can't get through the simplest situation without the constant guidance of his wife. Possibly the purpose of the interpolation was to show Mary's cooperative spirit; but the effect is almost one of nagging, and reduces Mary as well as Jay.

In spite of the general coarsening of his character, the issue

of Jay's drinking is transferred faithfully: in both media, Jay has been a heavy drinker who has succeeded in bringing his drinking under control; but in neither are we ever sure whether Jay was drunk when he met with his accident.

Mary

In both media, Mary is an agon--that is, the episodes are presented as powerfully affecting her. In the play, she is the principal agon; in the novel, she shares the role with Rufus and, to some extent, with Catherine and the minor characters. Where in the character of Jay there has merely been an over-simplification and a reduction, in her case the transfer has resulted in a substantial alteration of character: in the novel, she is a far stronger and more fully formed person.

In both media, Mary is in the process of development, and in both there is a gulf between her and Jay. But in the novel, she understands the gulf much better, and has even come to terms with it: she knows (N5) that the gulf is her religion, and not Jay's insistence on a certain amount of autonomy and independence for himself. If she feels a slight anxiety about his drinking, on the whole she regards it as a thing of the past. In N15, when in the presence of the others she is fondly recollecting what she and Jay have done together that day, she remembers a thought she had about him that she is unwilling to share with her family: angry at Jay because he was so late and had not telephoned, it occurred to her that he might have been drinking. She thinks:

> And if he was, why what in the world of it. Let's hope if he was he really loved being, God bless him always. Always.
>
> And then a terrifying thought occurred to her, and she looked at Andrew. No, she thought, he wouldn't lie to me if it were so. No, I won't even ask it. I won't even imagine it. I just don't see how I could bear to live if that were so.
>
> But there he was, all that day, with Ralph. He must have.

> Well he probably did. That was no part of the promise. But not really drunk. Not so he couldn't navigate. Drive well.
>
> No.
>
> Oh, no.
>
> No I won't even dishonor his dear memory by asking. Not even Andrew in secret. No, I won't.
>
> And she thought with such exactness and with such love of her husband's face, and of his voice, and of his hands, and of his way of smiling so warmly even though his eyes never lost their sadness, that she succeeded in driving the other thought from her mind.

And Mary never thinks about Jay's drinking again.

The passage does illustrate Mary's disinclination to confront the truth about things, which in both media is brought out in the scenes concerning Rufus and her pregnancy. In the novel, it is further brought out in her attitude towards the purchase of the cap (she is more concerned that Rufus should show than feel enthusiasm about going shopping with Aunt Hannah, and that Rufus should have a suitable cap than with what he wants), and also in N6 when she tries to explain death to the children; in the play, the first of these scenes is partially transferred, the second is omitted. But her motive for avoiding the facts of life is clearer in the novel, even to herself: whenever she has difficulty in reconciling factual with spiritual truth, she ignores the factual in favor of the spiritual. In N5, she makes a clear decision to be faithful to her religion, even if it means widening the gulf between herself and Jay. In the novel, Jay's death has the effect of deepening her religious life and confirming her attachment to the church--her father even feels (p. 156) that she might "crawl into it like a hole and hide in it," and the reader is not sure he is wrong. In the play, her widowhood draws her away from the church toward a more naturalistic view of things--Jay's view (P19).

In the novel, then, Mary is a more emotionally mature woman, and

her loss establishes her character more firmly instead of modifying it. Furthermore, her character is stronger to begin with. A close comparison of the novel with the play will furnish many illustrations of this difference, but perhaps one example is sufficient here: in the novel, when Mary hears the bad news she asks for whisky, and in the course of the next few hours she drinks a great deal of it; but her behavior is decorous--there is none of the childish desperation expressed in the play when she says she intends to get drunk. Throughout this crucial scene, the novel makes much of her courage and unwavering resolution; in the play, the emphasis is on the suggestion that she is a hurt and bewildered child.

Besides being altered, Mary as well as Jay is coarsened in the adaptation. That the scene with Ralph on the day of the funeral, when she asks him if Jay was drunk, would be unthinkable to the Mary of the novel has already been illustrated by the above quotation: she will not even ask her brother, whom she trusts, not even in her own mind; surely she would not ask Ralph, whom she distrusts and dislikes, in the presence of the whole body of mourners. Her attempt to strike Ralph reduces the scene almost to a brawl, of which in the novel there is not the slightest suggestion. The dramatic purpose may have been to show that she was internalizing some of Jay's characteristics--his masculinity and directness as contrasted with her feminine gentleness and subtlety; but the general effect of the dramatist's treatment of Mary is to reduce her refinement of spirit to mere prissiness. In the play, all her little niceties are motivated by what others will think of her; in the novel, some of them indeed are, but these are balanced and deepened by her earnest self-questioning, particularly in N5.

Rufus

The differences in Rufus have already been discussed. To recapitulate, he is a younger boy and his character is less specified.

Minor Characters

Here the loss of character is very great. Aunt Hannah perhaps comes through the best. Her respect for Rufus' integrity, her special love for Mary, her selflessness, even her youthful loss, are all illustrated in the play. The only element not transferred is the momentary shaking of her faith (N17); and even this might be partially conveyed by facial expression at various points in Act II.

Ralph too is rendered pretty fully, although again the effect is more stereotyped and less specific: as but one example of this, his moment of insight in the play (P4) is perfunctory and unconvincing, like any ordinary alcoholic's; in the novel, he really does see himself, and for a brief moment does take on full human dignity. However, his self-loathing, his maudlin sentimentality, his jealousy of Jay, his wife's and his son's fear of him, are all in the play. He is never outspoken or brutal in the novel, but the reader is made aware that Sally and his son are afraid of him (p. 70). Possibly his taunting of Rufus strikes a note false to the character of the Ralph of the novel, whose chief concern was to make himself loved and respected--in the novel, it was Uncle Ted who teased Rufus. However, the dramatist evidently wanted to include the teasing scene, and obviously did not want to introduce a new character for no other purpose than that: he felt it essential that some grown-up should tease Rufus in his parents' presence, and that his parents should come to his defense; and he concluded that Ralph was the most suitable

one for this purpose. The episode does not seem to me really to distort Ralph's character--he was rougher in background and habit of life than the Lynches, and it is not inappropriate for the dramatist to bring out this difference by having Ralph tease Rufus in a way that his own parents never would and in fact will not permit.

In the novel the only direct confrontation between Ralph and Jay occurs when Ralph telephones about their father's illness; in the play, there is also the scene (P5) where the brothers talk about drinking. It is upon this scene that the dramatist relies to render the peculiar quality of the relation between the two: they are both sons of the same parents, both married men with children, both tempted by drink; but where Jay is a reliable and helpful son, Ralph is a burdensome one, though not less dear; where Jay is much loved as a husband and father, Ralph is an object of fear; and where Ralph is hopelessly enslaved to alcohol, Jay has overcome his addiction. All this is rendered in P5. The play also strongly stresses another element in the relationship: in spite of Jay's great superiority to his brother, he is strongly influenced by him.

This influence is only hinted at in the novel. There is the passage where Mary is thinking about the possibility that Jay may have been drinking before he started to drive home: "But there he was, all that day, with Ralph. He must have." And other, subtler, suggestions of Ralph's influence occur, such as Mary's refusal to let Ralph be his brother's undertaker, presumably because of her resentment of this influence. In the play, on the other hand, the point is brought out early (Mary's "You won't let Ralph influence you?" in P3), and stressed thereafter throughout, until Mary's last word on the subject in P18, when she asks Andrew to make sure that Ralph gets home safely. The difference

is that in the play, Mary acutely fears and resents Ralph's influence until she learns to accept it after Jay's death; while in the novel, she has ceased to really fear it years ago, and insofar as it still exists, prefers not to dwell upon it in her mind.

Mary's brother Andrew appears in the novel as a lover of truth and beauty and a militant anti-clerical--in fact, as a Platonic poet, both gadfly and dangerous revolutionary. He is more richly developed in the novel, but the play does present the crude outline of the type (he paints portraits, refers to Jay's beautiful physique, wants to spit in God's face, is helplessly outraged by Jay's sudden death.) There is no portrait in the novel, but its introduction into the play does not, I believe, do violence to his character as Agee presented it. The dramatist uses it, not only for characterization of Andrew, but to heighten the dramatic effect of the telephone call to Mary informing her of the accident: the whole Lynch family is admiring the portrait at the time the phone rings, but their attention is gradually drawn away from it to what Mary is saying; the device serves to fix the audience's attention upon this crucial conversation. Also, there is a fine effect of dramatic irony in that the family is admiring the portrait, a birthday present to Mary, of the husband whom she has just lost without yet knowing it.

What is largely lost in the play is the profound influence Andrew had upon Rufus. As we read the novel, knowing that it is autobiographical, knowing also that Agee was a superb artist who lost his religious faith and drank himself to death, Andrew's character takes on a portentous weight. In the play, focusing as it does on Mary rather than Rufus, there is neither time nor occasion for stressing Andrew's influence on Rufus.

In the minor characters--the elder Folletts and Lynches--the loss

is greatest of all. In the novel they are vivid and distinct, while in the play they are flat characters, almost props: Jessie Follett exists only to inquire after her husband's comfort, Catherine Lynch only to raise her ear trumpet and ask if the other characters are in the bathroom, Joel only to suppress his irritation with Catherine. In the novel, although not much space is given to either of them, both Jessie and Catherine are fully developed characters: Jessie is a woman full of wisdom and understanding, with a deep compassion for her ailing husband, her alcoholic son, and even for Mary's predicament in regard to Jay; Catherine's gallantry in the face of her deafness and partial blindness, and of the inevitably irritating effect her presence must produce on all the people she loves most, makes pity for her seem presumptuous--her yielding her natural place as Mary's comforter to Hannah on the night of the accident is an act of authentic heroism, and is very moving. In the play, she is reduced to a common stock character--the unfeeling hypochondriac.

The effect of this loss is a general chilling of the family feeling. The pervading atmosphere in the novel is of deep love, and all the resignation and endurance that is brought into play is based on the underlying conviction of belonging to a community whose members are bound together by close sympathy and compassion; they can bear the loss of Jay only because he is somehow still a member of this community, both loving and beloved. In the play, most of the loving action, after Jay is gone, is performed by Hannah, until Mary is finally able to take it upon herself. This is a crucial difference, and brings us now to a comparison of the anagogies.

Differences in Anagogy

Taking into consideration and weighing the episodes, the

characterization, the ideas expressed and the diction used, as well as the visual effects in both novel and play, it seems that there is a considerable difference in their anagogies, suggested in the first place by their respective titles: the action in A Death in the Family (where, because of Jay's untimely death, nobody does get home) is the effect upon a family of the death of one of its members (variously husband, father, son, brother, brother-in-law, etc.); it is the story of a loss; the action in All The Way Home is the gradual incorporation of the character of the lost Jay into the character of Mary--it is the story of the psychological recovery of a loss.

A Death in the Family is an autobiographical novel; thus, although it is a work of art complete in itself, some reference to Agee's life and to others of his autobiographical works may serve to clarify some of its elements. The Morning Watch (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1951) shows that as a boy Agee's mind was thoroughly oriented toward the religion of his mother; the Letters to Father Flye (New York, Braziller, 1962) show that as he grew older he turned from this orientation. In A Death in the Family, none of Mary's family except Aunt Hannah had any sympathy with her religion: it outraged her brother, her father held it in contempt, and the rest ignored it. She herself felt that it came between her and Jay--there are several instances of her finding it difficult to accept something in Jay, because of various elements in her own character which she felt to be connected with her own religious life.

But there are no indications that Jay found Mary difficult to accept: although her theology had evidently no meaning for him (he was never baptized), he seems to have seen that her religious life was essential to her nature, and to have been fully able to accept that nature without feeling any pressure to share her views. The hang-up appears to have

been Mary's, not his. For her, the conflict between the claims of her religion and the claims of her love for Jay was an unresolved issue. Jay's untimely death brought the conflict to an unnatural and unsatisfactory end, as though a prizefighter had been shot dead in the ring: religion had won by default, not by victory.

The implication in the novel is that Jay, while he lived, served as a corrective and balance for the excesses of Mary's Anglicanism (surely he would never have permitted Father Jackson to bully and torment his family, nor would he have permitted Rufus to be sent away from home to an Anglican boarding school at the age of ten). From Rufus' point of view, his father's presence in the family life made his mother's religion tolerable to him: not only was his father his ally and support against his mother's rigidities, but Mary's love for the living Jay gave her a medium through which she could live her religion in a way that benefited little Rufus--she could work it out in acts of love toward her husband and children--in other words, in creating a happy family life. When she had only the dead Jay left to love, things were different: before very long she seems to have been constrained to send Rufus away (vide The Morning Watch)--that is, to destory his family life altogether.

The novel stresses the tragic quality of the action in a number of ways. First, there is a strong contrast between the atmosphere in Part III (the day of the funeral) and that of the earlier parts of the book. Until the funeral, the whole story, including Rufus' search for "who I am," is an explication of the various bonds that hold a family together (the family scene the night of Jay's death is indeed the most impressive example of this solidarity; but the author makes it clear (pp. 304-307) that it was on the day of Jay's funeral, not of his death,

that Mary's life without her husband truly began). In Part III, the subject shifts to the loosening of those bonds: Rufus betrays his father, he and Catherine quarrel, Aunt Hannah, who usually understands him so well, is angry with him for no reason; Father Jackson torments both of the children and torments their mother as well, and there is no one to protect them from what he does to them; little Catherine is left alone and frightened; in the very last paragraph, Rufus wishes to ask his uncle, "Why do you hate Mama?"

Then the funeral, with its attendant ceremony and panoply, is given a tremendous weight: it occupies ninety of the 340 pages of the book. Thus, the total effect is far heavier, graver, and more sorrowful than in the play. It is also more ritualistic: it is as though the spontaneous ebb and flow of family interchange were thickening and growing sluggish, slowed down by the rigid and formal channels of religious observance. God becomes death instead of life, particularly for Rufus (again, this is strongly brought out in The Morning Watch)--a death with which Rufus' mother is somehow involved, to which he has somehow lost her. Andrew comments (and it is this comment that makes Rufus want to ask him why he hates Mama):

> "Genuflecting, and ducking, and bowing and scraping, and basting themselves with the sign of the Cross, and all that disgusting hocus-pocus, and you come to one simple, single act of Christian charity and what happens? The rules of the Church forbid it. He's not a member of our little club.
>
> "I tell you, Rufus, it's enough to make a man puke up his soul."
>
> "That--that butterfly has got more of God in him than Jackson will ever see for the rest of eternity."

And this attitude of Andrew's toward the Church was the one that James Rufus Agee could never shake off throughout his whole adult life, although it was latent for some time. But in vain were all his years of prayer and dedication and hard studying, in vain his deep love for his

mother, in vain what might be called his adoption by Father Flye; as he matured, all his concern for human suffering, his artist's sensitivity, his dignity of spirit, impelled him away from the Church--"Mother Church." To the crucial question of Agee's life--"Why does Uncle Andrew (the sensitive artist) hate Mama (the Church)?"--there was only one person who could ever have provided an answer; and that person was untimely and irrevocably dead.

The hiatus left in Agee by his repudiation of the Church was filled, it seems, by his alcoholism--instead of being enslaved, as Donne puts it, by God, he was enslaved by drink. The farther he withdrew from the Church, the more helpless he appeared to feel about his drinking. In a letter to Father Flye written about two years before his death (February 12, 1953, p. 210) he writes:

> On the possibility of a few days in one of the Trappist monasteries I have to be vague. . . though the idea deeply attracts me . . . I also feel quite shy of it, in ways I imagine you will understand. Most of the ways I feel shy of it are, of course, simply the reverse-coin of the reasons I am attracted. One of the ways is apart from those and may well seem (or for that matter be) shameful and absurd: I am by now much more deeply addicted to alcohol than at any time before, I can remember. Yes, I am supposed to drink two drinks a day at most, but I have yet to succeed in that, except maybe once every three or four days. The effects of sobriety are intoxicatingly rewarding, but that is beside the point. Unless I should have broken the addiction, or would have gotten into a degree of control which still seems unlikely, I am afraid that several days of abstinence would bring me to such a pitch of tension that my stay would be much less like the relative apprehension of all that might be good that I imagine, than hell on earth. But I may really have done better, within a few weeks; work you care to do, can do wonders for you which you can't do yourself. Will you, anyway, let me know when exactly your spring vacation falls? I realize by your reply to a previous letter that it would mean a great deal to you, and that you feel it might to me, and I know that myself: so I am sorrier than, apparently, I know how to convey, to feel so unsure about actually doing it, as I do.

This passage seems to express a conflict in Agee's mind between the Church and drink. His dead father was a drinker, and not a church member;

and there was the doubt, suggested in the novel, as to whether Jay had been drinking on the day he met with the accident--a doubt much strengthened by Jay's "if I ever get drunk again, I'll kill myself." It is as if Agee, in order to preserve within himself the living image of his father which is so vital in the development of a man, had to repudiate the Church which had repudiated his father; and had also to fight over again the battle his father had fought against drink.

It is doubtful whether Agee himself saw the full ramifications of the connection between alcohol and God in his own consciousness; but a psychoanalyst would be quick to point out the unconscious association the two had for him. In a letter a month later (March 4, p. 221) Agee says: "I begin to suspect. . . that the only way out. . . is total abstinence; which as a prospect, is so threatening that I keep trying, instead, to cut down."--the loss of drink would be, for him, the death of God. This unconscious association of alcohol and God is quite general, as both fictional and non-fictional literature on the subject abundantly shows. As they say in Alcoholics Anonymous, to give up drinking is to make up one's mind to renounce Paradise. The words of the Anglican liturgy itself bring out the connection, as Agee brings out in The Morning Watch (p. 32): "Blood of Christ, inebriate me:" there follows a long paragraph on Rufus' childish confusion between drunkenness and divine inspiration, complicated of course by the circumstances of his father's death.

Agee wrote A Death in the Family over a period of many years that extended right up until the time of his death; thus, he was working on it all during his worst sufferings from his drinking. Even a reader unacquainted with his life might suspect, if he were well acquainted with alcoholism and its symptoms, that the chapter about Ralph (N7) is as

autobiographical as the parts about Rufus: it describes the feelings of an alcoholic rather than his conduct--that is, Ralph is seen from the inside, not the outside--and it is hard to deny the impression that Agee himself has suffered from what he so particularly describes. Ralph's function in the story is to heighten the tragedy: he, who is so helpless against drink that he thinks he ought never to have been born, remains alive while his brother, who has conquered the addiction, dies. Similarly Agee, who is also helpless and who loves death (vide his description of his plan for the Eldorado scene in Candide--Letters, p. 217), remains alive, while his father, who was no longer an alcoholic and who loved life, has long been dead.

Moreover, one has the impression that with Jay dead, Ralph's one remote possibility of cure is gone. And although Agee himself, as we have seen in the Letters, had not entirely given up hope of cure, one feels that there was some strength or wisdom in his father (or at least in his image of his father) that was lacking in himself, but which he might have managed to absorb if his father had lived. The story of Agee's life, as he apparently saw it, is that his father died when he was six years old. His own functioning as a husband and father was severely limited (Letters, pp. 64, 102, 110, 125. 130, 140, 173, 183, 198) and his attitude toward potency (fertility and masculine love) is suggested in the passages about urination in A Death in the Family and the bed-wetting in The Morning Watch. Again, instead of poetry and prose fiction, he wrote articles for the Luce publications; and instead of committing himself to God, he was committed to drink. It seems that as a result of his father's death, some principle of virility and maturity remained forever beyond his grasp. In A Death in the Family, the same is true of Ralph--"But I'm not a man. I'm a baby. Ralph is the baby. Ralph is the baby" (Death, p. 70).

Agee not only associates his father's death with drink and drink with God, but he also makes a direct connection between death and God. For Rufus' mother, as we have seen, there was a conflict between love of her husband and love of God; and Rufus felt on the day of the funeral that he was beginning to lose his mother to God and to death. Since Jay could apparently accept his wife's religious commitment, Rufus might have learned, in time, to accept it too. But he wasn't given time. And moreover, he became its victim. As things were, he never really understood about God; and all his mother's attempts to explain only thickened the obscurity (vide the pregnancy passages in Death, the passage about Victoria, and especially the conversation in N6 about death and the freedom of the will). His life at St. Andrew's, in spite of Father Flye and all the religious instruction he received, did not really improve matters: he still had no satisfactory answer to that most pressing of questions--"Who am I?" He had thought that he was the beloved son of the Follett-Lynch family, in whom they were well pleased. Why then, besides losing his father, did he have to be sent away from his mother and sister? A passage from The Morning Watch poignantly illustrates his feelings about this:

> Jesus, I my Cross have taken. . . all to leave and follow Thee; destitute, despis'd, forsaken, were words especially dear to him; Thou from hence my All shall be. As he sang that he felt: nobody else wants me; and did his best to believe it, even of his mother. . . Perish ev'ry fond ambition, he would sing magnanimously; (no I won't become a naturalist; I'll never explore the sources of the Amazon; I'll never even own a monkey, or be junior tennis champion); then tears and their subdual rewarded him: Yet how rich is my condition (never to live at home again, never to be loved or even liked). . . He even schemed to intensify his always all but annihilating homesickness to the utmost possible, asking permission of the Master of the Day the more often, that it be the more curtly or impatiently or, at best, contemptuously refused; watching his mother's cottage, the one place he was almost never allowed to go, sometimes by the hour;. . . relishing the fact that only he knew of the

> miserableness of that watch; sometimes openly, relishing the fact that she knew, and others could see, and that even though she knew, she would try to ignore him and stay out of his sight, and that when at last she could ignore him no longer, she would hurt him by trying to be stern with him as she told him to go away, and would sharpen his unhappiness into agony by her idea of a sensible explanation why this senseless cruelty had to be law. "Because, dear, mother thinks it's best for you not to be too near her, all the more because you miss her so much." "Because your father--isn't with us." "Because Mother thinks you need to be among other boys Richard. In charge of men." And worst of all: "I know how hard it is now but I know that when you're older you'll understand why I did it, and thank me for it." Thank her! his heart sneered now, in bitter paroxysm. And for a moment so brief that the realization did not stay with him, he felt hatred and contempt for his mother, for her belief in submissiveness and for her telling him, on certain infuriating occasions, that it is only through submitting bravely and cheerfully to unhappiness that we can learn God's Will, and how most truly to be good. (pp. 40-42)

For Agee, then, God meant death--the death of his father, the death of his own self-affirmation, the death of the happy mother-son relationship. Perhaps it is the persistent identification of death with God that removes much of the element of fear from the tragedy: Jay is gone, and not a member of the family but suffers a grievous and irrevocable loss; and there is no suggestion of resurrection or rebirth. Nevertheless, the beauty of the novel is of so rich and quiet a kind, so full of dignity, that we are not afraid or horrified. Agee seems to have been more than half in love with easeful death, but unlike Keats, he could not shake off its allurements and turn his face to life: he died at the age of forty-five, evidently of an uncontrollable appetite for death.

To sum up: the action of A Death in the Family is a loss: the bonds that hold the family together are loosened, the Church fails, drink is introduced as an ominous threat, and death triumphs decisively over life.

In All The Way Home, in spite of Mr. Mosel's great skill in incorporating so many elements of the novel into the play, the anagogy is completely different. Here, death and birth are presented as integral and complementary parts of a total life process. Jay is not altogether lost to the family, but is to some degree internalized by his wife and son: Mary takes on the responsibility for Ralph, for the elder Folletts, and for the education of Rufus; Rufus attempts to assert himself towards the boys in the street. Mary in particular changes her attitude toward birth: the last scene is her telling Rufus about the child that is yet to be born, in the way that Jay would have told him (P19). There is a strong implication that Jay lives on in Mary, in Rufus, and in the unborn child; and in general that the constructive elements in dead men's characters do survive them, by a process of absorption into the characters of the bereaved family.

Of these two anagogies, is one better? Although perhaps any anagogy can be great in the hands of a great artist, yet some anagogies do seem at first blush less trite and more challenging than others. Surely the idea that loss is irreparable strikes deeper chords in us than the idea that death is a part of a beneficent cycle. The playwright may have altered the anagogy for a number of reasons: because the alteration might be more pleasing to the public, or because of the technical difficulty of rendering the massive funeral scenes. But we cannot but regret the loss of a great closing scene: Rufus standing alone before his father's grave, saying, "Why does Uncle Andrew hate Mama?"

CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT GATSBY

At the time All The Way Home was produced, dramatization of novels had become enormously popular. All through the forties and fifties, the Ten Best Plays list was likely to include at least one adaptation. Not uncommonly, an adaptation received the year's highest awards. The trend had shifted in two decades from trying to find stories that would make successful plays to trying to dramatize novels of superior quality. The critical estimation of Agee's work had risen steadily since his death in 1954, and by 1961 the time was evidently ripe for a dramatization.

But in 1926, when American drama was just beginning to come into its own and Broadway still flourished on vast numbers of incredibly trashy plays, no adaptation of a novel had ever received a prize, or even been included in the Ten Best Plays, although many had had considerable commercial success. The Great Gatsby (photostatic copy of unpublished typescript) is one of the earliest attempts to dramatize a first-class novel. It is true that the status of Fitzgerald's novel was then rather ambiguous: Fitzgerald was a fantastically popular young writer held in generally low estimation by the critics; The Great Gatsby (see Bibliography) had had more critical acclaim than anything he'd written before, but on the other hand was much less widely read; yet it was about the wicked Jazz Age, a theme of compelling fascination for the bourgeoisie of the time. All in all, we

may doubt whether Owen Davis supposed that he was dramatizing a classic: from the result, and in the context of his other work, we have the impression that he was simply trying to write a successful play.

The Novel

(Passages from the novel that have been interpolated into the play are underlined.)

Chapter I

N1 a Nick Carraway, the narrator, presents his credentials:

> In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since.
> "Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone," he told me, "just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had."

Nick describes himself as the sort of person people tell things to, often more things than he wants to hear. However, "Reserving judgments is a matter of infinite hope. I am still a little afraid of missing something if I forget that, as my father snobbishly suggested, and I snobbishly repeat, a sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth."

However, the story he is about to relate has stretched his tolerance to the breaking point: "When I came back from the East last autumn, I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever. . . Only Gatsby. . . was exempt from my reaction--Gatsby, who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn. . . . there was <u>something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life. . . an extraordinary gift for hope</u>, (II 6) a romantic readiness. . . Gatsby turned out all right at the end; it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that

temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men."

b Nick describes how, restless after serving in the Great War, he came East to learn the bond business and settled himself in a summer cottage in the Long Island village of West Egg, next to a "colossal mansion" inhabited by Gatsby, as yet a stranger to him. Across the bay, in the more fashionable East Egg, live his cousin Daisy and her "enormously wealthy" husband, Tom Buchanan. ". . . the history of the summer really begins on the evening I drove over there to have dinner. . ." Tom is on the porch, and Nick describes him: "sturdy. . . hard mouth and a supercilious manner. Two shining arrogant eyes. . . the enormous power of that body. . . a cruel body." Yet "I always had the impression that he approved of me and wanted me to like him with some harsh, defiant wistfulness of his own." The two men go indoors to join Daisy and Jordan Baker, whom Nick has not met before. The ensuing scene conveys Nick's sense of the charm of these upper-crust women, particularly of Daisy. While they are at dinner Tom is called to the telephone, and Daisy soon follows him. Jordan tells Nick that "Tom's got some woman in New York." (I 7) Later Daisy tells Nick how miserable and bitter she has become; but "The instant her voice broke off, ceasing to compel my attention, my belief, I felt the basic insincerity of what she had said."

c After some general conversation, Nick leaves. "Their interest rather touched me and made them seem less remotely rich--nevertheless, I was confused and a little disgusted as I drove away. It seemed to me that the thing for Daisy to do was to rush out of the house, child in arms--but apparently there were no such intentions in her head." When he gets home he sees a man, presumably Gatsby, standing on the lawn of

the neighboring mansion. "I decided to call to him. Miss Baker had mentioned him at dinner, and that would do for an introduction. But I didn't call to him, for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone--he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, as far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward--and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock. When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness."

Chapter II

N2 Nick describes the ashy waste land by the drawbridge half way between West Egg and New York ". . . above the gray land. . . you perceive, after a moment, the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg. . . Evidently some wild wag of an oculist set them there to fatten his practice in the borough of Queens, and then sank down himself into eternal blindness, or forgot them and moved away. But his eyes. . . brood over the solemn dumping ground." It is here that Tom's mistress, Myrtle Wilson, lives with her husband. One afternoon as Tom and Nick are going up to New York on the train, Tom says he wants Nick to meet his girl. They stop at Wilson's shop (he is a car dealer). Tom greets him jovially, and surreptitiously arranges for Myrtle to come with them to the apartment in New York that Tom keeps for her. "It does her good to get away," says Tom to Nick when they are alone. "Doesn't her husband object?" asks Nick. "Wilson? He thinks she goes to see her sister in New York. He's so dumb he doesn't know he's alive." The three go into New York, and there is a drunken party with Myrtle's friends at her apartment.

Chapter III

N3 a Nick goes to his first Gatsby party. He has been invited, but most of the other guests have not. Another seedy orgy, except that this one is very expensive. It is not until half way through the evening that Nick meets his host, although he hears much gossip about him: "Somebody told me they thought he killed a man once;" and even then he doesn't know at first who he is. Gatsby, in contrast to his guests, is polite and pleasant. Jordan Baker is there, and in the course of the evening a servant comes to say Gatsby wants to speak to her. Returning after about an hour, she says: "It was. . . simply amazing. . . But I swore I wouldn't tell it and here I am tantalizing you." She asks Nick to come and see her, and leaves. The party continues to its noisily drunken end.

b Nick establishes his detachment from the events he has described: ". . . they were merely casual events in a crowded summer, and, until much later, they absorbed me infinitely less than my personal affairs." He begins to see a good deal of Jordan: "I wasn't actually in love, but I felt a sort of tender curiosity." But he recognizes that "She was incurably dishonest. . . It made no difference to me. Dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply." At a house party, they have "a curious conversation about driving a car." She is "a rotten driver," and doesn't care. "Suppose you met somebody just as careless as yourself," Nick suggests. "I hope I never will," she answers. "I hate careless people. That's why I like you." Nick ends the chapter: "Every one suspects himself of at least one of the cardinal virtues, and this is mine: I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known."

Chapter IV

N4 a More about the Gatsby parties. A catalogue of the guests, of which the following is a sample: ". . . the Hornbeams and the Willie Voltaires, and a whole clan named Blackbuck, who always gathered in a corner and flipped up their noses like goats at whosoever came near. And the Ismays and the Chrysties (or rather Hubert Auerbach and Mr. Chrystie's wife), and Edgar Beaver, whose hair, they say, turned cotton-white one winter afternoon for no good reason at all."

b Gatsby drives Nick into New York for lunch. Gatsby gives an obviously fictitious account of himself, but produces some authentic war medals and a snapshot of himself at Oxford. He wishes to make a request of Nick, which Jordan will explain to him at tea that afternoon.

c Lunch. Nick is introduced to Meyer Wolfsheim, who tells how his old and dear friend Rosy Rosenthal was fatally shot "three times in his full belly" in the old Metropole. Gatsby excuses himself to make one of his mysterious telephone calls. In his absence, Wolfsheim praises him warmly: "there's the kind of man you'd like to take home and introduce to your mother and sister." (I 1) After Wolfsheim leaves, Gatsby identifies him as "a gambler. He's the man who fixed the World's Series back in 1919." Nick is shocked: "It never occurred to me that one man could start to play with the faith of fifty million people."

d Tea with Jordan. Jordan's first-person narrative. She tells of Daisy and Gatsby's early love affair while Gatsby was stationed at Camp Taylor near Louisville. But after Gatsby goes overseas, Daisy marries Tom Buchanan; Jordan is a bridesmaid. On the day before the wedding, she finds Daisy in her room, drunk, crying, and saying she's "change' her mind." But "Next day at five o'clock she married Tom Buchanan without

so much as a shiver, and started off on a three months' trip to the South Seas. I saw them in Santa Barbara when they came back, and I thought I'd never seen a girl so mad about her husband. . . That was in August." A week after Jordan leaves Santa Barbara, Tom is in an automobile accident with his mistress--"one of the chambermaids in the Santa Barbara Hotel." Tom has had mistresses ever since. Jordan doesn't know if Daisy has had lovers or not, but suspects that she may. Six weeks ago, Daisy "heard the name Gatsby for the first time in years."

e Nick and Jordan drive through Central Park in a victoria. Jordan tells Nick that Gatsby bought his house in West Egg "so that Daisy would be just across the bay." "He wants to know if you'll invite Daisy to your house some afternoon and then let him come over. . . She's not to know about it. Gatsby doesn't want her to know. You're just supposed to invite her to tea." It seems to Nick a trifling request. He begins to make love to Jordan.

Chapter V

N5 a Daisy and Gatsby come to tea at Nick's cottage. Gatsby takes them to see his house, and Daisy cries as Gatsby displays a great pile of his shirts. "'They're such beautiful shirts,' she sobbed, her voice muffled in the thick fold. 'It makes me sad because I've never seen such--such beautiful shirts before.'"

b Gatsby and Daisy renew their love affair as Klipspringer plays jazz tunes on the piano. Nick leaves them there together.

Chapter VI

N6 a Nick narrates Gatsby's past. He began as Jay Gatz on the shores of Lake Superior "as a clam-digger and a salmon-fisher or in any other

capacity that brought him food and bed." He "knew women early," but cared nothing for them. Already he was consumed by an undefined vision: ". . . his heart was in a constant, turbulent riot. The most grotesque and fantastic conceits haunted him in his bed at night. A universe of ineffable gaudiness spun itself out in his brain while the clock ticked on the wash-stand and the moon soaked with wet light his tangled clothes upon the floor. . . he was still searching for something to do on the day that Dan Cody's yacht dropped anchor in the shallows alongshore." Cody, seventy-five years old, was a prospector and a drunkard. He employed Gatsby "in a vague personal capacity--while he remained with Cody he was in turn steward, mate, skipper, secretary, and even jailor, for Dan Cody sober knew what lavish doings Dan Cody drunk might soon be about, and he provided for such contingencies by reposing more and more trust in Gatsby." After five years Cody died, leaving Gatsby with "his singularly appropriate education; the vague contour of Jay Gatsby had filled out to the substantiality of a man." Nick at this point in the narrative has not seen Gatsby for several weeks. He drops by at Gatsby's one Sunday afternoon, when "by chance somebody brought Tom Buchanan in for a drink." Tom is hostile: "I wonder where in the devil he met Daisy. By God, I may be old-fashioned in my ideas, but women run around too much these days to suit me. They meet all kinds of crazy fish." Tom's friend Mrs. Sloane invites Gatsby to dinner that night, but as he goes to get his overcoat they all mount their horses and leave without him.

N6 b The second Gatsby party, to which Daisy and Tom come. Tom's hostility grows: "'Who is this Gatsby anyhow?" demanded Tom suddenly. "some big bootlegger?' 'Where'd you hear that?' I inquired. 'I didn't hear it, I imagined it. A lot of these newly rich people are just big

bootleggers, you know.'" Daisy, "except for the half-hour she'd been alone with Gatsby," is not having a good time. She is "appalled by West Egg, this unprecedented 'place' that Broadway had begotten upon a Long Island fishing village. . . ." Nick stays after the other guests have gone, and is made aware of Gatsby's intentions: "He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: 'I never loved you.' After she had obliterated four years with that sentence they could decide upon the more practical measures to be taken. One of them was that, after she was free, they were to go back to Louisville and be married from her house--just as it were five years ago. 'And she doesn't understand,' he said. 'She used to be able to understand. We'd sit for hours--' . . . 'I wouldn't ask too much of her,' I ventured. 'You can't repeat the past.' 'Can't repeat the past?' he cried incredulously. 'Why of course you can!'" Gatsby talks about the past--an autumn night when he was walking with Daisy in Louisville: ". . . they came to a place where there were no trees and the sidewalk was white with moonlight. They stopped here and turned toward each other. . . The quiet lights of the house were humming out into the darkness and there was a stir and bustle among the stars (P 3). Out of the corner of his eye Gatsby saw that the blocks of the sidewalks really formed a ladder and mounted to a secret place above the trees--he could climb to it, if he climbed alone, (P 3) . . . His heart beat faster and faster as Daisy's white face came up to his own. (P 3) He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God. So he waited, listening for a moment longer to the tuning-fork that had been struck upon a star. (P 3) Then he kissed her. At his lips' touch she blossomed for him like a flower (P 3)

and the incarnation was complete."

Chapter VII

N7 a Nick discovers that Gatsby has let all his servants go because "I wanted somebody who wouldn't gossip. Daisy comes over quite often--in the afternoons." He has replaced them with protégés of Wolfsheim's. "So the whole caravansary had fallen in like a card house at the disapproval in her eyes," comments Nick. Daisy invites Nick and Gatsby to lunch with Jordan. It is a broiling hot day. There is a tense, almost hysterical scene in which Tom discovers by the way Daisy speaks to Gatsby that she loves him. Restlessly Daisy suggests that they all go into town. Tom proposes that he shall drive Daisy in Gatsby's car, while Gatsby takes his; but Daisy goes with Gatsby, and Tom drives Jordan and Nick in Gatsby's car. They stop at Wilson's to get gas. Wilson is ill: "He had discovered that Myrtle had some sort of life apart from him in another world, and the shock had made him physically sick. . . Tom. . . had made a parallel discovery less than an hour before--and it occurred to me that there was no difference between men. . . so profound as the difference between the sick and the well. Wilson was so sick that he looked guilty, unforgivably guilty--as if he just got some poor girl with child." Wilson wants to make a deal with Tom about a car: he wants money so that he can take Myrtle away.

b The pressure is on Tom: "There is no confusion like the confusion of a simple mind, and as we drove away Tom was feeling the hot whips of panic. His wife and his mistress, until an hour ago secure and inviolate, were slipping precipitately from his control." They all check into a suite in the Plaza, and after some badinage the battle between Tom and

Gatsby begins. Eventually it ends in Gatsby's utter rout: "I glanced at Daisy, who was standing terrified between Gatsby and her husband. . . . Then I turned back to Gatsby--and was startled at his expression. He looked--and this is said in all contempt for the babbled slander of his garden--as if he had killed a man. For a moment the set of his face could be described in just that fantastic way. . .'Please, Tom! I can't stand this any more.' Her frightened eyes told that whatever intentions, whatever courage she had had, were definitely gone. 'You two start on home, Daisy,' said Tom. 'In Mr. Gatsby's car.' She looked at Tom, alarmed now, but he insisted with magnanimous scorn. 'Go on. He won't annoy you. I think he realizes that his presumptuous little flirtation is over.' They were gone, without a word, snapped out, made accidental, isolated, like ghosts, even from our pity." As Tom, Nick and Jordan begin the drive back to the country (Tom and Gatsby are now each driving his own car), Nick remembers that it is his thirtieth birthday. Again he makes love to Jordan as "we drove on toward death through the cooling twilight."

N7 c The narrative continues as Nick's account of the testimony of "the young Greek, Michaelis, who ran the coffee joint beside the ashheaps" and who was the principal witness at the inquest. Strolling over to Wilson's garage on the afternoon of the accident, he found Wilson sick and shaking with jealousy, determined to take his wife away, suspicious of every man who might have had any contact with her. Later Michaelis hears the Wilsons quarreling; Myrtle runs out into the road, waving and shouting at a passing car. The car runs over her and kills her, and drives on without stopping.

d Tom and his passengers come upon the scene of the accident.

Wilson, in deep shock, is nevertheless aware that the car that ran over Myrtle is the same one Tom was driving earlier in the afternoon--Gatsby's. Tom makes Wilson understand that it is not his car and that he was not driving it at the time of the accident. He arranges for someone to stay with Wilson, and he and Nick and Jordan drive on toward home. "In a little while I heard a low husky sob, and saw that the tears were overflowing down his face. 'That God damned coward!' he whimpered. 'He didn't even stop his car.'"

N7 e The group arrive at the Buchanans' house, and see that Daisy is home. Tom says he will order a taxi to take Nick home, and suggests that he and Jordan go to the kitchen and get some supper. Jordan urges him to come in, but "I'd be damned if I'd go in; I'd had enough of all of them for one day, and suddenly that included Jordan too." As he waits outside for his taxi, Gatsby steps out from the bushes. He tells Nick that Daisy was driving, "but of course I'll say I was." He intends to stay on the spot until he is sure that Daisy is all right. Nick goes back to the house to see what's happening: "Daisy and Tom were sitting opposite each other at the kitchen table, with a plate of cold fried chicken between them, and two bottles of ale. He was talking intently across the table at her, and in his earnestness his hand had fallen upon and covered her own. Once in a while she looked up at him and nodded agreement. They weren't happy, and neither of them had touched the chicken or the ale--and yet they weren't unhappy either. There was an unmistakable air of natural intimacy about the picture, and anybody would have said that they were conspiring together." Nick tries to get Gatsby to come home, but he refuses. So Nick leaves him "standing there in the moonlight--watching over nothing."

Chapter VIII

N8 a Nick cannot sleep. Toward dawn Gatsby comes home, and Nick goes over to his house. He warns him that he had better leave town, since his car will be traced. But Gatsby will not leave until he knows what Daisy is going to do. "He was clutching at some last hope and I couldn't bear to shake him free." Gatsby tells Nick about how he fell in love with Daisy, and of their month in Louisville together before he went overseas. (Gatsby's narrative is not directly quoted, but is given to the reader in Nick's words.) Her house was "as casual a thing to her as his tent out at camp was to him." (P3). There was "a hint of bedrooms upstairs more beautiful and cool than other bedrooms" (P3).

N8 b Gatsby continues. Daisy was in love with him too, he says. He describes their last afternoon together before he went abroad.

c Gatsby continues. After his departure, Daisy gradually yielded to the pressure to have her future life decided. When Tom Buchanan came to Louisville and wanted to marry her, she consented. Her letter reached Gatsby while he was still overseas.

d The sun has come up. Gatsby concludes his story. "I don't think she ever loved him," he says; and later, "In any case, it was just personal." Nick the narrator comments, "What could you make of that, except to suspect some intensity in his conception of the affair that couldn't be measured?" Gatsby describes his "miserable but irresistible journey to Louisville on the last of his army pay" while Tom and Daisy were still on their wedding trip. Nick and Gatsby have breakfast. Nick prepares to go to work, and Gatsby says he intends to swim in his pool that day. He is waiting for Daisy to call. As Nick leaves, "'They're a rotten crowd,' I shouted across the lawn. 'You're worth the whole damn bunch put together.'"

e In the city, Jordan calls Nick at work, and wants to see him. He doesn't refuse, but the conversation becomes gradually colder. Finally, "I don't know which of us hung up with a sharp click, but I know I didn't care. I couldn't have talked to her across a tea-table that day if I never talked to her again in this world." He tries repeatedly to call Gatsby, but the line is "being kept open for long distance from Detroit." Nick decides to take an early train home.

N8 f The narrative returns to Michaelis' testimony. (This too is in Nick's words.) He has sat up with Wilson through the night of the accident. Wilson is convinced that the driver of the car that killed Myrtle was her lover, and that he deliberately murdered her. "Who did?" asks Michaelis. "I have a way of finding out," Wilson answers.

g Continuation of Michaelis' testimony. On the morning after the accident, he goes home to sleep for a few hours; when he goes back to the garage, Wilson is gone. It appears that he wandered about on foot all through the day. "By half-past two he was in West Egg, where he asked some one the way to Gatsby's house. So by that time he knew Gatsby's name."

h Testimony of Gatsby's servants. At two o'clock Gatsby went swimming, instructing his butler to wait for Daisy's telephone message. None arrived. Narrative returns to Nick. Nick, anxious, hurries to Gatsby's house from the train. He and the servants go down to the swimming pool and discover Gatsby floating in the water, shot dead. Nearby is Wilson's dead body, "and the holocaust was complete."

Chapter IX

N9 a Nick describes the inquest and the verdict: "So Wilson was

reduced to a man 'deranged by grief' in order that the case might remain in its simplest form. And it rested there. But all this part of it seemed remote and unessential. I found myself on Gatsby's side, and alone." There is no one who seems concerned with Gatsby's death, no word from Daisy, no response from Wolfsheim when he tries to get in touch with him.

b Gatsby's father arrives from Minnesota. Klipspringer, Gatsby's perpetual guest, telephones--to inquire not about the funeral, but about a pair of shoes he left there. Nick hangs up on him.

On the day of the funeral, Nick goes to New York to see Wolfsheim and urge him to come to the funeral. Wolfsheim speaks of his close association with Gatsby, and Nick wonders "if this partnership had included the World's Series transaction in 1919." But he will not come to the funeral. "I can't do it--I can't get mixed up in it," he says. (III 4) Nick returns to West Egg and goes to see how Gatsby's father is. "His pride in his son and in his son's possessions was continually increasing and now he had something to show me." He displays a photograph of Gatsby's mansion, and then "a ragged old copy of a book called Hopalong Cassidy." On the flyleaf was written a daily schedule Gatsby had set for himself as a boy. "It just shows you," says the father; "Jimmy was bound to get ahead."

N9 c The funeral. Nick and Gatsby's father are the only mourners except for one man Nick had encountered at the first Gatsby party.

d Nick reminices about coming back West from school at Christmas time. He decides to go back home, for good. Before he leaves, he goes to tell Jordan that he is leaving the East. Jordan, without rancor, accuses him of throwing her over, and reminds him of their conversation

about driving a car. "'Well, I met another bad driver, didn't I? I mean it was careless of me to make such a wrong guess. I thought you were rather an honest, straightforward person. I thought it was your secret pride.' 'I'm thirty,' I said. 'I'm five years too old to lie to myself and call it honor.' She didn't answer. Angry, and half in love with her, and tremendously sorry, I turned away."

N9 e Nick runs into Tom in the street. At first he refuses to shake hands with him. "'You're crazy, Nick,' he (Tom) said quickly. 'Crazy as hell. I don't know what's the matter with you.' 'Tom,' I inquired, 'what did you say to Wilson that afternoon?' He stared at me without a word, and I knew I had guessed right about those missing hours. I started to turn away, but he took a step after me and grabbed my arm. 'I told him the truth,' he said. '. . . He was crazy enough to kill me if I hadn't told him who owned that car. His hand was on a revolver in his pocket every minute he was in the house--' He broke off defiantly. 'What if I did tell him? That fellow had it coming to him. He threw dust into your eyes just like he did in Daisy's, but he was a tough one. He ran over Myrtle like you'd run over a dog and never even stopped his car.' There was nothing I could say, except the one unutterable fact that it wasn't true." Nick decides it would be childish not to shake hands: "I couldn't forgive him or like him, but I saw that what he had done was, to him, entirely justified. It was all very careless and confused. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy--they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made. . ." (III 6).

f The night before his departure, Nick visits Gatsby's mansion once

more and looks out over the Sound. He imagines what the land must have looked like to the Dutch sailors who first discovered it, and associates their wonder with Gatsby's as he looked at the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. "Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter--tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. . . And one fine morning--So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

The Play

Prologue

P1 Scene: The Fay's porch in Louisville, Kentucky in September 1917. Dialogue between Mrs. Fay and the maid. Mrs. Fay is annoyed and anxious because she discovers from the maid that Daisy is out with Gatsby and has lied about it; the maid sticks up for both Daisy and Gatsby: Gatsby has "got a uniform ain't he! He's goin' to fight the Germans, ain't he?"--and he and Daisy are in love.

P2 Enter Dr. Carson, a friend of the family who has been asked by Mrs. Fay to investigate Gatsby. He has discovered nothing to Gatsby's discredit, except that he has changed his name from Gatz (N6a); in fact, his commanding officer has praised him (N8a,e). As for the affair with Daisy, Dr. Carson is inclined not to take it very seriously--"A wartime flirtation: All the girls are doing it"--and besides, Gatsby is going overseas the next day; "so unless she really cares for him--" "Of course she doesn't," says Mrs. Fay. She finds Gatsby altogether unacceptable, in spite of his good record: "Our girls never knew such people." She divulges that she wants Daisy to marry Tom Buchanan, who has just arrived

from out of town. "Then that's the end of poor Gatsby!" says Dr. Carson; and the two exit to put Tom off until Daisy can be found.

P3 Enter Daisy and Gatsby. There is a love scene in which Gatsby is shown as a romantic worshiping his vision of ideal beauty and utterly confident of possessing her (N6b,N8a), while Daisy is fascinated by his feeling for her; but at the end of the scene she gives some indication that her love cannot withstand his absence: "It's too hard! How long is the war going to last!"

P4 Exit Gatsby. Enter Mrs. Fay, who tries to persuade Daisy to see Tom. Daisy at first refuses. Her mother points out that "In the spring, you were all but engaged to him," and that Gatsby is going overseas in the morning. "You said good-bye to him. Now I want you to do as much for Tom. He's an old friend." Daisy, left alone, sobs for a few moments, then dries her eyes and powders her nose. Enter Tom, in uniform. Daisy receives him graciously. Curtain.

Act I

I1 Scene: Nick's cottage, August 1925, afternoon. Nick sits reading a book. From outside, the sound of an automobile horn, repeated several times. Nick gets up and calls offstage to see what's the matter. Enter Meyer Wolfsheim, looking for the Gatsby place. He praises Gatsby, and boasts of their friendship. (N4c). Exit Wolfsheim.

I2 Enter Effie, Nick's maid, with letters. They hear a noise outside, which Effie says is Gatsby's gardener cutting the grass (N5a). Nick tells Effie that Gatsby is coming to tea. She inquires about the Gatsby parties; Nick finds them "rather stupid, but I hate all that sort of thing." Effie repeats some of the gossip about Gatsby (N3a), and says she often sees him

looking out over the bay: "If you could see the look on his face, sir, the way I have, I guess you could believe he'd killed somebody!" (N3a, N7b).

I3 Enter Gatsby's butler, Ryan, followed by two footmen with flowers and food for the tea party. Brief dialogue between Nick and Gatsby, incorporating some of N5a. Gatsby says, "It's a big service you're doing me." Nick makes light of it (N4e), saying that he arranged the tea-party because Daisy wanted to meet him again. Gatsby says that Jordan Baker telephoned him to say that she and Tom were bringing Daisy. Nick has not met Jordan, and Gatsby tells him about her (N1b), and about her cheating in the golf tournament (N3b) Gatsby: "We can't quite expect real loyalty from women, can we old sport." Gatsby offers to put Nick in the way of making some money, but Nick coldly declines (N5a). Nick remarks that Wolfsheim was looking for Gatsby, and the two talk about him; "He's a gambler," says Gatsby. "He's the man who fixed the World's Series back in 1919." Brief dialogue, as in N4c. Then Gatsby: "Look here old sport, what's your opinion of me anyhow? (N4b) Dialogue, as in N4b. Then Gatsby: "Jordan Baker telephoned me that she and Mr. Buchanan would bring her here--bring Mrs. Buchanan here I mean, then drive on up to town." He excuses himself, saying he must go back to his house to see Wolfsheim, and may not get back to the party until after Jordan and Tom Buchanan have gone; "but you might say to your cousin that I will surely come." Exit.

I4 Enter Effie. Brief dialogue, in which she repeats that Gatsby may have killed somebody, and comments on his "terrible parties." Automobile horn outside.

I5 Enter Daisy; says Tom is only going to stay a minute, not to tell him that Gatsby is coming.

I6 Enter Tom and Jordan. Dialogue, as in N1b. Tom is called to the telephone, Daisy angrily follows him.

I7 Jordan tells Nick about Tom's mistress (N1b). Then Jordan: "She's no fool! It would serve Tom right if she made it up with Gatsby!" Nick, while flirting with Jordan, is anxious about his cousin, and wants to hear what has ahppened between Daisy and Gatsby. Jordan tells about the love affair in Louisville (N4d) up to the time of Daisy's marriage.

I8 Enter Tom and Daisy, Daisy crying. Daisy: "You can put that man out!" Tom: "Can't we settle this between ourselves?" Daisy: "It isn't between ourselves. It's between you and me and our chauffeur's wife. Get rid of them, or get rid of me. Take your choice. . . You won't see me again while that woman is on the place." Tom: "How can I get rid of him! Do you want me to tell him he's fired because you're jealous of his wife?" Daisy: "If you don't discharge him I will, and I'll tell him why too!. . . (she crosses furiously out on veranda, and calls) "Wilson! Come here Wilson!" Tom: "Are you crazy?" Daisy: "You tell him or I will! I won't have that wife of his in my house another night!"

I9 Enter Wilson. Tom: "We--we have made other arrangements about--about the car you know, something has come up that--that makes it necessary to make a change." Wilson: "I don't understand! There's a lot of things been going on lately that I don't understand." (He looks defiantly at Tom) Tom: "I'm not going to keep you, that's all. I've made up my mind that I don't need but one man, and Scott has been with me for years." Wilson (bitterly): "Sudden, isn't it?" Nick: "Not at all,

Mr. Buchanan happened to mention that he really didn't need you, and I said that in that case I thought I could find you a very good place. . . with a very wealthy neighbor of mine, a Mr. Gatsby." Tom: "Gatsby? Who's Gatsby?" Daisy: (quickly) "What does it matter who he is if he has money and wants a chauffeur?" Wilson, still suspicious and discontented, is dismissed. Daisy agrees with Tom to "make a bluff of it if you will," and Jordan and Tom exit to go to town.

I10 Nick and Daisy. More dialogue from N1b (Nick and Daisy's conversation after he knows about Tom's mistress). Gatsby knocks, Daisy goes off to dry her eyes and powder her nose.

I11 Enter Gatsby. Dialogue as in N5a (when Gatsby frantically follows Nick into kitchen). Daisy comes back. All are much affected, but Daisy is in better control than the two men. Pathetic comedy scene--Gatsby breaks a vase. Nick takes himself off.

I12 Daisy and Gatsby. Daisy: "He's--he's my cousin." Gatsby: "Yes, he said he was." D: "My cousin." G: "Yes, I know." D: "He didn't live in Louisville." G: No - I - I didn't think he did." D: "It's queer, your meeting him." G: (rises, goes to window) "We live next door, you see." (He points out window) "That's my place, over there." D: (rises, follows him) "All that?" G: "Yes, do you like it?" D: "I love it! It looks like the World's Fair." G: "I thought you'd like it, see how the whole front of it catches the light." D: "It's absolutely enormous. This isn't a bad little place Nick found, look way off there." G: "My view is the same as this. If it wasn't for the mist you could see your house, across the bay. You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock." D: "You found out where I live?" G: "That's why I bought this place, so I could see the

lights of your windows (N4e)." D: (turns away) "Don't--make me--cry." G: (following her) "No--I didn't mean that at all--I am happy--when I see them." D: "I haven't been happy--ever!" G: (gently) "It wasn't right, to make you marry him! I know she made you--your mother." D: "I don't know, things happen." G: "The last letters you wrote--I knew something was forcing you away from me. I wanted to come to you, anybody would understand that, but we were in the Argonne battles, and of course I couldn't--I got your mother's letter the day I was made a Major and put in command of the Divisional Machine Guns." D: "I should have written. I always was a coward." G: "When I came back you were on your wedding trip." D: "You must hate me." G: "No--I got down to Louisville on the last of my army pay. I stayed there a week, walking the streets where our footsteps had clicked together those September nights, revisiting the out of the way places you had taken me in your little white car." (N8d) D: "I knew, always, what it meant to you." G: "Your house had seemed to me more mysterious and gay than any other house (N8d)--and the city seemed to me like that, because you had lived there. The day I left I had a feeling that it was you I was leaving behind me--although of course I knew I had lost you long before. I stood out on the open vestibule as the station slid away, and I stretched my hand out desperately as if to snatch a whisp [sic] of air, as if to save a fragment of the spot you had made so lovely." (N8d) (she drops her head). Nick (enters) "Well you two! How about a little tea?" G: (turns to him) "Why yes, old sport, why not? Let's have a little tea." (picks up flower from bowl and puts them in her lap--steps back adoring her) Curtain.

Act II

III1 Scene: Gatsby's library--"a great circular room with very high

French windows opening onto a wide veranda, the veranda is circular, like the room, and it is gay with decorative lanterns, etc." "(Music as curtain goes up. A crowd of people are dancing on veranda)" Gay: (at punch bowl with Turner) "Some party." Turner: "Isn't it wonderful." Gay: (Myrtle enters with punch stand--puts on table--exit) "Two or three times a week, look at the crowd, look at the people." Turner: "Nobody needs an invitation to come to Mr. Gatsby's. All they need is an automobile." Gay: "Usually borrowed--they just come here to eat and drink--then they go. They don't even know which one is Gatsby." Exit.

II2 Enter Gatsby and Wolfsheim, later Ryan. Meyer congratulates Gatsby on his success, warns him not to push his luck. "Lots of the boys I know got a good start, not so good as yours, but nice, but they pushed their luck, and something broke, somebody squealed maybe, or maybe it was a woman butted in, and where are they, up the river there, or even worse in Atlanta." Ryan come in to say there is a telephone call from Detroit. As Gatsby takes it, Ryan closes doors and windows, and the three men are alone. It seems that Blakely in Detroit has been talking too much. G: "Bob will take care of him, it's all right."

II3 Enter Nick. Wolfsheim tells the story about Rosey Rosenthal and the old Metropole (N4c), and offers Nick a business connection, which Nick refuses (N4c). A stray woman comes in, hails Wolfsheim, and takes him off.

II4 Nick and Gatsby. N: "What they say is true, I suppose, about the crowd who come here to your parties." G: "Why yes, old man, true enough." N: "But why do you stand for it?" G: "Why not?" N: "To entertain God knows who!" G: "To keep open house! That's one of the phrases I always liked the sound of, but I had another reason. . . If all Long Island came drifting through these rooms of mine I knew that sooner or

later she would come (N4e), just as she is coming tonight." N: "Wait a minute Gatsby! You are speaking about my cousin. . . It isn't exactly the usual thing you know to talk about a married woman as--"G: (breaks in) "This isn't a usual thing Mr. Carraway. . . I want you to understand! . . . It is necessary that she and I should meet and have some talks together."

II5 Enter Daisy with other guests who drift off. D: "Oh Nick! A party like this excites me so! If you want to kiss me anytime during the evening just let me know and I'll be glad to arrange it. Just mention my name, or present a green card." (N6b). Enter Tom and Jordan. More dialogue, mostly from N6b. Then G: "I am going to show Mrs. Buchanan my pictures. Would you care to see them?" D: "No you wouldn't. Mr. Gatsby and I are going to look at them all by ourselves; you two are going to sit out here and whistle in case of fire, riot, or any act of God." Exit Daisy and Gatsby.

II6 Jordan and Nick. They speculate about Gatsby (material taken from N1a, N3a). Jordan continues her narrative from N4d. (Daisy's and Tom's married life) They exit to dance.

II7 Myrtle, Catherine (the stray guest), later Wilson, then Ryan. Catherine and Myrtle were show girls together; Myrtle tells her friend she is tired of Wilson. Enter Wilson, miserable, suspicious, determined to find out who has caused whatever is wrong between him and Myrtle. Enter Ryan, who tells Wilson he must go to White Plains to deliver a message. Wilson is reluctant--doesn't want to leave Myrtle, and suspects there's something shady about the message; but he agrees to go. Tom enters, speaks to Wilson; Wilson is sullen and hostile--evidently suspects Tom of being Myrtle's lover, or that he knows who the lover is. Exit Wilson on his errand.

II8 Tom, Nick, then Daisy and Gatsby. Tom too is suspicious, wants to know where Daisy is. Enter Daisy and Gatsby. Daisy spats with Tom, then takes him off.

II9 Nick and Gatsby. Dialogue, mostly from N6b. Daisy and Tom come back; Daisy asks Gatsby to dance with her. Tom doesn't like it, briefly questions Nick about Gatsby. Group of guests enters, Nick leaves with them. Enter Myrtle.

II10 Myrtle and Tom. Myrtle tells Tom of Wilson's suspicions. They arrange for Tom to come to the cottage that night while Wilson is gone. They kiss. Myrtle runs off as Daisy enters.

II12 Daisy and Tom. D: "Who were you talking to Tom?" T: "Nobody--why--let's go on back to Nick's. I'm tired and this damned place bores me. You know I'm getting to be about as bad as you are--bored at everything." D: "It would be a queer thing, wouldn't it--if you and I will ever finally agree--even about when to be bored." T: "Oh, we're all right old girl--we agree about lots of things. Do you know I've been looking at this rabble here tonight and thinking what a damned fine thing it was to have a wife who was a thoroughbred." D: "Oh, yes! No gentleman should be without" T: "Oh--Daisy!" D: "He should have a fine blooded dog and a fine blooded horse and a fine blooded wife--and a full blooded mistress." T: "My God, you're bitter!" After more quarreling, D: "I don't think I can go on much longer." T: "Don't be silly. We're all right--down deep I'm your kind and you're mine."

II13 Party continues, growing wilder. Finally Jordan comes in with other girls in one-piece bathing suits, says she is going for a swim. Nick is shocked. Tom, Nick, and Daisy go home. Party breaks up. Ryan and Wolfsheim left on stage.

II14 Ryan closes doors, lowers lights. Ryan: "That's the last of them except the girls in the pool; some of the boys are waiting to see Mr. Gatsby." Wolfsheim: "It's safe enough I guess to bring them in." Gatsby returns, and there follows a scene where the men plan a smuggling operation on which Gatsby has staked all the money he can raise. Wolfsheim is anxious about a bad break the gang has had, but relies on Gatsby's gambling skill and luck. Wolfsheim goes to bed, Gatsby is left alone.

II15 (Gatsby goes up to window for a moment looks off at the little green light on the distant shore, then X to sit on bench as Daisy enters)

Daisy

(Xes to him, puts hands on shoulders)
Jay!

Gatsby

(Rises, puts hand to hip)
Daisy!

Daisy

I've come to you!

Gatsby

You surprised me. I was dreaming of you and suddenly you were here. I thought before you came tonight that having you among my other guests would make me happy but it only made me wretched. It only seemed to make the gulf between us wider. (Steps toward her)

Daisy

There isn't any gulf between us that I am afraid to cross tonight.

Gatsby

I don't understand

Daisy

Must you understand any more than that?

Gatsby

Yes.

Daisy

You love me! Isn't that enough?

Gatsby

Just half enough.

Daisy

Tom has gone to that woman. He is with her now. I followed him to her cottage. I saw them meet. I won't be made a fool of.

(She Xes to table--lights cigarette--)

Gatsby

And because you were angry you came to me!

Daisy

Does it matter why I came?

Gatsby

Yes.

Daisy

I'm here--don't you want me to stay?

Gatsby

No.

Daisy

You don't mean that!

Gatsby

Of course I mean it! You belong to me--he is the "outsider". You are going to leave him and come to me. Not leave me and go to him.

Daisy

Divorce--I'm afraid of divorce. I don't like it. I told you that this evening. Besides I am not sure of you. How can I be.

Gatsby

It has been eight years, hasn't it, and there hasn't been a day in all those years that I haven't been planning for the time when you would come to me. What I've won, I won for you. You were his wife, that didn't matter. . . you were more than that to me! You had a great name--I didn't care--I made one for myself. Before I went away you called yourself my wife. . . that's what you've got to be! You've got to leave this man and come to me. . . not in a jealous rage . . . not to revenge yourself on him, but because you have been robbing me all these years and because at last I have claimed my own! It isn't his wife I want. . . It's mine.
(Pulls her up in his arms)

Daisy

You're a romantic fool Jay--you always were. I am jealous and angry. What does it matter whether it's because I hate him or because I love you. How do I know! What do I care! Damn the future! I am here. . . that's all, but don't you try to bargain with me, Jay, if you don't want me I'll go.

Gatsby

Daisy, not want you! Look at me. Surely you know. What you mean to me.

Daisy: "Well." (She puts her arm around his neck--he does not touch her). Gatsby: "Miss Baker, Miss Baker." (He Xes up to C door) (Jordan and Nick enter at back) Jordan: "Yes." Gatsby: "Mrs. Buchanan is waiting for you. It's getting late--you had better take her home." (As Daisy starts up C, the curtain falls)

Act III

IIII Scene: Gatsby's library. It is a very hot afternoon about ten days later. "Ryan is at telephone. Meyer Wolfsheim, his coat off, and his palm leaf fan in his hand, sits bending eagerly forward listening." Ryan cannot get an answer. Meyer is worried about the Gatsby enterprises: "Maybe his luck has gone." Ryan: "It's this married woman! He never bothered with women any more than to kid along with them. Now look at

him, for the last three weeks he's been with this Mrs. Buchanan every day, he is crazy about her." Meyer: "And that's bad! She's getting a thrill she calls it, but it's something real to him. It's bad business for a fellow to get out of his class." Meyer proceeds to tell Ryan of Gatsby's past (N6a). Ryan says Gatsby is nervous about the smuggling operation. Exit Ryan, enter Tom.

III2 Tom and Meyer. Tom inquires about Gatsby. Meyer responds (N9b). Exit Meyer.

III3 Tom and Wilson. Wilson tries to sell Tom his car: he needs money to take Myrtle away. Tom refuses, Wilson threatens him. W: "I want to know what's wrong with my wife. I want to know who it is that's been setting her against me." T: "Why don't you ask her, or have you frightened her away?" W: "I've got her locked up in my cottage there. I'm going to keep her locked up until I know who the man is that's taken her away from me." T: "What's all that got to do with me?" W: "I think you're the man!" Wilson goes on about his suspicions; finally he produces a cigarette case that he found in his cottage the morning after the party, and asks if it is Tom's. Tom says no, and suggests that it is Gatsby's. T: "Better return his cigarette case. He won't like your keeping it." W: "Yes, by God, I'll return it!" T: "Now don't be a fool!" W: "I've got to see her. I've got to be sure." Exit Wilson, then Tom.

III4 Gatsby, Ryan, Meyer Wolfsheim, others. The man in charge of the smuggling operation comes to report that it has failed. It becomes evident that all the Gatsby enterprises have collapsed. Meyer: "They've smashed you Gatsby. I got to get out. I can't get mixed up in this. When a man gets smashed I never like to get mixed up in it. When I was a young

man it was different, if a friend of mine got into trouble I'd stick to him to the end. I can't do it now. I got to be careful." (N9b)

G: "Order Mr. Wolfsheim's car, Ryan, he's leaving." Ryan: "So am I." All the other servants also leave. (They are evidently part of the gang.) Gatsby pays them off. When he is left alone, "(He Xes to safe and opens it and takes out a tin box and unlocks the box and takes out some papers. As he does so he draws out by accident an old copy book and it falls on table. Gatsby selects the papers he wants, and locks the box, and turns away leaving the old copy book on the table. On the veranda outside is heard a woman's laugh and Daisy comes on. . . followed by Nick and Jordan.)

Daisy

(Xes to R C)
Is it cool in here? If it isn't we won't come in.

Jordan

Don't be silly! It isn't cool anywhere! Oh Lord! What a day!

Daisy

It's cooler than your stuffy little place anyway Nick.
(She Xes and gives her hand to Gatsby)
I told you last night I'd come, you see I kept my word.

Gatsby

I knew you would! Sit here, there's a little air, and here's a fan.

Daisy

<u>You're a darling!</u>
<u>(She turns suddenly, and throws her arms about his neck and kisses him)</u>
<u>You know I love you!</u>

Jordan

<u>You forget there's a lady present.</u>

Daisy

That's all right. You kiss Nick too.

Jordan

What a low, vulgar girl!

Daisy

I don't care!
(She starts to dance gaily about the room) (N7a)

Nick

Sit down, you make me hotter just to look at you.

Daisy

(Sits C)
Oh dear! What'll we do with ourselves this afternoon and the day after that, and the next thirty years?

Jordan

Don't be morbid! Life starts all over again when it gets crisp in the fall. (N7a)

Daisy

I don't see why I shouldn't have a drink, a nice long cool drink.

Jordan

That's it. Ring for a drink, Mr. Gatsby.

Gatsby

Of course.
(He turns to push the button, then suddenly remembers that all the servants have left)
I'll have to ask you to excuse me for a moment.
(He Xes toward arch)

Daisy

What's the matter? Why don't you sit down and behave?

Gatsby

I want to see about your drink myself, I have a great idea.
(He exits to RI)

Jordan

Tom is around you know Daisy, suppose he had seen you just now? . . . When you kissed Gatsby?

Daisy

Suppose every wife in the world had seen you every time one of their husbands kissed you--don't be a frog always croaking! If it comes right down to kissing Tom isn't so bad at it himself.

Nick

You're careless people, Daisy--you and Tom. You have a way of smashing up things and creatures, then retreating back into your money, or your vast carelessness, or whatever the tie is that keeps you two together, and you leave other people to clean up the mess you have made. (N9e)

Daisy

Nick! You're as smug as the devil at his damndest and as oily as a fish!

(She rises, Xes back of table C)

I hate you very much, and I think I'll go home.

(She Xes and her eye falls on the small account book that Gatsby dropped on the desk)

Hello!

(She picks it up)

It looks like a little boy's exercise book!

(She opens it)

J. Gatsby! That's funny. J. Gatsby, the last two letters have been written in at a different time--it looks like Gatz--changed into J. Gatsby! Why it's a sort of a diary!

Nick

Put it down! What business is it of yours!

Daisy

My dear Nick, I want to be vulgar, even the very finest lady has to be vulgar when it's hot!

Nick

He might not want--

Daisy

Hush! Listen! 'Sept. 10, 1906--Schedule: Rise from bed 6 a.m. Dumbbell exercise and wall scaling 6:15 to 6:30. Study electricity

7:15 to 8:15 and Work 8:30 to 4:30 P.M. Baseball and sports 4:30 to 5. Practice elocution, poise, and how to attain it, 5:00 to 6:00. Study needed inventions 7:00 to 8:00.

Jordan

Someday!

Daisy

(Reads)
'General Resolves--no time wasted at. . .' at something, I can't read the word. "No more smoking or chewing. Bath every other day. Read one improving book or magazine per week. Save five dollars. . . no--save three dollars per week. Be better to parents. (N9b)

Nick

Poor kid!

Daisy

September 1906.

Jordan

He was about eleven wasn't he?

Daisy

(Laughs)
It just shows you.

Nick

He wanted to get to the top, didn't he?

Daisy

I remember once he told me something about the cement blocks of the pavement in the moonlight making a ladder for him, to take him up to the stars, or above the trees or somewhere, all bunk of course, but it made a terrible hit with me at the time.

Jordan

That ladder is going to fall over you on you two you know [sic], if you aren't careful.

Daisy

All right, let it fall. I have been just bored to death for the last two years, and I don't care what happens.

III7 Tom and Gatsby enter. The scene that follows is essentially the same as Fitzgerald's scene at the Plaza hotel; (N7b) at its end, Tom says

You're out of your class, old sport! You can't speak her language.

Gatsby

Daisy! Listen to--
(Wilson enters with Myrtle from R I--both stand in door. He has her by the arm)

Wilson

Now Gatsby!

Myrtle

No Buck! No!

Wilson

Look! Is this damned thing yours?
(Shows cigarette case)

Myrtle

Haven't I told you it wasn't his!

Wilson

Is this yours?

Myrtle (sic. Probably meant Gatsby.)

No.

Wilson

You lie!
(Hand to pocket)

Nick

Hello!

Jordan

Well! Upon my word!

Daisy

Why--

Gatsby

Wilson, I've had enough of this.
(He steps toward Wilson)

Wilson

Damn you, Gatsby!
(Shoots. DAISY screams. WILSON takes his revolver from his pocket and fires. GATSBY puts his hand to his heart--staggers C to Daisy who has crossed down after shot falls at her feet. MYRTLE pulls Wilson off R I)

Jordan

Oh my God!

Daisy

Tom! Take me home! I don't want to be mixed up in this--take me home!

Tom

(They both exit C to L)
Yes--come.

Nick

He was the best of the whole damned crowd of us!
(He stands looking down at Gatsby)

Curtain

Critique of the Novel

Like other works of art, Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby implies a great deal more than it explicates; but more perhaps than most novels, it depends for its effect upon a number of crucial "gestalts," their balance and the relative emphasis attached to them, rather than on the

interplay between character and circumstance. The memorable things in the novel are not the characters of Gatsby or of Nick Carraway, certainly not of Daisy or Tom, nor the interest of what happens to them; but rather such elements as Edith Wharton points out: (Twentieth Century Interpretations of THE GREAT GATSBY, ed. Ernest H. Lockridge, Englewood, N. J., Prentice-Hall, 1968, p. 107) "that seedy orgy in the Buchanan flat, with the dazed puppy looking on;" and there is the ashy wilderness overlooked by the eyes of Dr. J. T. Eckleburg, the sultry afternoon at the Plaza hotel, the image of the East as a drunken woman on a stretcher, the Dutch sailors coming upon the virgin Long Island shore. If we may judge by the amount of critical commentary they have provoked, these objective correlatives are more important to the anagogy than the plot is.

But this is not to suggest that there is any weakness in the plot structure; the agents are very fully imagined, and their behavior follows naturally, even inevitably, from their characters. Fitzgerald himself worried because he didn't know how Daisy responded to Gatsby's reincursion into her life; (letter to Edmund Wilson, Twentieth Century Interpretations, p. 105) but his uncertainty only shows how life-like a character he has created--he might feel equally uncertain on such a point about a real woman. Certainly readers do not find Daisy either flat or inconsistent; many of us might answer Fitzgerald's doubt by saying that Daisy wasn't sure herself exactly how she felt about Gatsby, or what she wanted of him.

In any case, we do not need to know: the anagogy is worked out in Gatsby's and Nick's experience, and Daisy's experience is important only as they perceive it. And about that Fitzgerald is very explicit.

Plot and characterization are not weak, but rather are subordinated to what might be called spectacle. Together these elements constitute an action which focuses upon the single-minded pursuit of a vision.

A perennial theme for Fitzgerald was the relation betweem the worth of a vision and the ardor and constancy of the pursuit (cf. "Winter Dreams," "'The Sensible Thing,'" Tender is the Night). If we apply Stanislavsky's device of finding an infinitive phrase that expresses the action, we might consider "to worship an idol in spirit and in truth." The value then attaches to the quality of the worship rather than to the object worshiped, and Gatsby is so thoroughly justified for loving well that he needs no defense for loving unwisely. "You're worth the whole damn bunch put together," says Nick; ("The Great Gatsby," The Fitzgerald Reader, ed. Arthur Mizener, New York, Scribner's, 1963, p. 218) and "Gatsby turned out all right at the end." (Reader, p. 106)

But to fix on this infinitive phrase is to assume that the action takes place in the mind of Gatsby, and to ignore the fact that a great deal of it takes place in the mind of Nick Carraway. The effect produced by Nick's first person narration is rather like a double exposure in a photograph: something happens to Gatsby, and this causes something to happen to Nick, so that our image of Gatsby is filtered through Nick.

Yet Nick is not a mere observer of the action; he is one of the agents, and furthermore he is the only agent we really see from the inside (we see Gatsby from the inside only insofar as Nick is able to do so). In the course of the story, his attitude changes from an alert neutrality toward the other characters to a committed stance toward each: justification of Gatsby, disapprobation of Tom and Daisy, the decision that Jordan Baker is not worthy of his love. If we take him

as the focus of the action, the infinitive phrase might be "to search for values." The interplay between Nick's experience and Gatsby's, then, is the method by which the total action is presented.

Nick is the point-of-view character, but there is much in the story to indicate that his values are not to be accepted without question: in the very first short passage where Nick gives us his ethical proof, he places "a sense of the fundamental decencies" at the top of his list of virtues; (Reader, p. 106) yet before long we are made aware that he too is a romantic, in whom a vision of ideal beauty, however elusive and ill-defined, will always be in conflict with anything so pedestrian as "decencies." He too finds peace dull in comparison to war; he too is charmed by the Buchanans' conspicuous consumption and by Daisy's allurements; he too hitches his wagon to a star (Jordan Baker) that burns with a not very steady light. He justifies Gatsby, we come to believe, not because of a compassionate awareness that Gatsby has not had his advantages, (Reader, p. 105) but because he participates in Gatsby's romantic aspirations.

On the other side, there is the matter of Nick's honesty (p. 148). His relations with Jordan Baker can hardly be described as the honest love of a man for a maid. And what about that girl back in Minnesota? Surely the whole passage at the end of Chapter III about Nick's personal life--the passage that ends with his estimation of his honesty--is irony. He participates in the Buchanans' upper-class myopia as much as he does in Gatsby's romanticism--perhaps more.

And if Nick participates, so do we--for surely Nick sees himself very much as Americans generally are taught to see themselves: not snobbish (he doesn't turn up his nose at Myrtle or her friends), yet well

bred (he fits easily into the Buchanan household); tolerant of others' foibles, yet well behaved himself; industrious, yet capable of an elegant leisure; in short, as representing the best possible compromise between all the conflicting values of American culture. It is precisely the validity of this compromise that Fitzgerald's novel calls into question: it works until it is subjected to serious strain. When it is, Nick Carraway and we emerge as an uncomfortable mixture of Gatsby and Tom Buchanan, a mixture continually threatening to separate into its constituent parts. Like Gatsby, we dream beautiful dreams and don't object to being a little opportunistic--or crooked--to make them come true; like Tom, we want to hang on to what we've got, and don't object to making others pay the price. And although of the two we may feel more kindly disposed toward Gatsby, we tend to behave more like Tom. Nick, unlike Gatsby, pulls back from Jordan--not because of any change in behavior in her, or because he gains any new insight into her character, but rather because he cannot sustain his commitment to a romantic idea. There may be in his jilting of Jordan a faint echo of Daisy's jilting of Gatsby. At the same time, he cannot help giving high marks to the parvenu Gatsby who is behaving with flawless chivalry, offering to take the blame for running over Myrtle, watching all night at Daisy's window to make sure she's all right, and generally rescuing a damsel in distress.

Gatsby seems to be quite aware that his damsel is not a particularly worthy object. He has long passed the point where this matters: that point was years ago in Louisville, when "he knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God." (p. 186)

As a boy he had wanted, like Faust, to claim for his own the whole world and everything it had to offer. When he first met Daisy, she seemed to him the embodiment of all he desired ("at his lips' touch she blossomed for him like a flower, and the incarnation was complete"); (p. 186) but when he kissed her that night in Louisville, he knew already that the incarnation, however beautiful it may be, is always a little less than the vision; and that by committing himself to Daisy, he was relinquishing his Faustian dream. When he saw her again for the first time after her marriage, "there must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams." (p. 175) It was no longer ideal perfection that Gatsby demanded of Daisy, but simply that she should belong to him: for the vision of ideal beauty, he had substituted the possession of Daisy herself.

But the plot of the novel is Gatsby's discovery that she did not, could not, belong to him. It shattered his world and, very soon after, his life. He had fixed upon her as the incarnation of his vision, and without her, there seemed nothing left to incarnate:

> No telephone message arrived. . . I have an idea that Gatsby himself didn't believe it would come, and perhaps he no longer cared. If that was true he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream. He must have looked up at the unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass. A new world, material without being real,
>
> (a beautiful description of matter which incarnates nothing)
>
> where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about. . . like that ashen, fantastic figure gliding toward him through the amorphous trees.

In this passage describing Gatsby's loss of what gave life its meaning, there is surely a suggestion of identification between him and Wilson: both have lost their women, and by losing them have been reduced

to the condition of shades in the underworld. From the beginning of the story we have been made aware that the lives of both men are barren without their women: the Gatsby parties are the rich man's Waste Land. In the end, the insubstantial splendor of the Gatsby ménage turns to something very like "a valley of ashes. . . where ashes take the form of houses and chimneys and rising smoke;" (p. 121) the photograph of the Gatsby house, "cracked in the corners and dirty with many hands," is "more real. . . than the house itself." (p. 232)

Moreover, both women have been lost to the Establishment. Wilson functions as a contrast to Gatsby as well as an analogue, like the reverse side of a coin: "Myrtle Wilson" says Ernest H. Lockridge, (Twentieth Century Interpretations, p. 8) "is body without spirit;"--her tremendous vitality is the only thing that redeems the Waste Land (and Wilson) from utter attrition. For Gatsby, Daisy is spirit without body: for most of the years he has aspired to her, she has been the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. And both Myrtle and Daisy belong to Tom Buchanan. Body and spirit alike belong to the Establishment which impresses us most strongly with its mindlessness and cruelty:

> "Civilization's going to pieces," broke out Tom violently. "I've gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things. Have you read The Rise of the Colored Empires by this man Goddard . . . The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be--will be utterly submerged. It's all scientific stuff. It's been proved."
>
> "Tom's getting very profound," said Daisy, with an expression of unthoughtful sadness. "He reads deep books with long words in them. What was that word we--"
>
> "Well, these books are all scientific," insisted Tom, glancing at her impatiently. (p. 114)

So much for the intellectual attainments of the upper classes. Later in the scene at Myrtle's apartment,

> Making a short deft movement, Tom Buchanan broke her nose (Myrtle's) with his open hand. (p. 131)

And so much for the gentleness of gentlemen. Those outside the Establishment are deprived of all nourishment, of both the bread and the wine--the means of physical and spiritual life; as a result, they first become shades, and finally are extinguished altogether.

Yet there is a sense in which Gatsby, and by analogy Wilson too, are superior to the Establishment: "They're a rotten crowd. . . you're worth the whole damn bunch put together." (p. 218) They have understood and cherished the means of life they lost, whereas the Buchanans, the owners, debase and ruin it. On the one hand the Buchanans create the values, or at least incarnate them; on the other, they destory them. Theirs is the "beautiful house," with its "hint of bedrooms upstairs more beautiful and cool than other bedrooms, of gay and radiant activities taking place through its corridors, and of romances. . . fresh and breathing." (Reader, p. 214). Nick, not an alien to the Establishment, is like Gatsby responsive to its glamor--"I think that voice held him most, with its fluctuating, feverish warmth, because it couldn't be overdreamed--that voice was a deathless song." (p. 175).

But if the Establishment creates and seems to love these values, it also corrupts them. At the very end of the novel, Fitzgerald picks up the siren image introduced in the above passage, when he writes of "the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes--a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams." (p. 238) Because of the Establishment, the virgin trees have made way not only for Gatsby's house and Tom's,

but for the waste land half way between West Egg and New York. Because of the Establishment, the "fresh green breast of the new world" has become Myrtle's "left breast. . . swinging loose like a flap, and there was no need to listen for the heart beneath." (p. 206) Because of the Establishment, the lovely siren "that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes," and flowered also in Louisville at the touch of Gatsby's lips, has become a drunken woman in a white evening dress, carried on a stretcher by "four solemn men in dress suits" who "turn in at a house--the wrong house. But no one knows the woman's name, and no one cares." (p. 235) Those who have the means to nurture and cherish the vision of ideal beauty have betrayed their trust, and have created instead ugliness and attrition.

I have suggested, as the infinitive phrase to indicate the anagogy that takes place in Nick's consciousness, "to search for values." His last statement about his own values is his "vivid memories of coming back West from prep school and later from college at Christmas time." (Reader, p. 234) He contrasts a child's Christmas in the Middle West with the "distorted," "grotesque" East (p. 234), which he sees as "a night scene by El Greco"; and he identifies himself with the other agents, saying that they "were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common that made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life." (p. 234) The contrast here seems to be between child and grown-up: the Buchanans, Jordan, Gatsby, and Nick function best when they don't have to weigh values, when the values are self-evident. Gatsby's merit, then, is in not searching for values: he has committed himself to a single incarnation of the meaning of the universe, and he affirms that meaning by giving his life to it.

To sum up the experience of Gatsby and Nick: Gatsby dedicates himself to the Faustian vision; the vision is incarnated in Daisy; he substitutes Daisy for the original vision; he is aware of how far she falls short of it, but is still committed to their possessing each other; he realizes that they cannot possess each other, and dies. As for Nick, he is at first confident of his values; they are subsequently challenged by what happens to Gatsby; he decides that the highest value is to affirm a value by committing oneself to it, and goes back to his childhood to find such a value.

Nick and Gatsby are very American; in fact the whole novel is--no reader could possibly suppose the action to have taken place in any other country. The last page of the story, where Nick "sat there brooding on the unknown world" of the American wilderness, makes it plain that what happens to the characters stands as a symbol for what has happened to America:

> Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter--tomorrow we will run faster, stretch our arms farther--and one fine morning--
>
> So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

The Great Gatsby is obviously not a moral fable, not an exhortation to action, but rather a picture of what happens when we are careless. "Careless" is the epithet Nick applies to Tom and Daisy (p. 237); "reckless" seems a more suitable one for us to apply to Gatsby himself, but there is a correlation between the two: we Americans are a careless lot--reckless in what we commit ourselves to, careless about following through when we have committed ourselves, careless about affirming the values we claim this country incarnates. Because of our carelessness, the only

future we have prepared for ourselves is the "orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us." The only way to go forward is to go back, as Nick goes back to his childhood home--"Can't repeat the past?" cries Gatsby; "Why of course you can!" (p. 186)--to rediscover values that we can affirm.

The Play As a Rendering of Fitzgerald's Novel

Owen Davis' claim to fame is that from 1897 to 1947 there was always a Davis play on the boards. He wrote hundreds of them. Many were successful, some had high merit; but good, bad, or indifferent, most of them were produced. He devoted many years of careful study and hard work to gratifying the public taste: "knowing that I lacked the high talents necessary for the really great dramatist," he write (Owen Davis, My First Fifty Years in the Theatre, Boston, Walter H. Baker Co., 1950, p. 12) "I decided. . . to watch and judge the reactions of theatre audiences and to fully understand why they laughed, or cried, or shuddered."

He began with melodrama, since that was the most reliably popular form at the time. The recipe he worked out included, he says, (Fifty Years, Ch. I, passim) a number of elements, of which the first in importance is theme. The two he mentions are "All for Love and the World Well Lost" and "The Wages of Sin is Death." The presentation of these themes had to be dramatic rather than verbal: the audience, few of them prosperous and many of them immigrants, were not highly skilled in the patterns of English speech. They were interested in simple emotions appropriate to clear-cut situations. A third essential was an interesting topic: many a well written, well constructed play has failed, he thinks, because the author was not lucky enough to hit on a subject that appealed to the audience. (Owen Davis, I'd Like to Do It Again, New York, Farrar

& Rinehard, 1931, p. 94).

The characters of melodrama, as enumerated by Davis, (I'd Like to Do It Again, pp. 101-105) are stock characters who have been the mainstays of the theatre since the time of Plautus. There are eight of them, he says: the Hero ("poor, or else very young and very drunk. If sober and wealthy he automatically became a villain. . . Brave this hero must always be, and strong and kind, but it was unfortunately difficult for him to be wise, as the burden of troubles it was necessary to load upon this poor man's shoulders, by way of suspense, would never have been carried by any one but a terrible sap.); the Heroine ("If the hero was extremely poor, it was possible for her to be extremely wealthy. . . Our heroine must be pure at any cost, or else she must die. There could be no temporizing with the "the wages of sin are death" slogan. In all my experience I never once saw it successfully defied."); The Heavy Man, or villain ("Always wealthy; the silk hat was his badge of office."); The Heavy Woman ("There were two of her, the haughty lady of wealth and social position, quite naturally the instinctive enemy of our audiences, and the 'bad woman' who in these days was spoken of in a hushed whisper."); The Soubrette ("A working girl with bad manners and a good heart."); The Comedian ("Either Irish, Jew, or German, the most important member of the company in the old days and the one who drew the largest salary."); The Light Comedy Boy ("This character was always a humble and faithful friend of the lovers and was always in love with the Soubrette."); The Second Heavy ("He was just a bum, a tool of the villain's, and as it was usual to kill him along toward the middle of the second act, we never found it necessary to engage a very good actor.").

This list of Davis' may well raise an uneasy doubt in the minds of modern critics as to how much Fitzgerald's story was influenced by the melodramas he must have seen in his childhood: was he, among other things, trying to get to the bottom of these stock characters and discover what really went on inside them? At any rate, it may have occurred to Davis when he first considered dramatizing The Great Gatsby that the story was a convenient amalgam of those two sure-fire themes, "All for Love and the World Well Lost" and "The Wages of Sin is Death." And the topic was the intriguing sinfulness of the Jazz Age--another ace in the hole. What he has done is to make Fitzgerald's novel into a well-made melodrama: we can detect the hand of the master craftsman who wrote over a hundred of them in a decade for the ten-twent-thirts. He has played ducks and drakes with Fitzgerald's plot, leaving out the most important episodes and adding a whole sub-plot about a smuggling operation (two, if you count Tom's night in the chauffeur's cottage and the mysterious cigarette case). No character in the play is quite the same as the character Fitzgerald created. The dianoia, although not altogether wanting, is reduced to tongue-clucking over the conduct of the Jazz Age Jeunesse Dorée. Great gobs of Fitzgerald's diction alternate freely with great gobs of Davis' own--and the difference is perceptible even to a crude ear. Spectacle and music are plentiful, but they are not the spectacle and music of Fitzgerald. Davis has fastened upon Gatsby as a man with a vision, upon what the vision did to his life and how it caused his death; and to this everything else has been subordinated. Scribe himself could not have done a better job of using every detail of stage business for the sole purpose of advancing the action.

Davis' plot is a marvel of construction. The Prologue, of which the episodes and characters (except for the principals) have been invented entirely by himself, is an illustration of the first few lines of the novel:

> In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since.
> "Whenever you feel like criticizing any one," he told me, "Just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had."

Davis shows that Daisy has the disadvantage of belonging to a class which Gatsby can never really enter, and of having a domineering mother; Gatsby is an outcast, and is utterly consumed by his vision. At the same time, Davis' Prologue has the same function as Nick's ethical proof--it prepares us for the betrayal of Gatsby.

Turning the Wilsons into servants (moving them into Gatsby's household "bag, and as you might say, baggage," as Alexander Wollcott said) makes them readily available at any time Davis wants to use them. Fitzgerald's Wilsons were perhaps not chauffeur and parlormaid types; so much the worse for Fitzgerald's Wilsons. Even the detail of Jordan Baker coming on late in Act II to shock Nick with her one-piece bathing suit has a plot function: she is still out at the swimming pool at the end of the act so that Gatsby can call her to take Daisy home when he chivalrously withstands his temptress' blandishments. The machinery does perhaps occasionally creak a bit, especially in the episode of the cigarette case; but then, Fitzgerald himself has told us that Tom is careless--and who cares if the machine creaks, as long as it works?

Davis' characters are not exactly the stock melodrama characters he describes in I'd Like To Do It Again; but these old, old stand-bys of the dramatist are not altogether absent from the play--we get glimpses

of the Heavy Man, the Comedian, the Soubrette, behind the more elaborate personae of Fitzgerald's creation. Gatsby himself has perhaps suffered the least change of any; but then Fitzgerald's Gatsby, as regards externals, is straight out of Horatio Alger. It is true that Alger's heroes do not become crooks, they simply become rich; but then Fitzgerald points out that upper-class money is just as dirty as Meyer Wolfsheim's money. In the show-down scene at the Plaza, Tom says of Gatsby: "I picked him for a bootlegger the first time I saw him, and I wasn't far wrong. "'What about it?' said Gatsby politely. 'I guess your friend Walter Chase wasn't too proud to come in on it.'" (p. 203) The only thing Davis' Gatsby does that is inconsistent with the character of Fitzgerald's Gatsby is to repel Daisy's advances--the episode is much more trite than anything in the novel. The rest of the added episodes--Gatsby taking leave of Daisy in the Prologue, the smuggling operation, his paying off the defecting servants--are all the sort of thing Fitzgerald's Gatsby might well have done.

Davis' Daisy, however, is quite different from Fitzgerald's. While in the novel we are primarily interested in her response to Gatsby, in the play she stands or falls by her purity. She is established even in the Prologue as an anti-heroine; purity meant fidelity as well as chastity in melodrama, and a girl who would forsake her true love because her mother told her to was not a good girl. Daisy's impurity is stressed again in Act I--for one thing, she is older (eight years have passed instead of four), for another, she is harder. It is she who has arranged to meet Gatsby at Nick's house, while in the novel Gatsby arranged it, and didn't want Daisy to know he was going to be there. Finally in Act II her wanting Gatsby to be her lover is made the focus of her unworthiness; it is given the same status as her letting Gatsby take the consequences

of running over Myrtle has in the novel. She emerges as an amalgam of the Heroine who isn't pure and so must die (or lose her status of heroine) and the wicked society woman who is the natural enemy of the audience.

At first blush it seems that Jordan Baker fulfills this latter role: she is rich; she has cheated in the golf tournament, and thus trifled with the faith, if not of fifty million people, of however many hold fair play in golf tournaments as an article of their creed; far worse, she has gone for a midnight swim in a one-piece bathing suit. But in fact Jordan has much more the flavor of the Soubrette, perhaps because of some conditioned audience reflexes that Davis leaves out of his account: by age-old theatrical and operatic tradition (Mincing in All For Love, Susanna in The Marriage of Figaro, etc.) the Soubrette is the Heroine's maid or companion; and Fitzgerald himself has placed Jordan in this role. She is with Daisy when Daisy is first introduced, and is present at most of the critical scenes that involve Daisy; she was Daisy's bridesmaid; more important, Nick's relation to Jordan seems to be closely geared to his responses to the affair between Daisy and Gatsby. One is reminded of Sheridan's The Critic: when the mistress has a broken heart, the companion has a broken heart; when the mistress goes mad, so does the companion. In both novel and play, the development of Jordan is a sort of barometer for the development of Daisy: as Gatsby makes love to Daisy, Nick makes love to Jordan; as Daisy becomes unworthy of Gatsby, Jordan becomes unworthy of Nick.

Davis has mentioned one attribute of the Soubrette that apparently was absolutely de rigeur in melodrama: the Light Comedy Boy must be in love with her. "I recall once trying to have this character in love with

some one else," writes Davis (I'd Like To Do It Again, p. 105)--but I had to rewrite the play. The audience got too bewildered." Nick, without any funny lines to speak, does seem to play the role of Light Comedy Boy by Davis' definition of the term: he is faithful friend of the lovers, and is in love with Jordan.

But Davis' Nick is more than this: at least at certain points, he is the raisonneur--not the point-of-view character (I have mentioned the difficulty of presenting point-of-view characters on a realistic stage), yet the one who occasionally utters what the audience is expected to feel. He reacts with distaste to the vulgarity of Meyer Wolfsheim, he disapproves of a possible liaison between Daisy and Gatsby, he is shocked at Jordan's going swimming, etc. Finally, with what seems to me brilliant insight into how Nick functions in the novel, Davis has Nick say in the concluding line of the play, "He was the best of the whole damned crowd of us" instead of Fitzgerald's "You're worth the whole damn bunch put together." In the play, Nick judges himself, as I claim he does in the novel, although perhaps less consciously than in the play; and insofar as he speaks for the audience, he judges general American attitudes of mind.

In the play as in the novel, Meyer Wolfsheim is the shadow, in the Jungian sense, to Nick's persona: if Nick's is the voice of the visible America, Wolfsheim's is the voice of the underworld, its invisible counterpart. But in the play, he is a major character. Not only is he important in Davis' sub-plot, but also he functions in the play as he does in the novel, to show that Gatsby is a great man in the underworld. But the most striking elaboration that Davis has wrought in the way of dramatic technique is to take full advantage of Wolfsheim's comic possibilities.

At his first entrance at the beginning of Act I he establishes himself as the familiar Jew Comedian with laughably uncouth habits such as wearing cuff-links made of human molars; throughout the play, more often than not he is on-stage to get laughs.

Davis' Tom Buchanan fits perfectly comfortably into the role of The Heavy Man, whose silk hat (or other item of conspicuous consumption) is his badge of office. Once the audience knows that he is rich, there is no further need to tell them that he is wicked. There is no scene in the play analogous to the one in the novel where Tom breaks Myrtle's nose. Nor is there any suggestion that Tom represents the power that rules Gatsby's destiny and the destiny of America. It is quite sufficient for Davis' purposes to depict Tom simply as the Wrong Man whom Daisy married. The audience knows at the end of the Prologue that Daisy has chosen Riches over Romance, and by long habituation it knows precisely the sort of bed she has made for herself to lie in. Elaboration of Tom's character beyond that of mere villain would be superfluous. And like the stock villain of melodrama, he controls The Second Heavy: Wilson has been stripped of all characteristics beyond being just a bum and a tool of Tom's.

And yet Davis' characters are not flat, however simplified and stereotyped. We somehow do not get the impression that they are no more than devices, as we do with Mosel's minor characters. Apparently Davis, in the course of his vast experience, had mastered the trick of bringing his characters to life. He has not, however, been so successful with his diction: as soon as he stops using Fitzgerald's words, he falls into a language notably inferior. It is almost impossible to read such lines as those in the closing scene (and in many others) with anything

but a melodramatic intonation. Moreover, most of the Fitzgerald passages that Davis interpolates were not conversation in the novel, but Nick's thought; and particularly in Gatsby's lines, there is a rude jerking back and forth between inarticulate country boy and romantic poet. Davis himself has said that the audience to which he had most successfully addressed himself was not skilled in the rhythms of English speech; and whether through lack of practice or lack of endowment, he has not the art of writing natural conversation.

To move on to the elements of spectacle and music: Davis makes no attempt to include what might be called the free association gestalts of Fitzgerald, except in Gatsby's lines. We do have the blocks of the sidewalk going up like a ladder to a place above the trees, Daisy blossoming like a flower at the touch of Gatsby's lips, and so on; but we have nothing of the drunken woman on a stretcher, or the Dutch sailors coming upon the American shore (of course in realistic drama these bits of spectacle could appear only in the dialogue; and there are pitfalls involved in putting word pictures in stage dialogue, as Gatsby's lines sufficiently illustrate).

A playwright, however, must consider the visual and auditory impact of his play--in fact, many commentators on the drama have suggested that the script of any play is no more than a short-hand for a series of gestalts. Sights and sounds are not introduced to set tone and convey atmosphere, as in a novel--they <u>are</u> the play. Davis of course knew this very well, and his use of music and spectacle is never arbitrary. He has done a masterly job, particularly in the second act, of using audio-visual effects to emphasize the tawdriness of Gatsby's world as against his dedication to his dream: the windows open from the library onto the

veranda, where there is the sound of talk and laughter. Enter Catherine, Myrtle's chorus girl friend.

> Catherine: (drops a lighted cigarette on the library floor, a man is with her. Dance music starts.) "Meyer! Well I'll be damned!" Meyer: "It's mutual!" Catherine: (She takes his arm--takes him up and out on veranda) "Here's a swell chance for you to be a cut-up Meyer, all the drinks are on the house." Meyer: "All right, I'm coming." (Meyer exits to crowd leaving Gatsby alone with Nick. The crowd stands on veranda--footmen pass drinks.) Nick: "What they say is ture, I suppose, about the crowd who come here to your parties." Gatsby: "Why yes, old man, it's true enough." Nick: "But why do you stand for it?" Gatsby: "Why not?" Nick: "To entertain God knows who!" Gatsby: "To keep open house! That's one of the phrases I always liked the sound of, but I had another reason." Nick: "I don't get it." (Music stops.) Gatsby: "If all Long Island came drifting through these rooms of mine I knew that sooner or later she would come, just as she is coming tonight."

Here we have the visual effect of the crowd on the veranda, of the entrance of Catherine (no doubt she was dressed like a cheap chorus girl), of her throwing her lighted cigarette on the floor, of the free drinks being passed by the footmen. We have further the very important auditory effect of the dance music: it starts at the points where Davis wishes to underline the ugly reality, and stops when Gatsby gets on the subject of his beautiful dream.

Marius Bewley (Twentieth Century Interpretations, p. 49) comments as follows upon one of Fitzgerald's devices for creating atmosphere. He is referring to the passage (pp. 174-175) where Klipspringer is playing the piano on the occasion of Gatsby's first meeting with Daisy after her marriage:

> In view of such writing it is absurd to argue that Fitzgerald's art was a victim of his own attraction to the Jazz Age. The snatches of song that Klipspringer sings evoke the period with an immediacy that is necessary if we are to understand the peculiar poignancy of Gatsby's ordeal. But the songs are more than evocative. They provide the ironic musical prothalamion for Gatsby's romance,

> and as Gatsby listens to them an intimation of the practical truth presses in on him. . . in the faint stirrings of Gatsby's recognition there is for a moment, perhaps, a possibility of his escape. But the essence of the American dream whose tragedy Gatsby is enacting is that it lives in a past and a future that never existed, and is helpless in a present that does.

Davis too seems to use music as a "prothalamion for Gatsby's romance." I have chosen this particular passage from Act II almost at random: a careful reading of the scripts shows that this pattern of the starting and stopping of the music is remarkably consistent.

To sum up: Davis has violently altered every one of the elements of Fitzgerald's story--every one, that is, except the anagogy itself: in spite of all the profound changes, Fitzgerald's and Davis' anagogies are the same. Davis' play is a striking illustration of the principle that quality does not depend upon the anagogy. It is not, at least from our point of view in 1970, a very good play, and any attempt to revive it would undoubtedly elicit screams of outrage from readers who have appreciated the beauty and the subtlety of Fitzgerald's novel. Davis' The Great Gatsby is not anything like so good as Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby: it is not even, by a long way, nearly so good as Mosel's All The Way Home; and yet Davis, like Fitzgerald, has presented the comi-tragedy of a man who worshiped an idol in spirit and in truth, and in doing so he has led us to think about our values.

CHAPTER V

THE OLD MAID

The Novel

"Those well-fed, slow-moving people. . . lived in a genteel monotony of which the surface was never stirred by the dumb dramas now and then enacted underground. . . Sensitive souls in those days were like muted keyboards on which Fate played without a sound." Thus writes Edith Wharton on the first page of her novel about upper-class life in New York in the 1850's. (Old New York. The Old Maid [The 'fifties], New York, Appleton, 1924, p. 4). The sentence sets the tone for this story of how two women brought up the child who was the illegitimate daughter of the man they both loved, and of the sacrifices each made to ensure the girl's happiness. The first episode in the novel is the introduction of these women, first Delia Ralston and then her cousin Charlotte Lovell.

Part I

N-1 The first chapter begins with some exposition of the Ralston family background: "They had not come to the colonies to die for a creed but to live for a bank-account". . . "Institutional to the core, they represented the conservative element that holds new societies together as seaplants bind the seashore". . . "Compared with the Ralstons, even such

traditionalists as the Lovells, the Halseys or the Vandergreaves appeared careless, indifferent to money, almost reckless in their impulses and indecisions". . . "Shopkeepers to the marrow, they put in their windows the wares there was most demand for, keeping their private opinions for the back-shop, where through lack of use, they gradually lost substance and colour". . . "The fourth generation of Ralstons had nothing left in the way of convictions save an acute sense of honour in private and business matters". . . "People said 'The Ralstons' when they wished to invoke a precedent. . . the fourth generation, to which Delia Ralston's husband belonged, had the ease and simplicity of a ruling class." (pp. 4-9). This is the first mention of Delia; the second follows on the next page, completing the exposition of the Ralstons: "the carefully built-up Ralston character was now so congenital that Delia Ralston sometimes asked herself whether, were she to turn her own little boy loose in a wilderness, he would not create a small New York there, and be on all its boards of directors." (p. 10).

This is the first glimpse the author gives us of Delia's point of view. She goes on to mention Delia's marriage to James Ralston five years before, and her present situation as "established, the mother of two children, the possessor of a generous allowance of pin-money, and, by common consent, one of the most popular 'young matrons' (as they were called) of her day." (pp. 10-11). Delia "was too near to the primitive Ralstons to have as clear a view of them as, for instance, the son in question might one day command". . . Yet that tremor of the muted key-board. . . would now and then so divide her from them that for a fleeting moment she could survey them in their relation to other things." The "muted key-board," then, is Delia herself, and hers is the sensitive soul upon which Fate plays without a sound. (p. 11).

But at this point in the story she foresees no difficulties, and is as carefree as a girl. She is busy admiring the new bonnet she has bought for the forthcoming marriage of her cousin Charlotte to her husband's cousin Joseph Ralston. She is placidly grateful to her kind husband, who has told her to spare no expense on the bonnet; and she is grateful for her position as a young matron of the ruling class. She considers that Chatty's marriage will be just like her own: "the kind of alliance which a nice girl in the nicest set would serenely and blushingly forecast for herself." She thinks uncomfortably about "afterward"--"the incomprehensible exigencies of the young man," "the terror of seeing him calmly shaving the next morning, in his shirtsleeves," "the evasions, insinuations, resigned smiles and Bible texts of one's Mamma;" and finally of "the growth of habit, the insidious lulling of the matter-of-course," and "the babies who were supposed to make up for everything, and didn't--though they were such darlings, and one had no definite notion as to what it was that one had missed, and that they were to make up for." "Only," she concludes, "Charlotte's bedroom would certainly not be as pretty as hers." (pp. 14-15).

She looks appreciatively at her favorite objet d'art, an ormolu clock representing a shepherd stealing a kiss from a shepherdess. This was a wedding gift from her aunt Mrs. Manson Mingott, "a dashing widow who lived in Paris and was received at the Tuileries." It had been intrusted by Mrs. Mingott to young Clement Spender, "on his way back from Italy. Delia would have married Clement instead of Jim if he had not been an impecunious painter, who had no taste for New York and the law." The family has criticized Delia for not placing this handsome article in the drawing-room (they are in awe of Mrs. Mingott's taste, and although

they disapprove of her "foreignness," it never occurs to them that there might be anything suggestive in the statuette); but Delia "liked, when she woke up in the morning, to see the bold shepherd stealing his kiss." (pp. 16-17).

Delia goes on to think with artless complacency of her cousin Charlotte's inferiority to herself in point of looks and fortune. Until her recent engagement, everyone had supposed that Charlotte would be an old maid. True, when she came out, although her looks were "regrettable," many young men thought her pretty, among them Joe Ralston (here Charlotte is described: from Delia's conventional point of view, Charlotte is not attractive; but through Delia's point of view, the reader sees an unmistakable image of a highly sexed woman, one whom many men would respond to). But Charlotte became ill, and went to Georgia for a year to recover; when she came back, she dressed like a Quaker and started a day-nursery which Delia occasionally visits. (This interesting career of her cousin's suggests nothing untoward to Delia.) "The married cousin confusedly felt that her own affection for her handsome children was a mild and measured sentiment compared with Chatty's fierce passion for the waifs. . ." (p. 23) But all that will be changed, and better things are in store for Charlotte now that she is to marry a Ralston--by "better things," Delia obviously means a full, rich life like her own.

At this moment Charlotte enters, and tells Delia that she cannot marry Joe because he insists on her giving up her nursery school; and this she cannot do because one of the children in the school is her own.

N-2 Delia, petrified with shock, takes her cousin into her arms. She thinks first that her own husband would feel just as Joe does--that his

wife's working in a day nursery might bring contagion into their home. Then it occurs to her to wonder what Clem would say if he were her husband:

> The thing was hard to imagine; yet in a flash of mental readjustment Delia saw herself as Clem's wife, she saw her children as his, she pictured herself asking him to let her go on caring for the poor waifs in the Mercer Street stable, and she distinctly heard his laugh and his light answer: "Why on earth did you ask, you little goose? Do you take me for such a Pharisee as that?"
>
> Yes, that was Clem Spender all over--tolerant, reckless, indifferent to consequences, always doing the kind thing at the moment, and too often leaving others to pay the score. "There's something cheap about Clem," Jim had once said in his heavy way. (p. 36).

Delia is flustered, horrified--"such things, even if they had to be said, should not have been spoken in her bedroom so near the spotless nursery". (p. 33)--and she is anxious about what people will say if the wedding is broken off. But underneath her shock, she has gotten her first confused glimpse of the true nature of her own feelings about Clem. Suspicious, she forces an avowal from Charlotte that Clem is the child's father.

Charlotte, in contrast to her cousin, cares nothing for "people," not even the Ralstons, and she is very clear about her own feelings for her former lover: she takes full, almost casual, responsibility for the affair, seeming to feel neither guilty nor sentimental--Clem is no longer important to her, it is the child that she is concerned about:

> "Oh, why did you make me tell you? I knew you'd never understand. I'd always cared for him, ever since I came out; that was why I wouldn't marry any one else. But I knew there was no hope for me . . . he never looked at anybody but you. And then, when he came back four years ago, and there was no <u>you</u> for him any more, he began to notice me, to be kind, to talk to me about his life and his painting. . ." She drew a deep breath, and her voice cleared. "That's over--all over. It's as if I couldn't either hate him or love him. There's only the child now--my child. He doesn't even know of it--why should he? It's none of his business; it's nobody's business but mine. But surely you must see that I can't give up my baby."
>
> Delia Ralston stood speechless, looking away from her cousin in a growing horror. She had lost all sense of reality, all feeling of safety and self-reliance. Her impulse was to close her

> ears to the other's appeal as a child buries its head from midnight terrors. At last she drew herself up, and spoke with dry lips.
>
> "But what do you mean to do? Why have you come to me? Why have you told me all this?"
>
> "Because he loved you!" Charlotte Lovell stammered out; and the two women stood and faced each other. (pp. 41-43).

Delia, convinced that Charlotte's marriage ought not to take place, cannot see how it is to be avoided without a scandal. She says she needs time to think. She decides to go for a walk to consider the situation, and tells Charlotte to stay there until she returns.

N-3 Delia goes to visit Charlotte's nursery. There she finds Charlotte's child, Tina, whom she instantly recognizes by her resemblance to Clem. She remembers that the child is being brought up by a Negro family. According to the woman who is in charge of the children, Tina is in rather frail health and "don't play like the other children, somehow." (p. 52). The child takes a strong fancy to Delia. Much moved, Delia goes back home to Charlotte, bursts in upon her, and says, "Chatty--Chatty, I've thought it out. Listen. Whatever happens, the baby shan't stay with those people. I mean to keep her." (p. 53). Charlotte tries to speak, but sinks back in her chair and, to Delia's terror, spits blood. But Charlotte reassures her, saying that her lung is almost healed. Delia repeats her promise to keep Tina herself, and says she will work out some way to manage it. Charlotte, somewhat solaced, goes home.

N-4 That evening. Jim Ralston brings Joe home to dinner. Joe wants to talk to Delia about Charlotte's working in the nursery. Delia realizes that "he was very much in love. At a word from Delia, . . . he would yield, and Charlotte gain her point, save the child, and marry him. . . and yet it must not be! . . . All the traditions of honour and probity

in which she had been brought up forbade her to connive at such a plan. She could conceive. . . of subtle revolts against the heartlessness of the social routine. But a lie she could never connive at" (pp. 65-66). She tells Joe that Chatty has suffered a return of her consumption. Joe is deeply grieved; but, like any Ralston, he would never knowingly introduce disease into his family. He fully accepts that the marriage is impossible. After Joe leaves, she arranges with her husband to assume the financial responsibility for Tina.

N-5 The next morning. Delia tells Chatty of the arrangement she has made: the marriage is to be broken off, but Jim is willing to establish Chatty in a little house where she can have Tina to live with her.

Part II

N-6 Several years have passed. Jim Ralston has died, and Delia has taken Charlotte and Tina into her home, and brought Tina up with her own children. Tina, "impelled by an instinct of imitation which no one took the trouble to correct, . . . always called Delia Ralston "Mamma" and Charlotte Lovell "Aunt Chatty." Charlotte has recovered her health, but has become a typical old maid. There is a scene in which Tina (now about eighteen) hurts Charlotte by saying to Delia "Do tell Aunt Charlotte not to be so dreadfully old-maidish." Later in the evening when Delia expresses to Charlotte her displeasure at Tina's rudeness, Charlotte says that she would rather Tina did think of her as an old maid: it is the only sure way, she thinks, to conceal their true relationship from her daughter. "But don't pity me," she says. "She's mine."

N-7 Delia's thoughts. The chapter develops the point that Delia

and Charlotte, though outwardly on pleasant terms, are in fact rivals for the position of Tina's mother. Tina prefers Delia, "yet whenever any question arose about the girl it was always Charlotte who gained her point." (p. 101) "It had never before occurred to Delia that her influence over Tina might be resented; now the discovery flashed a light far down into the abyss which had always divided the two women." (103) Delia is aware that in spite of Tina's preference for herself and her own compassion for her cousin, she envies Charlotte.

N-8 Some weeks later. Tina is out at a ball, and Delia and Charlotte are discussing her future. Tina has become strongly attracted to Lanning Halsey, the least stable of the Halseys; he has not yet chosen a profession, and his only income is a small allowance from his family, which may be stopped if he marries against their wishes. Although the two women do not mention him, Delia is reminded of Clem, "irresolute, impecunious, persuasive. Ah, if only she had let herself be persuaded!" (p. 116) Lanning has told Tina that he cannot afford to marry her; but he continues to see her. Delia becomes aware that she has always known that it would be difficult to find a husband for Tina, a girl with no money and no real family; she realizes at the same moment that "much as she desired Tina's happiness, some inmost selfishness whispered how much less lonely and purposeless the close of her own life would be should the girl be forced to share it." (p. 117). She says to Charlotte,

> "But, in any case, surely Tina need not be unhappy here, with us who love her so dearly."
>
> "Tina an old maid? Never!" Charlotte Lovell rose abruptly, her closed hand crashing down on the slender work-table. "My child shall have her life. . . her own life. . . whatever it costs me. . ."
>
> Delia's ready sympathy welled up. "I understand your feeling. I should want also. . . hard as it will be to let her go. But

> surely there is no hurry--no reason for looking so far ahead. The child is not twenty. Wait."
>
> Charlotte stood before her, motionless, perpendicular. At such moments she made Delia think of lava struggling through granite: there seemed no issue for the fires within.
>
> "Wait? But if she doesn't wait?"
>
> "But if he has withdrawn--what do you mean?"
>
> "He has given up marrying her--but not seeing her."
>
> Delia sprang up in her turn, flushed and trembling.
>
> "Charlotte! Do you know what you're insinuating?"
>
> "Yes; I know."
>
> "But it's too outrageous. No decent girl--"
>
> The words died on Delia's lips. Charlotte Lovell held her eyes inexorably. "Girls are not always what you call decent," she declared.
>
> (pp. 117-119)

Delia thinks for the first time, with a shock, that Tina may do what her mother has done. She is appalled, but sees the force of Charlotte's point. Charlotte says she must take Tina away from a life where she will be exposed to a series of admirers who will never marry her; Charlotte plans to take her to "live somewhere where we're not known, where we shall be among plain people leading plain lives. Somewhere where she can find a husband, and make herself a home. (p. 122). Delia is no less appalled at this suggestion. She thinks to herself:

> The change might only precipitate a tragedy. Delia's experience was too limited for her to picture exactly what might happen to a girl like Tina, suddenly cut off from all that sweetened life for her; but vague visions of revolt and flight--of a "fall" deeper and more irretrievable than Charlotte's--flashed through her agonized imagination.
>
> "It's too cruel--it's too cruel," she cried, speaking to herself rather than to Charlotte. (p. 123)

Charlotte cuts the conversation short by saying that it is time for bed. Delia understands that this is Charlotte's way of saying that only she has the right to determine what shall be done with Tina. Delia says nothing, but is torn between resentment of Charlotte and compassion for her. The two women go to their rooms.

N-9 Later the same evening, Delia, alone in her room, looks back at the circumstances that have changed her into a true Ralston,

> . . . living the life meant for another woman, a woman totally unrelated to the vivid Delia Lovell who had entered that house so full or plans and visions. . .
>
> The change had come on the day when Charlotte Lovell, cowering on that very lounge, had made her terrible avowal. Then for the first time Delia, with a kind of fearful exaltation, had heard the blind forces of life groping and crying underfoot. But on that day also she had known herself excluded from the, doomed to dwell among shadows. Life had passed her by, and left her with the Ralstons. (pp. 127-129)

She comes to a decision, but the reader does not yet know what it is. "Only once had she been not a Ralston but herself" (when she took Tina under her wing). "No, not for Clement Spender, hardly for Charlotte or even for Tina; but for her own sake, hers, Delia Ralston's, for the sake of her one missed vision, her forfeited reality, she would once more break down the Ralston barriers and reach out into the world." (p. 130)

At this point in her meditation, she hears Charlotte going downstairs. She gradually realizes that Charlotte's purpose is to prevent Tina and Lanning from being alone together when they come back from the ball. She understands for the first time "how. . . lovers like Charlotte and Clement Spender contrive to meet. . . Delia would never have dared to put the question to Charlotte; there were moments when she almost preferred not to know, not even to hazard a guess. But now, at a glance, she understood." (p. 137)

N-10 Delia's decision has been to legally adopt Tina and leave her her own small fortune. She goes to see the family lawyer, who knows the true circumstances of Tina's parentage. The step she has decided upon takes all her courage, because it is a defiance of the Ralston way of life. She fears that people will think the child is her own,

or Jim's, or that her own children (now married) may object. The lawyer admires her courage, urges her to carry out her plan, to brave the results, and to send any trouble-makers to him. As she leaves, she says,

> "I have an idea it's Charlotte I may have to send to you. . . She'll hate what I'm going to do, you know."
>
> Dr. Lanskell lifted his silver eyebrows. "Yes: poor Charlotte! I suppose she's jealous? That's where the truth of the third-and-fourth generation business comes in, after all. Somebody always has to foot the bill."
>
> "Ah--if only Tina doesn't!"
>
> "Well--that's just what Charlotte will come to recognize in time. So your course is clear."
>
> He guided her out through the dining-room. . . (p. 147)

There follows a crucial battle between Delia and Charlotte. At first Charlotte is adamant:

> "I mean to tell her everything; and to take her away."
>
> "To tell her about her birth?"
>
> "I was never ashamed of it," Charlotte panted.
>
> "You do sacrifice her, then--sacrifice her to your desire for mastery?"
>
> The two women faced each other, both with weapons spent. Delia, through the tremor of her own indignation, saw her antagonist slowly waver, step backward, sink down with a broken murmur on the lounge. Charlotte hid her face in the cushions, clenching them with violent hands. The same fierce maternal passion that had once flung her down upon those same cushions was now bowing her still lower, in the throes of a bitter renunciation. Delia seemed to hear the old cry: "But how can I give up my baby?" Her own momentary resentment melted, and she bent over the mother's labouring shoulders.
>
> "Chatty--it won't be like giving her up this time. Can't we just go on loving her together?"
>
> Charlotte did not answer. For a long time she lay silent, immovable, her face hidden: she seemed to fear to turn it to the face bent down to her. But presently Delia was aware of a gradual relaxing of the stretched muscles, and saw that one of her cousin's arms was faintly stirring and groping. She lowered her hand to the seeking fingers, and it was caught and pressed to Charlotte's lips. (pp. 154-156)

N-11 "Tina Lovell--now Miss Clementina Ralston--was to be married in July to Lanning Halsey," (p. 157) and New York society has accepted Delia's adoption of Tina with a minimum of fuss. Charlotte having once

and for all adopted as her "ruling purpose that her child should never guess the tie between them. . ." (p. 165) is full of gratitude to Delia. "But Delia's chief support was the sight of Tina. . . Delia saw displayed before her, with an artless freshness, all the visions, cravings, and imaginings of her own stifled youth." (pp. 165-166)

The evening before the wedding arrives. The two cousins are sitting together, the day's duties done, all the arrangements made for the next day.

> Only one subject had not been touched upon.
>
> "I have been thinking," Delia at length began, a slight tremor in her voice, "that I ought presently. . . Well, I suppose you agree with me, don't you, that a word ought to be said to the child about the new duties and responsibilities that--well--what is usual, in fact, at such a time?" she falteringly ended. (pp. 173-175)

She feels a resistance in Charlotte, but is irritated by it, and starts upstairs to Tina. Charlotte, however, stops her, saying that she herself is the one who should speak to Tina.

> "Just tonight," Charlotte concluded, "I'm her mother."
>
> "Charlotte! You're not going to tell her so--not now?" broke involuntarily from Delia.
>
> Charlotte gave a faint laugh. "If I did, should you hate it as much as all that?"
>
> "Hate it? What a word, between us!"
>
> "Between us? But it's the word that's been between us since the beginning--the very beginning! Since the day when you discovered that Clement Spender hadn't quite broken his heart because he wasn't good enough for you; since you found your revenge and your triumph in keeping me at your mercy, and in taking his child from me!" Charlotte's words flamed up as if from the depth of the infernal fires; then the blaze dropped, her head sank forward, and she stood before Delia dumb and stricken.
>
> Delia's first movement was one of an indignant recoil. Where she had felt only tenderness, compassion, the impulse to help and befriend, these darknesses had been smouldering in the other's breast! It was as if a poisonous smoke had swept over some pure summer landscape.
>
> Usually such feelings were quickly followed by a reaction of sympathy. But now she felt none. An utter weariness possessed her.
>
> "Yes," she said slowly, "I sometimes believe you really have hated me from the very first; hated me for everything I've tried to do for you."

> Charlotte raised her head sharply. "To do for me? But everything you've done has been done for Clement Spender!"
>
> Delia stared at her with a kind of terror. "You are horrible, Charlotte. Upon my honour, I haven't thought of Clement Spender for years."
>
> "Ah, but you have--you have! You've always thought of him in thinking of Tina--of him and nobody else! A woman never stops thinking of the man she loves. She thinks of him years afterward, in all sorts of unconscious ways, in thinking of all sorts of things--books, pictures, sunsets, a flower or a ribbon--or a clock on the mantelpiece." Charlotte broke off with her sneering laugh. "That was what I gambled on, you see--that's why I came to you that day. I knew I was going to give Tina another mother."
>
> Again the poisonous smoke seemed to envelop Delia: that she and Charlotte, two spent old women, should be standing before Tina's bridal altar and talking to each other of hatred, seemed unimaginably hideous and degrading.
>
> "You wicked woman--you <u>are</u> wicked!" she exclaimed.
>
> Then the evil mist cleared away, and through it she saw the baffled pitiful figure of the mother who was not a mother, and who, for every benefit accepted, felt herself robbed of a privilege. She moved nearer to Charlotte and laid a hand on her arm. . . .
>
> "Don't want to hurt you--I never did."
>
> "You tell me that--and you've left nothing undone to divide me from my daughter! Do you suppose it's been easy, all these years, to hear her call you 'mother'? Oh, I know, I know--it was agreed that she must never guess. . . but if you hadn't perpetually come between us she'd have felt about me as a child feels about its mother, she'd have <u>had</u> to love me better than anyone else. With all your forbearance and your generosities, you've ended by robbing me of my child. And I've put up with it all for her sake--because I knew I had to. But tonight--tonight she belongs to me. Tonight I can't bear that she should call you 'mother'."
>
> Delia Ralston made no immediate reply. It seemed to her that for the first time she had sounded the deepest depths of maternal passion, and she stood awed at the echoes it gave back.
>
> "How you must love her--to say such things to me," she murmured; then, with a final effort: "Yes, you're right. I won't go up to her. It's you who must go." (pp. 178-183)

Delia, left alone, "tried to avert her shuddering mind from Charlotte. What was happening at this moment upstairs? With what dark revelations were Tina's bridal dreams to be defaced?" (p. 184). She thinks of Charlotte's accusations, and at last fully confronts herself and her motives, and what she has done to Charlotte.

> Now for the first time, without shame, without self-reproach, without a pang or a scruple, Delia could yield to that vision of requited love from which her imagination had always turned away. She had made her choice in youth, and she had accepted it in maturity; and here in this bridal joy, so mysteriously her own, was the compensation for all she had missed and yet never renounced.
>
> Delia understood now that Charlotte had guessed all this, and that the knowledge had filled her with a fierce resentment. Charlotte had said long ago that Clement Spender had never really belonged to her; now she had perceived that it was the same with Clement Spender's child. As the truth stole upon Delia her heart melted with the old compassion for Charlotte. She saw that it was a terrible, a sacrilegious thing to interfere with another's destiny, to lay the tenderest touch upon any human being's right to love and suffer after his own fashion. (pp. 185-186)

She hears Charlotte coming downstairs. Charlotte has not, after all, gone in to Tina.

> "You haven't been in?"
>
> "No: I just stood in the passage, and tried--"
>
> "Tried--?"
>
> "To think of something. . . something to say to her without . . . without her guessing. . ." A sob stopped her, but she pressed on with a final effort. "It's no use. You were right: there's nothing I can say. You're her real mother. Go to her. It's not your fault--or mine."

Delia and Tina do not after all say much, but sit quietly with clasped hands. At last

> She bent down to kiss Tina goodnight; then she paused on the threshold and turned back.
>
> "Darling! Just one thing more."
>
> "Yes?" Tina murmured through her dream.
>
> "I want you to promise me--"
>
> "Everything, everything, you darling mother!"
>
> "Well, then, that when you go away tomorrow--at the very last moment, you understand--"
>
> "Yes?"
>
> "After you've said goodbye to me, and to everybody else--just as Lanning helps you into the carriage--"
>
> "Yes?"
>
> "That you'll give your last kiss to Aunt Charlotte. Don't forget--the very last."

THE END

The Play

P-1 The play too (Zoe Akins, The Old Maid, New York, Appleton-Century, 1935) begins by introducing Delia and then Charlotte. The scene is Delia's room, a few minutes before her wedding to Jim Ralston. A dialogue between Delia and her maid establishes that it is the maid, not Delia, who is in a state of pleasant bridal agitation--Delia is perfectly self-possessed. Charlotte enters, tense and almost exalted, to bring Delia a wedding present from Clem--a cameo brooch. Clem has arrived home from Italy that very day--"Just in time for your wedding. He hadn't heard you were going to marry someone else. He thought you were ill because you'd stopped writing."

Delia covers her face with her hands, says she is afraid of what Clem may do, and begs Charlotte to be kind to him and see that he doesn't drink too much champagne.

> Charlotte: I don't see how anyone could ever be unkind to poor Clem.
> Delia: (Bending her head sharply.) Don't--
> Charlotte: (Coldly, but with some surprise.) I didn't know you cared that much.
> Delia: You knew I loved him.
> Charlotte: I knew you told him so.
> Delia: I must not cry.
> Charlotte: You won't cry if you keep saying to yourself over and over: "I'm marrying a Ralston; I'm marrying a Ralston."
> Delia: (Defiantly, herself again.) Yes, I am marrying a Ralston; and I'm glad.
> Charlotte: (Without sympathy.) Everyone's glad you're doing so well. They always expected you to, and you have. But I don't envy you, Delia. (pp. 10-11)

Delia defends herself, saying that she did wait, that Clem, if he had loved her, would have given up painting and come back to her. Charlotte says such things as "Why couldn't you have waited?. . . Couldn't you have had the kindness, at least, to write Clem that you were going to

marry some one else? . . . I could have waited, I would have waited for him all my life." (pp. 12-13) Delia's response is that she didn't want to be an old maid; that "life doesn't stop"; that "one gets lonely; one wants children, and a home of one's own." "I could have waited," answers Charlotte. The wedding march begins. Delia suffers a moment of unsteadiness: "Oh, Chatty, I'm trembling! (But almost instantly she recovers her poise, and with her head lifted passes Charlotte, disappearing into the passage outside, to the strains of the music, as the curtain falls.)" (pp. 12-13)

P-2 Six years later. Charlotte's day-nursery. Several poorly dressed children are teasing little Tina about living with "niggers" and having no proper parents. Enter Charlotte, who seems "prettier and happier and even younger" than six years ago. The scene establishes that Charlotte is to be married, that she intends to keep on with the day-nursery after her marriage, and that she is supposed to have gone South several years ago to recover from consumption.

The children leave, except for Tina, who goes into the next room to have supper with the woman in charge of the nursery "because she's more delicate than the others." (p. 36) Dr. Lanskell, the family doctor, enters with Mrs. Manson Mingott. Mrs. Mingott congratulates Charlotte on her appearance and on her approaching marriage, and offers her $500 for a wedding present. Charlotte is very grateful, and explains to Mrs. Mingott that this sum will enable her to keep on with her nursery without having to make demands on Joe.

Enter Delia, Jim Ralston, and Joe. Mrs. Mingott asks to see Tina. The Ralston men both express great anxiety lest the sickly child's infection be carried to their own families. Tina is nevertheless brought in,

and displays a painful shyness. But when Delia calls her, the child runs to her eagerly and climbs into her lap. It is a case of love at first sight, as the two sit looking into each other's faces. Delia and Jim leave, Delia promising to come back to see Tina.

Scene between Charlotte and Joe. Charlotte obviously loves Joe and is grateful to him for marrying her. She says "and of course Delia never thought that I'd do as well as she did! I'm sure she thinks I'm cheating you, Joe." (p. 59) She tells Joe about Mrs. Mingott's wedding present. It develops that it has never crossed Joe's mind that she intended to keep on with the day-nursery after their marriage and he absolutely forbids it, although he is full of admiration for her generosity and devotion. Exit Joe. Charlotte sadly kisses Tina, who responds unenthusiastically and even with reluctance.

P-3 The same evening, after dinner at Delia's house. Brief scene between Delia and Mrs. Mingott, expounding Clem's marriage to a rich cousin and his failure as a painter. "The spark's gone," says Mrs. Mingott. (p. 76) (The implication is that Delia has broken his heart and ruined his life.) Enter Dr. Lanskell from dinner, who takes Mrs. Mingott into the next room where Joe and Jim have gone. Sound of piano-playing and singing from next room.

Enter Charlotte from street, very much upset. She tells Delia that Tina is her own child. Delia is a little shocked, but is sympathetic until she suspects that the child is Clem's. Action follows as in N-2, except that Delia is completely hard and cold. She tells Charlotte to go upstairs and wait.

Enter Joe and Jim. Action follows as in N-4, until Joe says that he would give in to Charlotte at once if it were not for the danger to her

health; but it emerges that in spite of this danger, he has decided to let her have her own way: "Nothing's important enough to come between us now." (p. 103) Delia, the moment she realizes that Charlotte has won, says that Charlotte cannot marry because she has been coughing blood (this is not true.)

Enter Dr. Lanskell. The scene establishes that Joe is not ready to give Charlotte up unless he believes that marriage would endanger her life. Dr. Lanskell hedges (rather unaccountably, since the audience knows that he knows that Charlotte is not really ill), but says that coughing blood is a very bad sign. Joe, broken, accepts his loss, and he and Jim exit.

Scene between Delia and Dr. Lanskell. It turns out that Charlotte has never had consumption, but had pretended to have it in order to cover up her stay in the South where she went to have her baby, and that Delia has by now guessed this. During this whole scene she is very sure of herself. She declares her intention of taking Tina herself.

Dr. L: (<u>again sharply</u>.) Chatty's little girl?
Delia: Chatty's and Clem Spender's. You see, I know everything.
Dr. L: If you're counting on me to back you up in this lie, I will make one condition.
Delia: What is it?
Dr. L: That you're not to take Chatty's child from her.

. . . . . .

Delia: But I intend to give the child a proper home, where Chatty can come and see her as often as she likes.
Dr. L: You must find a way to let Chatty keep her child for herself.
Delia: But--
Dr. L: No doubt you mean well, my dear, but each of us has the right to love and suffer, to lie or to tell the truth, after his own fashion. And now that Charlotte has put herself at your mercy in telling you her secret--be generous to her. Don't make her your enemy through a mistaken sense of duty. Above all, don't try to take from her the one thing which is really her own. . . (He turns to go.)
Delia: (Uncertainly.) Dr. Lanskell-- (He turns back.)

Dr. L: Yes?
Delia: (Quietly.) You are right. I have done a sacrilegious thing. Deliberately. (pp. 109-111)

Exit Dr. Lanskell; enter Jim. Delia arranges with Jim to set Charlotte and Tina up in a house of their own. Jim goes upstairs to send Charlotte down. Action follows as in N-5, except that the cousins are hostile: Charlotte realizes that she has been made a victim. The last bit of dialogue is a solemn promise from Delia that Charlotte shall have Tina with her always, in a house of their own.

P-4 Fourteen years later. Same room. Action involving Dee (Delia's married daughter) and her husband John Halsey, Charlotte, Dr. Lanskell, Tina, Lanning Halsey, and Delia. The young people are on their way out to a party. Exposition of situation: Tina and Charlotte are permanent residents of the household; young Dee is sweet and considerate of Charlotte, but Tina is badly spoiled and habitually contemptuous of "Cousin Chatty," who bitterly resents it. Scene between Delia, Charlotte, and Tina shows Tina's marked preference for Delia. Tina insults Charlotte, who leaves, hurt. Delia half-heartedly rebukes Tina, but Tina says,

(Sulking prettily, again settling herself on the arm of Delia's chair.)
Mr. Sillerton Jackson told Lanning you were lucky to have such a child--now that Dee's married, and you'd be left all alone with just Cousin Chatty in the house, if it weren't for me.
Delia: (Relenting; tenderly.) Of course I'm lucky. I know that. . . Cousin Chatty and I are both lucky to have you.

The young people go to the ball, and Delia and Charlotte are left alone. Action continues as in N-8, except that the interview stops when Charlotte says, "Even nice girls aren't always what you call decent. (p. 141) They prepare to go to bed, but Charlotte, as soon as she is sure Delia is on her way, returns to her place by the fire. "The curtain falls

slowly, to rise again after a dark pause denoting the passage of several hours." As the curtain rises, Charlotte is dozing, but "is roused by the opening and closing of the outer door. She rises, snatches up her candle and looks at the clock. For an instant she hesitates, and then, in a panic of uncertainty, steals on tip-toe, into the room at the right, softly closing the door after her. Almost instantly the door at the back is opened, and Tina enters, followed by Lanning. He looks at her, laughs, and deliberately closes the door again.)" (p. 145)

Love scene between Tina and Lanning. He takes off her shoes and stockings and holds her feet to warm them. They kiss. Tina says "That's the first time, and I shall never kiss anyone but you--ever--" (p. 148) Again they kiss, and Delia enters. She is shocked and embarrassed, but does no more than send Tina to bed and say goodnight to Lanning. But both Tina and Lanning remain.

Enter Charlotte, "trembling with anger." (p. 150) "Yes, don't scold him," she says. "This is Tina's fault, not his. Any boy would do the same if she permitted it!" Lanning tries to defend Tina, but Charlotte demands that he be forbidden the house. Lanning repeats that they have done no harm, but says that he is shortly leaving for Europe, and would have come again only to say good-bye. Exit Lanning.

Tina bitterly accuses Charlotte of driving her lover away.

Charlotte: Oh,--my child--I've not driven him away! If he's not coming here again it's because he'd find it awkward when he has no intention of marrying a girl who's so free with her kisses.
Tina: (At white heat.) That's not true! That's not true!
Charlotte: (Somberly.) You know it's true. I don't know all he said to you--I didn't want to hear--but you don't think for a minute that anything I could say would drive him away if he really cared for you, do you?
Delia: (Trying to stand between them.) Your cousin is right,

Tina. If Lanning goes it's because he doesn't care as much for you as you think--

Tina: (Bitterly, sobbing again.) But he would have cared, if she'd not driven him away! I'd have made him care. Now I can't! Now he's gone and I'll never forgive her--never--!

Delia: Tina!

Tina: I won't! (To Charlotte.) You'd no business to meddle! And if you ever do it again I'll never speak to you as long as I live!

Delia: (Sharply) Go to your room, Tina!

Tina: (Crying.) I'm going, mamma, but before I do, she's got to know that I'm sick of her fault-finding and her spying and her meddling! You can say what you please to me, because you understand me, and I love you; but she's only a sour old maid who hates me because I'm young--and attractive--and alive; while she's old and hideous and dried up--and has never known anything about love! I won't have her interfering with my life, I tell you! I won't have it! (pp. 152-153)

Delia, stricken, sends Tina upstairs. Tina is frightened at what she has done, but says to Delia: "You'll come in and say good-night to me, won't you, mamma? Please. . . (But Delia answers only with a little gesture of dismissal.) (p. 154)

When Delia and Charlotte are left alone, Charlotte declares her intention of taking Tina away. Delia says, "You'd take Tina away from me now?" (p. 155) Charlotte accuses Delia of befriending Tina and herself only for Clem's sake. Dialogue about Clem continues as in N-11 (bottom of p. 159, above) up to "she thinks of him years afterwards in all sorts of unconscious ways, in thinking of all sorts of things--" (p. 156). . ." (her voice drops to a whisper as she continues)" that she too was painfully reminded of Clem by the young lovers.

Delia: Hush, hush--you mustn't say these things! You mustn't think them!

Charlotte: (Triumphantly.) Ah--you can't forgive me because Clem Spender didn't quite break his heart over you! That's why you like keeping me at your mercy--and taking his child from me! That's why you took us in--to give his child a home.

Delia: (Suddenly losing all patience; at white heat.) And suppose that's all true! Suppose I couldn't leave Clem Spender's

child to the mercy of chance? She's yours too. And to take her away now--from the life you made such a sacrifice to give her--would be too cruel. Too cruel--to her! Even more cruel to her than to me.

Charlotte: (Faltering a little; impressed against her will by what Delia has just said.) My mind's made up. I know what is best for my own child. (pp. 157-158)

Delia here proposes to adopt Tina. Action follows substantially as in end of N-10 to end of scene.

P-5 Same room, decorated for a wedding, the following June. Lanning, Dee and John, Mrs. Mingott, Delia, Dr. Lanskell and Tina onstage, all chatting happily about the wedding. Enter Charlotte, "a grim figure in the pleasant scene in her dark dress and black apron." (p. 164) More chatter about the wedding, until all exit variously but Delia and Dr. Lanskell:

Delia: I think poor Chatty is really happy at last.
Dr. L: (Drily.) Why?
Delia: She came into my room this morning to talk about something unimportant; then she said suddenly, "We're giving her up, I know, but now at least she'll never suspect the truth."
Dr. L: And you judge she's happy from that?
Delia: At least she's relieved. . . I think she's been afraid all these years that she might tell Tina some time, herself (p. 166).

Delia is still insensitive to Charlotte's sufferings, still justifying herself.

Tina returns. Scene ensues which Charlotte overhears from the stairs, reiterating Delia's and Tina's almost erotic reciprocal attachment. Tina goes up to bed. Delia sees Dr. Lanskell to the door, and prepares to follow Tina. Enter Charlotte, who stops her. Action continues substantially as in N-11, with the omission of what has already been incorporated into P-4 except of course that Delia's crucial discovery of her real feelings for Clem and how they are connected with

her feelings for Tina and Charlotte are omitted.

Curtain.

Comparison

The anagogy of Edith Wharton's novel is a subtle one: Delia, a young woman almost totally ignorant of her own true nature and feelings and of other people's, leads a reasonably contented life as a young society wife and mother, successfully repressing her love for an artist who courted her before she was married. She is awakened by a sudden confrontation with her impecunious cousin's breach of the social code under which they have both lived: her cousin confesses that she is the mother of the illegitimate child of the artist, and appeals to Delia for help. Delia takes over the responsibility for the child. Over a period of years she becomes aware of her love for the child's father and her jealousy of her cousin, in spite of the fact that she herself stands in the emotional relation of mother to the child. She realizes that her obedience to the social code has stifled any possibility of sexual fulfilment for herself. She accepts this, and bends all her efforts to making possible a fuller, happier life for the daughter of the man she has loved. Finally, she realizes the terrible injury she has inflicted upon her cousin by, in effect, taking her child away from her. In the end, the two women join forces to promote the child's happy marriage, and are left alone together to finish out their empty lives as best they may.

It may be observed that this anagogy is far longer than the others discussed, and is moreover indistinguishable from the plot. Perhaps this is because an anagogy is the direction of a soul, and the plot of The Old Maid traces the development of a soul. However that may be, it seems to

me impossible to reduce or simplify this anagogy without omitting some important element in it. A rapid reading of Mrs. Wharton's apparently slight novella might tempt one to choose the infinitive phrase "to give up a rivalry for the sake of its object." But, as I think Zoe Akins' play shows, the episodes Mrs. Wharton has related simply will not yield this anagogy: the story is not about a triangle at all, it is about what happens to Delia.

Mrs. Wharton's method is to give a detailed account of the development of Delia's feelings and character from the moment of Charlotte's avowal to the day of Tina's marriage. But in the play there is no such development: when we first see Delia, her character is already formed. Most of the episodes of the novel are incorporated into the play, and a good many extra ones are added; but since they are not geared to character development, they are confusing and unaccountable, and the play in its totality seems to have no anagogy at all: the beginning, and in fact the whole first part leads us to expect a story quite different from the one that actually emerges, which bears a close, if superficial, resemblance to Mrs. Wharton's--a proof, if one were needed, that a series of episodes does not constitute an anagogy.

The first chapter of the novel, on the other hand, provides a solid basis for what is to follow. In the first pages we are given the picture of an unawakened girl who has the illusion (occasionally and fleetingly punctured) of being a mature woman, particularly in contrast to her cousin Charlotte; but who in fact knows as little of adult emotion as a child of twelve. When Charlotte comes in and faces Delia with her appalling predicament, there is real feeling in the scene--for instance,

Delia's instinctive repugnance to so shocking an avowal gives way in an instant to sympathy with her cousin's distress. Yet against the background of the first chapter, the situation has an element of comedy, leading the reader to wonder which of the two is the old maid. The whole scene impresses upon us that Charlotte is a woman experienced in sexuality and motherhood, and in understanding of other people's character and motives, while Delia begins at this point to grow up for the first time.

But in the very first scene of the play, Mrs. Wharton's gentle and submissive Delia has been transformed by Zoe Akins into a hardened evildoer (P-1), who has deliberately sacrificed true love to status, but lacks the courage of her convictions; and Charlotte has become a self-righteous, not to say nagging, romantic, who knows (and says) that a right-thinking girl will make any sacrifice for love, even unrequited love. By the standards the play implies, Charlotte gets A, Delia F; and we are prepared for a moral fable in which Delia gets her just deserts.

In the novel, in contrast, the morality of the two girls is almost identical (N-2); the essential difference between them is one of temperament, Delia being placid and credulous in her attitude toward society, while Charlotte is impulsive and skeptical. Charlotte's reason for not marrying Clem is exactly the same as Delia's--he could not support her, and her mother would never have consented; and both women accept without question that the fate of the child is the most important consideration. Delia is quite sincere in her feeling that it would be morally wrong to marry Joe on false pretenses; Charlotte makes only a half-hearted attempt to defend her proposed marriage on ethical grounds, but evidently has begun to feel lonely and that it would be pleasant

to have children and a home of her own. In fact, she is in exactly the situation that the play puts Delia in at the outset and makes so morally reprehensible.

But Zoe Akins, by initially giving all the moral honors to Charlotte and at the same time trying to follow Mrs. Wharton's plot, has involved herself in some grave difficulties of characterization: if in the First Episode Charlotte is so high-minded, and so determined never to marry anyone but Clem, how does it happen that in the Second Episode we find her engaged to Joe? We at first get the impression that she has been driven to it by the necessity of providing for her child: the Second Epidsode opens with the long sequence about how little Tina is tormented by the other children for being a foundling and for living with Negroes. But simply to use Joe for her own purposes, Zoe Akins evidently feels, would be inconsistent with the high moral tone that Charlotte still habitually assumes:

> Charlotte: (Rather pointedly.) I'm glad Delia and Jim found a reason for visiting my nursery at last. They've never been here before.
> Delia: (Smoothly.) But that doesn't mean we haven't been interested.
> Charlotte: (With a trace of resentment.) I'm afraid it does. (p. 36)

Accordingly, there is a scene where Charlotte shows strong feeling for Joe: "For an instant her face rests against his shoulder, then suddenly she puts her lips to his with a passionate impulse." (p. 56)

But what then has happened to Charlotte's undying unrequited love? It seems after all to have been a case of general susceptibility to the tender passion. She no longer seems to quite fit into the mould established in the First Episode. The result is not artistic ambiguity, but confusion. Zoe Akins has made the mistake of telling us in Act I

more about the characters than we need to know, or than the subsequent action will sustain. Mrs. Wharton has avoided this difficulty by following Aristotle's advice--putting questionable material into the exposition rather than into the direct action (Poetics, Chapter 15: "In the events of the drama itself there should be nothing that does not square with our reason; but if an irrational element cannot be avoided, it must lie outside of the tragedy proper, as in the case of Sophocles' Oedipus the King." Lane Cooper, Aristotle on the Art of Poetry. Ithaca, N. Y., Great Seal Books, 1947, p. 50). In the novel, there is a good deal of vagueness about both women's motives in regard to their early feeling for Clem: the episodes involving him occur many years before the action begins, and the feelings and attitudes attached to them appear chiefly in Delia's stream of consciousness. This device, especially in stories of character, is sound psychologically as well as dramatically: all of us tend to be rather vague about the reasons for things we did years ago.

But the dramatist has assigned to both women motives as uncomplicated as a meat cleaver. Besides the plot difficulties mentioned above, the result of this character distortion is loss of credibility, inconsistency, and stereotyping. The Delia of the play is one of the more familiar of these stereotypes: the conniving gold-digger. Her attitude toward her husband is that of a prostitute:

> Mrs. Mingott: How did you ever persuade Jim to let you dine at six instead of two?
> Delia: (Slyly.) Jim may have rigid opinions, but he can be persuaded. Even if he is a Ralston, he's still a man. And when I wouldn't let him kiss me for two days, he came round. . ." (p. 73)

The novel says only that Jim adopted the idea two days after Delia suggested it. There is indeed an implication that she can wind her husband

around her finger; but far from habitually and cynically using her power over him, she is at first not even aware that she possesses it. As already noted, she is grateful for his kindness to her; "she lived under (the Ralstons) as unthinkingly as one lives under the laws of one's country" (p. 11); moreover, "she would not have been young and tender, and a happy wife, if she had not thought Joe but an indifferent copy of her Jim" (p. 61). It is not until she has become thoroughly involved in Charlotte's predicament that she deliberately diddles her husband: she feigns to misunderstand him and be timidly submissive and crushed when he says that not a penny of her pin-money shall go for the maintenance of little Tina, while in fact she knows perfectly well that he is about to say that he will undertake Tina's support himself. That is, she has resorted to a little wifely artifice to make her husband feel generous when he has done a generous thing, instead of merely obedient. Even about this she does not feel happy, and it is the first artifice she has practised upon him.

In fact, the most painful element in her situation, if her unconscious reactions are excepted, is that in order to resolve Charlotte's difficulties she must engage in chicanery and intrigue which she had always felt were unthinkable. The novel makes much of her inexperience in double-dealing, of her indecision, of her agonized feeling that she has been plunged into a situation with which she is completely inadequate to deal: "But what should she do, of whom take counsel, how advise the wretched creature who had come to her in Clement's name?" (p. 44) This is the character, full of good intentions, uncertainties, and anguish, whom Zoe Akins has cavalierly transformed into the conventional figure of an ambitious and unscrupulous woman.

The play similarly distorts Delia's jealousy of Charlotte into a perfectly conventional and predictable pattern. Both novel and play introduce this element during the episode of Charlotte's avowal. But in the novel, it appears almost at the beginning of the story, against the lightly sketched in background of Delia as a happy, good young creature. And this first appearance of her jealousy is no more than a sudden flash of light thrown upon her deeply repressed feelings, almost immediately superseded by her more habitual sympathetic response. Mrs. Wharton's treatment is as follows: when Charlotte tells her dreadful news, Delia tries to find out something about the child's father:

> "He left the country--knowing?"
>
> "How was he to know? He doesn't live here. He'd just come back--come back to see his family--for a few weeks. . ." She broke off, her thin lips pressed together upon her secret.
>
> There was a silence. Blindly Delia stared at the bold shepherd.
>
> "Come back from where?" she asked at length in a low tone.
>
> "Oh, what does it matter? You wouldn't understand," Charlotte broke off, in the very words her married cousin had compassionately addressed to her virginity.
>
> A slow blush rose to Delia's cheek; she felt oddly humiliated by the rebuke conveyed in that contemptuous retort. She seemed to herself shy, ineffectual, as incapable as an ignorant girl of dealing with the abominations that Charlotte was thrusting upon her. But suddenly some fierce feminine intuition struggled and woke in her. She forced her eyes upon her cousin's. (p. 39)

She extracts from Charlotte that Clem was the child's father. (See N-2) Then Charlotte at last acknowledges that she has come to Delia "because he loved you!" (p. 43).

> Slowly the tears rose to Delia's eyes and rolled down her cheeks, moistening her parched lips. Through the tears she saw her cousin's haggard countenance waver and droop like a drowning face under water. Things half-guessed, obscurely felt, surged up from unsuspected depths in her. It was almost as if, for a moment, this other woman were telling her of her own secret past, putting into crude words all the trembling silences of her own heart. (p. 43)

By Charlotte's avowal Delia is at once caught up and plunged into the issues of the individual versus society, of private suffering versus the breakdown of moral principle. Here begins the slow development of the characters as they contend with the inner conflicts their situation engenders. And this conflict is the theme of the novel: the ever-present and insoluble tension between the preservation of the social fabric and the fulfilment of personal desire. Delia's jealousy of Charlotte is at first unconscious, and is only a minor one of many motives for her breaking up of Charlotte's marriage. Her gradual painful discovery of her own feelings as the novel develops is authentically pathetic; however much Clem's daughter may prefer her, and however much Delia may be able to do for her, Tina remains Charlotte's child, the visible proof of a consummated love. What matter that he would have preferred Delia? It was to Charlotte that he made love, to Charlotte that he gave his child. If Delia can do more for Tina in a worldly way, Charlotte understands her better; and Delia must lose her in the end, as Charlotte has lost her long before. Delia's conflict is between compassion for Charlotte and a vague sense of guilt toward her on the one hand, and on the other the close bond of love between herself and Tina, her belatedly acknowledged love for Clem, and her jealous envy of Charlotte's experience as Clem's mistress and Tina's natural mother.

Charlotte's development, although it emerges slowly for the reader, is in fact more sudden: actually she has determined the pattern for her life even before she appears upon the scene in N-1 and appeals to Delia for help. But not until the end are we told that when she came to Delia, she had already made a deliberate choice to turn her child over to another woman, rich and of impeccable social standing, who could do

for her what Charlotte could not do herself; and that she chose Delia not only because Clem loved her, but because she understood that Delia loved him, and consequently would love his child. Charlotte's story is one of maternal passion: she quickly realizes that she could not bear to be separated from Tina, and she gives up hope of marrying Joe even before Delia makes it impossible. Her decision is made. Thereafter she proceeds to turn herself from a vital, ardent, independent girl into a dry spinster and a poor relation, so that Tina will never guess their relationship, and will not "fall" as she has fallen. Charlotte's conflict is between her fierce passion for Clem and Tina, and her awareness that they both loved Delia and not her, and that she must accept this for Tina's sake.

But in the play, as I have said, there is no development of character, and consequently the conflict within the two women is absent. There are occasional external signs of it, but they are quite unaccountable, since we are given nothing on which to base them. The tension between the rivals, totally unconnected with either character development or inner conflict, is of an entirely different character from that in the novel: it is in fact no more than the usual triangle, with Tina substituted for Clem as the bone of contention, Charlotte as the helpless victim, and Delia as the villainess, too cold and mercenary to love any man, but jealous of the girl who does.

This simple plot does not of course require any development of character; but, like any well-made play, it does require the careful establishment of character (however crude) and situation. Although as I suggested above, Miss Akin has had her difficulties in getting a girl of Charlotte's character into the situation of being engaged to Joe, still

we know by the end of the Second Episode that she is a good girl at heart and that she is destined to be Delia's victim. We are now ready for the victimizing scene, and it is quite consistent with Zoe Akin's plan that this should occur so late in the play, when we all know pretty well who's who and what's what. Charlotte's avowal, then, occurs in the Third Episode, and functions as the climax of the rivalry, which gives the victory to Delia. When Delia discovers that Clem is the child's father, "all compassion has gone from her face; her eyes narrow" (p. 90). Charlotte humbly says that Clem loved Delia, not her, and desperately appeals to Delia in Clem's name. Delia is not a whit moved by this, but responds with outrage and scorn. In a very few minutes she is in complete command of herself and the situation. She peremptorily sends Charlotte upstairs, and arranges matters with Jim and Joe: she lies, saying that Charlotte is coughing blood, and implying that marriage would kill her; and she determines to bring Clem's child to live with her at any cost.

Here we have another disharmony between character and plot: we can understand Delia's determination to take over Clem's child, but why break up Charlotte's marriage? Surely it would be easier for her to get Tina if Charlotte were disposed of. Only two explanations occur to me: either it was an act of sheer disinterested villainy, just the sort of thing one might expect of a stock bad woman; or else it was an excess of spite, the object being to deprive her rival of any hope of earthly happiness. In either case the hatred expressed is so extreme that something has to be done to account for Delia's having Charlotte living in her household in Episodes Four and Five. Perhaps this was the function of the ensuing scene with Dr. Lanskell, where he extracts a promise from Delia

that she will never take Charlotte's child away from her. But this scene raises another perplexity: why did Dr. Lanskell, who knew all, permit the break-up of Charlotte's marriage to Joe? However, in spite of all awkwardnesses and discrepancies, the curtain does rise on Episode Four, where all the agons are gathered together under one roof about fifteen years later.

Part II of the novel, as we have seen, depicts Delia's growing awareness of her inner conflict, and her manner of working it out. The three principal elements in this process are the character of Delia herself as it has been set forth in Part I, Charlotte's character as it is gradually revealed to us throughout the novel, and Tina's as it is shown in Part II.

Even in Part I there have been indications that Delia, in spite of her emotional immaturity, is Charlotte's moral superior. She constantly displays a capacity for thinking of consequences, of how what she does will affect people in time to come--a capacity that Charlotte totally lacks. Charlotte is like Clem himself--impulsive and generous, but careless as to who is going to pay the cost. In proposing to marry Joe, she wants happiness for herself and him, but as far as Tina is concerned she wants only to preserve the status quo--to see her little girl every day. It is Delia who takes thought for what will happen when the child grows up, and who sees the necessity for removing her from the Negro family as soon as possible. She even foresees that Charlotte will never be contented until the child is actually living with her, and that if she marries Joe and has children, and persuades him to take Tina into their house, Tina's status in regard to the other children will be so ambiguous as to be untenable. Charlotte has apparently considered none

of this: "Oh, my poor head won't think," she says when Delia faces her with these problems. (p. 79) (Perhaps one of Charlotte's reasons for her desperate act of turning over her child to Delia was her trust in Delia's superior character and sense of responsibility.)

Thus we are prepared for Delia's behavior in Part II--her anxious desire to do what is right, her compassion for Charlotte, her courage in going against society when she plans to adopt Tina, her sacrifice of her own possessive love in favor of Tina's happiness, her acknowledgement of the injury she has done to Charlotte, and her final effort to make what amends she can.

Charlotte, as she appears in Part II, has undergone a crucial change. The unrestrained girl has learned to submit to a harsh discipline for Tina's sake. But unlike Delia, she cannot reconcile herself to her situation (admittedly her life is harder than Delia's, at least up to the time of Tina's marriage). But her outbursts of possessiveness and her bitter accusations against Delia in N-11 appear to be not so much the results of her hard life as the natural development of the character depicted in Part I--ardent, capable of sudden desperate acts of devotion, inconsistent, unruly, but dominated by a strong passion.

And what of Tina, the girl for whom the two women sacrificed so much? Mrs. Wharton has modified her reiterated theme that people sacrifice themselves for objects that are after all worth very little. In her softened and perhaps happier old age, she seems to have been moved to write a story in which the sacrifice <u>was</u> worth the end. Tina is an enchanting child, spontaneous, happy, gentle, and affectionate. To Delia she is consistently grateful and obedient, and her resistance to "Aunt Chatty" is only delicately suggested. In one scene, a visitor at

the house, just returned from abroad, remarks to Delia that the way Tina does her hair would be pronounced extremely stylish in Paris.

> Tina, who had been laughing with her cousins at the other end of the room, was around upon her elders in a flash.
>
> "I heard what Mr. Sillerton said! Yes, I did, Mamma; he says I do my hair stylishly. Didn't I always tell you so? I know it's more becoming to let it curl as it wants than to plaster it down with bandoline like Aunty's--"
>
> "Tina, Tina--you always think people are admiring you!" Miss Lovell protested.
>
> "Why shouldn't I, when they do?" the girl laughingly challenged; and, turning her mocking eyes on Sillerton Jackson: "Do tell Aunt Charlotte not to be so dreadfully old-maidish!"
>
> Delia saw the blood rise to Charlotte Lovell's face. . .
>
> That evening, when they went up to bed, Delia called Tina into her room.
>
> "You ought not to speak to your Aunt Charlotte as you did this evening, dear. It's disrespectful--you must see that it hurts her."
>
> The girl overflowed with compunction. "Oh, I'm sorry! Because I said she was an old maid? But she is, isn't she, Mamma? In her inmost soul, I mean. I don't believe she's ever been young--ever thought of fun or admiration or falling in love--do you? (pp. 90-92)

Thus Tina repeats the comedy that Delia played many years before, of misunderstanding Charlotte's character. But she is not malicious--her rudeness to Charlotte is a thoughtless joke, a piece of juvenile poor taste and lack of feeling.

It is notable that Delia does not spoil Tina: she rebukes her for her rudeness, conveying to the reader that it falls below the normal social tone of the household. This tone is conspicuously high, as one might expect in an aristocratic family of the mid-nineteenth century. As the quotations from the novel have demonstrated, until the shocking scene in N-11, the rivals scrupulously maintain the amenities, even when they are at odds.

Given these characters and their relations to one another, Mrs. Wharton's denouement makes perfect sense. We are willing and eager to see Delia enlightened and her conflicts resolved, to see Charlotte

justified and partly compensated, and above all to see Tina made happy, which is the end toward which the whole action of the novel moves. The admirable artistic effect is due to Mrs. Wharton's close adherence to Heraclitus' principle that character is fate. In Miss Akins' adaptation, on the other hand, the already tenuous connection between character and episode in Part I collapses altogether in Part II, and the audience is left to derive what satisfaction it can from a "period piece."

The latter part of the play does faithfully reproduce Mrs. Wharton's principal episodes, but the motivation for them becomes shrouded in deeper and deeper mystery. Why do these women sacrifice themselves for Tina? And what impels these enemies of a lifetime to join forces?

To begin with, Zoe Akins' Tina is a brat from the moment of her appearance--inconsiderate, coarse-mannered, impudent to Delia, arrogant to everybody, and mercilessly cruel to Charlotte. As a result, nobody in the audience can possibly care what happens to her, and the whole emotional impact of the sacrifice is lost. Miss Akins' point of course is that Tina's brattishness is all Delia's fault. To underline this, the dramatist has painstakingly developed the character of Dee, Delia's own daughter. Dee is depicted as a most unexceptionable young woman, presumably to serve as a foil for Tina. Miss Akins' use of this ancient device is about as successful as Sir William Davenant's in his adaptation of MacBeth, wherein he develops Lady MacDuff as a major character who arbitrarily appears on stage, as occasion offers, to utter platitudinous warnings against ambition; the dramatic purpose is to show, by force of contrast, that Lady MacBeth is not a good woman. The same quality of arbitrariness adheres to Dee: her entrances and exits are much better managed than Lady MacDuff's, but we can't help wondering how it happened that she grew up so saintly. We gather that Delia was too busy spoiling Tina to pay much attention to Dee,

and that consequently she was unspoiled. But in the modern theatre of realism, it is very hard for an audience to believe that a girl whose mother systematically neglects her in favor of a foundling will turn out so sweet-natured and understanding. She does, it is true have a slight tendency to be patronizing; but this is hardly to be wondered at, in view of the way the rest of the family behaves.

For Zoe Akins, possibly for the purpose of providing lively dialogue, has lowered the tone of family intercourse in this aristocratic household to a point that would hardly be tolerated in even the most permissive modern suburban home. Insult follows insult, and scene follows scene, until by the time the final confrontation between Charlotte and Delia occurs, it has lost all its force--it is just another family brawl, such as have been going on most of the time for years. One feels, not that Charlotte is willing to put up with ill treatment for Tina's sake, but that she has become inured to it. In fact, she provokes it. Her reason, as she explains it to Dr. Lanskell, is that she wants Tina to look upon her as an old maid cousin instead of as a mother, so that Tina will never suspect their true relationship. Why an old maid cousin should have to be so consistently intolerable is not made clear. But for whatever reason, Charlotte is far more disagreeable than in the novel, continually nagging Tina, making every effort to spoil even her innocent pleasures, and, in the scene involving Lanning, bitterly humiliating her.

Again, we are obviously meant to feel that this is what Delia has brought her to. But this continual blackening of Delia prepares us for a completely different ending to the story than the one Mrs. Wharton designed and Miss Akins followed: we long to see Delia punished. The logical denouement of the play would have been that the selfish Delia

would have maneuvered to keep Tina with her at any cost; that Charlotte, the good mother, would again have sacrificed herself, using the affection between Tina and Delia to outmaneuver her rival; that by so doing she would have secured her daughter's happiness, gratitude, and amelioration, and thus would finally triumph over Delia--a clear, if not very interesting, story of the victory of virtue over vice.

But, as I have said, Miss Akin has followed Mrs. Wharton's episodes faithfully, regardless of motivation. Perhaps the worst breakdown in plot structure is in the character of Delia herself. In the Fourth Episode, she is quite altered from the woman we have seen in the first three. She is less sure of herself, seems ancious to placate everybody, especially Charlotte and Tina; altogether, she acts like a woman with a guilty conscience. There is indeed a dramatic logic in this: she has had her way, she has indulged herself by ruining Charlotte's life and spoiling Tina, and the results have made her afraid of the wreckage she has caused. And there is an implication that her life with Tina has been a substitute for the life with Clem that she renounced, and that love has softened her. The effect has been to reduce this hard, domineering, selfish, conventional woman to a weak and sentimental middle age. In the Fifth Episode, her daughter Dee calls her a "dear romantic goose," (p. 182) and treats her as if she were a child.

But in spite of the logic of this denouement, it is emotionally frustrating for the audience: we do not <u>want</u> to see Delia softened and penitent, and we are not ready to forgive her--her punishment is far too trifling for her crimes. For one thing, she does quite as much harm as a dear romantic goose as she ever did in the days of her unregenerate

iniquity: Charlotte's life is a constant hell, and Tina is ruined. Worst of all, against all justice, against all the hopes of the audience, she triumphs over her cousin. At the end of the play Charlotte retires beaten from the field as she sees her daughter come down the stairs for her bridal talk with Delia. The final scene, between Delia and Tina, where Delia tries to make some reparation for Charlotte's years of torment, rings absolutely hollow and leaves us unsatisfied and even bewildered.

But in the novel, the development of Delia from an inexperienced young matron to a wise and loving woman is worked out carefully and carries utter conviction. Moreover, when she arrives at the point of making her sacrifice, the reader knows exactly what she is giving up: "never had she kept a moonlight watch with a lover's arms to warm her. . ." (p. 133) Never had she borne a child who was the fruit of a strong passion. In losing Tina, she is losing all that makes her life worth living. She gradually discovers that her position as a New York society matron, which in the beginning of the story was a source of such happy complacency to her, is a living death. With Tina gone, her house and all it stands for will be in effect her grave.

Charlotte, although we see her only through Delia's eyes, learns a wisdom of her own. Initially much more vital and aware than Delia, she begins by affirming her nature and refusing to accommodate her life to what society expects of her. But the affirmation is in vain: circumstances force her as well as Delia into an alien mould, and she becomes the prototype of an old maid, her sole desire to prevent her daughter from suffering the fate that she herself has suffered as the result of her rebellion. Finally, in yielding her place to Delia on the night before Tina's wedding, she acknowledges that society must win, even if that entails the complete

sacrifice of all private life and joy. In the end, she joins Delia in the grave. The only hope for the separate soul in its battle against society is that these two women may between them have succeeded in making some sort of real life possible for Tina.

Although the issue--society versus the person--is so clearly drawn, Edith Wharton's story is subtly told. All three women are endearing, and all are treated with tender irony--the matronly Delia, the independent-minded Charlotte, the pampered and carefully brought up Tina. In spite of the burial alive, the story is not a tragedy, but almost a romance: the way of life to which the two women's sacrifice has reduced them is almost worth the price they have had to pay for it. If it is oppressive and narrow, it yet allows scope for graciousness, personal honor, and loyalty. The romance verges upon comedy in the relation between Delia and Charlotte: outwardly affectionate cousins, inwardly they are rivals, for Spender and for Tina; but the finest point of the comedy is that at the deepest level of all, where the fulfilment of personal desire confronts the force of circumstance, they have been allies: the world may have beaten them both, but between them they have been able to give Tina at least a fighting chance to hold her own against it.

CHAPTER VI

ETHAN FROME

In an essay on Ethan Frome, "The Morality of Inertia," (Edith Wharton: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Irving Howe, Englewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice-Hall, 1962, pp. 137-146) Mr. Lionel Trilling says of his subject "it seemed to me quite unavailable for any moral discourse. In the context of morality, there is nothing to say about Ethan Frome. It presents no moral issue at all" (p. 139). Mr. Trilling develops the idea that the seriousness of Edith Wharton's moral intention in writing the story "was not adequate to the dreadful fate she contrived for her characters" (p. 138). Later in the essay he writes "Between the moral life of Ethan and Mattie and their terrible fate we cannot make any reasonable connection. Only a moral judgment cruel to the point of insanity could speak of it as anything but accidental" (p. 145).

In Mr. Trilling's view, this accidental quality is a serious fault; but it seems to me that what he says might equally well be applied to Oedipus Rex. Surely most of us can agree with him that none but the most brutally superficial moralists would think that Ethan and Mattie deserved their fate; but like most Greek tragedy, the work impels us to consider what the connection is between the moral life of the characters and what happens to them. Like Oedipus, Ethan is a better-than-average man, and like Oedipus he is stripped of everything. Why? Does the story

cast any light on human values, or is Lionel Trilling right in believing that it is a case of an author's self-indulgence in the cruel? To answer this, we may begin by considering what values the story implies.

The highest good in Starkfield culture seems to have been economic self-sufficiency, with its concomitant of strict probity about money. When Ethan's parents fell upon hard times, there was no thought of borrowing money: Ethan had to come home from school and work the farm himself. When he was thinking about going West with Mattie, leaving Zeena as a charge upon the community was unthinkable. Finally, the immediate cause of his capitulation to the circumstances which kept him in Starkfield was an unwillingness to borrow money from kind neighbors on false pretenses, even though the alternative was to condemn Mattie to exile and, as they both thought, death. In different cultures, the general feeling might have been that Ethan's parents ought to have gone into debt or sold the farm to give Ethan his start in life; that Ethan's and Mattie's happiness and fulfilment were more important than Zeena's financial independence; that Mattie's life was worth a small artifice.

A crucial event in Ethan's life was his marriage to Zeena. In Starkfield, marriage seems to have been a private affair, at least at its inception: Ethan was not, evidently, accountable to anyone else when it came to choosing a wife. He knew himself that he had married her out of loneliness (Ethan Frome, N. Y. Scribner's, 1938 ed., pp. 69,70) and this says something about the isolation of the members of the community from one another. In a European village, or in a Quaker community where marriage requires the assent of the congregation, the union might never have been permitted; furthermore, in such a community Ethan might not have been so lonely. Another notable point about Starkville mores is

that Zeena, once married, seems to have had more overt power over Ethan than she would have had anywhere outside America. Ethan's indulgence of her hypochondria, with its attendant extravagance, conforms to a peculiar type of American chivalry; another instance of it is his response to her insufferable behavior--invariably courteous, even affable; an Italian peasant would have kept away from her, quarreled with her, or beaten her.

Thus when Zeena made up her mind to get rid of Mattie, her battle was more than half won--the community would stand behind her. The perverted chivalry evidently made it hard for Ethan to fight his wife on any point; added to this, the bare suggestion of love between him and Mattie seems to have been sufficient to disarm all his defenses. It does not seem to have mattered much that theirs was an innocent love, even an undeclared love; it put Zeena in the right and them in the wrong, or at least made it impossible for Mattie to go on living in the Frome household. In Starkfield, love outside of marriage, whether innocent or otherwise, was high on the list of sins, easily taking precedence over the violation of family duty to a penniless cousin, or sending a young girl away to what was virtually her death.

The reverse side of the culpability of extra-marital love in this severe, middle-class Protestant view of things was its irresistible allure; Mattie represented for Ethan all the interest, all the joy and brightness and beauty that his life had lacked. As many students of culture have observed, this apotheosis of romantic love is a phenomenon of the 19th century which found its fullest expression in England and America, where it often became a substitute for religion. In a different society, the love might have been less important, both in the community

value system and to Ethan himself; and loyalty to family and to the marriage bond might have had the effect of keeping the three together rather than of driving Mattie out. But in the New England culture of 1911, which others besides Mrs. Wharton have seen as the quintessence of the middle-class Puritanism of the Western World, even an innocent preference for another woman is seen as an absolute violation of the obligation a man owes his wife. In literature, such episodes often end in some kind of metaphorical death.

And there is a close association between love and death in the story. When Mattie and Ethan rode the sled down the hill into the elm tree, their motives were more complex than a simple desire for death: the act was their way of making love. I have not found any comment about the metaphorical significance of this plunging together to an end that was never consummated; but surely it is a rich and valid image for their abortive love affair. The result was not death, but the climax that Mrs. Wharton refers to as having taken place a generation later (Edith Wharton, Ethan Frome, New York, Scribner's, 1922 edition, p. vi)--Ethan's awareness that he had failed Mattie. "If Mattie had died," says Mrs. Hale, "Ethan might have lived (1938 edition, last page): if he had succeeded in giving Mattie what she wanted from him, then his enthusiasm for life, his libido, might have survived. But he did not succeed, and so he was constrained, diminished, with "the look in his face which, as I persisted in thinking, neither poverty nor suffering could have put there" (p. 11).

Now the question before us is: did Ethan violate any part of the Starkfield code of morals? In the context of the story, was he responsible for his fate? In the sense that he was to blame for it,

certainly not. As I have said, the story is full of indications that Ethan was Aristotle's better-than-average man, from the point of view of both the alien narrator and the community itself. We cannot, I believe, even find an authentic hamartia in him: a Christian moralist might perhaps allege that he allowed himself to be bemused by his love for Mattie to the point where he harmed both the women he was responsible for; but given the grimness of his life and the gentleness of his nature, it was quite inevitable that he should fall helplessly in love with Mattie; and, in spite of the fact that the neighbors would have sided with Zeena, none of them seems to have blamed him for it. Even Zeena seems to have looked on it more as a weapon that she could use against him than as something culpable--he satisfied the community conscience by not declaring his love until he was about to lose Mattie forever.

But on the other hand, the subject of Ethan Frome, unlike that of Greek tragedy, does not seem to be the ineluctable mystery of fate. The story is an outrage to our feelings in a way that Oedipus Rex is not: the hellish grimness of Ethan's and Zeena's and Mattie's life seems somehow unnecessary, preventable. The reader feels like blaming somebody or something. The obvious culprit is of course Zeena. She is the demonic figure, the witch. Even when physically absent, she casts her baleful influence on happiness by means of her cat, which eyes the lovers from Zeena's rocking chair, and later breaks the red glass pickle dish, the symbol of erotic love. Witchlike, Zeena is accustomed to keep this article in the back of the closet, in contrast to Mattie who got it out for herself and Ethan at the earliest opportunity. And Zeena's seemingly meritorious act of taking Mattie back after the

accident and of caring for her is the act of a witch: she transmutes the lovers' paradise into a hell.

Ethan, the story tells us, had other difficulties to contend with (poverty, his parents, and the general harshness of his life) that made him peculiarly vulnerable to Zeena's malice. But, as I have suggested, she would not have had the power she had over him if she had not been in some sense representative of the community. The relation between the Starkfield inhabitants and their environment was precisely the relation between Ethan and Zeena--harsh, frustrating, and finally defeating of all hope of happiness. And this environment was of course moral as well as physical. In fact, throughout the work Mrs. Wharton uses the New England climate as a metaphor for the repressive and deadening moral atmosphere (see below, p.) which, in her novels about New York society, is presented as that society's assumptions about itself and the individual's place in it. Like the inhabitants of Starkfield, Mrs. Wharton's New Yorkers construct their moral being upon a base of economic self-sufficiency, probity in money matters, strict adherence to the truth, quasi-chivalrous indulgence of wives, and the joint culpability and desirability of romantic love. Thus, the true culprit in Ethan Frome is not Zeena, but the American system of moral values as it appears to Mrs. Wharton.

Many critics have observed that Ethan Frome is a departure from the general tendency of Edith Wharton's production: instead of New York society, we are presented with New England village life where poverty is a continual threat and cultural life is stripped to its bare essentials. But Ethan Frome is a departure only if we conceive of Mrs. Wharton as a novelist of manners (and even then, is not the cultural life of her

New York thin and constricting?). If we accord her a wider range, and read her as an interpreter of a more general human condition, Ethan Frome becomes the focus of her work: the cultural values of America, the values she questions in all her work, find their quintessential expression in the cultural values of Starkfield. And the question she raises is--is this civilization worth the personal sacrifice it entails? How does she mean us to evaluate the frustrated lives of Ethan, of Newland Archer and Anna Leath and Delia Ralston?

To be sure, Ethan's frustration is of a different sort from the others': for one thing, it is worse. His final state is repeatedly described as hell, whereas the characters in the other novels recall Dante's good pagans in Limbo--they are without hope; Ethan is in despair. But he is not inert. In the face of hell, he continues to act--action is the very mark of his endurance. He is still at work fulfilling his obligations, at the cost of whatever effort it may require. I am at a loss to understand how Mr. Trilling could have seen Ethan's moral life as one of inertia, unless perhaps he mistook the rigid and granite-like atmosphere of the book for inaction. Ethan's action, it is true, produced no change in the situation; but he was not defeated. His life was one of unremitting effort; he could do things that no one else could do; and moreover, as Harmon Gow says, "I guess it was always Ethan done the caring" (p. 7). He never gave up, either physically or emotionally: he endured. Again, Harmon Gow says, "Ethan'll likely touch a hundred" (p. 6). This life, however harsh, however apparently unrewarding, was not meaningless.

For a life truly bereft of meaning and hence more truly hellish, we may consider by way of example Undine Spragg's in The Custom of the

Country (McMillan, 1913). "She had everything she wanted, but she still felt at times that there were other things she might want if she knew about them" (p. 591). Then she learns that because of her divorce, her husband can never become an Ambassador. "Under the dazzle a tiny black cloud remained. She had learned that there was something she could never get, something that neither beauty nor influence nor millions could ever buy for her. She could never be an Ambassador's wife; and as she advanced to welcome her first guests, she said to herself that it was the one part she was really made for" (last page).

In arriving at this vacuous state of being, Undine had left a wreckage of other people's lives behind her. But apart from the good or harm each may have done, Ethan's hard life is one of more dignity, and therefore more value, than Undine Spraggs'. The attitude Edith Wharton consistently expresses is that the casting off of the constricting trammels of a code of behavior, regardless of that code's intrinsic validity, results in moral chaos and finally in anomie. However oppressive a civilization may be, it is better than no civilization; and if the individual person cannot flourish or live other than a stunted life in conforming to the strictures of American society, yet outside that conformity he cannot function as a moral agent at all. These moral values may not make for human happiness; worse, they may be merely relative; but nevertheless, they must be obeyed--the alternative is a life with no meaning.

If Mrs. Wharton questions the validity of the moral values implicit in Ethan Frome, she is quite definite about their aesthetic worth. In her preface to the 1922 edition, (pp. v, vi) she writes "I had an uneasy sense that the New England of fiction bore little. . . resemblance to the

harsh and beautiful land as I had seen it. . . the outcropping granite had been overlooked. . . It [her theme] must be treated as starkly and summarily as life had always presented itself to my protagonists; any attempt to elaborate and complicate their sentiments would necessarily have falsified the whole. They were, in truth, these figures, my granite outcroppings; but half-emerged from the soil, and scarcely more articulate."

I believe any addition to this comment of Mrs. Wharton's about the artistic technique of the book would be superfluous. The most obvious reason for its success is the harmony she has achieved between the theme and the plot, characterization, style, and use of detail to convey her vision. Most readers immediately recognize the justness, the perfect appropriateness, of the contrasting images of Zeena and Mattie as they open the door to Ethan on successive nights; of the pickle dish, the sinister cat, the simple but powerfully moving act of Ethan carrying Mattie's trunk downstairs.

The anagogia of Mrs. Wharton's novel, then, may be expressed as follows: all the aspirations of a better-than-average man are defeated by the environment in which he lives, but in spite of this he continues to work and to love. His motto might have been one I once saw on a French coat-of-arms: "Je maintiendrai."

When Ethan Frome was dramatized in 1936 (Owen Davis and Donald Davis, Ethan Frome, Dramatists Play Service, New York, Scribner's, 1936, p. 5), Mrs. Wharton wrote in the foreword to the play, "I found myself thinking on every page: 'Here at last is a new lease of life for Ethan'. . . I imagine few have had the luck to see the characters

they had imagined in fiction transported to the stage without loss or alteration of any sort, without even that grimacing enlargement of gesture and language supposed to be necessary to 'carry' over the footlights. I should like to record here. . . my professional admiration for the great skill and exquisite sensitiveness with which my interpreters have executed their task."

I am in full agreement with Mrs. Wharton about the skill and exquisite sensitiveness; moreover, almost every suggestion of dramatic action in the novel has been incorporated into the play. But it seems to me that there are significant alterations in the characters, or at least that the dramatists see them differently from the way the novelist did. Both the novel and the play begin with a prologue which takes place twenty years before the events set forth in the story. Both serve to stimulate our interest in Ethan, and our curiosity about the chain of events that reduced him to the condition in which we first see him--a ruin that has somehow endured, and will endure for years to come. But there are differences in the presentation of Ethan's character, a) in his moral stature, b) the influence of the climate upon him, and c) in the degree to which his career reflects that of the whole village.

In the novel, the narrator's role is that of interpreter. His interest in Ethan is first aroused by seeing this badly damaged but impressive man come to the post office every day to collect his mail. He inquires about Ethan from Harmon Gow, "who had driven the stage. . . in pre-trolley days and knew the chronicle of all the families on his line" (1938 edition, p. 4), and Harmon tells him of the "smash-up" twenty years before. It was the "wust kind," but "Fromes are tough. Ethan'll likely touch a hundred." To the narrator he seems "dead and in hell right now"

(p. 6). "Guess he's been in Starkfield too many winters," says Gow (p. 6); and he gives the reason for Ethan's not being able to get away--he had to care for his people. The narrator suggests that since the smash-up Ethan's people must have had to care for him; but Gow answers "Oh, as to that: I guess it's always Ethan done the caring" (p. 7).

Thus in the first few pages Ethan is established as a man who has endured all that fate could do to him, but who has retained the undiminished respect of his fellow-townsmen; more important, he has retained his compassion. It is this peculiar quality of his attitude toward "his people," it seems, that chiefly interests the narrator, and which places Ethan beyond his circumstances. Later the narrator refers to a "look on (Ethan's) face which neither poverty nor physical suffering could have put there" (p. 11). This look, as the story develops, seems to be the expression of frustrated compassion: Ethan was a man of superior qualities--"virtuous" in the classical sense--who bent all his efforts to taking care of "his people," and had to live with the fact that he could do nothing for them at all.

As the narrator begins to know Ethan better in the course of their daily drive to Corbury Flats, he finds more evidence of Ethan's superiority to his circumstances and to the townsmen. Ethan and his aging bay can get the narrator to his destination when all the other horses in the village are laid up with an epidemic (a metaphorical superiority, indeed, but surely more than a bit of plot structure); Ethan has spent a year in Florida--he has gone beyond the village; he knows something of science, and is willing to read a book on the subject, in spite of the reductive and confining circumstances of his present life. In sum, he is presented as a person of very high stature.

In the play too, the prologue serves as a device for characterizing Ethan (Davis, pp. 9-12). Gow treats Ethan's poverty and reticence with great respect, and the action establishes Ethan's readiness to surmount difficulties; but the impression we get is not of a superior man, but of one who is very poor and is reticent about his troubles; as for Harmon Gow's attitude, respect for poverty and reticence seems to be simply the custom of the country. The horses' epidemic is referred to, but emerges as plot structure rather than metaphor; nothing is said of Ethan's "caring," of his stay in Florida or his interest in science. In short, we are presented with the picture of a man stoical and resolute, but not heroic.

The prologue does not mention the smash-up. It establishes that some extraordinary event has brought Ethan to the condition we see him in, and the audience is made curious as to what that event may be. The whole action of the play then leads up to the smash-up as the cause of Ethan's present condition. In the novel, the dreadful non-fatal accident is of course also the cause of Ethan's condition, but the reader's knowledge of it is not postponed--it is mentioned on the second page. The effect is to display the smash-up as the central element in a larger pattern: the real cause of Ethan's fate is his ice-bound past. The phrase "guess he's been in Starkfield too many winters" (absent from the play) is uttered twice (Wharton, pp. 6,7), and functions as a focal point for the whole prologue. We are made aware as soon as possible that, as I have said, in the novel the enemy is the winter.

This battle between Ethan and the winters is one which he cannot win, but will not concede. "Most of the smart ones get away," says Gow (p. 9). Ethan is a smart one, but he is trapped by the obligations his

circumstances have imposed upon him, and winter is a metaphor for this trap. Gow tells the narrator about Ethan's farm, "always 'bout as bare as a milkpan when the cat's been round" (p. 13); of his father, who "got a kick, out haying, and went soft in the brain, and gave away money like Bible texts afore he died" (p. 13); of his mother, who "got quee" after the farm was isolated by the new railraod (p. 13); of Zeena, who's "always been the greatest hand at doctoring in the county" (p. 13). Ethan's one attempt at escape--his winter in Florida--offered him some hope for a time; "But now it's all snowed under," he says (p. 15).

A bit of the snowstorm scene may be considered as the controlling metaphor for the entire novel: "The small ray of Frome's lantern was soon lost in the smothering medium, in which even his sense of direction and the bay's homing instinct finally ceased to serve us" (p. 23). Perhaps we may accept the tired and aged bay, who nevertheless manages to get the narrator to Corbury Junction and back in a snowstorm that has sent the rest of Starkfield under cover, as a symbol of Ethan's vital energy.

The truncated farmhouse is another metaphor for Ethan's castration (pp. 20, 21). "I had to take down the 'L' a while back," says Ethan (p. 20)--presumably to conserve heat; and the narrator sees in Ethan's "diminished dwelling the image of his own shrunken body" (p. 21).

The winter, then, functions almost as a character in the story. It affects not only Ethan but the whole village, and by implication the whole of New England and even America. The prologue tells us that, like Ethan, the inhabitants of Starkfield have had their life force frozen to a "sluggish pulse" (p. 8), but not extinguished, by the stark northern land. The narrator "had been struck by the contrast between the vitality of the climate and the deadness of the community" (p. 8), which "emerged from its six

months' siege like a starved garrison capitulating without quarter" (p. 9). And Starkfield is only one of the communities to fall victim to "the enemy in command of almost all the lines of access between the beleaguered villages" (p. 9). What began in the early days of the nation as a stimulating challenge ends as a war of attrition: the winter rages, the people can only survive.

There are other devices by which Ethan is linked with the village. "All the dwellers in Starkfield. . . had had troubles enough of their own to make them comparatively indifferent to those of their neighbours . . . though all conceded that Ethan Frome's had been beyond the common measure" (p. 11). Mrs. Hale, the narrator's landlady, lives in "the most considerable mansion in the village," (p. 9)--that is, she represents it. She has been a close friend of the Fromes', and her fortunes too were "at the ebb" (p. 9). And presenting Ethan's story through the comments of Mrs. Hale, formerly the principal inhabitant, and Harmon Gow, formerly the stage-driver who knew all that went on, has the effect of tying the sinking fortunes of the village with Ethan's own grim destiny.

In the play, this careful interweaving of Ethan with the village and the American culture is absent. The focus of interest is entirely on Ethan himself, and the train of events which brought him to his present state. The farmhouse is not truncated, but simply dilapidated. The conversation between Gow and the "Young Man" does not connect Ethan with his fellow townspeople, but only gives us information about him. In sum, the difference between the play's prologue and the novel's is that the Ethan of the novel is of higher stature than the Ethan of the play, that the novel makes Ethan the representative of the whole community while the play does not, and that the antagonist in the novel is the climate, which

serves as a metaphor for the repressive moral climate of America as Mrs. Wharton saw America. In the play, the antagonist does not emerge in the prologue; but as the action develops, it seems to be Ethan himself who functions in that role, or at least the cold and unyielding elements in his character do.

As I have said, I believe that there are significant alterations in Mrs. Wharton's characters as they appear in the play. To begin with Ethan himself, as the curtain rises on Act I, of which the time is twenty years earlier than the prologue, all the audience knows of Ethan is that he is partially crippled and has suffered great misfortune; of his character, we know only that he is reticent, is unwilling to do favors, but will do a great deal for a dollar. The stage directions of Act I describe him as "a drab part of the poverty-stricken farm which is his life, and like it, severe and hard and cold" (Davis, p. 14). His first act after dumping the logs on the floor is to go to the table and push Zeena's china aside (p. 14). When she complains of pain and appeals to him for help, he doesn't listen. She has had to introduce Mattie into the house by a ruse, since Ethan has refused to have her (p. 15). When he discovers the ruse, he reacts "furiously and determinedly" (p. 17). He is a cold, wilful, hard man, and his relations with Zeena are openly embattled.

In the novel, the first description of a scene between Ethan and Zeena occurs <u>after</u> the exposition of his growing love for Mattie (Wharton, pp. 41-42). Thus our first view of the young Ethan is not of a man "severe and hard and cold" who is on bad terms with his wife, but of a warm-hearted, young fellow in love. In the brief but portentous first scene with Zeena, where she speaks of the possibility of Mattie's marrying and notes that now Ethan shaves every morning, he is peaceable, even amicable. In the second scene with Zeena too, when he and Mattie come home from the church

social, even though "it was peculiarly repugnant to him that Mattie should see him follow Zeena" up to their bedroom (p. 59), he seems anxious to placate her, to accede to her demands if he can: "'That's so. It is powerful cold down here,' Ethan assented; and with lowered head he went up in his wife's wake. . ." (p. 59).

And his attitude toward Mattie is different in the play. In the novel, he goes to the station to meet her when she arrives, and there is no mention of his having objected to her coming; again, "he reflected, looking over her slight person, 'She don't look much on housework, but she ain't a fretter, anyhow'" (p. 33). He is all amiability and good will. But in the play, he is infuriated at Zeena's duplicity in sending for her, and he is impatient with Mattie and almost rude. When she takes off her coat and drops it on a chair he says "There's pegs to hand it up on" (Davis, p. 19). Later, there is the following interchange:

> Zeena: If you'd just show her where things are once, Ethan, 'stead of scaring the poor girl to death. . . she might do all right.
> Mattie: (Turns and sees him holding out a ladle full of stew from simmering pot.) Oh! (She laughs nervously.) Guess I'm not much help.
> Ethan: (As he fills his plate.) I guess not! (p. 21)

It is not until the end of the scene that his hostility to Mattie is broken down, and he grudgingly concedes "Well, she ain't a fretter, anyhow" (p. 22). We have the impression of a habitually hostile man, unsympathetic to human needs and appeals, who is charmed into love against his nature.

Even in the church social scene which expounds the beginning of their love, Ethan is much rougher than in the novel:

> Denis: (Croses to Ethan.) Say, Ethe, would you mind if I was to take Mattie home?

Ethan: (Shortly.) Yes, I would.
Denis: I got the old man's cutter waitin' down there. I thought maybe she c'd take a little ride. We won't be long.
Ethan: (Shortly.) Nope!
Denis: I'll see't she get home safe.
Ethan: Nope
Denis: Well, maybe you c'd come along with us--save you walkin'.
Ethan: Don't mind walkin'! (Two girls and Mattie come out of the vestibule, Mattie hurrying toward them.)
Denis: (Calling to Mattie.) Say, Mattie, see if you can't make Ethan come along with us for a little ride in the old man's cutter! (Mattie crosses to Ethan.)
Ethan: (Firmly.) It's gettin' kind of late, Mattie. (He starts to turn from her, then says.) You comin' with me? 'Course if you want to stay and go with him, I guess I can't stop you. (p. 28)

In contrast, Mrs. Wharton's Ethan is very much the retreating lover, hanging back until he is certain that Mattie would rather walk home alone than ride with Denis, almost overwhelmed with happiness at the discovery.

But in the play, the whole dramatic movement is the gradual breaking up of Ethan's hardness of character, culminating in the passionate scene on the hilltop just before the epilogue. In this connection, in the fall of 1968 I had a conversation with Mr. Donald Davis about the scene in the novel on the night of Ethan's absence, when Ethan picks up the other end of the piece of cloth Mattie is sewing on. This episode is omitted from the play. I had supposed that this was for the same reason as the alteration of the bed-making episode in All The Way Home--that the visual impact would have been too light to carry weight of the emotion. But Mr. Davis said "No--just the contrary: the impact would have been too strong. The audience had to be more and more acutely aware of Ethan's struggle--Ethan and Mattie must never touch each other until they rushed into each other's arms on the hilltop."

If Ethan is a less attractive character in the play than in the

novel, Zeena is just the opposite. The same first scene of Act I that shows Ethan as unresponsive and rather brutal, shows Zeena as human and troubled and, if not exactly appealing, at least as one who is trying to make contact. The audience's first sight of a character is obviously of crucial importance to their feeling about her; and at curtain rise of the play proper, Zeena is on stage alone. We see her working about the house as any wife might do (in the novel, Zeena is never once seen at work until after the catastrophe, and the reader's first actual sight of her is the witch-like figure who opens the door to the lovers when they come home late from the church social) (Wharton, pp. 52,53). Her first utterance is when Ethan pushes her china aside--"Ethan, don't, you might break them!" (Davis, p. 14)--surely a rather touching point, against so drab a background. She proceeds to admire her china. She does use it to get in a dig at Ethan--"Of course I've given up hopin' we'll ever get a place where there'd be any use of havin' nice things" (p. 14), but immediately afterwards she "gets tea pot, shows it to him, he does not look," and says "This is real pretty, ain't it?" The point of the interchange is that she tries to communicate with him, but he refuses.

They go on to have a bitter quarrel about the imminent arrival of Mattie: Zeena, evidently feeling that her husband will never willingly meet her wants or needs, has arranged for Mattie to come without telling him anything about it. This episode does not occur in the novel; furthermore, the novel specifically states that "the first scene of open anger between the couple in their sad seven years together" (Wharton, p. 112) was after Zeena returned from Bettsbridge and declared that the doctor said she must have a hired girl.

In short, the novel presents us with the picture of a gentle, warm-hearted young man married to a mean and grasping woman, whereas in the play we have a sensitive, lonely woman married to a hostile, harsh-spoken man. As this first dialogue between the couple comes to its end, just before the arrival on stage of Mattie, Zeena states her position:

(The dots in the following passage do not indicate omissions, but are supplied by the dramatists to indicate pauses.)

> It just seems as if the good Lord' decided that you and me and the Fromes before us. . . them layin' out there. . . just ain't ordained to ever get away from here, living or dead. Sometimes I think I'll be losin' my mind like your mother did if I don't get someone here to talk to. Ethan, you can let Mattie stay, without it costin' you anything! . . . Just the spare room'n three meals a day. Well, the way I'm feelin' now. . . I can't eat anythin' myself to speak of. . . so she gets'll be the same as my share if I was able to eat proper! (Ethan rises, crosses to sink.) Mattie's a real bargain, Ethan. The last letter I got from Aunt Prudence says Mattie's willin' enough; but none of the family'll give her anythin' but advice, since her father died an' left his drug store bankrupt. . . so she ain't much use to herself or anybody else. . . (Davis, p. 17)

Surely this speech demonstrates both suffering and sensitivity. In the novel, we see Zeena suffer only once--when she discovers the broken pickle dish. Again, in the novel it is Ethan who compares his household to the Fromes in their graves, on his way home from the church social with Mattie:

> They turned in at the gate and passed under the shaded knoll where, enclosed in a low fence, the Frome grave-stones slanted at crazy angles through the snow. . . For years that quiet company had mocked his restlessness, his desire for change and freedom. "We never got away--how should you?" seemed to be written on every headstone; and whenever he went in or out of his gate he thought with a shiver: "I'll just go on living here till I join them." But now all desire for change had vanished, and the sight of the little enclosure gave him a warm sense of continuance and stability. (Wharton, p. 49,50)

Here it is Ethan who displays sensitivity; but whereas to the Zeena of the play the graveyard threatens insanity because she is cut off from communication, to the Ethan of the novel it promises continuance and stability because he has entered into communication.

Zeena's motive for having Mattie come is quite different in the novel. The prologue tells us only that "Zeena, she's always been the greatest hand at doctoring in the county." The very next mention of her is as follows:

> Mattie Silver came from Stamford, and when she entered the Frome's household to act as her cousin Zeena's aid it was thought best, as she came without pay, not to let her feel too sharp a contrast between the life she had left and the isolation of a Starkfield farm. But for this--as Frome sardonically reflected--it would hardly have occurred to Zeena to take any thought for the girl's amusement. (p. 32)

The contrast is striking: in the novel, she wants Mattie so that she can indulge her hypochondria and dig her knife deeper into Ethan; in the play, she wants a companion because she is ready to go mad with loneliness. Indeed, in the scene cited in the discussion of Ethan's character (p. 182 above), Zeena champions Mattie against Ethan's roughness, and in spite of her invalid's disposition to criticize and wound, she seems willing to make friends with her cousin.

It is made very plain in Zeena's next scene in the play that her good will turned sour only when she became aware that Ethan was warming up to Mattie. The time is the winter following the spring of Mattie's arrival. Ethan is a changed man--"in a generous, voluble mood this morning, suffused with the memory of his talk with Mattie" the night before (Davis, p. 41). Zeena frets about Mattie's incompetence and neglect of her, and suggests that Mattie may leave them one day to marry, pretty much as she does in the novel; but the precise moment when her

animosity turns to venom (no such moment is mentioned in the novel) is highly dramatized in the play. It occurs later in this same scene:

Zeena: I got my chill last night--goin' down them drafty stairs to open that door in the middle of the night!

Mattie: Oh, now, ain't that a shame! Just you wait one second . . . Zeena. . . I got water boilin' on the stove. . . and I'll be back before you know it! (She takes hot water bottle, exits hurriedly out L. Slight pause.)

Ethan: Guess that was my fault, Zeenie. . . I got gabbin' with Ed Varnum about business. . . and first thing you know. . . I was late gettin' to the sociable to fetch Mattie. (He glances at Zeena, a bit self-consciously reaches for his coat and murmurs.) Now Zeena, don't you go frettin' yourself . . . Mattie's all right, she's doin' fine. . . (Smoothly.) 'Course I know she ain't the housekeeper you are! . . . But you can't expect that. (Pointedly as he struggles into sweater.) One thing I know. . . Mattie ain't leavin's long's she's needed. (Gets his coat on and buttons it up.) Well, Jotham's comin' and we're loadin' spruce and startin' to haul over to Andrew Hale's place today. (Puts coat on.) I guess't I'm a little late gettin' started.

Zeena: I guess't you're always late. . . now't you shave every mornin'. (The implication stops Ethan.)

Mattie: (Enters with the hot water bottle and a breakfast tray.) Here you are, Zeena! (Mattie hurries to bed with hot water bottle, Zeena shifts about petulantly.)

Zeena: (Grabs hot water bottle from Mattie.) I'll do for myself!

Mattie: (Sets tray on chair.) I'm terribly sorry about last night. . . we was just awful late, wasn't we, Zeenie? (Ethan is standing stock still. . . nervous and embarrassed, and alarmed at what Mattie is about to say.) Well. . . it was all my fault, every bit. . . I went and promised Denis Eady the last dance and he just wouldn't let me go. . . and there was poor Ethan waitin' out in the cold. . . (Zeena glances from one to the other of them, she smiles slightly, Ethan is overwhelmed with embarrassment.)

Zeena: Ethan, I thought you was late gettin' about your business.

Ethan: A-yeah, well, I'll get there. You see't everything gets done, Mattie. . . so' Zeena c'n rest easy. . . I'll be back in time to give you a hand around the house later on. (Crosses to door L. Mattie gets tray from chair.)

Zeena: Ethan! (He stops.) You 'tend to the haulin'--we'll see to the housework! (He exits. Mattie sets the tray on Zeena's lap, Zeena is watching her steadily, which increases Mattie's uneasiness. Zeena looks at the tray full of food.) All them things. . . just goin' to waste. . . thk, thk, thk. . .

Mattie: (Cheerfully.) You always say that, Zeena. Well. . . (Crosses up to door L.)

Zeena: (Sharply.) Mattie! (Mattie turns quickly. Zeena composes

herself.) Oh, I didn't mean to be cross. You know, I didn't sleep much last night. (Takes sip of coffee, looks up at Mattie.) You been leadin' quite a lot of dances with Denis Eady--lately, ain't you?

Mattie: (Relieved at the turn of the conversation.) Oh, well--I don't know--I guess he dances a lot with most everybody.

Zeena: (Significantly.) His father owns the Starkfield grocery.

Mattie: (Innocently.) I know--an' folks say they're real well off, too.

Zeena: Denis is quite a catch for some girl.

Mattie: (c.) My, I should say!

Zeena: (Pleasantly.) If you was to get goin' steady with him--c'd ask him over to the house Wednesday evenin's. Denis is a mighty fine boy, and I wouldn't stand in your way if he was ever to propose to you.

Mattie: (Laughs.) Oh, my--why, he wouldn't never do that!

Zeena: He might. . . if you was to give him the chance.

Mattie: (c.) Why--gorry--whatever put that into your head, Zeena? And I never thought of him that way at all! I don't like him!

Zeena: Paupers can't be choosey. (Drinks coffee.)

Mattie: (Quickly.) Oh, I'm not choosey. . . Zeena. . . honest', I'm not. Like I was saying to Ethan only last night. . . I says nobody ain't never asked me yet, I said, and he said, if he wasn't married he might ask me himself. . . so 'course I said, "Sayin' that don't mean anythin'. . . But still an' all," I says, "it's real nice of you to say it". . . and it was, too, wasn't it? (She beams.) And that's about as near to proposin's anybody ever--got--(Zeena is sitting rigidly bolt upright in the bed, and is staring at Mattie fixedly.)

Zeena: (Indicates tray.) You c'n take this. . . if you're a mind to.

Mattie: (Hastily and frightenedly.) Yes, Zeena. (Mattie goes to lift the tray. Zeena lurches away from Mattie. Mattie upsets the coffee cup on the tray and the coffee spills out over the blankets. Zeena sits rigidly motionless, staring at the rapidly spreading stain. Mattie is terrified. She suddenly darts forward, sets the cup upright upon the tray.) Oh, Zeena! Oh, my! . . . if I'd only been thinkin' what I was doin'. . . oh, them blankets is just ruint, simply ruint! (Puts tray on chest up C., stops, straightens up, glances at Zeena helplessly, and then after a moment, unable to bear Zeena's steady gaze of terrific hatred, she mumbles faster and faster.) I don't know what I'm going to do! (pp. 43-44)

The dramatic movement in this scene is: 1) Zeena, already aware of a change in Ethan's disposition, discovers that his story about getting home late does not match Mattie's; this confirms her suspicion that he is falling in love with Mattie. 2) Although she is deeply hurt by this, she

sets about to find out if Mattie's affections can be engaged elsewhere. 3) She discovers that Mattie has unconsciously been falling in love with Ethan, and that 4) the interchange that has just taken place between the two women has brought Mattie's feelings from unconsciousness to consciousness. This bit of action has supplied Zeena with a concrete and powerful motive to get rid of Mattie, one which the audience can sympathize with, at least for the moment. In the novel, since the action is never seen from Zeena's point of view, there is of course none of this, nor does it ever suggest a change of disposition in Ethan; and there is no contrast between his customary hostility to Zeena before Mattie enters their home and his false affability after they have fallen in love.

Thus in the play, Zeena's cruel hatred of Mattie and the plot to get rid of her begin at the point where she discovers that Mattie is taking her husband away from her, and not before. Her situation is made the more poignant by the marked difference in Ethan's treatment of the two women. From the novel, by contrast, we get the impression that Mattie's advent does not change Ethan's character or even his behavior, but rather that Mattie is the first person he has ever known who has given him a chance to be his full self. Even at the end, Ethan is still the one who reaches out, who makes the effort toward love and peace in his house. A comparison of the two epilogues will show the difference in the relationships. In the kitchen scene in the novel, Zeena does not respond with either a word or a look to anything the other two say; Mattie does nothing but complain of Zeena; and it is Ethan who introduces the only note of domestic concord and comfort, by remarking that it is cold in the house without blaming anyone for it and by introducing his guest to the women (Wharton, pp. 173, 174). Later, Mrs. Hale says as she looks back on the

past twenty years of the Fromes' family life, "sometimes the two of them (Zeena and Mattie) get going at each other, and then Ethan's face'd break your heart. . . When I see that, I think it's him that suffers most. . . anyhow it ain't Zeena, because she ain't got the time. . ." (p. 180). This corroborates what Harmon Gow said in the prologue: "I guess it's always Ethan done the caring."

And here is the epilogue to the play: (Ethan enters, carrying a magazine. Zeena helps him off with his coat and hat.)

Zeena: What's that, Ethan?
Ethan: Engineering magazine that young feller give me. (Puts it on table C.)
Zeena: Did you get that dollar?
Ethan: (As he limps slowly to his chair L. of table.) That's what I went for. (Sits at table.)
Zeena: Well. . . a dollar's a dollar. . . but it ain't a whole lot for drivin' all the ways over there to Corbury an' back this weather. . . I don't know as I'd do it again in the mornin'. (She hangs his coat on peg at door.)
Ethan: Another dollar'll come handy, won't it?
Zeena: I was just wonderin' how much Eady's Livery'd get out of that young fellow.
Mattie: (Calling from off R.) Zeena--Zeenie! (Zeena crosses to door R., goes out. Zeena enters with Mattie in wheel chair, closes door. Mattie's hair is thin and gray, and her face is drawn. She is partly paralyzed and never moves except for an occasional surge of petulant vitality. Mattie, as she enters, petulantly whimpering.) Zeenie, you hurt, Zeenie. . . You done that on purpose. (Zeena goes to stove--gets cup of milk--feeds Mattie.)
Zeena: Don't say that! You can't say that when I been doin' what I can for you for twenty years. (Goes back to stove with cup.)
Mattie: Why didn't you let me die there that night when they brought Ethan and me in here? (She is silent for a moment--then she whines.) Zeenie, I'm cold!
Zeena: Give her the blanket, Ethan. (Ethan rises, takes blanket off back of his chair, gives it to Zeena. He sits as Mattie speaks.)
Mattie: No, don't let him touch me,--Zeenie, you do it! He's so clumsy--he always hurts me.
Zeena: (Tucks blanket around Mattie's knees.) Sh-h-h-h! You're worse'n a baby, Mattie!
Mattie: Zeena, you'll carry me down in the morning, won't you? I can't stand to have him touch me. Ain't you never goin' to die, Ethan Frome!

Ethan: The Fromes are tough, I guess. The doctor was sayin' to me only the other day. . . "Frome," he says, "you'll likely touch a hundred."

The first words are spoken by Zeena, and show a not unfriendly curiosity. Ethan, on the other hand, seems to be interested only in the dollar, while Zeena is more concerned with Ethan's comfort and safety than with whether they get the dollar or not. With Mattie, Zeena is patient and gentle, in spite of Mattie's ungrateful petulance. Zeena seems to have what she has always wanted--someone to be dependent on her and to care for.

It seems unnecessary to say much about Mattie's character as it is developed in the play. Although the Davises have added a considerable amount of dialogue for her, she is altogether Mrs. Wharton's Mattie; the Mattie of the play is the Mattie of the novel to the very life. But the dramatic climax of the play is the revelation of Mattie's and Ethan's feelings for each other twenty years after the accident: I remember that when I saw it, Mattie's "Ain't you never goin' to die, Ethan Frome!" brought a gasp of shock and horror from the audience; less than a minute before, they had seen the lovers locked in each other's arms. The effect was heightened by the way in which the last scene and the epilogue are connected:

(End of last scene):

FAST BLACKOUT

(The sled is heard in the darkness. . . bounding faster and faster down the slope.)

(Beginning of epilogue):

During the brief moment of darkness before the curtain rises . . . the sled is heard bounding down the hill with increasing speed. (p. 81)

Then the curtain rises on the Frome kitchen twenty years later.

The anagogia of the play, then, is: An ugly, stifled woman who longs for love is married to a hard, unresponsive man who falls in love with his wife's cousin; the girl responds warmly; the wife, hurt and embittered beyond endurance, tries to get rid of her rival; the lovers attempt suicide, but fail, although they are permanently injured; the wife takes them both back to live with her; twenty years later, the husband is as he was in the beginning--hard and unloving; he and the girl who once loved him now hate each other; but the wife has found some degree of satisfaction in her life by having an outlet for her frustrated love.

The dramatists have chosen to concentrate their story upon the interplay between the characters, while the novelist developed the conflict between character and environment. The dramatic reason (very possibly unconscious) for altering the focus was probably that interplay between characters is more dramatic, in that it involves the emotions of the audience more directly. In any case, they have succeeded in producing a very fine play; but the fascinating thing about the dramatization is that the characters are more developed than in the novel. The plot is the same in both works; but in the novel, we know only Ethan: Mattie's inner life we must surmise, though we see a great deal of her; as for Zeena, she is kept at such a distance from us that she strikes us almost as an archetype.

In the play, on the other hand, Zeena is the protagonist. It is she who moves, initiates, undergoes change. Mrs. Wharton does give us a hint of Zeena as the victim of frustrated love, in the scene where she finds the broken pickle dish; but it is only a hint. As the dramatists develop her character, her motive for taking the lovers back to

live on the farm with her becomes much clearer and stronger. In the novel, we feel that it was a grim sense of duty that impelled her, perhaps combined with a desire to put herself in the right in the eyes of the community; in any case, we are not sure.

Since Zeena is the protagonist in the play, Ethan appears to the audience more as he appears to Zeena. We have the impression that the gentleness and the aesthetic sensibility he displays in the scenes with Mattie are rather the temporary softening effect of love than an essential element in his character. As for Mattie, her role is mostly passive; gentle, tolerant, warm-hearted though she is, she lacks the depth and strength of the other two characters. This relative weakness was suggested in the novel--the charming girl became a whining and querulous invalid. But it was not clear in the novel that she ended by actually hating Ethan. This point in the play is not only a brilliant dramatic stroke, but is exactly suitable to Mattie's character and circumstances: the Mattie Mrs. Wharton created would have eventually hated Ethan.

All in all, one can see what Mrs. Wharton meant when she wrote that her characters were "transported to the stage without loss or alteration of any sort": although the characters of Ethan and Zeena were altered (I claim), and as a result Ethan lost a good deal of stature, still the alteration established a closer and more convincing relationship between the characters and Mrs. Wharton's plot; the effect of stark tragedy was not lost; and perhaps most important, as a work of art the play is worthy of the novel.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

I have tried to show that of the four dramatizations under consideration, three are based on anagogies different from those of the corresponding novels. The play that does seem to follow the novel closely, The Great Gatsby, is of relatively poor artistic quality; of the others, two are very fine pieces of work, whereas one, The Old Maid, seems to me also rather poor. Although of course four plays are far too few to have any statistical significance, still the foregoing analysis suggests that the quality of a dramatization does not depend upon its fidelity to the anagogy of the novel that inspired it. What a first-rate dramatist apparently does is this: rather than attempting to render the anagogy of one work of art in another art form, he is inspired by various elements in the novel to form an anagogy of his own.

This in turn suggests that any process of interpretation--any aesthetic response that has significance--involves the formation of a new anagogy in the mind of the perceiver. "Anagogy" is a synonym for "meaning" (one, it is to be hoped, that adds some clarity to the concept). Thus, for the perceiver, a work of art is a part of the general stream of experience to which he attaches meaning. But this is not to say that there is no distinction to be made between experience of art and experience of life.

What then is the distinction? A crucial one appears to be that a work of art is made by somebody. It is an attempt of a human mind to order some elements of experience (we may leave aside the question of "art trouvé," since no one claims that novels and plays are produced fortuitously). It follows that when we try to respond to a work of art, we may assume that it can have a meaning for us. This is an assumption that we cannot make about phenomena in general, unless we are committed to certain religious or philosophical beliefs; and even then, we need not believe that all phenomena have a meaning that a single human mind can apprehend. But a work of literature, since it was created by one human mind, can presumably be apprehended by another. When we approach a work of art, then, we try to understand it, whereas our response to experience in general is that it needs to be understood only to the degree necessary to enable us to deal with it.

Another closely allied and perhaps equally crucial distinction is that we are free to accept or reject art, whereas much of experience is imposed upon us. Hence the necessity of evaluating art: is the experience of a given work of art one to which we can attach meaning? one that produces in us a clear and at least temporarily all-inclusive orientation of thought and sentiment? Perhaps this is only another way of stating the standard suggested in the introduction: a work of art may be judged by the clarity, vividness and depth of the vision the artist makes us see.

But, given the differences in human experience, the vision the artist makes us see can never be precisely the one he saw himself, and our own vision is to some degree our own creation. Nevertheless, given the similarities in human experience, there is apparently a close

connection between the clarity and all-inclusiveness of the anagogy his work can produce in another mind. Thus, fine novels inspire playwrights to try to dramatize them. But the quality of the dramatic interpretation seems to depend not so much upon its fidelity to the novelist's vision as upon the quality of the dramatist's own vision (and of course his skill in transmitting it), for which the novel has furnished him the material. If fiction is the imitation of an action, it is his own inner action the dramatist must imitate. And since the presentation of a play depends also upon the acting company, this process of forming a new anagogy upon the old must take place repeatedly: the director, actors, stage designers, etc., must creatively interpret the dramatist's work, as the dramatist has interpreted the novelist's. This is why two interpretations of a great play can be quite different, and yet equally good.

And yet it does not seem that a work of art, considered as the material from which a different work of art may be wrought, is in exactly the same category as any other piece of life experience an artist might use for material. The content of a novel, for example, is much more concrete than the happenings it describes would be if they occurred in real life, and this concreteness imposes restrictions upon the dramatist. If we were to form our judgment on the basis of the four plays under discussion, we might conclude that the better the dramatist, the more seriously he takes the restrictions. Both All The Way Home and Ethan Frome seem to be dedicated and painstaking attempts at adaptation: every effort was made to get as much of the novel onto the stage as possible, and to omit from the play anything that was not in the novel. The Great Gatsby and The Old Maid, on the other hand, are full of interpolated scenes, interpolated dialogue, and gross distortions of much of the material that

was taken from the original. In the two better plays, such distortions as there are are far more subtle, and one gets the impression that the dramatists would have avoided them altogether if they could.

Perhaps the crux of the dramatizer's problem is this: because of the various physical circumstances which influence the psychic state of the perceiver, a given anagogy demands a particular art form for its accurate imitation. If this is so, then any attempt to translate a fiction from one medium to another will inevitably produce a different anagogy. Does this leave us with no criteria for evaluating how successful a dramatization is, as distinguished from how good a play is? I believe not. There <u>are</u> valid criteria for determining how successfully a novel has been adapted to the stage: when we undertake this kind of judgment, we consider many elements, such as arrangement and emphasis of the episodes, characterization, atmosphere, and others; and if most or many of these are successfully transferred from one medium to the other, we judge that the adaptation is a good one. The point is that very subtle rearrangements of these elements, or additions to them or subtractions from them, seem to produce a significant alteration in the anagogy; and consequently we <u>cannot</u> judge the success of a dramatic adaptation by how faithfully it has reproduced the anagogy of the original novel.

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